SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

Analysis of Consultation Responses to Inform a National Fostering and Kinship Care Strategy

Education

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NATIONAL FOSTERING AND KINSHIP CARE STRATEGY

ANALYSIS OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES

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The views expressed in this report are those of the researchers and do not necessarily represent those of the Department or Scottish Ministers.

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BACKGROUND OVERVIEW

1   The consultation on *"National Fostering and Kinship Care Strategy"* was published by the Scottish Executive on 6th December 2006 and ran until 16th February 2007.

2   Findings from the analysis of consultation responses will be used to determine the direction and content of the final strategy.

3   The consultation booklet posed a series of questions divided into 5 main sections:

- What do children and young people tell us they need from fostering and kinship care?;
- Meeting the needs of foster carers;
- Family and friend carers – "Kinship carers";
- Private fostering arrangements;
- Fostering services, including kinship care – planning for the next 20 years.

OVERVIEW OF CONSULTEES

4   A total of 111 responses to the consultation were analysed, comprising 48 responses from individuals and 59 responding on behalf of an organisation. In 4 of the responses the respondent type was not given. In addition, the Fostering Network ran 16 events, for foster carers, kinship carers and those working in the area of fostering, at 6 locations across Scotland. The information presented in the 16 documents produced after the meetings has been incorporated in our analysis and reporting. Although there were no responses received directly from young people, one response did present the views of young people who had taken part in a consultation exercise run by the Fostering Network's Young People's Project. Thirty-eight young people with experience of foster care participated in 5 meetings across Scotland and a response was submitted incorporating their comments.

5   Among the organisations responding, the largest number of responses received was from Local Authorities (24%).

OVERVIEW OF RESPONSES

6   Across this consultation, a number of key themes emerged time and time again. The following paragraphs outline some of the more frequently mentioned. Across the proposals posed in the consultation paper, of those providing definitive "yes" or "no" answers, there were generally higher levels of support for each proposal. However, significantly high proportions of respondents did not provide definitive answers to each question. In these cases, we have tried, wherever possible, to identify an answer as either a positive, negative or mixed from the comments given, in order to quantify as many consultation responses as possible.

7   The themes occurring most frequently across the range of consultation questions included:

- funding and financial support;
- support for foster carers;
- support for kinship carers;
- support for children and young people;
- the need for more carers;
- suggested methods of recruitment.

Funding and financial support

8   There were comments at many of the questions on the need for financial support. Issues included the need for extra funding to local authorities to enable them to provide training to carers and funding for a range of support services was also seen as necessary. Increased financial assistance for carers, and in particular financial support for kinship carers, emerged as one of the key themes in consultation responses.

Support for carers

9   The provision of respite was identified as crucial in supporting carers as was the need for 24 hour support. A wide variety of areas in which carers would benefit from training were suggested; those suggested most frequently included:

- child protection;
- attachment, loss or resilience training;
- child development;
- safe caring;
- first aid;
- managing challenging behaviour;
- record keeping and report writing.

10   There were also some comments that there needs to be more support for kinship carers and that they do not receive the same levels of support or regulatory provision as foster carers.

Increasing the pool of available carers

11   Responses indicated a need for an increased pool of available carers, particularly if some of the proposed changes are accepted; as well as more social work or other professional staff to provide assessment and support to both carers and to children and young people.

Recruitment

12   Word of mouth was seen as an ideal way of recruiting carers with existing carers seen as the ideal people to promote foster care. There were some suggestions for local authorities and /or other organisations to pool resources in order to create larger regional or national recruitment campaigns to back up those at a local level. Responses from those

consultees who reported that they had run a campaign indicated that more of these had proved successful in attracting and sustaining applications than had not.

Specific support for kinship carers

13   Kinship carers were seen to have different needs from foster carers in terms of support and training with a small number of comments that the two types of care should be dealt with in separate strategies.

14   Kinship carers are often older and may be on low incomes but do not receive the same levels of financial support available to foster carers. Support in dealing with the bureaucracy and legal problems was also seen as important, as was support in coping with the needs of the child or young person in their care.

Support for children and young people

15   There were calls for greater involvement of children and young people within the fostering process; for example, to have early contact with potential carers, to have greater involvement in family group conferences and so on. There was a feeling that this is not being fully achieved at present due to a lack of resources, both staff and financial. There was widespread support for allowing young people to remain with their foster carer after the age of 18; financial support would again be required to enable this to happen.

CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND

1.1   BACKGROUND

1.1.1   According to the British Association for Adoption & Fostering, fostering is a way of providing a family life for children who cannot live with their own parents. Fostering is often used to provide temporary care while parents get help sorting out problems, take a break, or to help children or young people through a difficult period in their lives. Often children will return home once the problems that caused them to go into foster care have been resolved and when it is clear that their parents are able to look after them safely. Others may stay in long-term foster care, some may be adopted, and others will move on to live independently[1].

1.1.2   In Scotland there are over 3,700 children and young people in foster care. This figure does not include those looked after by friends or relatives, commonly known as 'kinship care' where the main full-time care arrangement is provided by a member of the child's extended family or wider network of friends[2].

1.1.3   On 6th December 2006 a plan was launched, in Edinburgh by Education Minister Hugh Henry, which will shape foster and kinship care in Scotland over the next 20 years. The 'National Fostering and Kinship Care Strategy' has been drawn up with the help of experts from groups including the Fostering Network, children's charity Barnardo's, the Association of Directors of Social Work, NCH, local government body CoSLA and foster and kinship carers[3]. This builds upon recent work undertaken, including *Extraordinary Lives* by the Social Work Inspection Agency, the Executive's Proposals for the development of integrated services, *Getting it Right for every Child*, the 21st Century Social Work Review, *Changing Lives, Hidden Harm: The next Steps*.

1.1.4   This Strategy will address the specific needs of those children who need to live away from home and from their birth parents in foster and kinship care, either by way of a compulsory supervision requirement or a voluntary arrangement. As part of the development of this strategy, the Scottish Executive launched a consultation seeking to identify the key issues for consideration to ensure that all fostered children and young people, and those cared for by relatives, are given the safe, stable and secure environment that they need. More specifically, the consultation paper considered:

- The specific needs of children and young people for whom the option of living with a foster carer or kinship carer is in their best interests;
- The improvements that could be made in supporting foster and kinship carers to enable them to meet the needs of the child or young person;
- The way forward for fostering services and kinship care arrangements more broadly;
- Views on how these needs can be met.

1.1.5   The consultation also sought views on how to best achieve a fundamental and long-term transformation of fostering services and kinship care arrangements to ensure they are fit to tackle the challenges that will be faced over the next 20 years.

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[1] http://www.baaf.org.uk/info/firstq/fostering.shtml#what
[2] http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/159529/0043403.pdf
[3] http://www.scotland.gov.uk/News/Releases/2006/12/05155209

1.1.6   In January 2007, George Street Research was commissioned to analyse and report on responses to the consultation. This reports details the key themes identified from the 111 responses received to the consultation by 10th April along with findings from the 16 events run by the Fostering Network.

CHAPTER 2: THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

2.1   TIMING OF THE CONSULTATION

2.1.1   The consultation ran from 6th December 2006 until 16th February 2007. In total 111 responses were received, providing a wide range of views and information for consideration. In addition 16 documents listing comments made at the events run by the Fostering Network were submitted.

2.2   NATURE OF THE CONSULTATION

The consultation questions

2.2.1   The consultation document asked 32 questions split over 5 sections:

- What do children and young people tell us they need from fostering and kinship care?;
- Meeting the needs of foster carers;
- Family and friend carers – "Kinship carers";
- Private fostering arrangements;
- Fostering services, including kinship care – planning for the next 20 years.

2.3   RESPONSES

2.3.1   A total of 111 responses to the consultation were received, comprising 59 responses from organisations and 48 from individuals, although 4 consultees did not state which group they belonged to. Among organisations, the largest number of responses received was from local authorities. Among individuals, responses came from both kinship and foster carers as well as other individual respondents.

2.3.2   Although there were no responses received directly from young people, one response did present the views of young people who had taken part in a consultation exercise run by the Fostering Network's Young People's Project. Although the events run for this consultation exercise did not follow exactly the questions in the consultation document, many of the questions asked were similar. We have therefore analysed comments from this response alongside those of other consultees at relevant questions. Thirty-eight young people with experience of foster care participated in 5 meetings across Scotland and discussed the following:

Introduction to the consultation:

- Aims and why the consultation is taking place;
- Respecting confidentiality – yours and other people's;
- Anonymity – we won't use names or identifying info in the feedback report;
- Don't have to say anything you're not comfortable in sharing.

1. Generally – what has your experience of Foster Care and Kinship care been like?

2. Did you have a CHOICE in your placement?

3. What is the best way to involve children and young people in the CHOICE of placement and MATCHING them with a carer?

4. Do you think that there should be a MAXIMUM NUMBER of children per foster family?

5. Ideal Foster Carer exercise :

    What QUALITIES do foster carers need to have?
    What INFORMATION do foster carers need?
    What SUPPORT would help foster carers?

6. What support do you think SONS & DAUGHTERS of foster carers need?

7. What could be used to help RECRUIT foster carers?

8. How should children & young people be involved in LOCAL PLANNING and IMPROVING services?

9. Knowledge Book Exercise:

    What TRAINING should a foster carer have to do?
    What TRAINING can be optional?
    What QUALIFICATIONS (if any) does a foster carer need to have?

10. What needs to change or improve so that young people can STAY in foster care beyond their 18th birthday?

11. Is there anything else you'd like to say about foster care or kinship care/ What's your main MESSAGE that you'd like to give to Scottish Ministers?

2.3.3   The Fostering Network ran 16 events for foster carers, kinship carers and those working in fostering services, these took place at 6 locations across Scotland.   These locations were Edinburgh, Kilmarnock, Perth, Inverness, Aberdeen and Glasgow. In total, 50 agencies were represented with 150 delegates participating. The information presented in the 16 event documents included comments on the consultation returned by 94 of the attendees and comments made in groups. This information has been incorporated in the analysis and report, either as quantified data given after each chart or by indicating where comments identified in consultation responses were also made at events.   The introductory section which was included with the document produced by the Fostering Network after these events is appended to this report (App. 2); this includes a profile of attendees.

2.3.4   As table 2.1 shows, **48 (44%) of all responses were from individuals and 59 (53%) were from organisations**.   However, 4% of consultees did not provide this information. Organisational responses have been further segmented into organisation types. Analysis of the response submitted on behalf of young people by the Fostering Network is included in the Voluntary sector sub-group. The 16 reports from Fostering Network events have been analysed separately from the consultation responses in order to give weight to the views expressed there, as comments made at events may have come from more than one

attendee. Views expressed at the events have been reported alongside similar comments emerging from responses. Rather than increasing the numbers reported as 'no response' in relation to closed questions, in the few cases where answers were quantified these have been reported alongside relevant charts. In total, 150 delegates participated (28 kinship carers, 61 foster carers and 61 practitioners).

Table 2.1
Total number of Consultees by Category

Consultee Type	No	%
Individuals	**48**	**44**
Individuals (foster carers)	16	15
Individuals (kinship carers)	13	12
Individuals (other)	19	17
Organisations	**59**	**53**
Carer's group	9	8
Local Authority (inc. COSLA)	27	24
Other Professional Organisations or Public Bodies	8	7
Voluntary Sector (inc. Adoption or Fostering Agencies or Organisations)	15	14
Respondent type not stated	**4**	**4**
TOTAL	111	100

(* figures may not add due to rounding)

Gaps in Respondent Type

2.3.5   A scan of the respondent list along with a review of the consultee organisations revealed no responses received directly from young people. However, as mentioned, one response did report the views of young people who had taken part in a consultation exercise run by the Fostering Network's Young People's Project. The response detailing their views is included in the Voluntary Sector sub-group for analysis purposes.

CHAPTER 3: APPROACH TO ANALYSIS OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES

3.1 ANALYSIS

3.1.1   George Street Research was commissioned to conduct an analysis of the consultation responses and this document constitutes a summary report of this analysis.

Analytical Framework

3.1.2   The analytical framework used in our analysis of the consultation responses was an electronic ACCESS database specifically written for this consultation.   This enabled a combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis to be undertaken.

3.1.3   The fields used to record the material in the ACCESS database were based on the questions set out in the consultation document. The text from free flowing responses was, where possible, assigned to a specific question and stored in the relevant field.

Publication of Responses

3.1.4   Where respondents have agreed to publication, these responses will be made available in the Scottish Executive library. After discussion with the consultation team, the convention adopted for this consultation has been to attribute comments and quotes to the grouped consultee category to which they fit. In this way, a further depth is added to the analysis by providing some contextual information about the consultee type.   However, there were occasions where it was seen as useful to directly attribute comments or quotes; this was mainly in cases where the response came from an organisation with a major role in fostering or in delivering the strategy.

Factual Accuracy

3.1.5   The views presented in this analysis have not been vetted in any way for factual accuracy.   The opinions and comments submitted to the consultation may be based on fact or may, indeed, be based on what consultees perceive to be accurate, but which others may interpret differently. It is important for the analysis to represent views from all perspectives. The report may, therefore, contain analysis of responses which may be factually inaccurate or based on misunderstanding or misinformation on the issues but nevertheless reflect strongly held views. In some instances, such inaccuracies and misunderstandings will be relevant findings in themselves.

Interpretation of Findings

3.1.6   Those participating in the consultation exercise were self-selecting and each had their particular motivation to take part. The exercise was not intended to gain views that were representative of the Scottish population, but was intended to give all those who wished to comment an opportunity to do so. This has to be borne in mind in interpreting the findings presented in this report.

3.1.7 Given the self-selecting nature of any consultation exercise, it should be noted that any statistics quoted here cannot be extrapolated to a wider population outwith the consultation population.

3.2   REPORTING

3.2.1   The following chapters document the key themes identified from the 111 responses received to the consultation, including the response submitted on behalf of young people, and from the 16 events run by the Fostering Network and for ease of reference directly reflect the structure of the consultation paper and questionnaire.

3.2.2   It should be noted that, as a number of consultees chose not to use the consultation template provided for answers, many of the yes/no or similar questions were not answered. For those who did not answer in this format we have tried, wherever possible, to identify any answer as either a positive, negative or mixed from comments given, in order to quantify as many responses as possible.

3.2.3   Although documentation from a small number of the Fostering Network's events gave an indication of the attendees' views in relation to some of these questions, most did not. For this reason it is not possible to include any quantitative data from the events in the charts. However, where information is available, an indication of support or otherwise from event attendees has been reported after each chart.

3.2.4   Where reports from the events include comments similar to those in the consultation responses, these have been reported alongside, and any extra themes emerging from those attending the events have also been highlighted.

3.2.5   Themes emerging in response to each question were examined by respondent type thereby allowing us to ascertain commonalities or differences between consultee groups. In addition, this allowed us to identify issues about which consultee groups did not comment, and by implication therefore did not feel as strongly about, similar comments to those made by others. On the whole, most of the key themes emerged in responses across all respondent groups. In the report, details are given for any theme that appears primarily in responses from one particular type of respondent group, or where any of the larger sub-groups (especially local authorities, voluntary organisations and the 3 individual respondent sub-groups), do not include these themes.

CHAPTER 4: WHAT DO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE TELL US THEY NEED FROM FOSTERING AND KINSHIP CARE?

The long-term goal of the National Fostering and Kinship Care Strategy is to achieve safe, stable and secure placements for all children and young people by getting the placement right first time. There need to be constant assessments of the matching process and local authorities and independent agencies need to be sure that the foster care resource available meets the needs of the matching process. The first section of the consultation contained 6 questions dealing with 3 areas:

- Getting the placement right first time - improving the matching of placements to the needs of children and young people;
- Transition to adulthood and independent living;
- Amendments to Regulations.

4.1 GETTING THE PLACEMENT RIGHT FIRST TIME - IMPROVING THE MATCHING OF PLACEMENTS TO THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Question 1. Do you think that setting a maximum number of placements for each foster carer would improve the fostering experience of the child?

4.1.1 **There were 55 responses in agreement with only 12 disagreeing.** Nineteen comments, mainly from Local Authority consultees, indicated that support for setting a maximum would depend on other factors. The reminder (25) did not state their opinion (see chart 4.1).

Chart 4.1
Whether setting a maximum number of placements for each foster carer would improve the fostering experience of the child (n=111)

	Yes: Total: n= 55 (50%)		No: Total: n=12 (11%)
	Depends: Total: n=19 (17%)		Not stated: Total: n=25 (23%)
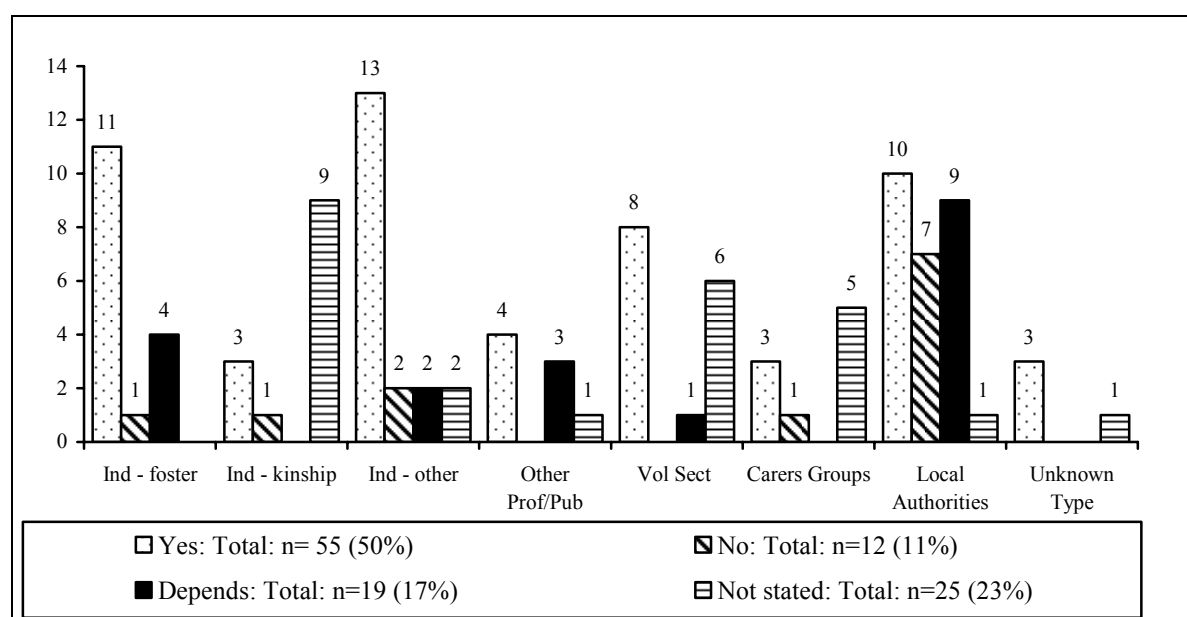
4.1.2   At the events, one group which included those working within foster care indicated that 17 attendees were in support with 7 against the idea of a placement limit. An event for foster carers produced 33 in favour with 5 against the idea.

If you've answered yes, please specify what the placement limit should be and please give reasons for your answer.

4.1.3   While those who answered yes to this question were then asked to specify what the placement limit should be, comments came not only from those replying yes to the initial question, but also those saying no, depends or giving no response.

4.1.4   Consultees acknowledged that foster children can have complex needs that might not receive the attention needed in a large household. **The number of children being cared for has implications for carers, not only in the time available to spend with each child, but also in the amount of paperwork and meetings involved for each child that the carer has to deal with; this comment was the single most frequently mentioned issue at this question**, by 38 consultees. A foster carer described their own experience *"I have experience of having four children and giving them individual time and attention was almost impossible. Plus all their appointments with therapists, medical appointments, educational reviews and having a 'normal family experience' was very difficult with a large number of children."* This theme did not however, appear in any depth at the Fostering Network events. Only one of the reports, from an event attended by foster carers, produced this comment.

4.1.5   In relation to the placement limit, a 3 child limit was most favoured by over a third of consultees (36 and 5 events). Supporting comments included that a 3 child limit would be in line with England and Wales. A fostering charity commented *"We would wish to suggest that the period of transition towards a placement limit of some three years would allow local authorities sufficient time to realign their recruitment and retention policies and practises in order to prepare an imposition of a placement limit. In addition, as is the case elsewhere in the United Kingdom, we would wish to suggest that sibling groups of more than three would not fall under the ambit of the usual fostering limit."* Almost a quarter (26) of consultees, predominantly local authorities, stressed the need to keep sibling groups together and many of those suggesting a limit asked that allowances be made for sibling groups. Attendees at 4 events also highlighted this point.

4.1.6   Thirty-two consultees and attendees at 6 of the events felt that placement limits would depend on a number of factors including:

- the number of birth children;
- whether those providing care were single or a couple;
- the size of house.

4.1.7   The main single factor affecting size of placement was present in over a quarter (31) of responses and this concerned the age and needs of the child(ren) involved. This was a key theme amongst event attendees with 7 foster carer events and 2 events for workers raising this issue. A local authority consultee gave their opinion:

> *"We believe that younger children, particularly pre-fives need very close care*
> *and attention that is more likely to be available in a smaller household.*
> *However, some older children and young people prefer to be in households*

where the relationships are less intense. Large foster homes are regularly and often pejoratively compared to residential units. It is possible that the young people placed actually get the best of both worlds i.e. continuity of caring adults and peers but without the emotional intensity of a smaller family."

4.1.8   Another key theme to emerge was the experience of the carer(s); mentioned by 25 consultees. Again it was pointed out that these factors are assessed in deciding placements at present and again, this theme was seen as important at the Fostering Network events; 7 foster carer events and 3 events for workers reported the experience of carers as a factor in deciding any placement limit. The response detailing the views of young people included several comments indicating that young people with experience of foster care feel placement numbers should be decided in this way. Comments included:

- *"When a carer begins to care, place one child at a time, then when they have as many children as they feel they can manage then that should be their limit. Therefore there is no reason to put on a limit of children, as the carers knows within themselves their limit and what they can manage."*
- *"Depends on foster carers own beliefs. If they feel they can cope (and obviously can) then they can have more."*
- *"Need information on how many children they can handle. And stress levels of carers - how much they can take."*

4.1.9   The need for children or young people to have their own rooms, unless sharing with siblings, was stressed by 13 consultees; this point also emerged from 5 of the events although there were also a couple of comments on the benefits of children sharing rooms. A local authority response saw the need to *"Decrease incidence of room sharing, each child should have a single bedroom and the number of placements needs to relate to the capacity of the carers and their accommodation."*   There were comments, from 14 consultees and at 3 events, on the need to ensure foster homes are not overloaded.

4.1.10 There were 10 comments suggesting that maximum figures should include the number of birth children present in the home. Responses from 2 events for foster care workers and from 5 of the foster carer events also saw the number of birth children as an important factor. This included the following comment from foster carers *"If a family have their own children, I believe that it should be up to a maximum of 4 children in the household – this means their needs may be met. Large households can be chaotic and needs overlooked. A child's individual needs have to be taken into account, placing children one-to-one may be needed."*

4.1.11 Ten consultees and attendees at 3 events felt that more carers would be needed if placement limits were set. This is illustrated by the following comment from a local authority *"This is a more complex question than would first appear, set as it is within the context of too few foster placements and increasing numbers of looked after and accommodated children with complex needs. Unless the issues of recruitment and retention of foster carers can be resolved, then it is difficult to see how any proposals to limit the numbers of placements in a foster placement could reasonably be achieved."*

4.1.12 Other comments made by smaller numbers of consultees included:

- a maximum of 2 children or young people, unless accommodating a sibling group (8

comments);

- a maximum of 4 children or young people, unless accommodating a sibling group (8 comments);
- concern that the reduction in fees or allowances paid to carers through looking after smaller numbers may result in the loss of carers (7 comments and 3 mentions from events);
- that a placement limit may increase the likelihood of stable placements (4 comments, mainly voluntary or charity consultees).

4.1.13 There were a variety of different suggestions on placement limits given at the events and these included:

- a limit of 4 if there are 2 foster carers in the home, otherwise the limit should be set at 3;
- three but with the option to increase if needed – especially for sibling groups (9 comments);
- a maximum of 4 (4 events);
- although a limit of 3 was favoured, 2 to 3 was also widely suggested at one event for foster carers and received a mention at one other foster carer event.

4.1.14 A suggestion that there should be some form of policy in place to deal with placements going over limit appeared in one of the consultation responses and 3 of the events for workers reported that a policy should be in place.

> *"In terms of placements where more than three children were placed, it would be in our opinion worth emulating the situation in the rest of the United Kingdom where situations such as this are brought to the attention of the appropriate regulatory bodies. In this case in Scotland, our suggestions would be the Scottish Commission for the Regulation of Care, or the Social Work Inspection Agency. Their role would be to regulate and monitor these situations in order to ensure themselves that the children's best interests were being met on an ongoing basis. It would also serve to bring home to local authorities the exceptional nature of such placements less they become the norm."*
>
> (fostering charity)

Question 2. If introduced, setting a maximum number of placements would need to be phased in. What, in your opinion, would be a realistic timeframe for this?

4.1.15 Although there were a variety of suggestions for suitable timeframes, **the main comment made in relation to timeframes was on the importance of allowing existing placements to come to an end naturally.** Twenty-four consultees stressed that existing placements should not be disrupted by the introduction of a placement limit and this point came through strongly as well in reports from the events; 5 foster carer events and 2 of the worker events stressed the need to allow a natural progression to the end of current placements. A foster carer commented *"You can't tell a child to leave who you may have had for years and agreed to keep until they move to independent living because you are over the number."*

4.1.16 The situation regarding new carers was, however, viewed differently; 15 consultees, mainly foster carers and local authorities, along with attendees from 6 events, saw no need to delay implementing a placement limit for new carers.

4.1.17 Again, consultees anticipated that more carers would be needed. Sixteen consultees, half of these from local authorities, and attendees from 5 events commented on this issue in relation to question 2. This comment from a fostering agency deals with both this and the previous theme:

> *"However with regard to carers currently in the assessment process, strict adherence to a new policy of restriction in numbers could be and should be implemented immediately. Whilst this may have an impact on resource availability, sufficient carers need to be recruited and retained to ensure this can happen. Delay in bringing about change for those currently in assessment will only add to a future problem if an implementation date is set in future."*

4.1.18 Looking at the issue of specific timeframes, there was greatest support, from consultees, for a phasing in period of 3 years (9 comments and mentioned at one event). A children's charity *"believes that a period of 3 years would be a realistic timeframe for this on the condition that there is investment and a positive strategy to recruit suitable carers."* Both 3 and 5 years were most widely mentioned at the events which reported on question 2. There were smaller numbers of consultees and attendees supporting:

- two years (5 comments and 3 events);
- five years (5 comments and 2 events);
- six months to a year (2 comments and 2 events);
- one year to eighteen months (2 comments and one event);
- between 2 and 4 years (2 comments and 2 events);
- three to five years (2 comments and mentioned at 2 events);
- five to eight or ten years (2 comments and 2 events);
- one year (one comment and 2 events);
- one to two years (one comment);
- eighteen months to two years (one comment);
- ten years or 8 to 10 years (one comment and mentioned at 2 events);
- twenty years with funding guaranteed for 20 years (mentioned at one event);
- 3 to 6 months (2 events).

4.1.19 The issue of extra resources was noted, with 8 consultees and attendees at 2 of the events for workers commenting on the need for investment in the service before making any changes. As a local authority pointed out *"Any timetable to impose a change of this nature needs to be set against a commitment from the Scottish Executive to permanently invest in the service."*

4.1.20 One local authority felt *"local timescale targets should be set within each authority that reflect the local circumstances of that area, including the implications of established care plan arrangements for children and young people currently in placement."* Three other consultees as well as attendees from 3 of the events agreed that there may be a need for

different timeframes in different areas or that each local authority should be allowed to decide their own timeframe.

4.1.21 At an event attended by workers in foster care there were some mentions of the need to link all legislation together and to ensure that the whole of Great Britain has a strategy in place, while there was a further comment on the need for a Scotland-wide strategy.

Question 3. Are you aware of any examples of good practice that demonstrate how best to involve the child or young person in the choice of placement? If so please give further details.

4.1.22 Although a small number of consultees mentioned specific examples, most gave more general descriptions of what they considered good practice. **The need to familiarise children or young people with potential or proposed carers through family booklets, videos, carer profiles and pictures was mentioned by 20 consultees**. This issue was also raised amongst attendees at 9 events. A foster carer described the steps they take to welcome new placements:

> *"We have often prepared an "All About Us" booklet for any prospective children / young people coming into our home. This includes photographs of ourselves, our home, family pets, etc, a little bit of information about the house and the family, and a wee fun questionnaire for the young person to complete so that we know a bit about them in advance."* They go on to add *"I think that all carers should be asked to carry out this task, which would then be kept on file, so that children and young people could see a bit about their new placement family, even in an emergency situation, before coming to the house. Other local authorities in England get their new carers to do this as part of their training, but it is not something that I am aware of happening as the norm in Scotland."*

4.1.23 Pre-placement meetings between the young person and potential carer were also seen as important, with 19 consultees commenting, along with attendees from 5 foster carer and 3 worker events including *"my area does provide if possible a phased introduction so the child gets to know the carer."*

4.1.24 Consultees also raised possible issues around involving a child or young person in the choice of placement. Sixteen consultees mentioned that choice may be limited due either to the small pool of available carers or to difficulties in involving young people in professional matching panels. This was one of the main comments on this question from local authorities. Similar concerns also emerged in reports from 5 events. Eleven consultees, along with attendees at 6 of the events, saw involvement as potentially difficult in emergency placement situations due to the timeframe involved. However, although the response detailing comments from young people indicated that they were aware of, and resigned to, these problems, the following quote from one young person shows the potential benefits of overcoming them *"If I had a choice of foster parent then it would mean my behaviour would be better and my anger more under control."*

4.1.25 There was support for involving children or young people in placement planning or in family group conferences (FGC); 10 consultees felt young people could be involved in these meetings as did attendees from 4 of the events. Twelve consultees thought that children or

young people should be encouraged to identify issues of importance to them such as area or type of family and this point also appeared in reports from 6 events. One local authority commented *"Children are not currently given a choice of carer placement, but children and their families are consulted through the planning process. Areas such as family contact, friends, school and other factors all influence placement choice, and are given careful consideration."* The age of the child may have an effect on the extent of their involvement; there were 9 comments in responses and reports from 2 events on this subject; consultees felt that older children should have some form of input.

4.1.26 Eight consultees commented that involvement may not be happening due to a lack of resources. One local authority explained that young people are not involved because *"Our fostering resources are at maximum capacity and allow little opportunity to match placements."* Other comments, made by smaller numbers of consultees, included:

- the need for each child or young person to have an adult, perhaps a social worker, with whom they feel comfortable in expressing an opinion or voicing any concerns (5 comments and mentions from 4 events);
- involving children or young people in preparing their BAAF form (3 comments and mentioned at one worker event);
- the need for a trial or settling in period (2 comments and mentions from 3 events);
- ensuring that the child or young person is properly prepared and briefed for the placement (2 comments and mentions from 3 events);
- having child-specific recruitment drives (2 comments).

4.1.27 Specific examples identified in responses included:

- Sycamore, Aberlour, Fife (2 mentions);
- materials and processes associated with the Looked After Child (LAC) system (2 mentions);
- Barnardo's Home from Home in Aberdeen (one mention);
- Inverclyde Local Authority process (one mention);
- FCA process (one mention);
- previous Lothian Regional Council adolescent placement scheme (one mention).

4.1.28 Specific examples mentioned in event reports included:

- profiles of carers, including photos, are produced in Edinburgh.

Question 4. How do you think that the matching process could be improved (for instance, by combining the expertise of child protection and family placement services, or by using family group conferencing)?

4.1.29 The main comment to emerge in relation to improving the matching process concerned **the need to widen the pool of available carers**. As one foster carer put it *"There is no point in trying to make a process child-centred at a strategic, functional or management level if there is not the bums on seats to accommodate the end result of the process."* Twenty-five consultees, including 13 local authorities, pinpointed the need to recruit more carers or commented that placements are dependent on the availability of carers. This comment also emerged from one event for workers in foster care.

4.1.30 A local authority felt *"We consider that family group conferencing could and should be used more to look at options within the kinship network prior to or immediately after children become looked after and accommodated. They should also be looked at again if permanence is being considered."* In total 20 consultees commenting on family group conferences felt that these are of limited use, or of more use in kinship care situations; this was also reported from one event. However, 19 consultees supported their use and there were comments in support from 2 of the events for workers. *"Family group conferencing seems an appropriate principle in terms of exploring all family options and views."* (local authority).

4.1.31 Nineteen consultees, including 11 local authorities, and the report from one event for workers in foster care commented on the need for good assessment frameworks and for an integrated approach to assessment. These should be followed up by an improved, formal linking process.

> *"Above all good assessment - this is always stated but rarely achieved - and a full analysis of each child/family /wider setting would help agencies like ours in making recommendation of carers to referring LA's. Such information should be gathered in a well written report which is made available to foster care agency as early as possible. This is not happening currently. The Integrated Assessment Framework implementation will need to achieve what the DoH assessment framework has yet to achieve: improved assessment by staff in Local Authorities (this has implications for the perennial old chestnuts of social work training, recruitment, retention, supervision and management).*
>
> (fostering agency)

4.1.32 In 2 reports from events for workers and in sixteen responses it was pointed out that success in the matching process depends on up-to-date, comprehensive and accurate information on both the child and the carer. One individual felt *"If carer and placement had more honest information on each other then expectations from placement would be more realistic and possibly more likely to succeed."*

4.1.33 There were calls, from 13 consultees, including 5 voluntary or charity organisations, for the child or young person to be involved in the process as much as possible. Young people provided the following suggestions:

- *"Children should be asked where they would like to live for example town, county or a place with no pets etc. Listen to children."*
- *"A foster carer that is close to where friends, school and family are."*
- *"Personality matching- sense of humour-not matching with strict carers."*
- *"Age difference of young people/children in placement."*
- *"Lifestyle matching (e.g. TV, Vegetarianism)."*
- *"They should meet a couple of families with their social worker and have a say as to where they would like to go, meaning there is more chance that the placement will go well."*

4.1.34 Multi-agency consultation was important to 10 consultees while 7 commented on the importance of planning and matching meetings. A local authority felt *"there needs to be a*

range of options though as other professionals, agencies have knowledge/experience of the child which would help give a clear picture and understanding of needs."

4.1.35 Informal visits, meetings or introductions to potential carers were seen, by 10 consultees, as important to the matching process. Other, less widely mentioned, comments included:

- the usefulness, knowledge and skills of family placement services (3 comments);
- possible use of child or life appreciation days, these bring together the child's life stories and are useful in helping foster parents to appreciate the child's life up until the present (3 comments);
- that it is always preferable to place a child or young person with own extended family, as the child will already know and trust other family members (2 comments from kinship carers);
- the need for link workers to be more aware of carers' skills and strengths and to match these to the needs of the child (2 comments);
- that the matching process can be limited by time constraints in emergency placement situations (2 comments);
- that use be made of the knowledge held by previous carers of a child or young person (one comment);
- the need for more analysis on the reasons for placements breaking down (one comment).

4.2 TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD AND INDEPENDENT LIVING

Question 5. What improvements or changes do you think must be made to the current arrangements to enable young people to stay in their foster home beyond their 18th birthday, if they wish, or if it is appropriate?

4.2.1 The main issue affecting any improvements, or changes, to arrangements for young people in care after their 18th birthday was finance. **Forty-three consultees felt that more funding would be needed in order to allow young people to remain with their carers**. A professional body noted *"To enable young people to stay on in their foster home after 18 if they wish, will require financial support to the carers to continue. Preparation tasks can be very effectively done by carers but they need to be recognised for their work and skills. There is currently no capacity for local authorities to continue to fund these important placement arrangements."* Comments on this issue appeared in reports from 11 of the events and many attendees at the events for kinship carers gave details of hardship which they and others face in trying to provide for the children and young people in their care as they grow to maturity. This included problems such as the cost of further education *"As grandparents without any financial aid and pensioners we have to consider how we can fund any further education when he comes to that age as we want the best for him."*

4.2.2 Twenty-seven consultees and reports from 4 events commented on how important it is for young people to have good planning, support and guidance as they progress towards the 'outside world'. A carer's group commented *"Children in Kinship care need extra support e.g. from Careers Service, school guidance, to help them at this time of transition into independent living."* There were associated comments on the need to provide carers with training and guidance to provide this.

4.2.3   Many consultees felt that young people should be able to stay with their carer as long as they, and their carer, wished; 23 responses contained comments on this issue as did reports from 5 events for foster or kinship carers and one event for those working in foster care. A kinship carer felt *"if the child is agreeable every effort should be made to keep them where they have always known to be home and should be encouraged into further education."*

4.2.4   Fees and allowances featured strongly in responses with 20 consultees and reports from 3 events pointing out that, at present, carers lose income as the young person moves out of the foster care system.   Seven consultees, mainly local authorities, alongside one event report asked that financial arrangements be simplified and made consistent across all areas. *"A bed should still be kept free where the carer agrees, on some form of retainer (which means it will not be given up for another fostered child). Even if the young person is living away at college or university, they should still be able to come home for week-ends and holidays."* (carer's group). Nine consultees suggested that some form of retainer be paid to carers to give the young person a base to return to if needed and this point was also raised in reports from 6 events. There were comments, from 3 consultees and one event, suggesting that any allowance paid to carers should somehow take into account any income the young person may have.

4.2.5   At present, the decision whether to continue to support young people in care after the age of 18 rests with local authorities.   Nineteen consultees saw the need for changes to regulations to make this a right for every young person. A public body commented *"The 1996 Fostering Regulations will require to be changed to achieve this as Regulation 12.4 specifies the categories of people who may foster. Where other adults live in the household they must be relatives which foster children over 18 years are not."*   There were comments, from 18 consultees, that there needs to be a sea change in opinion; not every 18 year old is ready, or able, for independence. This was an important issue for those attending the events; 12 event reports included similar comments as illustrated by this comment from foster carers *"Recognise that although their chronological age legally may be seen as adulthood some young adults' level of functioning is far less."*

4.2.6   Thirteen consultees wanted to see young people allowed to stay in the foster home until 21, or after education or training, if they wished to do so; as did attendees at 4 events. A young people asked *"Why should young people be forced to leave? It should be between young person, foster carer and social worker."* Nine consultees and comments in 3 event reports pointed out that allowing care to continue would normalise life for young people or that they deserved the same chances and options as birth children. *"Foster carers should be encouraged and enabled to be part of a young person's life as any other family would be. They should be able to continue to take young people on holiday or help them towards a holiday as any parent might, to provide gifts and parties at birthdays and Christmas, and to ensure there is a bed for them at weekends and to provide them with gifts for their new homes as any parent might."* (fostering charity).

4.2.7   Allowing young people to remain in the foster home after their 18th birthday would have an impact on the number of placements available and reports from 3 events along with 10 consultees felt this would need to be addressed. A local authority noted *"Young people should be able to stay with their carers beyond their 18th birthday although the repercussions of this in reducing the overall number of placements for children under 18 years of age would have to be considered."* Twelve consultees pointed out that carers would

need further training and support in dealing with older young people as did attendees at 2 events for those working in foster care. *"There are specific training and support (and finance) issues for foster carers for this older age group."* (local authority).

4.2.8 Sixteen consultees, mainly local authorities and voluntary/ charity organisations, voiced support for supported lodging schemes or other through-care schemes; they felt access to these should be clarified and harmonised across areas, and attendees at 6 of the events agreed. The following comment was made at one of the events for young people *"Through care and after care should be involved and know the person – no-one has been in touch and I am ready to leave care."*

4.3 AMENDMENTS TO REGULATIONS

Question 6. The Scottish Executive has made clear its commitment to amend the Arrangements to Look After Children Regulations 1996 and the Fostering of Children (Scotland) Regulations 1996. We invite comments on the proposed amendments at Annex A.

4.3.1 Consultees commented on the five proposed amendments in Annex A with **27, including 13 local authorities and 4 voluntary/ charity organisations, voicing support for all amendments**. Question 6 was not covered at the events run by the Fostering Network.

Proposal 1: *Following the proposed introduction of Permanence Orders by the Adoption and Children (Scotland) Bill, if a foster carer is given parental rights and responsibilities, even though the carer and the child may be the same, the legal relationship will be different and it would be appropriate to reconsider care plans etc. We propose to amend the Arrangements to Look After Children (Scotland) Regulations 1996 (S.I. 1996/3262) to address the needs of the child and to amend the Fostering of Children (Scotland) Regulations 1996 (S.I. 1996/3263) to address the needs of the carer.*

4.3.2 Twelve consultees supported the first proposal while 2 suggested that this should be extended to include a right to through-care or after-care.

Proposal 2: *The restriction on fostering by adults of the same sex living in the same household will be removed.*

4.3.3 Fourteen consultees agreed with this proposal.

Proposal 3: *The emergency placement provision will be clarified, for example to address the issue that on occasion children are placed with childminders in an emergency, when no foster carers are available. We also propose that it should be self-contained, without cross-reference to other regulations. Provisions on immediate placements should also be self contained. Immediate placements should last for up to four months, subject to an interim assessment and approval, during which time a full assessment and approval should be carried out.*

4.3.4 Eight consultees specifically agreed with this proposal; 3 commented on the need to ensure sufficient time and resources to complete the assessments and 1 asked that there be clear guidance and schedules for the assessments.

Proposal 4: *The regulations will also be amended to ensure that all carers undergo assessment of some form, including those carers who have children placed with them by the Hearings system, no matter what the carers' relationship to the child.*

4.3.5   There were comments in support of proposal 4 from 9 consultees. Two mentioned the need to ensure that the carer assessment does not negatively impact on established relationships.

Proposal 5: *APRG proposed some ways in which fostering panels operate should be changed that would require amendments to the 1996 Fostering Regulations. APRG's recommendations were:*

- *Fostering applicants and existing carers on review should have the right to make oral or written representations to fostering panels, including the right to attend the panel.*
- *Fostering panels should be involved in reviews of foster carers every three to five years.*
- *Fostering applicants should be given a right to receive a copy of their assessment report, excluding confidential third party information.*
- *There should be an independent system for appeals by prospective foster carers and existing foster carers.*

4.3.6   Ten consultees expressed their support for proposal 5 with requests, from 3 consultees, for clarification of the terms 'panel' and 'panel meeting'.

4.3.7   Other comments on the proposals included:

- that there should be additional financial resources made available to fund any additional costs and ensure no financial detriment to carers (6 comments);
- the need for greater consistency in the levels of allowances and fee payments (5 comments);
- that there should be a distinction made between foster carers and kinship carers (4 comments);
- the need for clear guidelines, less bureaucracy and obstacles over respite care and access to respite care (3 comments);
- disagreement that young people should be placed in same-sex households (3 comments);
- that the decision of an appeals panel should be final (one comment).

CHAPTER 5: MEETING THE NEEDS OF FOSTER CARERS

There is a range of different fostering arrangements. Research shows that foster carers want their role and contribution to be valued and acknowledged, to ensure that they are included in all aspects of the fostering process and to ensure that support mechanisms are in place for them. However, remuneration is consistently identified as a barrier to the recruitment and retention of foster carers and there is inconsistency in the rates paid and the approaches to remuneration to foster carers across different local authorities. This chapter examines these issues and looks at ways to overcome barriers to foster care.

The consultation document posed 8 questions around the subject of meeting the needs of foster carers and covers:

- Remuneration for foster carers;
- Registration of foster carers;
- Wider support for foster carers.

5.1 INVOLVEMENT OF FOSTER CARERS IN THE DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW OF A FOSTER CHILD'S CARE PLAN

Question 7. Do you agree that foster carers should be more closely involved in the development and review of a foster child's care plan?

5.1.1 **The data indicates that 72 consultees agree while only 8 disagree**, with 3 giving a qualified answer and 28 not replying. A public body commented *"Foster carers' involvement in care plans should be proportionate to their involvement in the care of the child. It should be a question of meeting the child's needs rather than the carer's. It is certainly important that foster carers feel valued, but there are other ways of doing this through evaluation of the service or support, especially around a particular child. In some cases it will be appropriate for foster carers to have a significant input into the care plan; in others not."*

5.1.2 At one of the events for foster care workers the report indicated 26 supporting the involvement, one against and one undecided. Thirty-seven attendees at an event for foster carers indicated their support with none against.

Chart 5.1
Whether foster carers should be more closely involved in the development and review of a foster child's care plan (n=111)

Chart data:

Category	Yes	No	Depends	Not stated
Ind - foster	13	2	1	
Ind - kinship	3			1
Ind - other	14	3		9
Other Prof/Pub	3	1	1	3
Vol Sect	9			
Carers Groups	6			2
Local Authorities	24	1	1	1
Unknown Type				4

☐ Yes: Total: n=72 (65%)   ◨ No: Total: n=8 (7%)
■ Depends: Total: n=3 (3%)   ⊟ Not stated: Total: n=28 (25%)
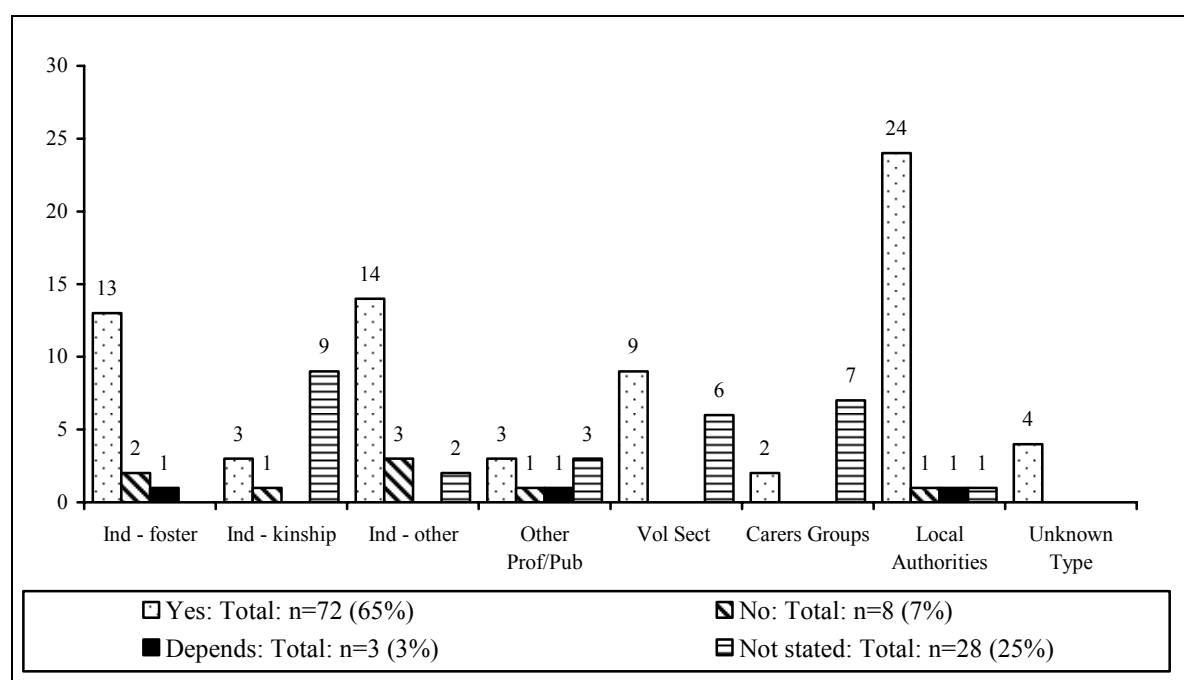
If you've answered yes, what do you think are the best ways of involving them? (Please tell us about any specific examples of good practice you are aware of.)

5.1.3   Again, comments came not only from those replying yes to the initial question, but also those saying no, depends, or from those giving no response   There were general comments from 10 consultees that carers should be involved in plans as they know the children best. This comment was also made in reports from 9 events.

5.1.4   The key comment on involving carers, from 31 consultees and mentioned at 6 events, was **general agreement on the need to involve carers in planning, care plans and reviews**. *"Good practice dictates that carers should be closely involved in the development and progression of a child's care plan, as well as providing good quality day-to-day care for the child."* (local authority). This was the key theme to emerge from voluntary /charity organisations and from local authorities. In addition, 24 consultees and attendees at 6 events stressed **the need to listen to carers and take their views into consideration**. At an event for foster care workers an attendee commented *"Carer's views very important. Should be listened to. Quite often social workers do not include carer's views in reports. Need to be given more respect/credence."* Twenty consultees along with attendees at 4 events felt carers could contribute to Looked After Child (LAC) meetings and that their attendance should be encouraged. This was the main theme emerging in relation to this question from foster carers. A fostering agency felt *"Foster carers should be consulted when developing care plans. Foster carers may appreciate / benefit from training which would enable them to develop confidence to contribute at LAC Reviews, and other relevant meetings."*

5.1.5   The issue of training and support in order to ensure effective involvement was raised by 17 consultees with 5 commenting on the need to develop knowledge and skills. Training

needs were raised by attendees at 3 events attended by foster care workers and one for foster carers. *"For them to be fully involved they might need support to be able to attend meetings and training in understanding group processes and how to present information and opinions effectively in multi-agency settings (verbal and written)."* (fostering agency)

5.1.6   Sixteen consultees suggested that carers should produce written reports, diary entries or other information to contribute to the development of a care plan and this was mentioned at 2 events. A carer's group also suggested *"Perhaps carers should also fill in a report form for the hearing panel as they do for Child Care Reviews, this would avoid any conflict with Social Workers or distress to children/parents at the Hearing."*

5.1.7   There were some comments, from 9 consultees and at one worker event, that carers are already closely involved, with some comments that the process works well at present. A local authority commented that it is their current practice *"to involve foster carers in core group meetings for children in their care and Looked After Reviews that provide opportunities for them to make significant contributions to the development and review of the care plan."*

5.1.8   There was some concern over the extra burden that involvement might place on carers; 2 consultees commented on the increased demands on a carer's time including this comment from a local authority *"Any further involvement can present problems for carers who work, even part time. If expectations of working systemically in partnership create too many demands, given the time it will take, the nettle of fostering being a 'full time job' needs to be grasped."*

5.1.9   Better, more open, fuller communication was highlighted as important by 7 consultees while 5 wanted to see improved respect between carers and social work or other staff, perhaps through raising the status of foster carers.   *"Currently foster carers are often hampered in their ability to make decisions for the children in their care by their lack of authority and status. As a consequence the lives of the children that they foster are disadvantaged by bureaucratic indecision and a lack of clarity about authority and responsibility as well as a lack of resources in terms of either social workers or ancillary professionals."* (fostering charity).   Three commented on the need for more consultation while 2 consultees and attendees at 2 events mentioned the need to ensure the children or young people are involved.

5.1.10 There were a variety of comments from 9 consultees regarding social workers with 4 consultees mentioning that there sometimes exists an element of mistrust between the social worker and foster carer and others commenting on the pressures on social workers in terms of case-loads and the need to find suitable placements quickly. There were similar comments made at 6 of the events. One Local Authority consultee commented *"It is though, sometimes the case that carers do not feel their views are given due regard by social workers."* An event for foster carers produced a comment that *"we have the child 24/7 yet we are often ignored by social workers who see the child for 1 hour a month but often less than this."*

5.2   REMUNERATION FOR FOSTER CARERS

Question 8. Do you agree that there should be a minimum or standard rate of fostering allowances?

5.2.1   **Minimum rate of allowances: 42 consultees answered yes**; 13 answered no and 56 did not give an answer (see chart 5.2). It should be noted that of the 56 not stating an answer on the subject of a minimum rate of allowance, 27 did indicate support for a standard rate. It is not possible to ascertain whether this means that these consultees do not want to see a minimum rate or whether they would merely prefer a standard rate and so these have remained unclassified. Twenty-eight consultees did not state an answer on either a minimum or standard rate.

> *"Article 27 of the UNCRC recognises 'the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development.' The primary responsibility lies with parents or others responsible for the child's care; but Government must assist where necessary. It is important to recognise that the payment of allowances is money for the children, not for the benefit of the carer. Many carers have to give up jobs to care for the children and the lack of financial provision can result in carers taking on debt to buy necessities. There should be a minimum rate for allowances, but there must also be a clear and consistent system of assessment of the needs of the carers and the child to ensure that an adequate level of funding is provided."*
>
> (public body)

Chart 5.2
Whether there should be a minimum rate of allowances (n=111)

Yes: Total: n=42 (38%)   No: Total: n=13 (12%)   Not stated: Total: n=56 (50%)
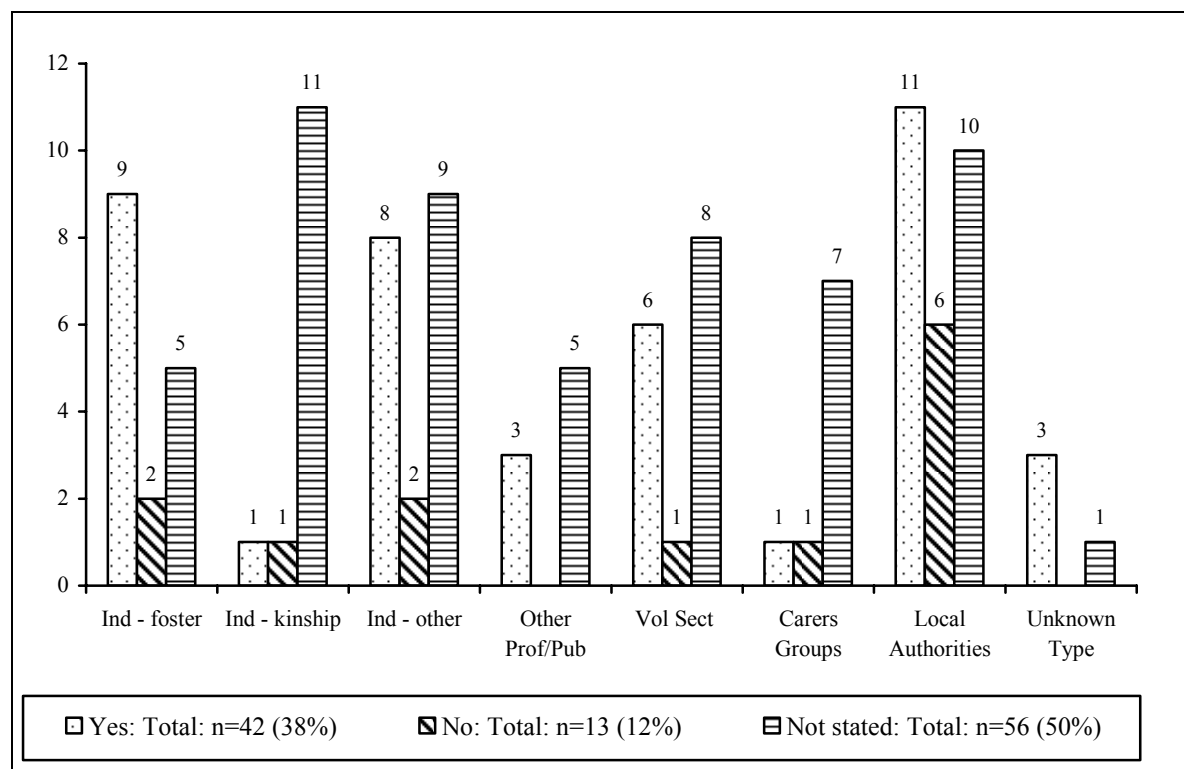
5.2.2   Those events reporting on this part of question 8 supported a standard, rather than minimum, allowance.   At a foster carer event 22 attendees wanted to see a minimum allowance while 27 wanted a standard one; there were 4 votes against a minimum and 3 against a standard. At an event for foster care workers 5 said yes and 6 said no to a minimum allowance but there was support from 23 for a standard allowance with only 2 against. An unquantified report from another workers' event indicated support for a standard, rather than minimum allowance.

5.2.3   **Standard rate of allowances**: amongst consultees **this again received more support than the minimum**; 59 consultees answered yes; 11 said no and 41 did not give a direct answer of either yes or no. A local authority consulted workers in its family placement team *"All workers agreed that there should be a standard rate of allowances. Some felt that it would have to be at Fostering Network's rates as some fostering agencies already pay at these rates."* Thirteen of the 41 consultees not giving a direct answer did voice support for a minimum rate.

Chart 5.3
Whether there should be a standard rate of allowances (n=111)

	Yes	No	Not stated
Ind - foster	8	4	4
Ind - kinship	4		9
Ind - other	15	1	3
Other Prof/Pub	2	1	5
Vol Sect	5	2	8
Carers Groups		2	7
Local Authorities	20	3	4
Unknown Type	3		1

☐ Yes: Total: n=59 (54%)   ◩ No: Total: n=11 (10%)   ⊟ Not stated: Total: n=41 (37%)
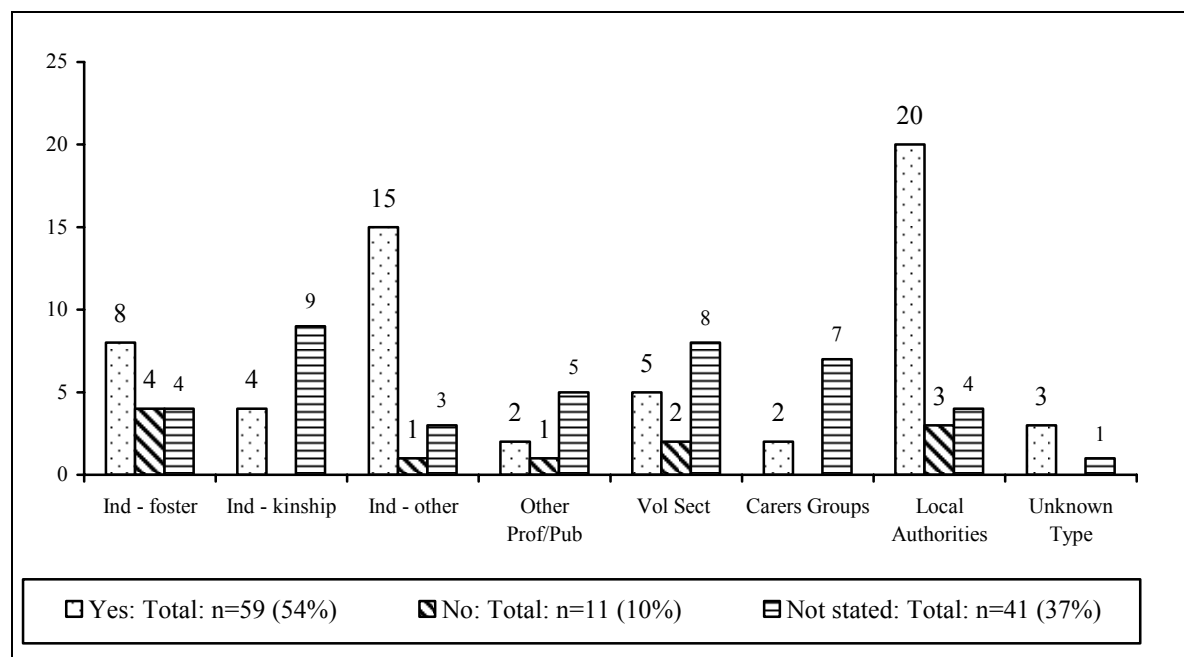
5.2.4   Twenty-seven consultees, especially local authorities, and attendees at one event felt that **rates should be set at the level worked out by the Fostering Network or BAAF as the real cost of fostering**; while 25 wanted to see rates set at the level recommended by the Fostering Network or National Foster Care Network. Reports from 5 events also included this comment and this was the key comment from foster carers in relation to question 8. One local authority *"supports the view that there should be a standard rate of allowances rather than a minimum, therefore promoting equality not only between Local Authorities but also with Independent Fostering Agencies. This should be a realistic payment per child which is calculated according to the costs of raising a child. The BAAF document which deals with the true cost of fostering provides some useful guidance."*

5.2.5   Views on how rates should be decided included:

- enhanced rates for caring for the most demanding or challenging cases (12 comments and mentioned in 4 event reports);
- rates should be related to the age of the child (11 comments and 5 events);
- index linked / linked to the cost of living (8 comments and 2 events);
- equivalent or related to state benefits (4 comments);
- should be income related (2 comments and mentioned in one event report);
- that the allowance should be sufficient for the carer to live on (one consultee and one foster carer event commented on this).

5.2.6   There were suggestions as to specific needs that should be funded and these included 17 comments on the need for allowances to cover expenses such as hobbies, school outings and activities with an individual proposing *"Allowance might include all routine costs to carers e.g. food / energy bills / clothing / extra-curricular activities / books but also an element for holiday costs, birthday celebrations etc for replacement of equipment e.g. washing machine."* This was mentioned as important by attendees at 5 foster carer events. Eight consultees wanted to see allowances to cover equipment replacement or household wear and tear as did attendees at 3 events for foster carers. *"Some children may compensate for previous neglect and poor diets by eating large quantities of food or being 'faddy'. These difficulties lead to additional expenditure on many items including laundry, food, household decoration and the frequent replacement of toys, clothes and other equipment."* (fostering charity).

5.2.7   Nineteen consultees raised the issue of the problems of funding any increases, with the need for central funding highlighted by both the consultees and 3 reports from workers events. This included a local authority who suggested *"Allowances should be based on a minimum recommendation by BAAF and the National Foster Care Network with this funding supplied centrally through the Scottish Executive. This will result in the need for considerably more investment in children and young people in care."*

5.2.8   Consistent levels of allowances across the country were important to 15 consultees and by attendees at 9 events, although 2 consultees felt that this would be difficult to implement.   An individual consultee felt *"A standard allowance has the appeal and appearance of fairness but the Devil is in the Detail.   A single standard remuneration package paid by all fostering agencies (local authority, private, and voluntary) would have much to commend it and would greatly simplify recruitment strategies across the board."*

5.2.9   Linking allowances, on a case by case basis, to the level of ability or experience of the carer or the amount of work needed in providing care was suggested by 7 consultees and by attendees at an event for foster carers who said *"the experiences shown by carers through training i.e. skills, training towards certificates and modules."*

Question 9. Do you think that there should be a minimum or standard rate of fostering fees?

5.2.10   **Minimum rate for fees**: **36 consultees answered yes**; 13 answered no and 62 did not provide a definitive response. It should be noted that of the 62 not stating an answer on the subject of a minimum rate of fees, 20 did indicate support for a standard rate. It is not possible to ascertain whether this means that these consultees do not want to see a minimum rate or whether they would merely prefer a standard rate and so these have remained unclassified. Forty-one consultees did not state an answer on either a minimum or standard

rate. One consultee indicated they did not want to see a standard rate of fees but did not give an answer on a minimum rate.

> *"A minimum rate should be calculated at the very least by using the Fostering Networks recommended rates, with an automatic inflationary rise build in annually."*
>
> (foster carer)

Chart 5.4
Whether there should be a minimum rate for fees (n=111)
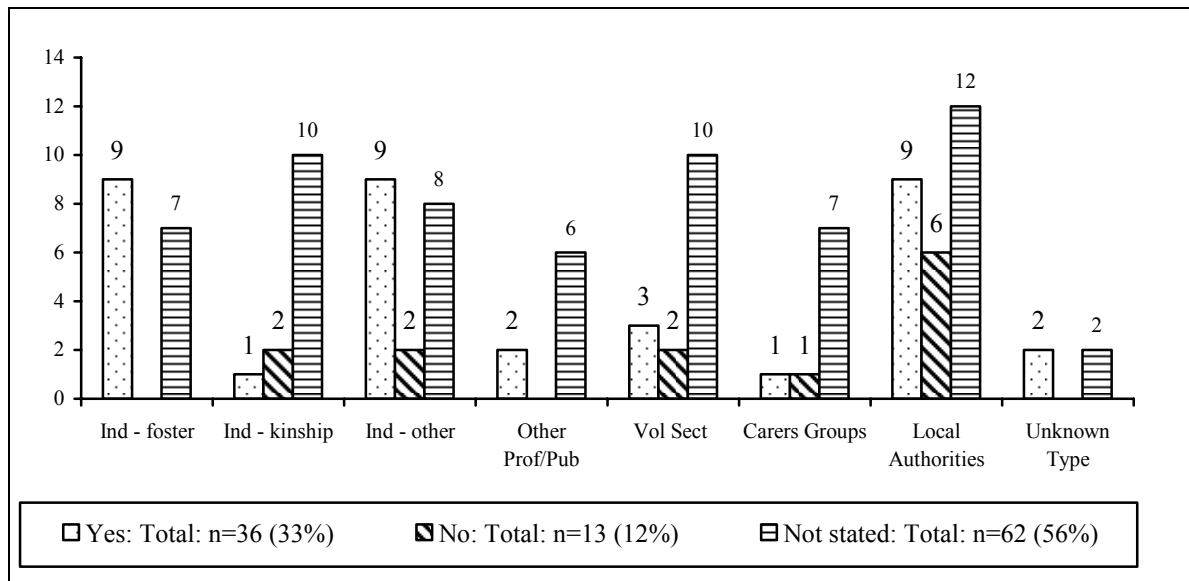
5.2.11 At the events workers favoured a standard fee with 13 for and 2 against; there were 7 for a minimum fee and 2 against. An unquantified report from another workers event indicated support for a standard, rather than minimum fee. The foster carer event which returned a quantified answer also indicated more support for a standard fee; 23 supported a standard with 20 wanting to see a minimum fee. Four attendees were against a minimum with 3 against a standard fee.

5.2.12 **Standard rate for fees**: **41 consultees answered yes**; 19 answered no and 51 did not give an answer. Nine of the 51 consultees not giving a direct answer did voice support for a minimum rate.

> *"It was felt to be helpful to also standardise fees nationally but that within this a range of fee payments was helpful which could reflect the skills and experience of the carer, and also a higher reward for more challenging placements."*
>
> (local authority)

5.2.13 All 6 events for foster carers returned comments in support of fees for carers as did the 4 worker events. The kinship carer events did not cover the question of allowances or fees and the combined kinship and foster carer event did not state a preference in relation to fees.

Chart 5.5
Whether there should be a standard rate for fees (n=111)
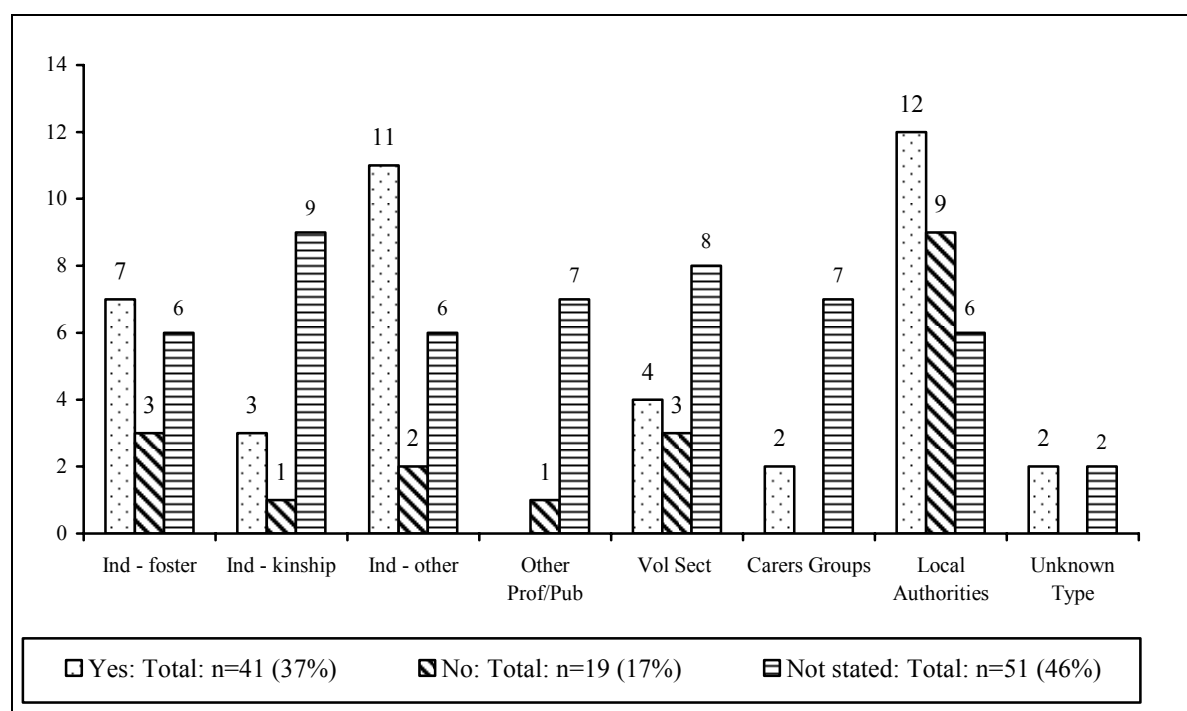
If you've answered yes, please give your suggestions on how this should be calculated.

5.2.14 Once again, comments came not only from those replying yes to the initial question, but also those saying no or giving no response. Responses were very similar to those given at question 8.

5.2.15 **While a small number of consultees, at the last question, suggested linking allowances to the level of ability or experience of the carer, a higher number, 20 consultees, felt this was also appropriate for fees**. This was the most common suggestion from local authorities. This was also identified by attendees at 5 events. Twelve consultees, the largest number of whom were foster carers, and a report from a foster carer event also mentioned that fees should be linked to the work expected of the carer, while 6 consultees and reports from 3 events suggested it should vary according to the needs of the child.

> *"Senior foster carers will usually be experienced foster carers who have a track record of providing high quality care to a wide range of children or children with high levels of need. They will also be involved in training and supporting other foster carers, they may be involved in recruitment activities or in other fostering work. The level of fees should reflect the level of experience, and level of other work required or expected and might equate to a senior residential worker."*
>
> (fostering charity)

5.2.16 Sixteen consultees, along with attendees at 6 foster carer events and 3 worker events, felt that fees should be structured to take account of working conditions including pension, employment status, sickness and people leaving paid employment. There were comments, at 5 events, on the need for foster care to be treated as a profession with associated benefits.

"Need to have in place pension provision, sick entitlement, fee payable in between placement - 'retainer', holidays – leave/pay." (foster carer)

5.2.17 *"Authorities should be able to set fees according to the demands and expectations they will have of carers and the needs of the looked after children in their area."* There were 7 comments from consultees who felt that levels should be determined locally; reports from 2 events for foster carers also included this point. However, consistency across all areas was again mentioned; by 12 consultees and from 5 events. One local authority pointed out problems in standardising fees *"This is a more difficult issue- there is a greater range of payments for fees within authorities, and across them. To standardise, which would have to be at the higher rate of payment to avoid reductions in payments to some carers, would mean a considerable investment, and similarly need central funding."*

5.2.18 Funding issues were raised by 8 consultees, mainly local authorities.

5.2.19 Once again, the recommendations on fees by the Fostering Network or National Foster Care Network were supported; 8 consultees thought these recommendations were appropriate as did attendees at an event for foster care workers. Six consultees and a foster carer event report indicated a desire to see fees set at the level worked out by the Fostering Network or BAAF as the real cost of fostering and 6 consultees and a report from an event for foster care workers wanted to see a change to the tax and benefits system which some perceive to be unfair. A voluntary/ charity organisation stated *"Current system for non foster families should apply i.e. family tax credit. Child tax credit should apply with an additional uplift of no less than £25.00 per week. It has to be recognised that foster carers apply to become foster carers not for profit, but because they want to care."*

5.2.20 Some consultees mentioned that fees should not stop after the 2nd child, with 6 consultees and 2 event reports proposing that the fee should be based on the number of children being cared for.

5.2.21 Other comments from small numbers of consultees included:

- monies to cover equipment replacement or household wear and tear (3 comments);
- that fees should be related to the age of the child or young person (3 comments);
- that the fee should take account of any extra expenses which may be incurred (2 comments);
- regular reviews increasing fees in line with inflation or other form of indexing (2 comments and one event);
- there should be an element of reimbursement to cover equipment replacement (3 comments).

Question 10. Do you think that financial support should include an element for replacing or purchasing one-off items, such as a washing machine or a car?

5.2.22 **Sixty-one consultees answered yes**; 15 answered no, 5 gave a qualified response and 30 did not give an answer.

5.2.23 Ten attendees at an event for workers said yes while 2 said no. One event for foster care workers indicated that this should be available for capital items. There was support from 25 foster carers at an event with only 4 against.

Chart 5.6
Whether financial support should include an element for replacing or purchasing one-off items (n=111)
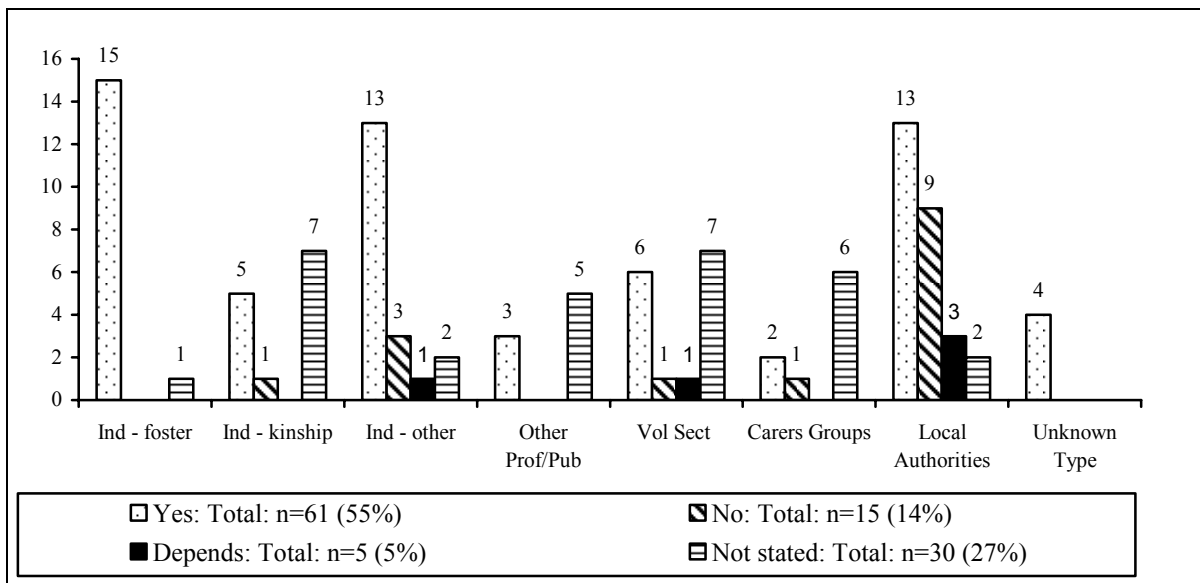
Please give reasons for your answer.

5.2.24 Twenty-six consultees made **general comments in support of allowances or fees containing an element for replacing or purchasing one-off items**, as did attendees at 5 events. This was the main theme emerging from local authority responses to question 10. There were 8 comments, half from foster carers, on the fact that washing machines do suffer from extra wear and tear and may need to be replaced regularly; 3 event reports contained similar comments. Six consultees, 4 of whom were foster carers, made comments on the wear and tear on cars due to increased usage and this was also mentioned at an event for foster carers.

5.2.25 In addition 13 consultees and reports from 5 events mentioned that other general household appliances also suffer and may need to be repaired or replaced. Four consultees wanted to see some form of budget for replacing items. However, 3 local authorities felt that it would be difficult to ensure consistency or even handedness and 4 thought payment systems could be open to abuse or exploitation. Only 2 consultees felt that the carers should bear the cost of repair and replacement, and this was also mentioned at one event.

> *"As a carer, this is one of the biggest issues which occurs again and again over the years. The wear and tear on just about all aspects of household appliances, sofas and dining furniture, as well as for many carers the requirement to purchase a second or bigger car is one which is vastly underestimated. Even with fairly generous allowances there is no way that this accommodates all of the above. Since becoming a carer we have had 3 new 3 piece suites and required 2 washing machines replaced - as well as buying a people carrier. This really needs considered. What about looking at things creatively such as allowing carers access to the local authorities car lease scheme, with changes to fuel tax regulations to make them exempt from*

those types of fuel charges? Or doing a deal on a national level with a car sales company? Big and creative thinking required for this one!"

(foster carer)

5.2.26 Commenting on how to assess the extra monies needed, 22 consultees suggested that this would depend on the demands of each particular placement and that finance should be tailored to suit each case; attendees at 3 events agreed. Ten consultees and attendees at 3 foster carer events pointed out that in some cases the problems of a child or young person can lead to destructive behaviour or that even instances of bed wetting can lead to extra wear and tear on items in the home. There were individual reports, from 7 consultees and a mention at one event, of the extra expense they had incurred in repairing or replacing items. The following quote comes from a charity for children in care *"Financial support should be available to enable a foster home to be 'established' whether this means purchase of washing machines, beds, safety equipment etc. If the fostering allowance is then expected to cover the repair and replacement of such items, it should be clearly specified and reflected in the allowance paid. There should be due recognition that the wear and tear on household furniture and equipment is often greater than normal in a foster home due to a) the number of children and b) their behaviour, e.g. bedwetting, hyperactivity."*

5.2.27 Twelve consultees, mainly voluntary /charity organisations and local authorities, supported a system of discretionary payments; as did reports from 2 events; while 8 consultees felt there should be a payment in the early years of any placement. In a response from a local authority, it was reported that their family placement team workers *"did not support this proposal, feeling standard allowances and fees would address this, although there may be exceptional circumstances when a case could be made for supporting such purchases e.g. in the case of particularly destructive children needing care or when the specific needs of a disabled child that might require some additional supports."*

5.2.28 The situation of carers faced with adapting or extending their homes, or purchasing adapted vehicles, to cope with placements was seen, by 6 consultees (mainly local authorities and fostering agencies), and attendees at 4 events as another area in which extra finance should be provided. A fostering charity noted *"However, the allowance is not designed to, and therefore cannot cover the expenditure on large items such as larger cars, more expensive holidays, home extensions or other one off purchases. These large 'items' should be met by grants available from the local authority."*

5.2.29 Some (6) consultees suggested alternatives in the shape of car share schemes or low interest rates for car purchase. One local authority has *"a discretionary grant scheme to help carers to buy vehicles to assist in the fostering role."* Four consultees commented on the expense incurred by increased running costs. Reports from 4 events also mentioned the need for support to offset increased transport costs. This included 3 mentions of having to purchase car seats and one of the need for a larger vehicle to accommodate car seats.

5.2.30 As an alternative to direct funding, 3 individuals suggested some form of low or interest free loan scheme for carers and this included a foster carer who reported *"Interest free or very low interest loans available from a "central pot" which would be repayable. Foster Carers find it very difficult to obtain credit and this would help us be able to have funding for major purchases."* Two consultees and attendees at an event for foster carers wanted to see some form of insurance made available to carers. Problems of household insurance claims were mentioned by 2 consultees and at 3 events. Events for foster carers

raised the following issues *"Insurance not covering malicious damage"*, *"shouldn't have to claim foster carer's insurance e.g. household, car"* and *"claiming insurance affects no-claims" – should be covered by Council policy"*.

5.3   REGISTRATION OF FOSTER CARERS

Question 11. Do you think that registration of foster carers would enable them to improve their foster care service?

5.3.1   As shown in chart 5.7, **37 consultees answered yes**; 26 answered no, 8 qualified their answer and 40 did not give a definitive response. While there were more consultees in total voicing agreement at this question, **more local authorities disagreed than agreed**.

Chart 5.7
Whether the registration of foster carers would enable them to improve their foster care service (n=111)

| Yes: Total: n=37 (34%) | No: Total: n=26 (24%) |
| Depends: Total: n=8 (7%) | Not stated: Total: n=40 (36%) |
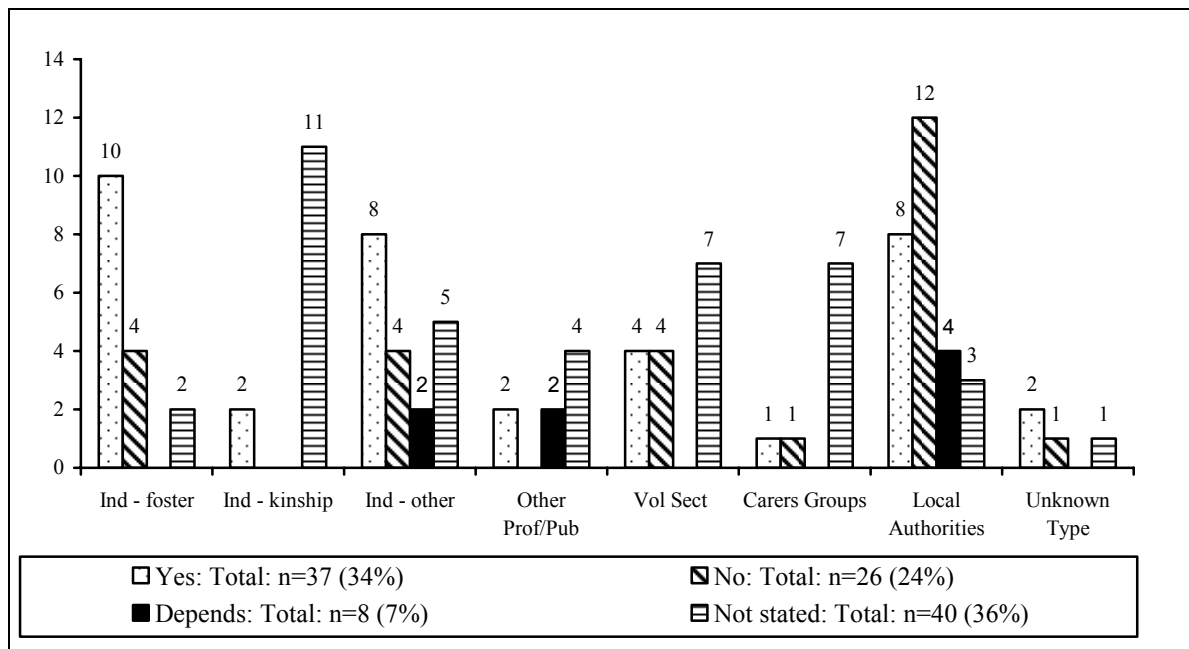
5.3.2   The joint event for kinship and foster carers reported a consensus that foster carers should be registered. At an event for **workers in foster care 14 said yes** while one said no and at an **event for foster carers 36 attendees said yes**, only one said no while 2 were undecided.

If you've answered yes, please tell us what improvements could be achieved and what form the registration should take.

5.3.3   The main comment to emerge in relation to registration, from 26 consultees, including 14 local authorities, was that **training, development and assessment were the best ways to improve the quality of foster care**. This included one local authority commenting that registration *"would also raise expectations of accountability and could tie in with standards and requirements, such as the need to complete a portfolio of training and competencies"*.

Reports from 8 events also included similar comments as shown in the following quote from an attendee at an event for foster carers *"All foster carers should be registered when the Form F is completed – then additional skills and training should be graded,"* they continued *"This will encourage carers to train and do qualifications especially if there are financial carrots"*.

5.3.4   Looking at the wider implications of registration, 18 consultees and attendees at 6 events supported a move to increased professionalisation of the foster care service; registration was seen as a step towards this; and some of these comments included support for an independent body to oversee foster carers. At an event for foster care workers an attendee commented *"It will make it more professional and accountable and allow it to become a career path."* Two consultees, both local authorities, however felt that not everyone would be in favour of increased professionalisation and that carers should not be required to gain qualifications.

5.3.5   The main benefit of registration identified was that of portability. Twelve consultees, including 4 foster carers and 4 other individuals, welcomed the greater flexibility which registration would provide carers wishing to move to a different area, and some commented that this may lead to greater retention of carers; this was mainly mentioned by carers but, unlike other themes at this question, no local authorities made comments on this subject. A fostering agency commented *"A national register would not necessarily improve the service but may allow greater movement of carers from agency-to-agency, provided agencies retain the right to assess and approve their carers."* There were also comments at 6 events on the potential benefits, and safeguards, of portability. Another benefit identified, by 5 consultees, was that registration would enhance the safety of children or young people in care and this was illustrated by the following quotation from an event for foster carers *"Inspections ensure children aren't placed in unsuitable and detrimental environments, particularly if unable to speak for themselves and raise concerns."*

5.3.6   Eleven consultees commented that registration already takes place in some form and attendees at 6 events also mentioned existing registration practices. Nine local authority consultees described the current approval and review system as sufficient. Concern was raised, by 3 local authority consultees, over the possibility of duplication of reviews or paperwork should registration be introduced.

> *"Carers are already registered with local authorities and there would need to be a clear understanding of what the differences and the benefits of SSSC registration would be. It may be that some elements of the SSSC registration could be included in the local authority process, rather than the duplication and additional costs of maintaining two similar registrations."*
>
> (local authority)

5.3.7   Some (5) consultees felt that registration may act as a barrier to recruitment and retention as did attendees at an event for foster carers. A local authority felt that *"The Individual Registration of Foster carers would have a considerable negative impact on the recruitment and registrations of Foster Carers"*. There were also comments that a requirement to undertake training or to pay for registration may put off potential carers. Eight consultees sought assurances that registration would not cause extra bureaucracy for carers as did attendees at an event for foster care workers *"I feel registration of social*

workers is a waste of time and registration of carers would be worse, another expensive layer of bureaucracy."

5.3.8   Funding featured in responses from 5 consultees with concerns over the cost of the scheme, the costs to carers should they be expected to pay fees or the need to enhance pay for registered carers.   A public body noted *"However, the cost of doing so may outweigh the benefits of registering, and thereafter inspecting each carer would be very costly. The current cost of registering a child minder is £985 and for subsequent regulation the cost is £659 a year. It is likely that it would be more expensive to regulate foster carers."*

> *"This should be at nil cost to the carer. The reason for the nil cost should be to encourage people to remain on the Register. At the moment there are too many registration bodies asking for large sums for professionals to stay on registers e.g. nurses and teachers and since foster care is not a recognised profession, I do not think it is appropriate that they pay to be registered."*
>
> (foster carer)

5.3.9   There was some confusion over who would be providing registration; 6 consultees and one event report commented that the consultation document was not clear on this point. There were various suggestions as to who could best provide registration:

- agencies (5 comments and one event);
- local authorities (4 comments and one event);
- the Care Commission (3 comments);
- that registration would provide reassurance for parents (2 comments).

5.3.10 Five local authorities felt it best to register agencies rather than individual carers while 2 wanted to see an assessment of the benefits of the recently introduced system of regulation before deciding.

> *"The rigour of the fostering panel system should remain with the recommendation to the agency decision maker to approve or not – would this then be extended to determine whether carers should be registered or not? This would keep decision-making close to the carer and at agency level however, registration would allow carer to be recognised nationally."*
>
> (fostering agency)

5.3.11   Two consultees and attendees at 2 events felt that a registration process similar to that for child minders might be suitable.

5.4   WIDER SUPPORT FOR FOSTER CARERS

Question 12. Regarding the introduction of a national protocol for dealing with and responding to allegations, please tell us about any specific proposals for what this should include.

5.4.1   There were general supporting comments from 29 consultees and from 5 events, some of whom also reported that they already have a system in place for responding to allegations. Twenty-seven consultees and attendees at 5 events stressed **the need for independent**

support and advice, legal assistance or helplines. This was the main comment from foster carers in relation to question 12. A local authority felt *"The introduction of a national protocol for dealing with and responding to allegations would be welcome, although there also requires to be a mechanism whereby foster carers can access an independent means of support and representation throughout an investigation."*

5.4.2 **Shorter investigation periods and a rapid response** were stressed by 20 consultees; this was also stressed by many attendees at 8 of the events for workers and foster carers; while 4 consultees felt that the social work service and/or police should implement a first step response to allegations prior to a full investigation. A foster carer stressed *"This is so important. There must be a national protocol. At present it is ridiculous that you may have an allegation made against you and that it can take months before it is resolved."* while a local authority noted the need for *"Speedier resolutions from the legal processes that do not leave careers in limbo for long periods of time."*

5.4.3 The need for clear guidelines was highlighted as important by 12 consultees, of which 10 were Local Authorities, and at 2 events. This was seen as particularly important in cases involving the police force. A local authority felt *"A definition of 'allegation' would be helpful. Timescales and good practice guidance would be helpful. There needs to be greater clarity over what information (and the status of it) following an investigation is then held on Disclosure (Scotland) forms on carers."*

5.4.4 Maintaining the safety of the child or young person was of paramount importance. Twelve consultees, including 6 local authorities, thought that there should be some form of independent support for children and young people; this should include the carer's own children and these comments were echoed at 4 events. Comments from 4 events questioned whether or not it was best to remove all the children in a household immediately. *"An allegation shouldn't affect all the children in the foster household, they should only remove the child involved, as this can be detrimental to the other children"* (foster carer).

5.4.5 Thirteen consultees felt that remuneration should continue until allegation outcomes are finalised; as did attendees at 3 events for foster carers and one for workers. An individual was *"dismayed at the thought of a carer suffering financially whilst an allegation is investigated. I can't think of any Government organisation where this is the case. A doctor or police officer under investigation is generally suspended on full pay pending completion of the investigation. Why should a foster carer be penalised when they may be innocent of the allegation?"* Four consultees felt that carers should not be de-registered if an offence has not been proven or that they should be allowed to continue to offer support wherever possible. This view was supported by attendees at 4 foster carer events.

5.4.6 Risk assessments should be employed in cases of possible spurious allegations. A fostering agency suggested *"that a risk assessment process for the actual investigation should be considered for spurious allegations not deemed if proven to be of significant harm. Removing a child is not always necessary if the level of allegation would not warrant it. The issue is about expediency of process to minimise risk."* Five other consultees made similar suggestions as did a report from a foster carer event; this included the need for these to be conducted by independent external agencies.

5.4.7 Link workers should be available and kept abreast of any developments; 8 consultees felt they should be able to provide up-to-date information to carers as did attendees at 4 events.

5.4.8 *"With 1 in 3 likely to be subjected to some kind of allegation, the* consultee *would like it recognised that foster carers are "At Risk" as no other group are, due to being alone with children for long periods of time, and therefore are a "Vulnerable Group" in this instance and should be allowed an "Independent Silent Witness", at Police Interview, whether or not they have been charged. This could come from an already established source, such as Fostering Network or a local Carers Association."* (carer's group). Three consultees commented that foster carers should be considered vulnerable to allegations and treated with respect while one consultee and attendees at an event for foster carers wanted to see a right of appeal for carers. At 5 events, attendees stressed the need to recognise the emotional impact on the carer and other members of the household *"the procedures do not address the emotional impact on carers prior to investigation being resolved."* (foster care worker)

5.4.9 The need to involve all interested parties in a joined up approach was seen by attendees at one event and by 7 consultees as important in minimising discrepancies and regional variations. Four consultees stressed that only a multi-agency approach would work and there were comments at 3 events and from 2 consultees that the protocol would need to be signed up to by all parties. There were 2 mentions; in one response and from one event; that protocols are useful particularly when different local authorities are working together.

> *"However, this will only work if this is multi-agency and signed up to by all parties. There needs to be clear guidelines on the time limits for investigations; communication; support and advice for carer. Fostering Network has done a lot of useful work on this and their guidelines are comprehensive. We have had highly complex situations at our Family Placement Service following an allegation where 3 different local authorities were involved, alongside ourselves, all with different procedures. A national protocol would be invaluable in these situations."*
>
> (charity)

5.4.10 Four consultees mentioned the issue of training to accompany any protocol including one local authority who commented that their recently introduced local protocol *"has been well received - this has been launched in conjunction with a training initiative. This focuses on how to deal with allegations and includes staff, carers and carer panel members."*

Question 13. How should such protocols balance the rights of children and young people to have their allegations properly investigated with the needs of carers for timely and appropriate support and advice? What potential difficulties would there be in developing and implementing such a protocol?

5.4.11 **The main issue to emerge at question 13 involved timescales** with a carer's group suggesting *"There should be timescale rules, as much for the child's right to a speedy decision to the investigation, as the carer's."* Responses from 4 events and from 19 consultees indicated that there should be set timescales for investigations and stressed that a quick response was needed in these cases. This was the main comment from local authorities and voluntary /charity organisations in relation to question 13. There were some comments that current investigations can take a long time. Five consultees commented on the problem

of delays in cases involving the police or the fiscal and attendees at 2 of the events for foster care workers also voiced concern over delays caused by the legal system.

> *"Once children are removed from foster placements during the allegation process, it becomes a relatively low priority task for police and procurator fiscal in terms of continuing the investigation towards its final outcome. This means that foster carers and children and young people who have made allegations, remain in some form of limbo until these agencies have come to a point to where they make a decision. This can take months and on occasions, years"*
>
> (fostering charity)

5.4.12 Thirteen consultees and attendees at 2 events stressed *"Any protocol must have as a guiding principle the welfare of the child."* (charity) and 4 consultees and a report from a foster care worker event asked that a protocol ensures that the child is kept up-to-date with developments and supported throughout the process.

5.4.13 Support for carers was seen, at 4 events and by 14 consultees, as an important part of any protocol; 4 consultees and attendees at a foster carer event wanted to see carers informed of the nature of the allegations and the progress of the investigation. *"When an allegation is made it is important that foster carers have appropriate information about the nature of any allegations and the continued support of their agency."* (local authority). Five consultees mentioned the need for support for both parties as did reports from 3 events. Foster care workers at an event, along with 2 consultees, felt that carers should be deemed innocent until the case was proven.

5.4.14 Independent investigation, by skilled practitioners, was important to 8 consultees and was mentioned in 3 event reports and 6 consultees commented that each case is different and, as a charity commented *"It should always be the case, however, that the welfare of the child is paramount and credence given to their concerns and a proportionate investigation undertaken."*

5.4.15 A clear knowledge of the child's history, including any previous allegations or whether the allegations may be the result of something else in the child's life was seen, by 5 consultees, as useful information which should be considered by the investigating team. A foster carer felt *"The history of the child should be taken into account. For example does the child have a history of making false allegations?"* Four of the events for foster carers and 2 for foster care workers also mentioned the need to place allegations within the context of a child's history.

5.4.16 A multi-agency approach to investigation was supported by 8 consultees, including a local authority who commented *"The only way that this could be fully effective is by multi-agency agreement and effective joint working in line with agreed timescales."* This was also mentioned by foster carers at one event.

5.4.17 Both carers and the child or young person have rights and responsibilities; 14 consultees and attendees at an event for foster carers wanted to ensure that both parties were aware of these and that any investigation balanced these rights. In addition, reports from 3 events and a comment from one consultee stressed the need to ensure that the process is clear to all involved. A foster carer at an event commented *"Process – good communication –*

awareness of this by Family Placement Worker /Social Worker, foster carers and others involved in allegation."

5.4.18 Comments at one event stressed that it is *"vital to keep accurate and full records"* while at another foster carers felt *"diaries of the child's behaviour should be kept for future reference, although there are data protection issues regarding this."*

Question 14. What other information and support do you think would be helpful to carers in carrying out their job?

5.4.19 Across all those responding, levels of support were similar for each potential source of information and support. Table 5.1 shows the range of responses given across sub-groups responding to this consultation. In almost all instances, support for one potential source meant support for all from each consultee. In responding to this series of question, consultees either used the tick boxes provided to indicate support, or made supporting comments. It is not possible to ascertain whether those who did not detail their support for the option did so deliberately as they were against it or merely omitted to answer. Nevertheless **the majority of consultees did support each of the options given.**

- A support network for children of foster carers (74 consultees ticked this option or made positive comments);
- A support network for foster carers (73 consultees ticked this option or made positive comments);
- A key worker for foster carers (72 consultees ticked this option or made positive comments);
- A regular training programme (76 consultees ticked this option or made positive comments);
- A helpline to contact when problems arise, such as an allegation (70 consultees ticked this option or made positive comments).

Table 5.1
Information and support that would be helpful to carers in carrying out their job

	Total	Indiv (foster carers)	Indiv (kship Carers)	Indiv (other)	Prof Orgs & Pub Bods	Vol Sec	Carer's groups	LAs	Unkn'n
A support network for children of foster carers	74	14	2	11	4	11	4	24	4
A support network for foster carers	73	14	1	12	4	11	4	23	4
A key worker for foster carers	72	14	1	12	4	10	4	23	4
A regular training programme	76	14	2	12	4	11	4	26	3
A helpline to contact when problems arise	70	13	3	13	3	10	4	22	2

5.4.20 Reports from four of the foster carer events as well as from the kinship and foster carer event indicated support for the 5 options in the consultation document. One further

report, from a foster carer event, quantified support. Thirty-six attendees voiced support for a support network for foster carers while 35 attendees indicated support for the other 4 options. The events for kinship carers and for foster care workers did not cover this question.

Anything else (please specify below)

5.4.21 The comment found most frequently in response to question 14 was that **some or all of the types of support mentioned already exist**; 17 consultees, including 10 local authorities, voiced this opinion and a foster carer said *"Many of these things exist at a local level already."*

5.4.22 **Out of hours support was the most frequently requested type of support**, especially from foster carers, with 16 consultees and reports from 3 events for foster carers stressing the need for 24 hour support for carers. A foster carer would like to see *"More people manning out of hours, so you can get help through the night in an emergency."* Respite leave was mentioned by 9 consultees and attendees at one foster carer event. Buddy systems were noted as being effective in supporting new carers and 7 consultees and, again, attendees at one foster carer event identified these as necessary.

5.4.23 Problems of funding support, especially by smaller local authorities, were identified by 9 consultees with a professional body commenting *"Local authorities need to be resourced appropriately to allow for these improvements to develop."*

5.4.24 Support from the Fostering Network was important; some of the 10 responses commenting on this included mentions of Foster Talk. One fostering agency *"pays a subscription for all carers to Foster Talk which is a carer benefit membership package which provides access to a helpline for advice when problems arise, such as an allegation."*

5.4.25 Six consultees along with reports from 2 foster carer events commented on the importance of access to specialist services; at one event legal support was mentioned.

5.4.26 There were other suggestions from smaller numbers of consultees and these included:

- local helplines and support groups (4 comments);
- clarification of complaint and appeals procedures or support during allegations (4 comments);
- online training and support (3 comments);
- focus groups and meetings with professionals (3 comments);
- clear emergency arrangements (3 comments);
- the need to ensure all support is available to kinship carers (3 comments);
- support for placement breakdown (2 comments);
- activities and support for family members, especially the foster carer's own children (2 comments and mentioned at 2 events);
- family group conferences (2 comments);
- employment related entitlements (mentioned at 2 events).

CHAPTER 6: FAMILY AND FRIEND CARERS – "KINSHIP CARERS"

Kinship care is the term used to describe circumstances where the main full-time care arrangement is provided by a member of the child's extended family or a family friend. There are many similarities in the issues facing foster carers and kinship carers, although there are also some specific differences such as assessment and financial allowances. As with foster carers, the Executive is keen for the role and contribution of kinship carers to be valued and acknowledged, to ensure that support mechanisms are in place and to ensure there are no unnecessary barriers to prevent kinship care when this is the first choice for placement.

6.1   SUPPORT FOR KINSHIP CARERS

6.1.1   The consultation posed 2 questions on this subject. Only the events for kinship carers covered these questions.

Question 15. Do you consider that further changes to the law are required to support the position of kinship carers (for example, in relation to assessment and payments)?

Chart 6.1
Whether further changes to the law are required to support the position of kinship carers (n=111)
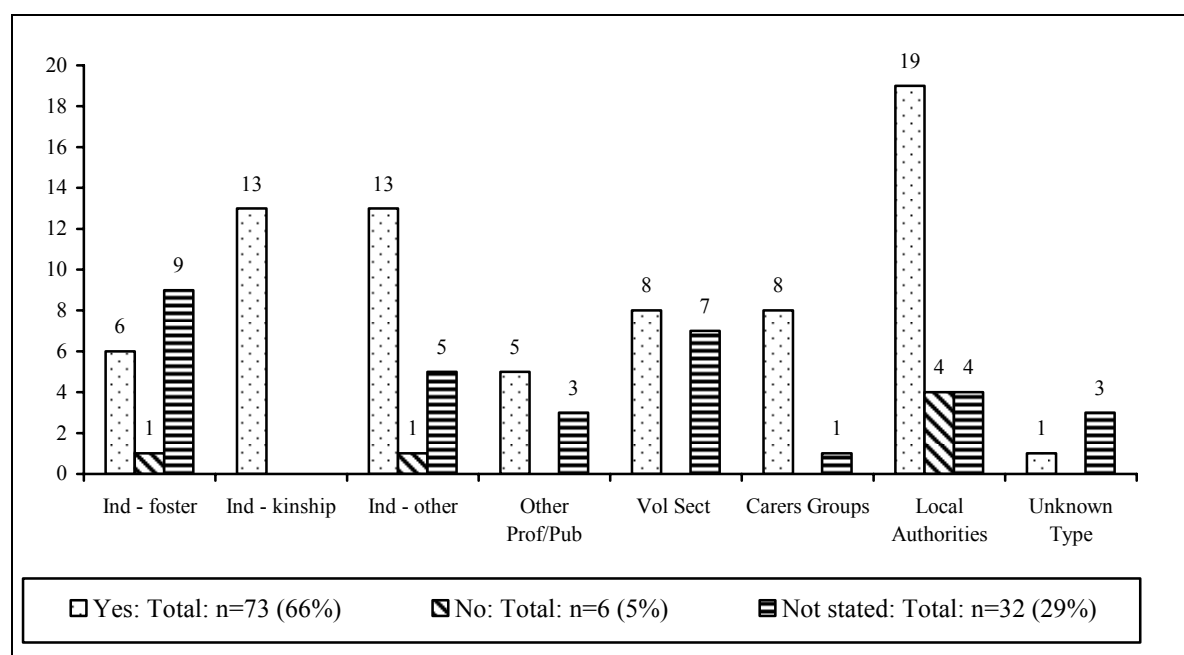
6.1.2   Comments on **the need for kinship carers to be supported financially featured** in 49 responses and in 3 of the kinship carer event reports with 5 consultees, mainly carers, commenting that kinship carers should receive payments to cover extra expenditure. This was the main point made by kinship carer consultees and was one of the top recommendations from voluntary /charity organisations and local authorities. One kinship carer pointed out *"Non 'looked after children' in kinship care, ARE looked after children and for recognition of this payments should reflect that kinship carers are valued. Payments would allow us to care for the children adequately, and give them a standard of living they*

deserve, in turn supporting kinship carers to do the caring properly instead of struggling."
Seven consultees pointed out that many kinship carers are living on pensions or low incomes
and this was also highlighted at one kinship carer event.

6.1.3   Fees and allowances for kinship carers should, according to 14 consultees, be
commensurate with those of foster carers; 2 of the events for kinship carers also raised this
point. A response from a carer's group included the following points *"Kinship carers should
be able to get legal aid (Total Costs) if necessary to gain a legal order to safeguard the child.
Information on understanding legalities and the consequences of legal outcomes should be
freely available for Kinship Carers."* Eight consultees and attendees at 2 kinship events
wanted to see help provided for legal costs incurred in securing care.

6.1.4   While 3 consultees and, again, attendees at 2 kinship events acknowledged that extra
financial provision for kinship carers would lead to resource issues for funding any changes,
6 consultees pointed out that if the child or young person went into the care system it would
cost money to provide their care and this point was again raised by attendees at 2 kinship
events.

6.1.5   **Clarification of the status of kinship carers**, was requested by 25 consultees,
including 13 local authorities, and by attendees at 2 kinship and one of the worker events.
This, they felt, should take the form of national guidance and should also apply to associated
assessments, rights and benefits. A standard definition of kinship care was also requested.
Four consultees wanted to see an independent working group tasked with surveying issues
surrounding kinship care. A response from a local authority highlighted current anomalies:

> *"It would be really helpful if the currently odd confusing situation where
> kinship carers caring for children looked after under Sections 25 or 86 have
> to be approved foster carers, whereas those caring for children looked after
> under Section 70 only have to be subjected to the most cursory checks was
> amended."*

6.1.6   Twenty-one consultees thought that **payments for kinship carers should be
addressed through the benefits system with central, rather than local, funding**. These
consultees were mainly local authorities, kinship carers did not comment on this subject.

6.1.7   Ten consultees voiced support for the recommendations made by Aldgate and
McIntosh and there were comments that it was surprising that the consultation document had
not referred to this work. *"We concur with the recommendations from Looking After the
Family - A study of children looked after in kinship care in Scotland, J.Aldgate &
M.McIntosh, 2006 and consider that these provide a comprehensive response to this
question."* (local authority). While many responses contained general suggestions, the
response from the BAAF covered many of the issues raised in response to question 15 in
depth. These were included, as an appendix, in a policy response to the Care Matters Green
Paper which contained the following key recommendations in respect of children in kinship
care situations:

- *"To enable more children who cannot live with their parents to be raised by relatives.*

- *To recognise children being raised in family and friends care, as a unique group of children in need, requiring tailored policies and provision of support services at national and local level, including a ministerially led taskforce to drive forward this development.*
- *Assessment procedures that recognise the uniqueness of family and friends care and ensure that placements suit the needs of each individual child, enabling them to feel safe, loved and secure.*
- *That family and friends are able to get legal aid to secure as necessary a legal order to safeguard a child.*
- *That family and friends carers aren't driven into financial hardship but are entitled to emergency financial support and a national financial allowance if they are caring for a child for over 28 days.*
- *That all authorities provide support services for children and their families, including assistance with contact.*
- *That children being raised by relatives and friends, are recognised as children in need, and thus entitled to an assessment by the local authority of their specific needs."*

6.1.8   In addition, the Fostering Network reported that "*A working party comprising the Fostering Network and the Association of Directors of Social Work produced a report on the future of kinship care in Scotland in 2003, (Family and Friends as Carers)."* This report was included as an appendix to their submission. They also voiced support for the findings of a report from the Social Work Inspection Agency and said "*We would strongly endorse the policy and practice implications identified in the SWIA report and the need for them to be addressed quickly."*

6.1.9   On the subject of assessment for kinship placements, 29 consultees, along with attendees at 2 kinship events, felt **kinship carers should go through an assessment process**, there were requests for guidance on specific assessments for kinship carers. This was a key issue for local authorities and voluntary / charity organisations.

> *"For these placements that are 'brokered' by councils (e.g. as part of a child protection investigation or via Family Group Conferencing), or that otherwise occur in circumstances requiring intervention, an assessment is essential. Kinship carers need to be prepared for the task and have some opportunity to explore the issues that may arise from their parenting their grandchildren/other relatives. etc. They need to consider how they will cope with what may be acrimonious parental contact. Assessment will also identify those kinship carers who may be unsuitable to care for children."*
> (professional body)

6.1.10 Twenty-four consultees saw kinship carers as needing **access to the same support and training provided to foster carers**, attendees at 2 kinship events made similar comments, although this did not feature strongly in consultation responses from kinship carers. In addition, specific training would be needed for social workers to provide support to kinship carers. *"The paper does not mention training for social workers and others on supporting children and carers in kinship placements, but we highlight that this should be an essential element of the National Strategy."* (childcare charity). Two consultees commented that needs can vary significantly from case to case and that flexibility is needed in providing appropriate support.

6.1.11 There were reports of differing practices across different local authorities and 13 consultees wanted to see consistency across all areas or services. This point was made at 3 of the kinship carer events with a comment that *"local authority discretion re allowances is not fair and equitable."*

6.1.12 Ten consultees commented that kinship care should be treated differently to foster care while receiving adequate provision and there were 2 comments that foster care and kinship care should be dealt with in separate strategies.

6.1.13 At the kinship carer events there were many comments on the fact that kinship situations are often the result of addicted parents and that kinship carers should, therefore have immediate access to specialist services such as psychologists, in order to help the children and young people in their care. One carer commented *"The law must be changed, particularly where our grandchildren are damaged profoundly by their parents' addictions. There is no priority with regards to psychologists to facilitate the needs of our children. It is a constant battle to get support"*.

Question 16. The consultation paper covers the following topics in terms of foster care:
- *the assessment process to match a child or young person to a carer (see paragraphs 3.6-3.9)*
- *amendments to existing regulations (paragraphs 3.27 and Annex A)*
- *proposals for further support measures (paragraphs 4.9-4.16)*

*On these issues, do you think that there are **specific** differences or additional points which should be considered for kinship carers? If so then please give details.*

6.1.14 There were general comments, from 16 consultees and at 4 events, **on the need for kinship carers to receive the same range of support, specifically to include respite and financial support, as foster carers**. This was the main comment from kinship carers in relation to question 16. Financial issues were covered at 2 of the events with concerns that any money given to kinship carers could result in them losing other benefits.

6.1.15 Nine consultees commented on the additional emotional needs of kinship carers with eleven consultees, including 10 local authorities, pointing out that foster carers and kinship carers have different needs. There were comments, in three responses, on the fact that kinship carers are often older and may have health problems. At the events there were comments on the particular problems faced with kinship carers as they are usually still in contact with the birth parents with one comment that carers *"have to try and protect grandchildren from own children on occasions."*

6.1.16 There are inconsistencies in the way different local authorities recognise and support kinship carers and 8 consultees and attendees at 2 kinship carer events asked for conformity or uniformity across areas, although 3 consultees pointed out that while local authorities have discretionary powers in relation to payments to kinship carers, lack of resources can mean that these are not applied. One local authority commented *"Differing practices across authorities and a lack of transparency mean that it is difficult for relatives and friends who are caring for looked after children to know what help they can get, for themselves and the children."*

6.1.17 There was a feeling, expressed in 8 responses and at one event, that kinship carers are excluded from services and that this should be rectified by government funding and

recognition. A carer's group felt that *"Local authorities should have a key worker, who would promote good practice in support and access to integrated support within education, mental health and social work for the benefit of the child and the carer. At present Kinship Care is excluded from enhanced services."* Eight consultees wanted to see a clear, legislative basis outlining rights and responsibilities; this would include access to training.

6.1.18 The positive benefits of kinship care were highlighted in responses; 6 consultees felt that children develop more positively when raised in kinship, rather than foster, care and kinship carers at one event also made this point. Four consultees felt that kinship care should be given priority, with foster care as a back-up where necessary; one event for kinship carers also produced a similar comment. In addition these consultees felt that the matching process is not necessary, or should be amended, in kinship situations.

6.1.19 On the subject of assessment for kinship carers, seven consultees felt that the process should be more rigorous and/or robust to ensure kinship carers are prepared for the issues and problems they may face. The opposite opinion was expressed by 5 consultees who felt that assessment ought to be less stringent than for non-related foster carers.

> *"The assessment of kinship carers when children are placed with them on supervision requirements should be more robust. Kinship carers are more wary of social work support than foster carers and often, where the child is well settled, more support is not required. However, they can experience considerable stress and difficulty both from children's behaviours, from difficult contact arrangements and from anxiety concerning the actual or potential loss of the children's parents."*
>
> (local authority)

6.1.20 There were again positive mentions of the research findings from Aldgate and McIntosh; 3 responses mentioned this work.

6.1.21 The use of IT in kinship support could be problematic; 2 consultees commented that many kinship carers do not have internet access.

6.1.22 At one event for kinship carers there were comments on the fact that kinship carers are not familiar with the terms used in relation to care situations *"one kinship carer pushed to take a residence order being unaware of what it was."* There were comments at 3 events on the range of support and services that can be offered by social workers and through schools, but there were also comments that kinship carers may be unaware that this is available or how to access support.

CHAPTER 7: PRIVATE FOSTERING ARRANGEMENTS

Private fostering differs from public fostering. The latter is the provision of fostering services to children who are looked after by local authorities and can be done by the local authorities or by others on their behalf. Private fostering is where parents make arrangements with people who are not close relatives to care for their children, although they do have a duty to report this to their local authority. This chapter examines views on private fostering arrangements.

Question 17. In relation to private fostering arrangements, do you think that there is a need for any additional action, by (a) the Scottish Executive

7.1.1 As shown in chart 7.1, **34 consultees answered yes**; 10 answered no and 67 did not give a definitive answer. Sixty-three respondents did not give an answer in relation to any of the organisations mentioned in question 17.

Chart 7.1
Whether there is any need for additional action by the Scottish Executive in relation to private fostering arrangements (n=111)
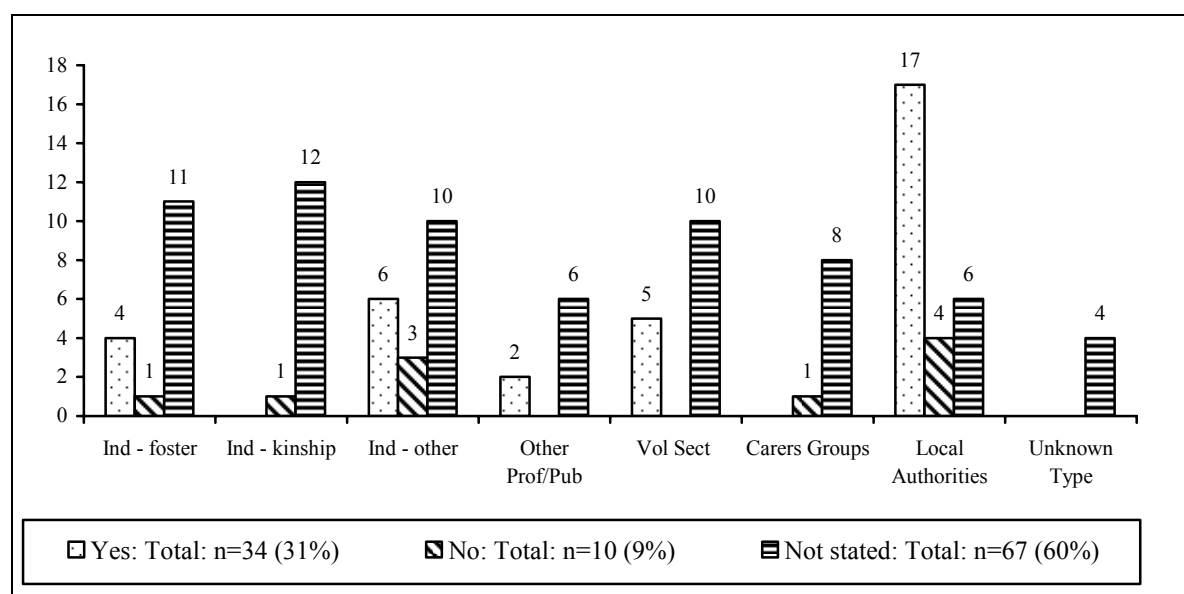
Question 17. In relation to private fostering arrangements, do you think that there is a need for any additional action, by (b) Care Commission.

7.1.2 As shown in chart 7.2, **23 consultees answered yes**; 13 answered no and 75 did not give a definitive answer.

Chart 7.2
Whether there is any need for additional action by the Care Commission in relation to private fostering arrangements (n=111)
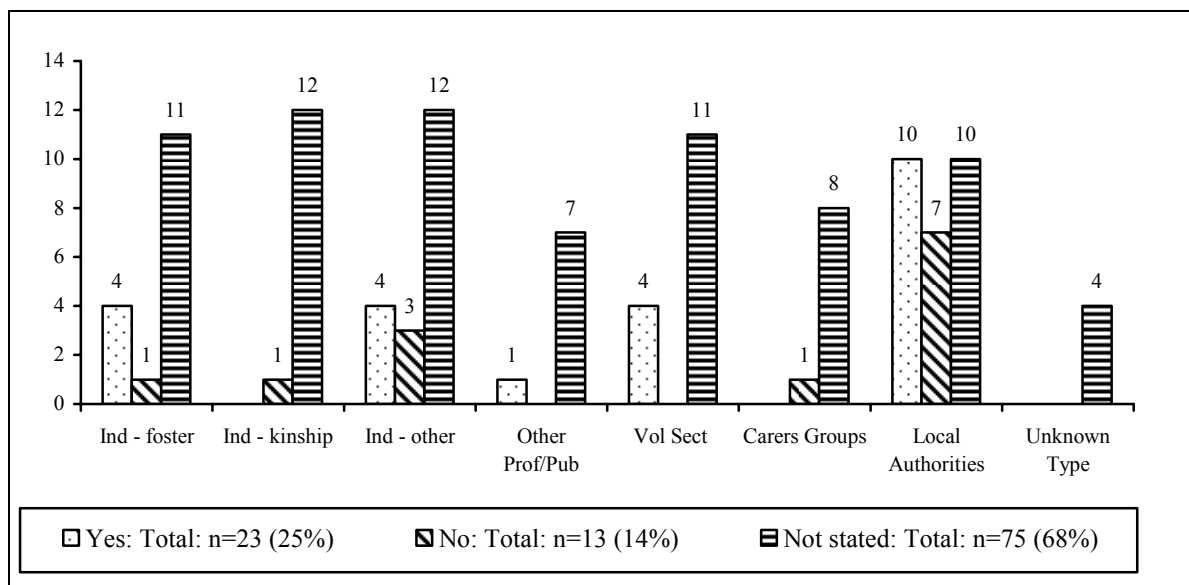
Yes: Total: n=23 (25%)   **No: Total: n=13 (14%)**   **Not stated: Total: n=75 (68%)**

Question 17. In relation to private fostering arrangements, do you think that there is a need for any additional action, by (c) local authorities?

7.1.3   As shown in chart 7.2, **29 consultees answered yes**; 9 answered no and 73 did not give a definitive answer.

Chart 7.3
Whether there is any need for additional action by local authorities in relation to private fostering arrangements (n=111)

Yes: Total: n=29 (26%)   **No: Total: n=9 (8%)**   **Not stated: Total: n=73 (66%)**
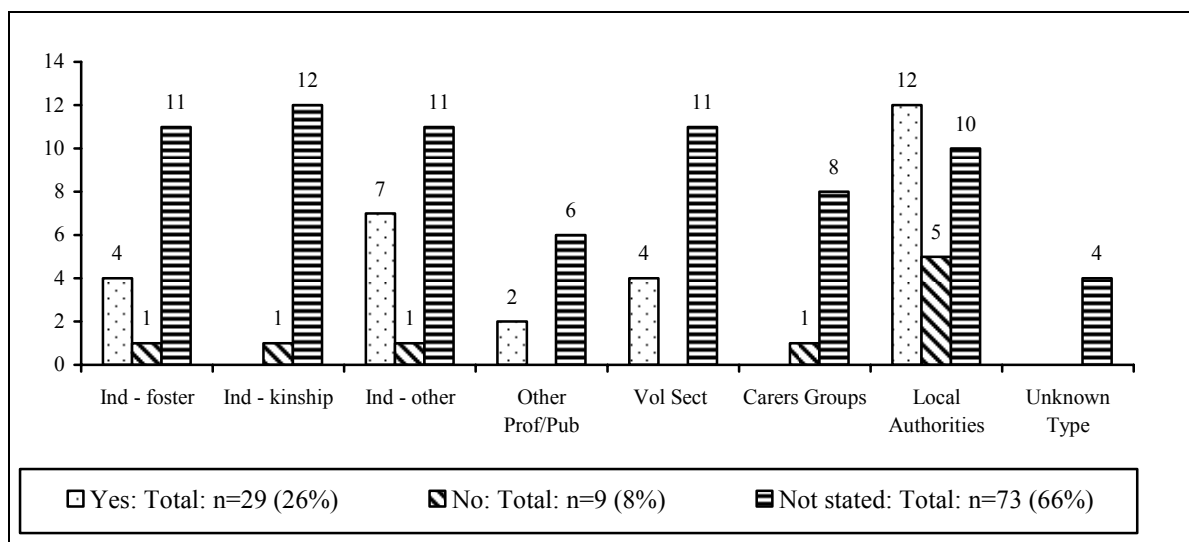
7.1.4   Question 17 was not covered at the Fostering Network events and there were very few comments on this question in foster or kinship carer responses.

What should these be?

7.1.5   There were a variety of comments and suggestions from small (less than 10) numbers of consultees, with one main comment emerging in response to question 17; twenty-four consultees, including 16 local authorities, commented that **private fostering is misunderstood both generally and by users and providers** and that more publicity is needed to raise its profile.

7.1.6   Political commitment was seen as important, by 7 consultees who felt that both government and local authorities should take a stronger role in the assessment of the scale of private fostering and in its regulation. Two consultees commented that local authorities must be aware of private fostering arrangements within their areas. Two consultees felt that private carers should be subject to the same processes and procedures as foster carers. Consistency across areas was also identified as important with 3 consultees stressing the need for all local authorities working to deliver the same standard.

7.1.7   While consultees saw the need to respond to identified private fostering care, 7 commented on the need for increased funding in order to assess and support this type of care.

7.1.8   Five consultees stressed that private carers must be suitably assessed and subject to inspection and monitoring. Two consultees also mentioned the need for private carers to receive the same training as foster carers. A public body noted *"The present National Care Standards DO NOT apply to private foster carers, as is implied in paragraph 6.3 of the consultation document."*

7.1.9   Multi-agency working is imperative in supporting carers; 7 consultees wanted to see health, education and social work services working closely to identify and support private fostering. One consultee also included mention of the police forces working more closely with social work departments and cited the case of Victoria Climbie as a cautionary example of private fostering.

7.1.10 The Care Commission was seen, by 5 consultees, as the ideal body to register and regulate private fostering. The Care Commission themselves stated *"the Scottish Executive, Care Commission, local authorities and other stakeholders should consider and bring forward proposals to enable private foster carers to be regulated under the Regulation of Care Act. This would mean they would be subject to independent registration and inspection, investigation of complaints and, where required, legal enforcement action by the Care Commission. It would be an offence to operate as a private foster carer without registration. These provisions could better safeguard children and, through time, ensure that private foster care comes out into the open."*

7.1.11 Four consultees voiced concern that private fostering is under-reported.   *"The Adoption Policy Review Group report, Adoption: Better Choices For Our Children, 2OO5 recommended that a working party be established to more fully investigate this phenomena in terms of establishing its use, its needs and the potential requirements by both local authorities and central government in terms of supporting and monitoring this type of service."* (fostering charity)

7.1.12 Two consultees felt that all three parties mentioned in the consultation should consider the introduction of regulations similar to those of child-minders into private

fostering situations. Three consultees felt that current regulations are outdated and need to be reviewed.

7.1.13 There were positive mentions, in 3 responses, of Private Fostering Partnership Contracts now being developed in some local authority areas.

7.1.14 The need to allow the views of a child in a private fostering situation to be heard was stressed in 2 responses and 2 consultees expressed concern over state interference in private arrangements; some of these could, in fact, be seen as kinship arrangements under the definition of 'family' by the European Court of Human Rights.

CHAPTER 8: FOSTERING SERVICES, INCLUDING KINSHIP CARE – PLANNING FOR THE NEXT 20 YEARS

This section of the consultation asked for views on the longer term challenges to fostering services in order to ensure that fostering and kinship care play a central role in meeting the needs of children and young people. This section of the consultation dealt with planning for the future in a series of 15 questions under the headings:

- Developing a wider role for foster carers and kinship carers;
- The recruitment and assessment process;
- Training, learning and development;
- Fostering support services; children's services partnerships;
- Inspection and regulation.

8.1 DEVELOPING A WIDER ROLE FOR FOSTER CARERS AND KINSHIP CARERS

Question 18. Do you think that foster and kinship carers should become more involved in prevention and early intervention work?

8.1.1   As can be seen from chart 8.1, **66 consultees answered yes**; 9 answered no, 6 gave a qualified answer and 30 did not give a definitive answer.

Chart 8.1
Whether foster and kinship carers should become more involved in prevention and early intervention work (n=111)
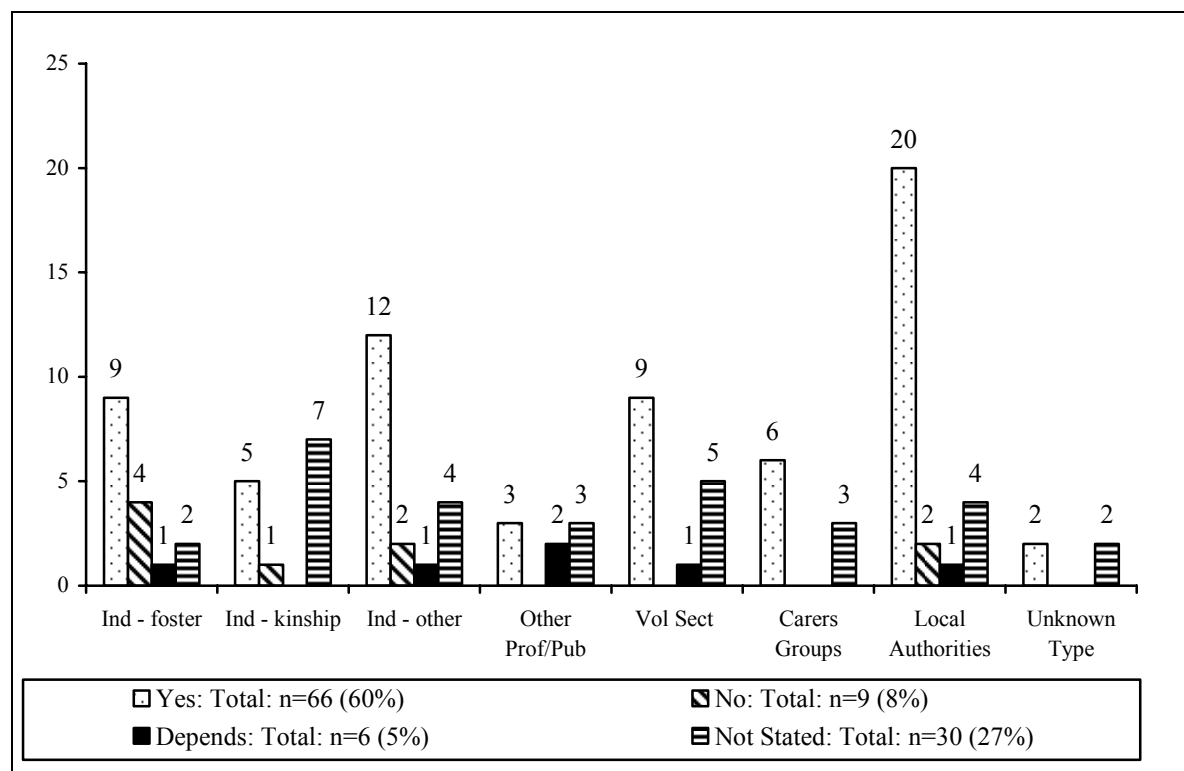
8.1.2 Only 2 event reports gave an indication of support or otherwise for question 18. At one event for foster carers, 22 attendees said yes while 8 said no. Ten attendees at a kinship carer event said yes, with no-one saying no. **Questions 18 to 20 were covered at events for foster and kinship carers but not at those for practitioners.**

Question 19. If you answered yes at Q18, do you think their role could include helping children/young people and their families remain together in the parental home?

8.1.3 As can be seen in chart 8.2, **54 consultees answered yes**; one answered no, 16 gave a qualified answer and 44 did not give a definitive answer.

Chart 8.2
Whether role of foster and kinship carers could include helping children/young people and their families remain together in the parental home (n=111)
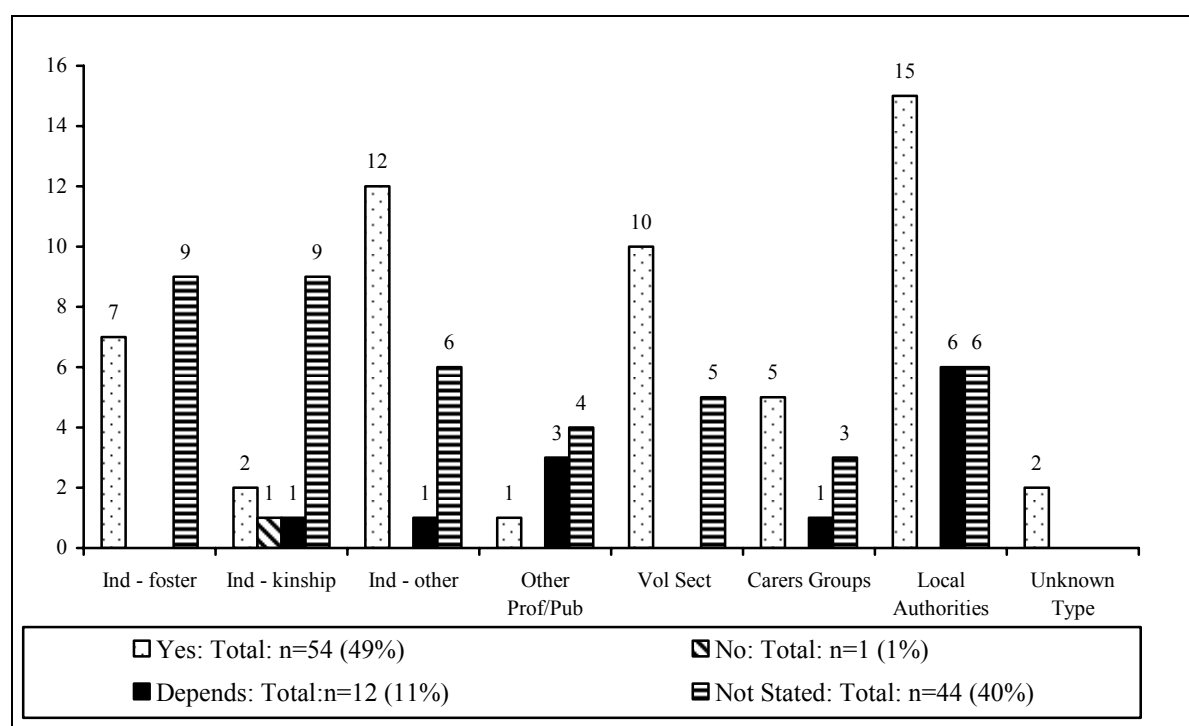
8.1.4 Again, only 2 event reports gave an indication of support or otherwise for question 19. At one event for foster carers, 19 attendees said yes while one said no. Six attendees at a kinship carer event said yes, with no-one saying no.

Question 20. Please tell us below about any specific examples of good practice you are aware of involving foster and kinship carers in prevention and early intervention.

8.1.5 Consultees took the opportunity to comment on questions 18, 19 and 20 with the key theme to emerge being **that kinship should, or in some cases is, the first port of call**. Comments from 25 consultees included the need to acknowledge and support those families trying to help. These consultees, along with attendees at 4 events, commented that **families are best placed to provide assistance to other family members in difficult circumstances**. *"Kinship carers should be the first call made in prevention and early intervention. Families*

should be the first consideration in seeking a solution." (carer's group) This was the key theme to emerge from all 3 individual sub-groups.

8.1.6 **Respite care** featured in 23 responses; this included the need for carers to provide weekend, day or shared care; this was the key comment from local authorities and from voluntary /charity organisations. Foster carers at 3 events also felt carers should provide respite care with one mentioning *"probably yes for kinship carers, respite, providing break for parents – balance respite with realistic care for children in own home".*

8.1.7 Again, the need for extra finance to support kinship carers, and the associated costs of providing support, was mentioned by 6 consultees on this occasion.

8.1.8 Looking at examples of carers providing support, 10 consultees commented that providing support in the birth parent's home, or by telephone, can be a very useful method of supporting families. Foster and kinship carers at 3 events also mentioned this type of support. However, the legal status of care at home services was seen as in need of review; 10 consultees raised concerns over the extra registration and inspections needed to provide this service as well as the extra cost to local authorities. *"There are some legal restrictions currently on the use of a foster carer going out to support children and parents in their own home - it would be helpful if this could be addressed."* (local authority)

8.1.9 Consultees saw the need for foster carers to receive extra training to enable them to provide support wherever needed or appropriate. This theme emerged in 6 responses and at 2 events. Six consultees also felt that managed contact was an effective support mechanism with carers providing role modelling to birth parents or preparing the child for returning home. Foster carers at 3 events also felt this was important. Five consultees wanted to see carers continuing to have contact after the child or young person returns home as did attendees at 2 events for foster carers. There was also a comment, at a foster carer event, on the need for foster carers to maintain a relationship between the young person and their family as they may wish to return to the family after leaving care at 16.

8.1.10 Five consultees felt carers could provide support by teaching parenting or housekeeping skills. This was widely mentioned at events; 5 reports from events for foster carers and one for kinship carers felt carers could provide support in this way. Six consultees and attendees at 2 events for foster carers mentioned that carers could provide support to pregnant or new mothers. *"Foster carers can work with 'young mums' – taking role in child's life e.g. babies, routine – foster carer as advisor."*

8.1.11 There were 5 mentions from consultees, along with one from kinship carers at an event, of support networks such as the Sure Start programme which were seen as highly effective. Nine consultees felt that family group conferences were useful tools in prevention and early intervention. A childcare charity noted *"Family Group Conferencing is most effective if used as soon as any problems are identified that affect a child's safety or wellbeing. For example, FGC is currently used where there are issues of substance misuse, mental health difficulties, behavioural difficulties, offending and so on, in a child's life. The FGC enables the wider family to come together to agree ways in which they can help the parent's) or child."* There was support, from 2 consultees and at one event, for the benefits of community care support packages.

8.1.12 Consultees felt that any intervention should be carefully planned; there were 2 comments on the need to ensure that the situation was carefully assessed and that any action taken should be in the best interests of the child. At the kinship events there were comments on the special role kinship carers already play in trying to keep families together, in spotting warning signs and in keeping children safe. Associated with this was the need to provide support to family members in such a situation and this could include social workers paying more attention to concerns of family members or better signposting of available support. There were 2 comments on the need for unannounced social work visits to homes where children have been reported as at risk.

8.2   THE RECRUITMENT AND ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Question 21. What approaches, other than a recruitment campaign, have you used to recruit and retain foster carers?

8.2.1   **Question 21 was not covered by attendees at the Fostering Network events** and consultation responses on question 21 came predominately from local authorities and voluntary /charity organisations.

8.2.2   **Word of mouth was seen, by 22 consultees, as the best method of recruitment**; 9 consultees felt that recruitment should be attempted within the family, friends or community. This was the main approach commented on by foster carers. A local authority supported the use of word of mouth as a recruitment tool *"Word of mouth continues to be a positive recruitment tool and we are seeking to establish a reward element for existing carers who promote fostering."* Various forms of media; press, radio, TV, newsletters and websites; were also seen, by 20 consultees, including 14 local authorities, as a useful tool.

8.2.3   Promotions such as billboards, bus or taxi sides and in shop displays or advertising were suggested by 9 consultees; 3 felt that material promoting foster care should be constantly in the public domain, with comments on the need for a central point of contact for interested parties.

8.2.4   Events could also be used to raise the profile of foster care with 17 consultees mentioning stalls, attendance at events and sponsorship of events as possible aids to recruitment. *"We have year round promotional work staffed by foster carers and family placement staff and a yearly planner of promotional events."* (local authority)

8.2.5   There were comments, from smaller numbers, on the need to widen the range of people becoming foster carers. Three consultees mentioned extending the upper age limit, attracting more male carers or more younger adult carers.

8.2.6   Three consultees felt that increased professionalisation of the foster carer's role would attract more people to the service.

8.2.7   Comments on retention focussed on the need for appropriate, accessible support with 12 consultees mentioning access to education, therapy, key workers and out of hours support. Five consultees specified access to appropriate training as a good way of retaining carers. A charity expressed the view that *"that the single most important factor in retaining foster carers is the support and training that they receive."*

8.2.8   Regular consultation with the carer was identified by 8 consultees as key in retaining foster carers; 2 consultees felt that newsletters or other contact would be useful.

8.2.9   Paid respite or other mentions of payment for carers featured in 7 responses; 2 consultees felt that carers without placements should be paid a retainer.

8.2.10 Four consultees stressed the need to ensure that carers feel valued and this included the suggestion of some form of recognition for long service. A local authority noted *"Recruitment and retention of carers is further aided through publicity valuing the service of carers."*

Question 22. Has your organisation run a fostering recruitment campaign?

8.2.11 As can be seen in chart 8.3, **39 consultees answered yes**; 6 answered no and 66 did not give a definitive answer.

Chart 8.3
Whether a fostering recruitment campaign has been run (n=111)
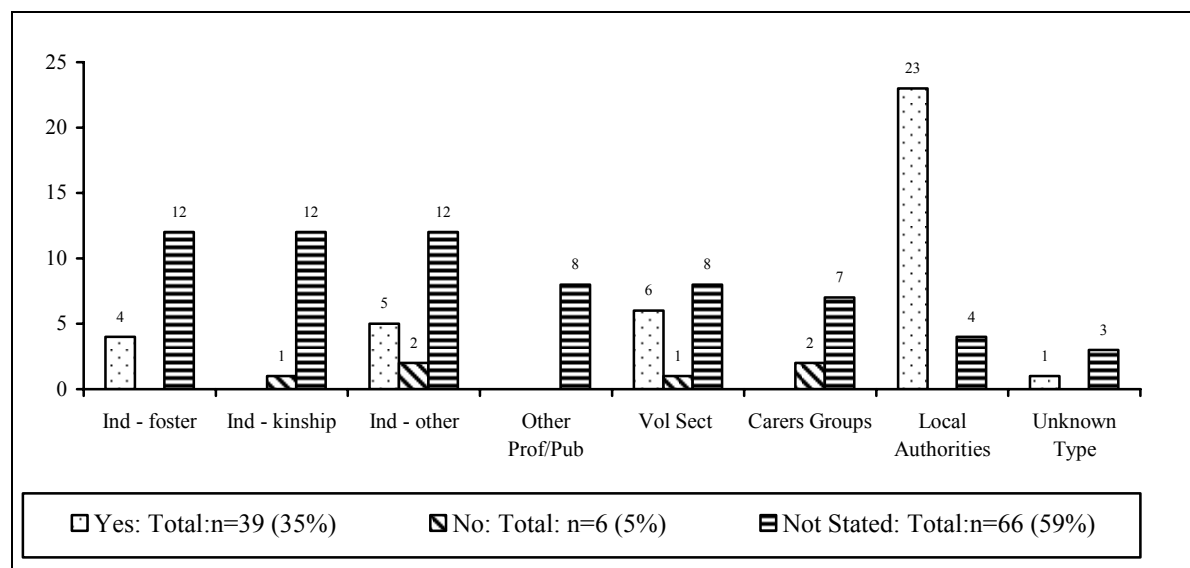
8.2.12 Questions 22 to 24 were not covered at the events.

[If you answered no at Q22, please go to Q25. If you answered yes at Q22, please continue with Q23.]

N.B.   Not all consultees followed the routing as stated in the consultation documentation.

Question 23. Following such a campaign, have you met your targets in attracting and sustaining applications?

8.2.13 As can be seen in chart 8.4, **16 consultees answered yes**; 11 answered no and 84 did not give a definitive answer, indicating that less than a third of those who had experience of a campaign had not met their targets while over 2 in 5 (41%) had.

Chart 8.4
Whether a fostering recruitment campaign has met targets for attracting and sustaining applications (n=111)

Yes: Total: n=16 (15%) □ No: Total: n=11 (10%) ◼ Not Stated: Total: n=84 (76%) ▤
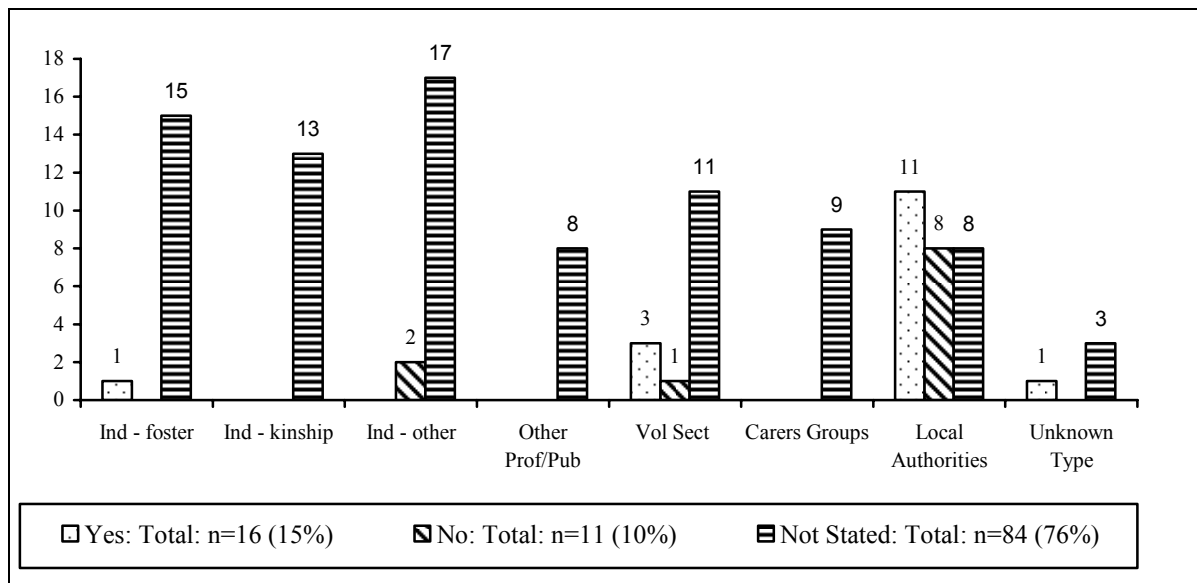
Question 24. Would a national campaign be of benefit to your local campaign?

8.2.14 **Thirty-four consultees answered** yes; 0 answered no, 6 gave a qualified answer and 71 did not give a definitive answer.

Chart 8.5
Whether a national campaign would be of benefit to local campaigns (n=111)

Yes: Total: n=34 (31%) □ Depends: Total: n=6 (5%) ◼ Not Stated: Total: n=71 (64%) ▤
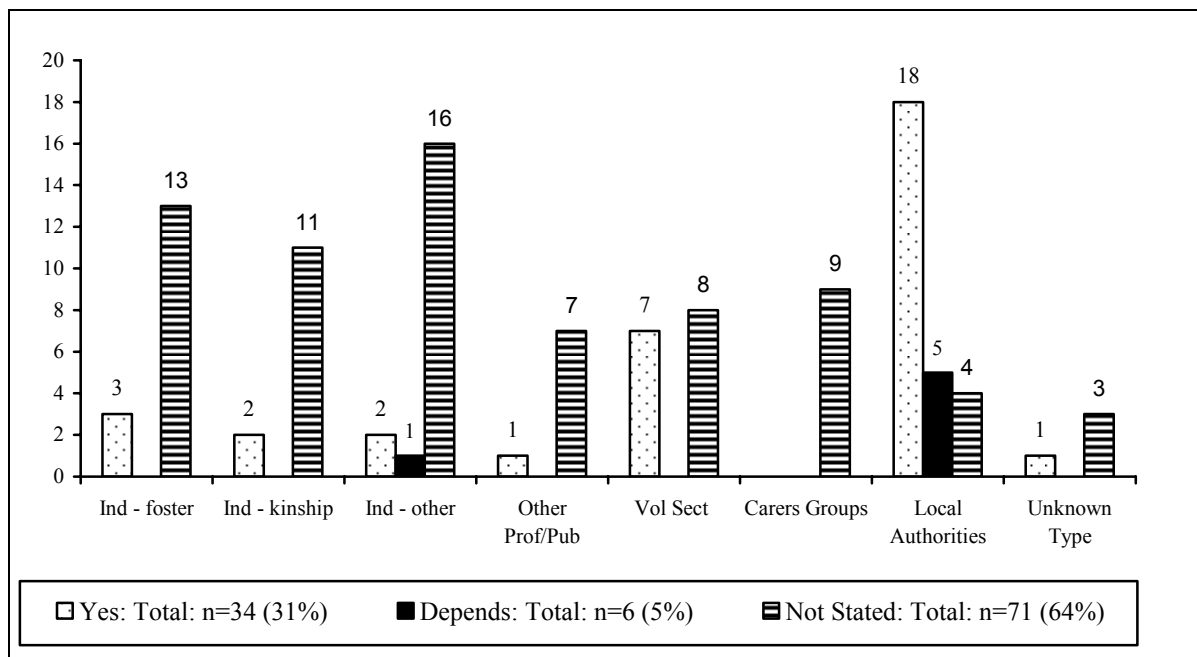
If yes, please provide details of the type of national campaign you'd wish for

8.2.15 Thirty-one consultees, including 20 local authorities, made general supporting comments that a campaign would be welcome. Most of the comments on this question came from local authorities.

8.2.16 **Advertising in various forms of media** was recommended by 19 consultees. In the response reporting the views of young people, comments showed that negative publicity may also need to be addressed;

- *"Because of bad news reports, people might not want to go into fostering and kids might not want to get fostered.*
- *Bad press can destroy everything.*
- *Carers think you'll just get someone who'll wreck your house.*
- *More positively about fostering, not negativity."*

8.2.17 There were other comments from smaller numbers of consultees and these included:

- the need for a high profile for foster caring (3 comments);
- additional funding to attract more carers; this could include financial incentives (3 comments);
- a central point of contact for enquiries (2 comments);
- stalls at events or sponsorship of events (2 comments).

Question 25. What would be the benefits of a more regionalised approach to recruitment and retention, for example a number of local authorities combining on a geographical basis? How could this best be delivered?

8.2.18 Neither question 25 nor question 26 were covered by those attending the events. The comments in consultation responses on question 25 were mainly made by local authorities and was the main question addressed in the response from COSLA.

8.2.19 *"There already exists two consortia of local authorities in Scotland in terms of fostering services, the North East consortia and the West of Scotland consortia. Whilst these consortia operate in different ways, they have similar aims and objectives in terms of the mutual support by local authorities offered in terms of adoption and fostering services."* **Fourteen consultees, including 10 local authorities, commented on the existence of consortia** and a regional approach was seen as a good idea by 10 consultees who remarked that this would be more economical by allowing the pooling of resources. There were 6 comments on the need for all local authorities to consider collaborative arrangements.

8.2.20 Sharing resources was seen as important in 9 responses, although there was a note of caution that all parties involved must have an equal footing. In addition COSLA stated *"However, the consultation paper implicitly raises the idea that regionalisation might be suitable for other areas of fostering and kinship care work. If there is a suggestion that there will be an imposition of regionalisation of our functions COSLA is likely to resist this actively. In addition to clouding accountability it is likely to create barriers to the local authority resources needed for effective children's services."* They did, however, support the idea of developing joint working arrangements.

8.2.21 Specific areas identified, by 7 consultees, where sharing would be useful were in the areas of training and preparation; joint training courses were seen as more economical for local authorities. Six consultees were in favour of joint recruitment campaigns.

8.2.22 There were some concerns over disparities in fees, assessment processes or other aspects of the fostering system; 7 consultees commented that these disparities could lead to problems for introducing a regional approach and 5 felt that there may be a need for different approaches to suit different areas; this may be because of geographical issues or limitations. A local authority commented on an existing consortium *"This is problematic when in, for example, the NE Consortia - 8 LAs have 8 different rates of pay, forms of assessment, /adoption allowances, and indeed names for their categories of carers."*

8.2.23 Recruitment on a regional basis could increase the pool of carers; this was commented on by 5 consultees with additional comments on the benefits to smaller local authorities.

> *"The main advantage of such an approach would be the economies of scale provided. However, at present very few councils have carers with vacancies. Some areas are so small that it is costly to do a solo concerted campaign, and prospective carers will often cross boundaries to apply. A pool of carers from more than one council may provide more choice of placements. Preparation costs could be reduced and ongoing training could be organised collaboratively."*
>
> (public body)

8.2.24 Some (4) consultees felt that the local area is important to carers and that local carers are more preferable, and 3 consultees wanted to ensure that young people are not placed outside their own local area; 4 made additional comments on the usefulness of local advertising.

8.2.25 Three consultees commented that they did not see any benefit in a regional approach and that it may not be appropriate for some agencies or authorities.

Question 26. Do you have any further suggestions or any <u>specific</u> examples of good practice regarding recruitment and retention of foster carers? If so please provide details.

8.2.26 **Finance played a large part in responses to question 26 with 18 consultees commenting on various ways to support carers financially which, they felt, would aid retention and help with recruitment.** These included; paid training, incentives, bonuses for signing up other carers, pensions and increased fees. This was the key issue raised by local authorities in relation to question 26. One foster carer commented *"Have heard of loyalty or bonus payments for long term carers or those who 'sign up a friend'. The attraction to new carers will only be realistically improved in the long term by improving all the terms and conditions as previously outlined (fees, allowances, training, professionalising of the service, etc)."*

8.2.27 The use of current carers to recruit from their families and friends or through word of mouth; as well as through providing information to potential carers was seen as an effective method of recruitment by 11 consultees.

8.2.28 Support for carers was also seen as important with 11 comments on the need to ensure carers have access to support whenever needed. This was the main comment provided by voluntary /charity organisations to this question. A public body indicated that *"The best way to retain carers appears to be providing support when needed and ensuring they feel valued for the work they undertake with vulnerable children and young people."*

8.2.29 Publicising the work of foster carers more widely was mentioned in 8 responses; examples included a poster competition which was reported in the press and the success of a local campaign. Making use of a variety of media; TV, CD roms (such as the one produced by the North East Consortium in conjunction with BAAF), videos, newsletters; was also mentioned with 10 comments in support of advertising. Young people agreed that advertising was a good recruitment tool, as was word of mouth. They also had some ideas about retention:

- *"Show them how kids benefit. How the kids can get better lives from being in care.*
- *Get rid of stigma surrounding foster care*
- *Involve young people who foster carers have helped*
- *'Make it soppy'*
- *Get young people in care to do presentations*
- *Show how much they are needed*
- *Pull those heart strings!"*

8.2.30 Again, stalls and a presence at events and community meetings was suggested; on this occasion by 6 consultees.

8.2.31 Four consultees again voiced support for a national or regional recruitment campaign and 3 restated their support for resource sharing amongst local authorities. One local authority was, however, unconvinced of the benefits of a national approach *"We are cautious about a Scottish Executive national campaign, mainly because the last one in approximately 1998 was so spectacularly unsuccessful. We wonder, if there is money available, whether it would be better to fund 2 or 3 evaluated demonstration recruitment projects in different areas of the country using everything currently known about best practice."*

8.2.32 Three consultees saw benefits in involving young people from within the care system in recruitment. *"More young adults who have been through foster care should be approached to help with recruitment campaigns and ideas as they can reflect back on what they gained in life from being in foster care."* (charity)

8.3 TRAINING, LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

The consultation document states that "National Fostering and Kinship Care Strategy will cover training, learning and development for both foster carers and kinship carers."

Question 27. In your opinion, is there a need for mandatory training for foster carers?

8.3.1 Chart 8.6 shows that, on the subject of mandatory training for foster carers, **68 consultees answered yes**; 8 answered no, 2 gave a qualified answer and 33 did not give an answer.

Chart 8.6
Whether there is a need for mandatory training for foster carers (n=111)
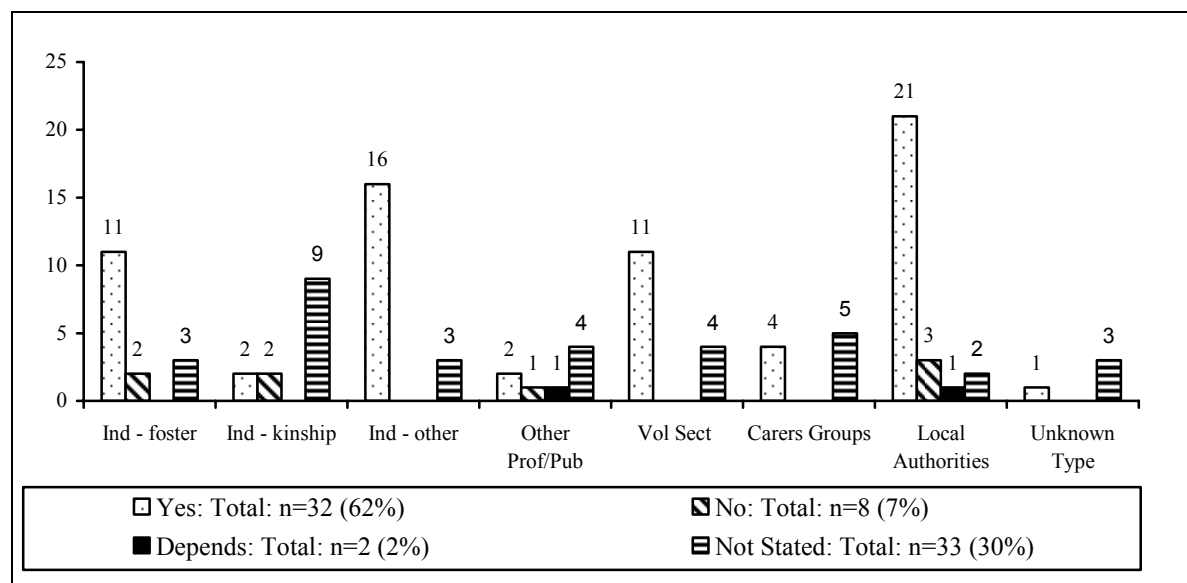
8.3.2   While this question was covered at events, support was quantified in only 3 reports. A report from a kinship carer event showed 4 attendees in support of mandatory training for foster carers and none against. At one event for foster carers, the report noted 40 attendees had given support with none against. At an event for foster care workers, 28 voiced support for mandatory training.

(If yes, please give details of the topic areas to be covered)

8.3.3   Responses contained a wide variety of suggestions for possible training for foster carers. Child protection and first aid were the areas mentioned most often by foster carers while attachment, loss or resilience training was the area mentioned most by local authorities:

- **child protection**, this could also include dealing with allegations (28 consultees and mentioned at 2 events);
- **attachment, loss or resilience training** (27 consultees and mentioned at 9 events);
- **child development** (26 consultees and mentioned at 9 events);
- safe caring (17 consultees and mentioned at 7 events);
- first aid (16 consultees and mentioned at 9 events);
- managing challenging behaviour, anger management or conflict resolution (16 consultees and mentioned at 7 events);
- record keeping and report writing (14 consultees and mentioned at 4 events);
- supporting education; including IT (11 consultees and mentioned at 6 events);
- therapeutic care for traumatised children; dealing with neglected or abused children (10 consultees and 4 events);
- dealing with substance abuse (10 consultees and mentioned at 8 events);
- health and safety (8 consultees and 4 events);
- dealing with contact, working with parents (8 consultees);
- training dictated by the specific needs of each child or young person (2 consultees and 5 events);

- parenting (3 consultees and 4 events);
- grief or loss counselling (7 consultees and one event);
- inclusion, diversity, discrimination awareness (7 consultees and 3 events);
- understanding legislation (6 consultees and mentioned at 7 events);
- life-story work (6 consultees and 3 events);
- the need for both pre and post approval training (5 consultees and 3 events);
- mental health issues (5 consultees and 2 events);
- training as recommended by the Fostering Network (5 consultees);
- cooking and healthy eating (3 consultees and 2 events);
- advocacy or court skills (one consultee and 3 events);
- communicating with children (4 consultees and one event);
- confidentiality (3 consultees and one event);
- preparation for moving on (3 consultees and one event);
- the needs of looked after children (2 consultees and one event);
- counselling (2 consultees);
- specific training for male foster carers (2 consultees);
- child and family psychology (2 consultees and 2 events);
- racial or cultural awareness (2 consultees);
- sexuality (2 consultees);
- religion (2 consultees);
- finance (2 consultees).

8.3.4   In addition, 7 consultees and attendees at an event stressed that training needs to be flexible; provided at times and in locations that suit the carers. Two consultees voiced concerns that training expectations may discourage current or potential carers. Attendees at 2 events, along with 2 consultees, called for assistance for those attending training. This could include crèche or childminding and expenses to cover the costs of attending. A report from a foster carer event stated *"supports need to be in place to enable attendance at training – childcare, transport."*

8.3.5   Eight consultees and attendees at 6 events wanted to see a recognised qualification made available to foster carers while 5 consultees and attendees at 2 events wanted to see some form of core or induction training. *"Mandatory training is essential to ensure a foundation - SVQ level 3 feels right and topic coverage provided for this level of under pinning knowledge are standard. "* (fostering agency). The need for training to be on-going and regularly updated was mentioned by 4 consultees and by attendees at 2 foster carer and 2 worker events. Two consultees and attendees at an event for foster carers felt that training should be mandatory in areas where a carer did not have sufficient knowledge.

8.3.6   One response indicated what young people felt should be compulsory:

- *"Training in understanding and liking teenagers*
- *Training in speaking to young people and understanding them*
- *No qualifications 'Just be nice folk', listen to weans*
- *To be able to relate and interact with children*
- *Foster carers should have knowledge of present education system."*

Question 27. In your opinion, is there a need for mandatory training for kinship carers?

8.3.7   **Thirty-eight consultees answered yes; 34 answered no**, 2 gave a qualified answer and 37 did not give an answer (see chart 8.7). **Local authorities were strongly against this suggestion.**

Chart 8.7
Whether there is a need for mandatory training for kinship carers (n=111)
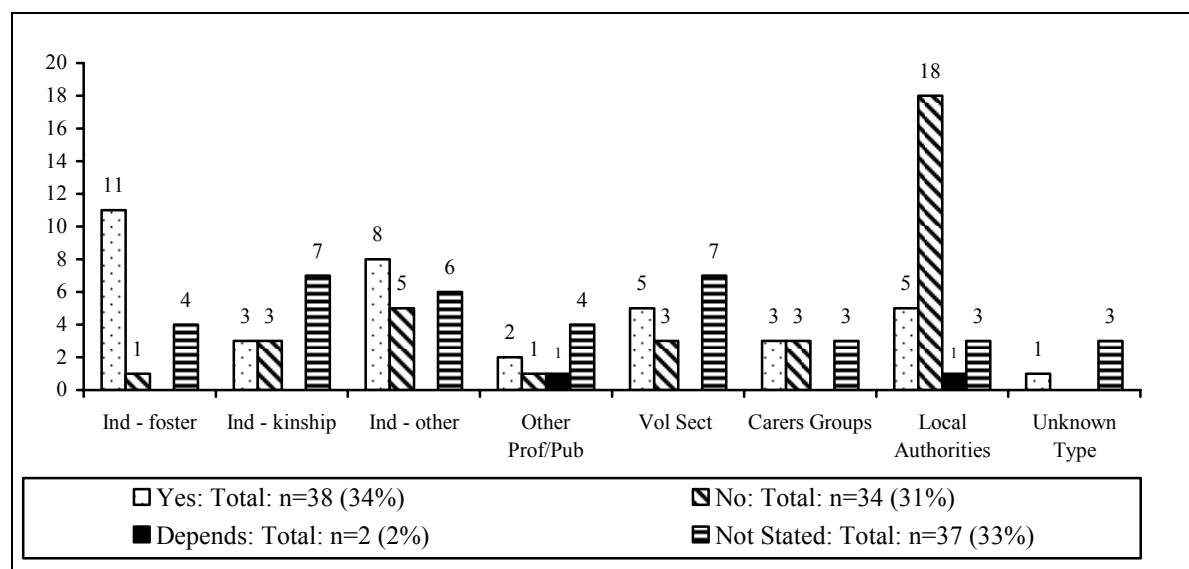
8.3.8   While this question was covered at events, support was quantified in only 3 reports. A report from a kinship carer event showed 3 attendees in support of mandatory training for kinship carers and 5 against. At one event for foster carers, the report noted 24 attendees had given support with 3 against. At an event for foster care workers, 16 voiced support for mandatory training for kinship carers while 4 felt this was not necessary.

(If yes, please give details of the topic areas to be covered)

8.3.9   Again, consultees provided suggestions on a wide range of possible training areas for kinship carers. However, the main comment, from 22 consultees and mentioned at 5 events, was that **kinship carers should be offered training but that it should not be mandatory.** This was the key comment given by local authorities and was raised at all kinship events. Four consultees and a report from a kinship carer event expressed the opinion that mandatory training requirements may put off potential kinship carers. In addition, 4 consultees felt that kinship carers should be given financial support to attend training. Again, flexible training options were mentioned; by one consultee and at 2 events.

8.3.10 Eleven consultees thought that training for kinship carers should be decided on a case by case basis with training needs identified for each individual; a public body commented *"Kinship carers should be offered the equivalent of non-stigmatising parenting classes and special training on particular needs where appropriate."* Attendees at 3 events also expressed this view.

8.3.11 Individual kinship carers made few comments in relation to question 27 but this question was covered at the kinship events with suggestions reported in the form of a list of

subjects suggested. The main areas identified as training requirements for kinship carers by consultees and at events were:

- **child development** (11 consultee comments and mentioned at 3 events);
- **attachment and resilience training** (8 consultees and mentioned at 3 events);
- **child protection** (8 consultees and mentioned at 5 events);
- first aid (7 consultees and 4 events);
- managing challenging behaviour (6 consultees and 6 events including all kinship events);
- safe caring (6 consultees and 4 events);
- legislation and legal issues (2 consultees and 7 events);
- dealing with substance abuse (3 consultees and 6 events);
- record keeping and report writing (3 consultees and 3 events);
- parenting and coping skills (2 consultees and 4 events);
- grief or loss counselling (5 consultees and 5 events);
- dealing with contact (4 consultees and 2 events);
- supporting education or understanding current education (3 consultees and 3 events);
- mental health issues (2 consultees and 2 events);
- child psychology (one consultee and 3 events);
- moving on (2 consultees and 3 events);
- lifestory work (2 consultees and 3 events);
- health and safety (2 consultees);
- dealing with abused children (one consultee and one event).

Question 28. Please tell us what kind of training and development opportunities would be most welcome in your opinion (tick as many boxes as appropriate)

Table 8.1
Training and development opportunities that would be welcomed (n=111)

	for foster carers		*for kinship carers*	
	mandatory	**optional**	**mandatory**	**optional**
Easier access to a Scottish Vocational Qualification	16	41	6	35
Training for the pre-selection and selection process	53	3	n/a	n/a
Following approval as a foster carer	42	6	n/a	n/a
Child development issues and good practice in managing behaviour	55	3	19	35
Legislation awareness (including relevant regulations and standards)	49	7	15	37
Own local authority's plans for improving foster services in the local area	26	29	9	34

8.3.12 Reports from 3 events; one kinship, one foster carer and one foster care worker event; replicated the grid from the consultation document. The figures in table 8.1 show total numbers of consultees who either completed the grid or who referred to support for one or more of the options in their response. As not every consultee completed every question, assumptions cannot be made that the remainder of the consultees disagreed. The three grids provided by event reports are included in the appendices for reference. It should be noted that we do not have base figures for attendees at each event, **however the report from a foster carer event shows larger numbers in favour of mandatory training for foster carers at each of the options** with much smaller numbers supporting a mixture of mandatory or optional opportunities for kinship carers. The report from a kinship carer event has a low response to the options for foster carers (only one or 2 at each option) while the main support appears to be for optional training at each of the items. The foster care workers showed more support for the optional 'easier access to SVQ' and 'own local authority's plans' with support for the other options to be mandatory. **For kinship carers, there was more support for training to be optional than mandatory at each of the items on the list.**

Any other (please specify):

8.3.13 There were relatively few comments given in relation to question 28. Other areas identified were, on the whole, similar to those covered at question 27. The most frequently mentioned were:

- **dealing with children who have suffered through** abuse (9 comments and mentioned at one event);
- **first aid or health and safety training** (9 comments and mentioned at one event);
- **attachment issues** (7 comments and mentioned at one event);
- grief and loss counselling (6 comments);
- safe caring (5 comments and one event);
- dealing with mental health issues (5 comments and one event);
- life and coping skills (5 comments and one event);
- dealing with contact, working with parents (4 comments and one event);
- training specific to the needs of the child or carer (3 comments).

8.3.14 Consultees again took the opportunity to restate their concerns **that training must be provided at times, in locations, and in ways suitable to carers**. There were 11 comments, 7 from local authorities, on this subject from consultees and one mention in an event report. *"Given the home based nature of carers' work, mobile trainers, distance learning could all helpfully be developed. However, our current training resources for carers (human and financial) are extremely limited."* (local authority)

8.3.15 Annual or regular reviews could identify any additional training needs as they become apparent; 6 consultees commented on the need to update training or to provide refresher courses. One charity felt there should be *"Refresher training every 2 years to maintain skill levels and avoid complacency/staleness."*

8.3.16 Support for carers undertaking training was seen as important by 6 consultees, and this included access to child-minding or crèches and payment or expenses for attending training. In addition, attendees at 2 kinship events felt that kinship carers would prefer group training or to attend as part of a group.

Question 29. What changes do you think need to be made to the provision of support services to foster and kinship carers by local authorities, independent and voluntary agencies?

8.3.17 The main change in provision of services, requested by 22 consultees, was **for 24 hour support to be made available**. This was the main comment made in local authority and in foster carer responses to question 29 and was also mentioned at 4 events. *"Access to other support when in crisis, e.g. a more robust system to support carers out of hours, evenings and weekends. Carers often experience out of hours services as 'hands off'."* (local authority)

8.3.18 Twelve consultees along with attendees at 3 events asked that each carer be provided with a link worker to provide both regular support and other support when needed. A children's charity stated *"A link worker can provide consistency and ongoing personal support and is often highly valued by foster carers as providing continuity throughout changes in placements and placing social workers."*

8.3.19 Ten consultees and a report from a kinship carer event felt that support needed to be consistent, adequate to the needs of carers and accessible and 4 stressed the need for partnership working between all sectors and services involved in care.

8.3.20 There were comments, from 9 consultees, on the need for more funding to provide support services and this was also mentioned at 6 events. *""Increased resources: financial and human!"* (foster care worker). Funding specifically for the voluntary sector was mentioned by 2 consultees from outwith the voluntary sector and at one event. Recruiting extra staff to ensure stability of contact and to reduce caseloads was seen as important by 8 consultees and at 2 events; this would thus ensure staff are able to provide support to carers. Two consultees wanted to see specialist workers for kinship carers and 2 suggested the provision of a helpline specifically for kinship carers. Three consultees wanted to see better or more communication between social work staff and kinship carers and attendees at 3 events also felt this was needed.

8.3.21 Eight consultees and attendees at an event for kinship carers and 2 events for workers in foster care called for equality with foster carers in the support provided, or available, to kinship carers. A kinship carer stressed the need to *"Treat kinship carers equally in all respects, don't treat them as a cheap option to fostering."*

8.3.22 Eight consultees wanted to see consistent, clear, robust guidance, and policies on support for carers; this would be included in their terms and conditions. Clear guidance and access to financial support was important to 6 consultees and was mentioned at 2 events. A children's charity wanted to see *"Clarity on the financial payments available."*

8.3.23 Respite care was again mentioned; by 7 consultees and at 6 events. Some also wanted to see respite activities made available. Respite provision for kinship carers in particular was mentioned at 2 events *"Options of respite for kinship carers is essential. Foster carers have this in place"*(kinship carer). Four consultees suggested the provision of therapeutic services for carers such as well-being therapies; this was also commented on by attendees at an event for foster carers.

8.3.24 Specialist services should be available when needed; 7 consultees (6 local authorities

and one voluntary /charity organisation) commented as did attendees at 4 events. There were some mentions that this access should be as fast as possible. *"Generally, provision of support services to foster carers is good. However, both they and the children placed would benefit from quicker and easier access to CAMHS or equivalent services."* (local authority)

8.3.25 The need for training, to be provided free and updated as required, was identified by 6 consultees and at one event. In addition there should be free childcare for those attending training; this was mentioned by one consultee and at 2 events.

8.3.26 Efforts to raise public awareness of the contribution made by carers would be welcomed by 5 consultees. This was also mentioned at an event for kinship carers.

8.3.27 Other changes to the provision of support suggested by consultees included:

- legal support, especially in cases where allegations have been made (3 consultee comments);
- support for birth children (3 consultees and mentioned at one event);
- access to education, including specialist tutors (3 consultees and 2 events);
- involving carers in planning and development (2 consultees);
- clarification of the definition and status of kinship care (2 consultees and one event);
- opportunities for networking (2 consultees and 2 events);
- improved recruitment and retention (one consultee and one event);
- access to whatever services carers felt necessary (one consultee and one event).

8.3.28 Two consultees suggested that local authorities could learn from independent agencies with Aberlour support services given as a good example.

8.4 FOSTERING SUPPORT SERVICES: CHILDREN'S SERVICES PARTNERSHIPS

Question 30. In addition, we want to know more about the extent to which foster and kinship carers and children and young people are involved in the local planning and improvement process. Are you aware of/have you been involved in any such arrangements? If so, have they involved:

(a) children in foster care or kinship care
(b) foster carers and/or kinship carers
(c) relevant independent agencies.

Table 8.2
Awareness of involving children and young people in the local planning and improvement process

	Indiv (foster carers)	Indiv (kinship carers)	Indiv (other)	Other Prof /Pub	Vol Sect & Ag's	Carer's groups	Local Auth	Unk'n	**TOTAL**
Children	1	-	-	1	2	2	15	1	**22**
Carers	-	-	-	1	2	3	19	2	**27**
Ind. agencies	-	-	-	-	1	2	8	-	**11**

8.4.1 Event reports did not quantify the information at question 30, instead giving commentary on details of involvement. Consultation responses on this question came mainly from local authorities.

If yes, please provide specific details

8.4.2 Six consultees, including 4 foster carers, stated that they had had no involvement, or had no awareness, of involving children or carers in planning and improvement. A fostering charity commented *"We are not aware of any strategic initiative within Scotland involving children in foster care or kinship care in terms of Children's Service Planning on an ongoing or operational basis. There are some examples of children and young people who have been consulted on a sporadic, issue based basis, or within the confines of the Children's Service Plan when it is reviewed. The same applies to both foster carers and kinship carers and relevant independent agencies."* Five consultees agreed that this was underdeveloped but that steps are being taken in some areas to rectify the situation. A local authority said *"We have a fairly newly appointed Consumer Involvement Officer and her net task, after child protection, is to improve involvement of looked after children and young people when they undertake reviews of services."* There were also comments on the current lack of consultation:

- **kinship carers are seldom or never consulted** (7 consultee comments and mentioned at 2 events);
- foster carers are seldom or never consulted (4 consultees);
- children are seldom or never consulted (3 consultees and one event).

8.4.3 The main examples of arrangements reported by consultees included **cases where Looked After Children were consulted on revised procedures, reviews or plans**; 8 consultees (7 local authorities and one voluntary /charity organisation) mentioned that this had happened in their area as did attendees at 3 events. At an event for foster care workers it was reported that children are inadequately considered and that *"Falkirk Council are addressing this by including children and young people in the Service Planning process."*

8.4.4 Eight consultees had experienced the involvement of carers in meetings or other interaction with providers to discuss issues, policies or plans; attendees at 4 events also mentioned that this happens. Five consultees and attendees at 3 events commented that they were aware of carers being invited to attend focus groups or meetings with local authority representatives and other professionals to discuss their opinions. One foster carer event report noted that *"South Lanarkshire Council consulted with their carers on a recent Payment for Skills. All carers views were sought and considered."*

8.4.5 Six consultees reported that children and young people are involved in children's services; Aberdeen and West Lothian were given as examples of areas in which children are encouraged to participate. Children 1st, Primrosehill was mentioned at a foster carer event as having consulted young people on developments.

8.4.6 There were 6 mentions of "Who cares?" as an example of encouraging the involvement of children and young people. One local authority reported *"This Council offered all children and young people the opportunity to comment on the Who Cares? Scotland report of 2003 in order to complete an audit of those recommendations against what this Council provides."*

8.4.7 Four consultees felt that the use of feedback forms and questionnaires was a successful way of allowing carers or young people to put across their views. Foster care workers at one event agreed with this comment.

8.4.8 Young Voice or other forums for young people were mentioned in 3 responses and at an event for foster carers, while 3 consultees and attendees at 3 events wanted to see young people involved in planning meetings and developing services. Two consultees wanted to see children in care and those who had moved on from care involved in developing children's service plans.

8.4.9 Three consultees felt there should be more consultation with foster carer associations.

8.4.10 Three consultees commented on partnership working or other involvement between agencies and local authorities and felt that this should be encouraged.

8.4.11 There were mentions, in 3 responses, that the Foster Carers Consultative Committee involves foster carers in planning and development.

8.4.12 There were two comments on the value of involving young people or carers on fostering panels and 2 consultees mentioned that young people had been involved in developing or reviewing service plans in their local authority area.

8.4.13 At 2 events for foster carers there were comments on policies that are implemented without consultation. This included a ban on foster carers smoking in their homes.


8.5 INSPECTION AND REGULATION

Question 31. Do you think that inspection and regulation arrangements of fostering services and kinship carers are proportionate?

8.5.1 **Twenty-five consultees answered yes**; 20 answered no, 13 gave a qualified answer and 53 did not give an answer.

Chart 8.8
Whether inspection and regulation arrangements of fostering services and kinship carers are proportionate (n=111)
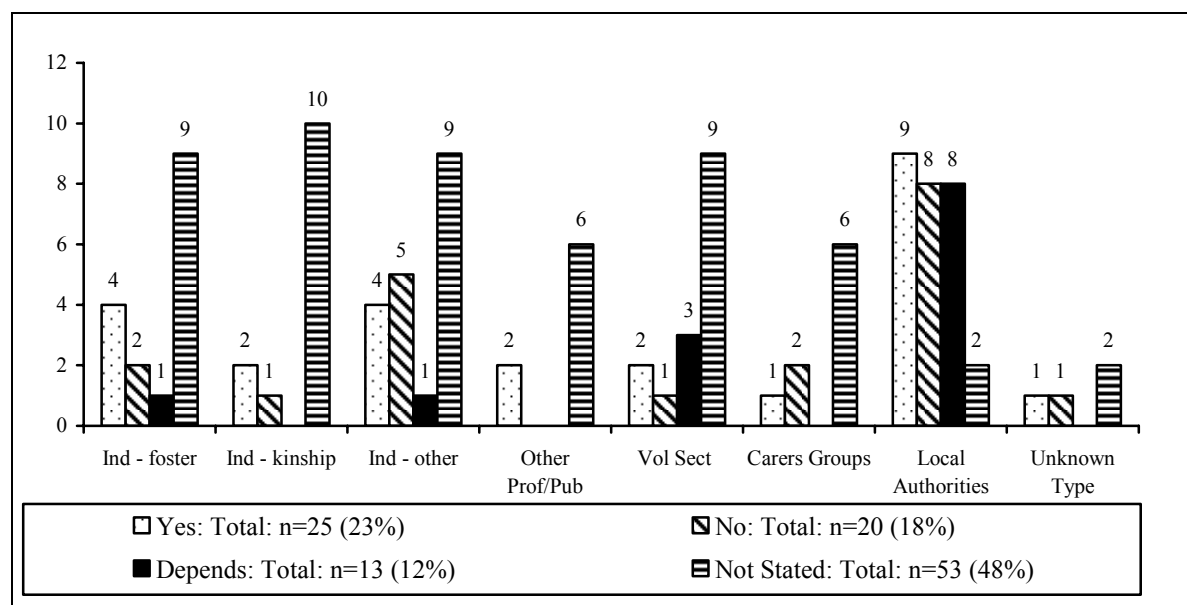
8.5.2   Question 31 was covered at three events for workers in foster care. One report provided data showing 10 attendees answered yes, 5 said no with 1 undecided.

(Please give reasons for your answer)

8.5.3   Thirteen consultees, including 4 foster carers, felt that **the inspection and regulation system is satisfactory and / or appropriate**, whilst 12 consultees, including 8 local authorities, and a report from an event for foster care workers indicated that it was too early to say as the arrangements were still in their infancy. *"At this time given the relative immaturity of the inspection and regulation processes in Scotland in comparison to the rest of the United Kingdom with specific regard to foster care it is perhaps too early to say whether or not the current arrangements for the inspection and registration of family placement services are appropriate"* (fostering charity). Nine consultees and attendees at 1 event said they did not know as they had little experience of the arrangements.

8.4.3   Nine consultees and attendees at one event thought that **the inspection and regulation of kinship carers is in need of clarification** while 8 consultees and foster care workers at one event perceived fostering as being a priority with kinship not being a significant feature of inspection. Furthermore, 4 consultees felt kinship care arrangements were not well specified, but on the other hand 4 consultees were opposed to the regulation or formalisation of kinship care.

> *"Children and young people cared for by family and friends who are not "looked after" are not the concern of the Care Commission as do not fall within the remit of public fostering services. Perhaps greater clarification in the Regulations might mean a more equitable outcome for such children and young people."*
>
> (fostering charity)

8.5.5   Seven consultees and foster care workers at one event felt that the Care Commission focuses on Local Authority and Agency fostering services rather than individual carers, whilst 4 consultees, including 3 voluntary /charity organisations, specifically stated that the inspection process should involve carers more than they currently do. Seven consultees said that the inspections should measure outcomes for children. A charity noted *"There are some anxieties, however, that the inspection and regulatory approach is not frequently 'linked' to the actual outcomes for individual children."*

8.5.6   Seven consultees thought inspections should take place less frequently than once a year and 6 cited either a lack of preparation time for inspections or the burden imposed in using time resources in preparation for inspections.   An individual commented *"Many aspects of good practice are not measurable. Danger that energy will be put into performance indicators relevant to inspection at expense of time given to core elements of service delivery"*

8.5.7   Other comments by small numbers of consultees included:

- Need to streamline the process in terms of sharing information and avoiding duplication (4 comments from local authorities);
- Inspections should focus on all the standards (3 comments);
- Not all standards should be considered at every inspection (3 comments);
- Need more qualitative data in terms of outcomes (3 comments);
- Inspection methodology may need refined (2 comments);
- Need financial inspections (one comment);
- Inconsistent approach by inspectors (one comment).

Question 32. Do you think that the inspectorates and regulatory bodies currently provide adequate cover for the range of activities undertaken by fostering services and kinship carers?

8.5.8   As can be seen in chart 8.9, 17 consultees answered yes; **27 answered no**, 8 gave a qualified answer and 59 did not give an answer.

Chart 8.9
Whether inspectorates and regulatory bodies currently provide adequate cover for the range of activities undertaken by fostering services and kinship carers (n=111)
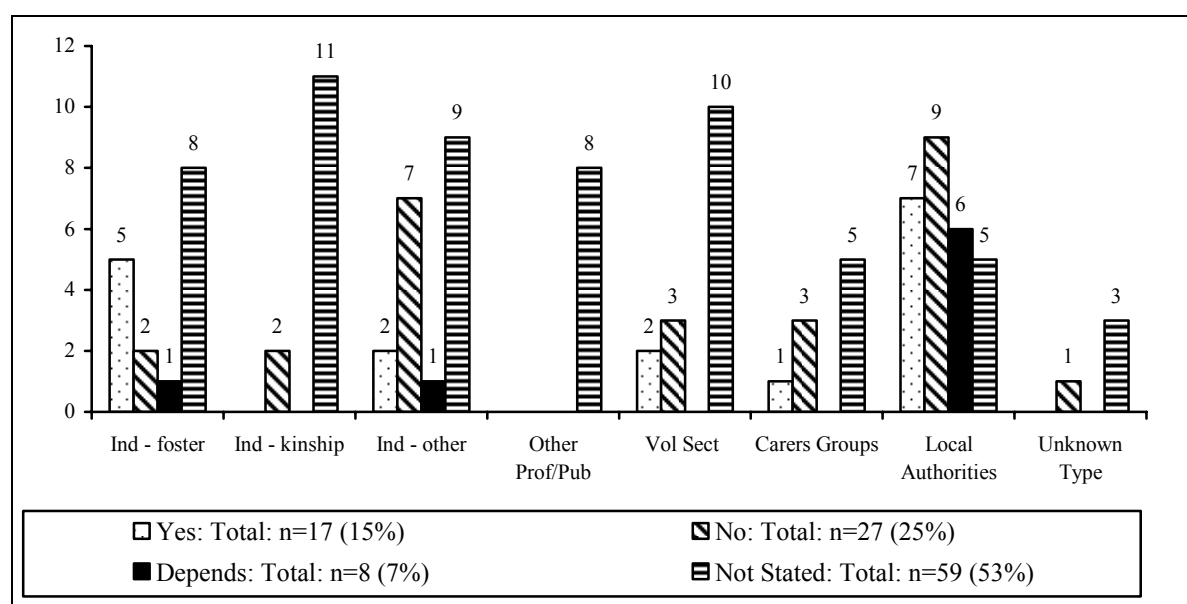
8.5.9   Two event reports returned figures at question 32. At an event for kinship carers 4 attendees said no. Attendees at an event for foster care workers 2 said yes while 1 said no.

(Please give reasons for your answer)

8.5.10 Thirteen consultees stated that **there needs to be more focus on kinship carers in terms of clarifying regulations and legislative impact**. This was the comment made most frequently in relation to question 32 by local authorities and was echoed at 5 events. A local authority felt *"Current service standards for fostering services are extensive and adequately cover the activities of our fostering agency. A deficit is the lack of a national Kinship Carers scheme that could have clear definition of kinship carers and provide adequate funding to provide these services."*

8.5.11 *"We would see an advantage in a yearly review to monitor progress for the child and any emerging changes that meant additional support e.g. at times of stress: transition to secondary school, going on to work/college; coping with teenage years; increasing contact with parents."* (carer's group) Ten consultees and attendees at 4 events saw a need for monitoring children's progress or outcomes and, additionally, foster carers at 2 events and 10 consultees thought there should be more focus on good practice in service delivery rather than exclusively on procedures and regulations. A local authority commented *"The focus during the Care Commission Inspection was on procedure and regulation and not on the whole range of good practice within a service. Wider more in-depth inspection on a less frequent basis would be more productive."*

8.5.12 Seven consultees brought up the need to be able to show service improvements as the regulation and inspection processes develop, in order to make undertaking them worthwhile. This was also mentioned at 4 events; 3 for foster carers and one for kinship carers. *"It is important to ensure that the introduction of any standards and/or inspection processes will*

be advantageous to the carers and children and promote an improvement in the service that they receive" (local authority).

8.5.13 Seven consultees and foster care workers at one event felt it was too early to comment on this topic.

8.5.14 There were a large number of comments by only small numbers of consultees and these included:

- Inspections should take place less frequently (5 consultees and mentioned at 2 events);
- Placements should be available for inspections (3 consultees and mentioned at 5 events);
- Funding and resource issues (3 consultees and mentioned at 7 events);
- Carers should be more involved in the processes (4 consultees and 2 events);
- Provision is adequate / satisfactory / appropriate (4 consultees, including 3 foster carers, and one event);
- Agencies and local authorities need to be inspected more (3 consultees);
- Careful consideration is needed of the issues raised by seeking children's views or inputs (3 consultees and 2 events);
- Don't know / don't know enough to comment (3 consultees and similar comments at 5 events);
- Carer's Rights Officer should be appointed (2 consultees);
- Consistency and equity needs to be ensured in measuring or enforcing across all sectors (2 consultees);
- Useful practices could be copied from England and Wales (2 consultees);
- Provision is adequate for fostering services (2 consultees and one event);
- There is not enough cover for private fostering (one consultee and one event);
- Respite carers could be improved (one consultee);
- Transport should have checks (one consultee);
- There is too much duplication / should be a single set of standards (one consultee);
- Rules and regulations tend to be changed without any thought as to implementation (one consultee);
- children need to be allowed to take risks in order to develop (2 events).

8.5.15 Looking at comments on regulatory inspections for kinship carers specifically, these included the need for every placement to be available for inspection; a carer's group felt that inspectorates and regulatory bodies should choose which placements to visit. Two local authorities commented that there no inspectorates or regulatory bodies for kinship carers and a fostering agency made a similar comment. A foster carer felt this depended on the definition of kinship carer being used as did another local authority. Another local authority commented that they were unclear as to what was proposed for kinship care inspection, while another felt *"Additional focus on kinship care would raise its profile."* There was a comment, again for a local authority, that there is too much duplication; this consultee saw a need for a single set of standards. **Comments made at kinship carer events indicate a lack of experience amongst kinship carers of inspections and concern that kinship carers are not covered by current standards**; one kinship carer felt this indicated that regulatory bodies are not interested in children in kinship care situations. There were comments that these would be welcomed.

CHAPTER 9: ADDITIONAL COMMENTS AND SUMMARY

9.1 ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Finally, consultees were asked *"If you wish to add any additional relevant issues, please do so below."*

9.1.1   Additional comments mainly included background information on the consultee or reiteration of points covered in previous questions; the main recurring comment was on the need to support kinship carers (10 mentions). The need for extra support for foster carers was mentioned in 4 responses.   Issues of how any proposed changes would be funded or general comments on the need for more funding appeared again in 8 responses. In particular, extra funding needs were anticipated:

- children's service budgets are under serious pressure;
- more financial burdens will arise in the form of:
  - permitting young persons to remain in their foster home after turning eighteen, if desired;
  - more carers to support current carers;
  - national protocol for allegations;
  - ensuring that kinship care is much more widely available to children;
  - publicise private fostering;
  - recruitment campaigns at national & local levels;
  - incorporating respite care and preventative work.
- kinship care can only achieve a statutory foundation with proper financial backing and appropriate legislative change.

9.1.2   Other, additional, points included 2 mentions of backdating tax credits where foster carers have been involved in caring before the introduction of tax credits. There was also a call for pension rights to be provided from the outset of caring and that these should not be on a claim or lose basis.

9.1.3   A mention that, in keeping with Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC), all policies must be child-centred and 2 comments on confusion in kinship and looked after categories, including one that this contradicts GIRFEC principles. There was a comment that the organic and shifting definitions of kinship care means that the role of fostering care has seemed unclear at times.

9.1.4   The strategy should also address the needs of children and young people who move between foster and residential care.

9.1.5   A specific call for the term 'particular circumstance' to be dropped as this was seen to encourage organisations to opt out of paying kinship carers under section 50.

9.1.6   One response, from lawyers acting on behalf of a fostering agency, dealt solely with *"a significant anomaly in current law and practice"* with regards to the exclusion of non-voluntary organisations. This is at odds with the situation in England and Wales and was seen as an *"arbitrary barrier"* to their operation, violates the principle of equal treatment and constitutes a breach of EU law.

9.1.7　Two kinship carers detailed their own experiences and the obstacles they encounter in their role.

9.1.8　There were 2 calls for kinship and foster care to be treated in separate strategies.

9.1.9　There were comments, from 3 consultees that current practice appears more focussed on finance than on the wellbeing of children in care. COSLA felt that any national strategy needs to be child-focused, but that the involvement of other individuals, family members and the state need to be clarified; this will, in turn, help the public to understand the available alternatives to state provision.

9.1.10　There was a call for children and young people to be involved in developing the strategy while 2 consultees stressed the need for children to be given a say or a choice in their placement.

9.1.11　There was a cautionary note that the Scottish Executive and local government need to work jointly and further that the Integrated Children's Services should be responsible for both fostering and kinship care and for providing leadership at both political and officer levels.

9.1.12　Additional comments from the Fostering Network events also mainly reiterated earlier comments and these included the need to value foster carers through financial, training and other support, respecting their input, putting foster care on a professional footing. Again, support for kinship carers was mentioned as was the feeling of inequality with foster carers and there were also mentions that it appears to kinship carers that children in kinship care are discriminated against in relation to those in foster care because of a lack of financial and other support. Concerns were again raised over the need for extra resources to be put into supporting fostering services.

9.1.13　Further comments from events included the impact of what one foster carer described as *"a drugs epidemic"* on the number of children and young people in need of care.

9.1.14　There were 2 further calls to separate kinship and foster care into two strategies, a comment that the definition of kinship care is too narrow and again concern that there is an emphasis on the needs of looked after children rather than children in need which is inconsistent with the principles of GIRFEC.

9.1.15　One foster care worker asked whether the strategy would look at *"the changing role men can play in young people's lives given lack of the male role models."*

9.1.16　There was a comment on the need to tailor resources to individual children.

9.1.17　Finally, young people at the fostering network consultations were asked what they would like to say to those developing the strategy:

- *"To get a grip, grow up and let folk who they haven't let foster before, foster.*
- *Get involved with young people.*
- *Age limit: up to Foster Carers as to when Young Person moves out.*
- *Shouldn't be an age limit.*
- *Support when leaving care.*
- *Listen to young people and foster carers to see what needs to be changed*

when making rules and regulations - Ministers don't have the experience.
- *Why should friend's mums etc be police checked. It stigmatises us and doesn't respect confidentiality (some people may not know that you are in foster care).*
- *You would not police check your own children's friends mum and dad.*
- *Why should we need to go through this?*
- *Cut out some of the red tape!*
- *All this will fit into the Ministers report about education (We Can and Must Do Better).*
- *Make it better.*
- *Make it worthwhile.*
- *Don't mess our lives up any more than it already has been.*
- *Make it better not worse.*
- *Help get support to those who are in dire need of it.*
- *Make a difference.*
- *Don't sit and listen - hear and do something about it!"*

9.2   SUMMARY

9.2.1   There were a range of responses from a variety of viewpoints; both from organisations and from individuals acting as carers. Of those commenting at most questions, there were generally higher numbers of consultees answering positively than negatively, although high proportions of consultees did not provide definitive responses to questions.

9.2.2   Comments on the need for financial support occurred frequently across most questions in the consultation. Funding for the provision of training and support by local authorities as well as increased assistance for carers was one of the key themes in the consultation responses. When asked about standard versus minimum fees and allowances, consultees voiced more support for standard rates and the greatest support was for a standard rate of allowance.

9.2.3   The need for both respite and 24 hours support for carers was another theme which appeared often in responses and consultees again commented on the need for increased funding and staffing levels to provide these.

9.2.4   Consultees identified a need for an increased pool of available carers; as well as more social work or other professional staff to provide assessment and support to both carers and to children and young people. Word of mouth was seen as the best method of recruitment.

9.2.5   Parity with foster carers in terms of financial assistance, support and recognition for kinship carers emerged in responses and event reports. This was not only seen in comments from kinship carers themselves but also from local authorities and other organisations. There were also comments on the very different nature of these two caring roles and, while consultees agreed that kinship carers should be entitled to more support these differences would necessitate different methods of delivery.

9.2.6   There was widespread support for enabling young people to stay in care for as long as they, and their carers, required. Support for carers to enable them to continue to care for young people reaching adulthood would be required, comments were mainly on the need for

continuing financial arrangements but there were also some on the need for extra training in dealing with young people moving on.

9.2.7   On the subject of registration, comments indicated that training, development and assessment were more important in improving the foster care service rather than simply a process of registration.   While more consultees felt that registration would improve the service than did not, local authorities disagreed.

9.2.8   In relation to the protocols surrounding allegations, the main comments were on the need for speedy resolutions and for support for all involved.

9.2.9   Looking at the main respondent groups the main focus of comments for each group was as follows:

- **kinship carers**: the need to be given access to the same financial and other support normally given to foster carers but with an understanding and consideration of the differences between the two types of care. Some of the individual carer responses and reports from the events for kinship carers gave details of the hardship and difficulties they face.
- **foster carers**: foster carer responses include calls for the professionalistion of their role. Associated with this were comments that they do not feel their opinions and experience are valued by professional staff. Extra funding to provide an adequate, realistic standard allowance and to provide money for repairing and replacing household items and transport seen as necessary.
- **local authorities**: agreed with the need to provide extra support to both foster and kinship carers but pointed out that extra monies would have to be made available from central funds to allow this to happen. The "other" group of individuals made broadly similar comments to those seen in local authority responses; this may indicate that many of those in this category perhaps work within the foster care service.
- **voluntary / charity organisations along with fostering organisations and carer's groups:** tended to make comments similar to those given by carers.
- **young people:** wanted to have more say in their placements and also demonstrated considerable understanding of the needs of foster carers.   They were strongly supportive of changing the current system to allow young people to remain with their carer after the age of 18.

9.2.10 Looking across questions, those responding positively to one question generally gave a positive response to other questions in the same section. This was, however, not the case in relation to mandatory training. While 68 consultees were in favour of mandatory training for foster carers, less than half (31) of those saying yes were also in favour of mandatory training for kinship carers.

9.2.11 It is clear that this consultation has given individuals and organisations the opportunity to present a wide range of views on the development of the National Fostering and Kinship Care Strategy. While the strategy was generally welcomed across all categories of respondent, many felt that the details and financial implications needed for carers, both foster and kinship, play a crucial role in helping some of the most vulnerable children and young people in society and young people themselves when asked what makes for an ideal carer gave many answers; patience, caring, forgiveness and good listening skills were mentioned most frequently.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX 1: CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

(TO BE APPENDED BY SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE)

APPENDIX 2: FOREWORD TO THE DOCUMENT SUBMITTED BY THE FOSTERING NETWORK FOLLOWING THEIR EVENTS

Introduction

On behalf of the Scottish Executive, the Fostering Network facilitated a series of six consultation events across Scotland in January – February 2007 to allow the opportunity to respond to the National Fostering and Kinship Care Strategy.

The events took place in Edinburgh, Kilmarnock, Perth, Inverness, Aberdeen and Glasgow and involved kinship carers, foster carers and practitioners from throughout the country. In total, 50 agencies were represented, including 28 of the 32 local authorities, 13 independent and voluntary fostering providers and 8 kinship carer support groups. In total, 150 delegates participated, 28 kinship carers, 61 foster carers and 61 practitioners.

Methodology

To capture the views of the participants, a variety of methods were used.

Individual responses

The questions discussed within the consultation events were extracted directly from the Strategy. Given the timescale involved in the consultation process, and the events themselves, the events provided the opportunity to focus specifically on those questions more relevant to the particular area of expertise of the groups present i.e. as a kinship carer, (Qu's. 5, 15-16, 18-20, 27-30, 32), a foster carer, (Qu's 1-3, 5, 7-14, 18-20, 27-30, 32), or a practitioner (Qu's 1-5, 7-13, 27-32).

These questions were issued in advance of the meetings to allow delegates to discuss with colleagues, friends, family, and were used by delegates during the day to record any further thoughts they wished to add to the discussion, returning these at the close of the meetings. (Blank sets of questions are appended to this report).

A total of 94 'individual responses' were returned to the Fostering Network. 17 kinship carer, 45 foster carer and 32 practitioner responses. These individual responses have been collated into this report.

Group responses

At each of the six events, participants were allocated groups dependent on their area of 'expertise' i.e. their background, whether it be kinship carer, foster carer of practitioner.

The views of the groups have been recorded and included in this report.

APPENDIX 3: QUESTION 28 GRIDS FROM EVENTS

Training and development opportunities that would be welcomed - *WORKERS*

	for foster carers		*for kinship carers*	
	mandatory	**optional**	**mandatory**	**optional**
Easier access to a Scottish Vocational Qualification	9	17		19
Training for the pre-selection and selection process	21	4	N/A	N/A
Following approval as a foster carer	22	2	N/A	N/A
Child development issues and good practice in managing behaviour	28		11	13
Legislation awareness (including relevant regulations and standards)	24	3	9	13
Own local authority's plans for improving foster services in the local area	12	14	2	12

Training and development opportunities that would be welcomed– *KINSHIP CARERS*

	for foster carers		*for kinship carers*	
	mandatory	**optional**	**mandatory**	**optional**
Easier access to a Scottish Vocational Qualification	1	1		6
Training for the pre-selection and selection process	1		N/A	N/A
Following approval as a foster carer	1		N/A	N/A
Child development issues and good practice in managing behaviour	1	1	3	9
Legislation awareness (including relevant regulations and standards)	2		2	9
Own local authority's plans for improving foster services in the local area		2	1	8

Training and development opportunities that would be welcomed– *FOSTER CARERS*

	for foster carers		*for kinship carers*	
	mandatory	optional	mandatory	optional
Easier access to a Scottish Vocational Qualification	28	16	11	12
Training for the pre-selection and selection process	32	4	N/A	N/A
Following approval as a foster carer	34	5	N/A	N/A
Child development issues and good practice in managing behaviour	38	1	16	6
Legislation awareness (including relevant regulations and standards)	36	5	10	10
Own local authority's plans for improving foster services in the local area	32	10	10	8

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