



NSW CARER SURVEY 2022

REPORT OF FINDINGS



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My Forever Family NSW acknowledges the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first inhabitants of the nation and the traditional custodians of the lands where we live, learn and work.

Our program supports the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principles that aim to ensure that intervention into family life does not disconnect children from their family and culture.

The My Forever Family NSW program is funded by the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) and operated by Adopt Change.

FOREWORD

The last few challenging years have really brought home to all of us just how important carers are, not only for children in out-of-home care (OOHC) but for the entire NSW community. If there was ever any doubt, it is now abundantly clear we can't take carers, their support needs or their invaluable contribution for granted.

The NSW Carer Survey is a central part of the work My Forever Family NSW does to listen, hear and understand the lived experience of carers, distil their key needs and share these insights with the OOHC sector and the NSW Government. This 2022 Carer Survey Report is a rich source of data outlining the experience of carers and the evidence-based policies that will improve their ability to care for the children in OOHC. When coupled with the Advocate for Children and Young People's Report, the *Voices of Children and Young People in Out-of-Home Care*, also released this year, this Carer Survey Report provides a clear, concrete roadmap to improve the lives of children in OOHC.

Significantly, the survey results continue in similarity to previous Carer Surveys including that conducted in 2020. In the 2022 Carer Survey, carers told us the top three supports they need for the children and young people in their care are counselling/psychologist services, behaviour support and specialist medical care. In 2020, carers told us financial support, specialised carer support services and respite care were the top three supports they needed. The needs of carers and children in their care remain consistent and well identified, meaning the solutions to better supporting carers, children and outcomes have a tangible and clear roadmap without any guesswork required.

The consistency of these findings is compelling. These asks from carers are tangible and achievable, and have the capacity to make an immediate and ongoing impact on the lives and trajectories of children in OOHC.

The sustained levels of carer satisfaction and relatively strong levels of carer wellbeing reflected in this survey are a credit to the efforts of those in the sector who have worked to support carers through a very difficult few years. However, the survey also shows us that while not every carer experiences

challenges, there is still a sustained, critical need for additional support for carers in NSW. With appropriate resourcing from the NSW Government and a renewed commitment from the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) and agencies we are confident that we can all work together to meet the needs of carers outlined in this report.

This report tells stories of care and great commitment:

- 76% rated their sense of achievement and fulfilment as 7 out of 10 or higher, with 18% scoring the highest rating of 10.
- 61% were very satisfied or satisfied with the process of becoming a carer
- 27% have been a carer for 6-10 years

The report also contains evidence of considerable struggle and perseverance:

- 62% of respondents reported that counselling or psychologist services were needed for children in their care
- 59% reported a need for behaviour support – 34% indicated they always or mostly received this support when needed, while 30% indicated that they never received this support when needed

The report also shows us where improvements are needed:

- An increase in Aboriginal Carers is needed as well as ensuring non-Aboriginal carers are provided with cultural training when Aboriginal children are in their care. Almost a third (30%) of respondents who did not identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander reported having Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children in their care.
- 12% of kinship carers reported they never received the support they needed from their caseworker/case manager, compared with 10% of foster carers
- 41% of carers surveyed reported they were very likely or likely to recommend becoming a carer; 27% were neutral and 32% were unlikely or very unlikely to recommend caring

This last statistic is particularly concerning when viewed in the context of the body of research which has identified that word of mouth is key to recruitment – satisfied carers can interest others in caring. The survey responses provide clear and tangible directions for improvement moving forward: increased agency accountability and caseworker follow up, along with greater financial support for medical and educational expenses. These will see both increased carer satisfaction and retention, but also likelihood of positive word of mouth and the flow on effect to welcoming new carers to the role.

Each of us within the sector, including My Forever Family NSW, play an important role in ensuring carers are able to focus their energy on the children in their care and not the challenges they may face in the OOHC system. We look forward to connecting with carers and the wider sector in the first half of 2023 at the My Forever Family NSW Carer Forum to discuss these findings and to create a plan of action. Coming together is an opportunity to respond to the experience of carers at a systems level and demonstrate a genuine willingness to implement changes to ensure that carers are supported by the wider OOHC system that they are part of.

We look forward to working with the NSW Government and our colleagues in the OOHC sector this year and beyond to make measurable in-roads to support carers to support children. On behalf of us all, we sincerely thank carers for their contribution to this survey and most importantly for the love and support they provide the children in their care.

Renee Carter
CEO
Adopt Change

Dara Read
Sector Engagement and
Advocacy Lead
My Forever Family NSW

AT A GLANCE

My Forever Family NSW Carer Survey 2022

Who responded?

1,897 carers
16% of carer households¹



13% identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander



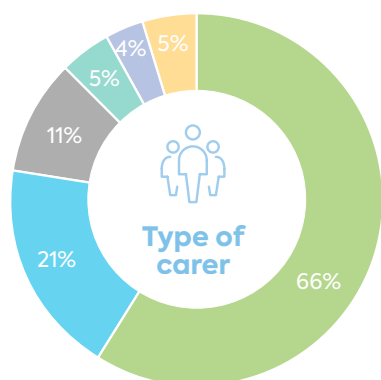
37% had Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children in their care



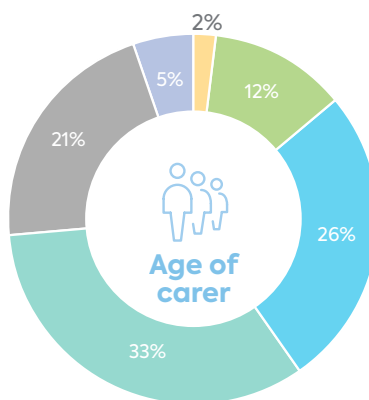
8% of carer households spoke a language other than English at home



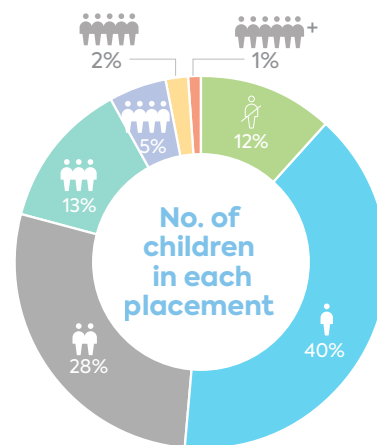
6 carers participated in in-depth telephone interviews²



- Foster carer
- Relative / kinship carer – grandparent
- Relative / kinship carer – other
- Guardian – relative / kin of child from out of home care
- Guardian – non-related to child from out of home care
- Adoptive parent



- 18-30
- 41-50
- 61-70
- 31-40
- 51-60
- 71-100



What would make carers more likely to promote the caring role?



More agency accountability



Better caseworker follow up



Improved financial support for medical and educational expenses

Training topics carers want most



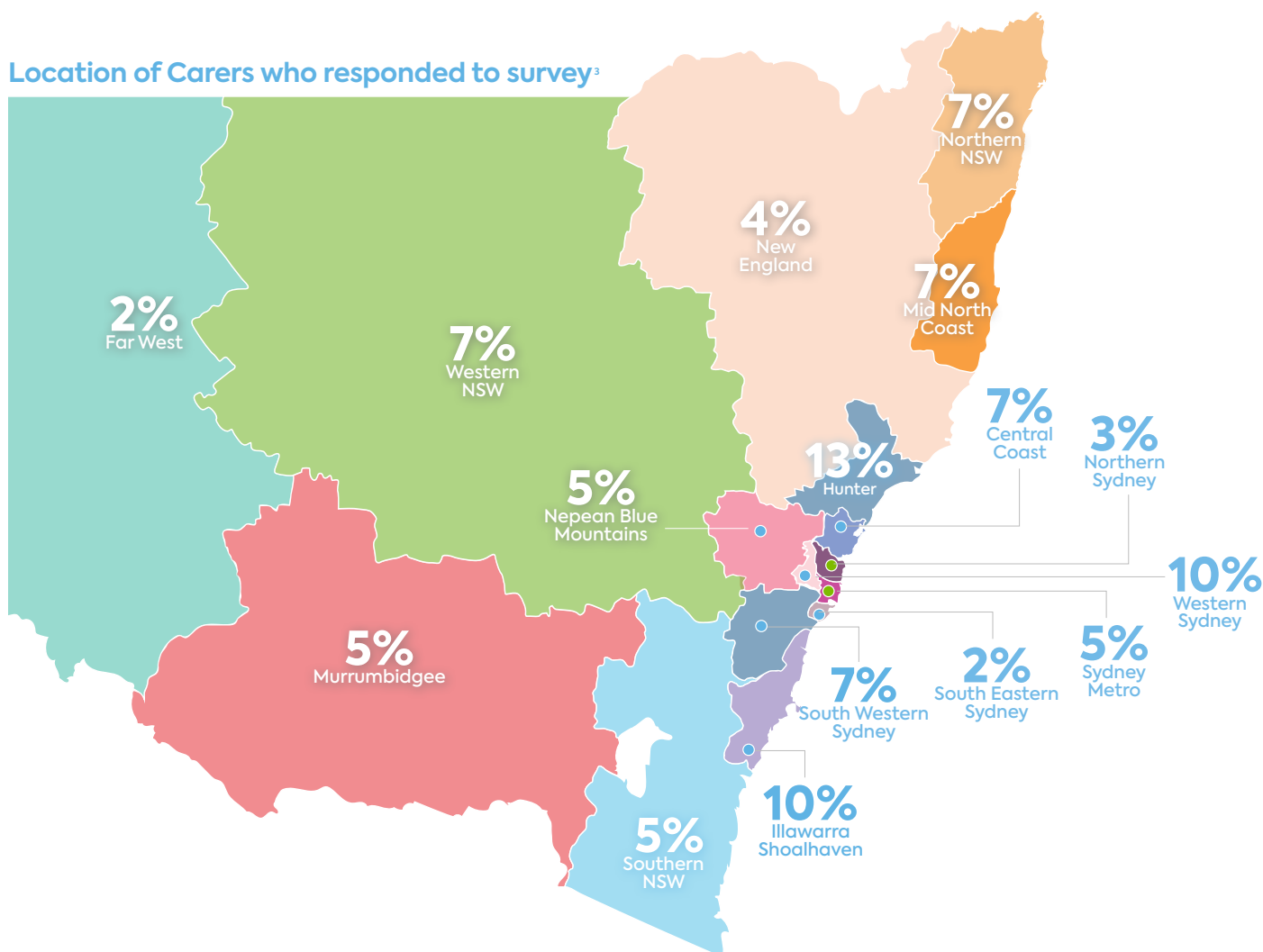
- Challenging behaviours/behaviour support
- Healing from trauma
- Advocating for kids in their care
- Self-care for carers

1. 11,625 carer households at 30 June 2022 according to NSW Carers Register

2. Sample selection described in subsequent section of this report

3. Due to rounding, may not equal 100%

Location of Carers who responded to survey³



228

carers were authorised for the first time in the last 12 months

61%

of carers authorised in the last 12 months were satisfied or very satisfied with the process of becoming a carer

34%

of carers reported that they felt stressed quite often or all the time

46%

of carers always or mostly received the support they needed from their caseworker/case manager to care for the child/ren in their care



Carer support needs

The top three supports that carers reported they needed for the children and young people in their care were:

62%

Counselling/psychologist services

59%

Behaviour support

46%

Specialist medical care

The most common supports carers reported being unable to access for children in their care in the last 12 months were:

239

Behaviour support

226

Counselling / psychologist

198

Additional financial support

186

Formal respite care



Satisfaction with My Forever Family NSW services in the last 12 months:

78%

satisfied with the customer service received

75%

satisfied with the information provided on caring for children

72%

satisfied with training events

62%

satisfied with support provided to talk through an issue

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Carer acknowledgement

The My Forever Family NSW Carer Survey provides a vital source of information on carer experiences and needs. The NSW Carer Survey 2022 (“Carer Survey”) received close to 1,900 responses from carers across the state.

The Carer Survey consisted of 44 questions, with most carers completing the whole survey. In addition to the Carer Survey, a small selection of carers participated in one on one telephone interviews to share their experiences as a carer in further detail, allowing narrative analysis of carer experiences to highlight trends emerging from the Carer Survey.

My Forever Family NSW recognises the contribution of these carers and values the time taken to share their experiences and provide feedback. We further recognise the cultural knowledge shared by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers who participated in the process.

Without the generous support of carers, this report would not be possible. Thank you to the carers who responded to the Carer Survey and participated in interviews to articulate carer needs, supporting NSW to meet the needs of children and young people across the state. Whilst this report includes quotes from some interview and survey respondents, every carer who responded to the survey provided valuable input which helped to inform this report.

This report provides an important insight into carer views and experiences within the out-of-home care (OOHC) system in New South Wales (NSW) in the last 12 months. The Carer Survey findings can help to inform practice, programs and systems by highlighting the various supports that carers require from their caseworker, their agencies and other services, the challenges that carers face, the rewards of caring and the factors that would encourage carers to recommend caring to others.

The feedback provided by carer respondents is instrumental in supporting the OOHC sector to undertake strategic planning, informing best practice to improve carer experience, recruiting and retaining carers. Through the Carer Survey, carer voices inform the activities of My Forever Family NSW, service providers, peaks and the NSW Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) to ensure that supports are tailored to best meet carers’ needs and the needs of the children in their care.

Background

My Forever Family NSW, established in 2018, is funded by DCJ and is operated by Adopt Change in collaboration with key contributors Professor Paul Chandler (University of Wollongong) and Continuum Consulting. My Forever Family NSW works in collaboration with the NSW OOHC sector, including peaks and service providers. My Forever Family NSW’s role is focused on supplementing and coordinating recruitment, support, training, and advocacy for carers in the NSW OOHC system.

The NSW Carer Survey 2022 builds on the results of the previous surveys conducted by My Forever Family NSW in 2019 and 2020.

The role of carers is essential in enabling children and young people who require care to thrive. The Carer Survey provides the sector with a unique understanding of the perspective of carers, the challenges they experience and opportunities to provide support to ensure they are best placed to meet the needs of children and young people.

The NSW Carer Survey 2022

The NSW Carer Survey 2022 was conducted in August and September 2022, with a target audience of NSW-based foster carers, relative/ kinship carers, guardians and adoptive parents.

The online and paper-based Carer Survey was designed to be completed in under 15 minutes, and consisted of 44 items in which carers reported on the following factors:

- Carer demographics
- Recruitment experiences
- Overall satisfaction with the carer experience
- Supports received and perceived needs
- Training and development
- Wellbeing and connection
- Experience and satisfaction with services provided by My Forever Family NSW.

Alongside the Carer Survey, a subset of interviews were conducted to explore the views of carers and their needs.

Key findings

The 2022 Carer Survey had 1,897 respondents, with key findings outlined below and presented in more detail in the subsequent sections of this report.

Carer recruitment experiences

Carer's experiences during recruitment can have lasting impacts on their retention. In this Carer Survey:

- The majority (87%) of Carer Survey respondents had been carers for over 12 months.
- Of the 228 respondent carers authorised for the first time in the last 12 months, 61% reported they were satisfied or very satisfied with the process of becoming a carer.
- 44% of carers authorised in the last 12 months indicated that more training or information on how to access support would have better prepared them for the placement of the child/ren in their care, and 39% wanted more information about the child.

Carer suggestions to increase likelihood of promoting caring to others

Word of mouth recommendations can be powerful to support carer recruitment. Carers were asked how likely they are to recommend becoming a carer to others:

- New carers were more likely to recommend becoming a carer to others (55%) compared to carers who have been authorised over 12 months ago (41%).
- Carers over 70 were most likely to recommend becoming a carer, with 59% saying they would recommend.
- The top three ranked factors carers indicated would increase their likelihood of recommending caring to others were **more agency accountability** (31%), **caseworkers following up on what they say they will do** (19%) and **improved financial support for medical and educational expenses** (16%).

Carer support needs

Carers shared their experiences of both requesting supports and receiving supports. It is notable these rates were consistent with previous Carer Surveys, highlighting the ongoing nature of these experiences and needs:

- Just 50% of carers reported they always or mostly received the support they needed from their case worker or case manager.
- Foster carers were more likely to indicate that they had received the support they needed from their caseworker / case manager (49%) compared to relative and kinship carers (41%).
- 54% of carers surveyed reported having sought support from My Forever Family NSW in the past 12 months.

Unmet needs of children in care

The most common support needs carers reported being unable to access for children in their care in the last 12 months were:

- **Specialist carer support services** (54%)
- **Additional financial support** (45%)
- **Support with the restoration of children in their care** (41%).

Other supports carers reported not being able to access include informal and formal respite care and specialist education support. These support needs remain similar to those raised by carers in the previous 2020 Carer Survey.

Relative and kinship carers were more likely to report not receiving support when needed than foster carers, indicating opportunities for targeted support to this cohort.

Carer training and development

Within both interviews and the Carer Survey, carers emphasised the value of training and development opportunities:

- The topics carers would most like training on are dealing with challenging behaviours/ behavioural support (50%), healing from trauma (46%) and advocating for kids in their care (32%).
- 30% of carers indicated they prefer to access face to face training. Interviewees highlighted the benefits of face to face training in allowing the building of rapport and relationships with trainers and carers.
- 42% of respondents preferred to access online training in a live or pre-recorded format.
- 71% of carers who preferred live or pre-recorded online training found it easier to make time for this type of training.
- 28% of carers preferred to access a combination of face to face, live online and pre-recorded training options, indicating a hybrid model of training is valuable to the carer population.

Carer wellbeing, satisfaction and connection

Alongside a continued focus on carer connection, this Carer Survey introduced a range of questions on carer wellbeing. The Carer Survey identified:

- Overall, 66% of carers reported they are satisfied or very satisfied with their role as a carer. Carers aged over 60 reported a higher sense of satisfaction, with 78% being either satisfied or very satisfied in their role as a carer, compared with 62% of carers aged 60 or under.
- While on average, carers responding to the survey rated the three wellbeing measures (personal health and wellbeing, sense of connection with others, sense of achievement and fulfillment) higher than the general population, they also reported experiencing moderate to high levels of stress.
- On average, foster carers rated their personal health and wellbeing as higher than the average satisfaction with health in Australia.
- Foster carers rated all three wellbeing measures slightly higher than relative and kinship carers. Relative and kinship carers also reported higher levels of stress.

- Many carers who had connected with others indicated that these connections were beneficial. Others indicated they were unaware of carer support groups and reported not having received any information regarding ways to connect with other carers.
- Receiving more information about the child, talking with another carer and self-care for carers were also commonly reported needs.

Whilst unable to be compared to previous Carer Surveys as these items were newly integrated into the Carer Survey for 2022, this data provides a baseline to monitor ongoing wellbeing of carers over time.

Feedback on My Forever Family NSW

Identifying ways to better meet the needs of carers is a key focus for My Forever Family NSW, who supports carers across the state. The survey findings provide opportunities for continuous improvement and provide valuable feedback on the assistance provided to carers by My Forever Family NSW. Survey responses indicated:

- The majority (91%) of carers had heard of My Forever Family NSW before completing the Carer Survey. Over 61% of respondents heard about My Forever Family NSW through their agency or DCJ.
- Carers who contacted My Forever Family NSW in the last 12 months were most satisfied with the information provided about caring for children (75%) and the customer service they received (78%).

The recommendations highlighted in Section 2 below identify opportunities to support improvements in ongoing strategic policy planning and practice to support carers across NSW.

This report outlines findings from the NSW Carer Survey 2022, including an overview of the sector context, Carer Survey design and methodology and key recommendations to support carers to continue to care, providing a vital role to children and young people across NSW.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations have been drawn from the findings of the NSW Carer Survey 2022 and interviews described within this report.

The data gathered through the Carer Survey and targeted interviews highlights opportunities to continue to support carers. These recommendations are designed to support the sector to best meet the needs of carers, thereby supporting carers to ensure children and young people are provided with the care they require to thrive.

Recommendation 1: **Improve awareness and accessibility of supports available to carers**

Across various items in the Carer Survey and within interviews, many carers discussed their information needs, and the challenges they face in knowing where and how to access supports such as advocacy and training. Given this, there are clear opportunities to support carers through linkage to existing resources.

There are a range of existing resources which can support carers in their care journey. These include information and resources available through My Forever Family NSW, DCJ and other evidence-informed services such as Raising Children Network. Regularly providing easy to access listings which outline the supports available to carers may assist to address this need.

A significant number of carers indicated that information on how to access support would have assisted and prepared them for the placement of children in their care. Such feedback highlights opportunities for caseworkers and agencies to better link new carers with quality resources, alongside profiling these resources to support carers through their care journey.

Recommendation 2: **Increase Aboriginal carers and the availability of culturally appropriate supports for carers of Aboriginal children**

Both survey results and interviews suggested a need for more Aboriginal carers in the OOHC system as well as a need for tailored and culturally appropriate supports to enable carers to care for Aboriginal children. Given the continued over-representation of Aboriginal children within the OOHC system and placement with non-Indigenous carers, this is an area of clear priority. While 12% of responding carers identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, 37% of carers reported having Aboriginal children in their care. This highlights a significant need for support to ensure children's cultural needs are met, particularly where they are placed with non-Aboriginal identifying carers.

Increasing culturally appropriate supports, including training for carers of Aboriginal children will assist children to remain connected to their culture and foster pride in their cultural identity. This is of utmost importance where the carer has a different cultural background to the child/ren or young person in their care.

Recommendation 3: **Increase mechanisms to support agency accountability and communication**

Through both surveys and interviews, carers raised concerns regarding a lack of follow through and accountability for both agencies and DCJ. Likewise, survey data highlighted that carers wanted improved communication with agencies and greater follow through from caseworkers. A significant proportion of carers also indicated a need for more information about the child/ren in their care and greater involvement in decision-making in relation to the child/ren in their care.

Accountability was highlighted as a key driver of poor carer experiences within interviews, with carers indicating that they felt accountability mechanisms were heavily weighted towards carer responsibilities rather than agency follow through.

It is recommended that My Forever Family NSW works with DCJ to explore a mechanism to enhance and monitor agency accountability and communication, transparency and engagement with carers.

Recommendation 4: **Ensure a blend of training delivery to enable participation and meet individual learning styles**

Survey responses indicate carers frequently engage in training and were generally satisfied when participating in training and development activities. The high levels of satisfaction reported by carers with training suggests these activities enable carers to meet the needs of the children and young people for whom they are caring.

While Carer Survey data indicated online training modes were well received, some carers indicated they would appreciate more face to face options to enable deeper interactions with other carers and facilitators.

Through interviews, carers shared that in-person training provided opportunities to share and connect with other carers, building their support network in a way that online modes of delivery often do not readily enable.

Providing a variety of training and connection formats to support participation of carers in these activities is likely to assist meeting carer needs.

Recommendation 5: **Increase the availability of specific supports to address unmet carer needs**

The level of support needs reported by carers in the Carer Survey echoed those of previous surveys, with similar types of unmet support needs highlighted by carers.

Carers reported having unmet support needs including additional specialist carer support services, financial support (above their carer allowance) and support with the restoration of the children in their care and respite care.

Alongside this, carers reported a desire for training on managing challenging behaviour as a key need. Trauma-informed supports including both training and access to psychological and other tailored specialist medical care services were also cited in surveys and interviews as a key need. Taken together, it is evident there continues to be ongoing opportunities to provide more intensive supports to carers to meet the needs of children in their care.

A range of additional support opportunities were highlighted by carers to strengthen their ability to provide care to children and young people in need. Their perceptions are discussed in further detail in the subsequent sections of this report through survey and interview findings.

3. CURRENT CONTEXT

The NSW 2022 Carer Survey is set in a context in which NSW and the carer community is emerging from COVID-19 lockdowns and pandemic response. Numerous studies have highlighted the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on foster carers, children and young people in OOHC, with this impact acutely felt by some carers⁴.

The previous Carer Survey occurred during the 'first wave' of COVID-19 in Australia. The current 2022 Carer Survey is set in a post-lockdown context, with NSW having experienced long lockdowns which had a range of impacts on children, young people and families across NSW. These included the need to school some children from home, increased mental health needs and some uncertainty relating to work and changes to ways of working. These are all likely to have significantly impacted current foster carers, relative and kinship carers, guardians and adoptive parents, alongside children and young people in care. The current survey explores these areas by integrating a focus on carer wellbeing.

Added to these complexities, there are a range of constraints in the number of carers and their availability across NSW. These include the existing aging population of the carer pool, which impacts on the sector's ability to meet the care needs of children and young people requiring placements. The survey's focus on demographic analysis of the existing carer pool enables the sector to consider its recruitment and support planning to best meet these emerging needs.

Since the Safe Home for Life reforms in 2014, the NSW OOHC sector has continued to focus on achieving permanency for children in care. This has included a transition through the Permanency Support Program to achieve permanency for children and young people in care, whether through restoration, guardianship or adoption.

Alongside these trends, across the sector there has been growing emphasis of the importance of supporting families through both early intervention, kinship care and restoration which has impacted the carer pool. An emphasis on recruitment of culturally appropriate carers such as Aboriginal carers, alongside efforts to increase the number of identified kinship placement options in a child's network prior to entry to foster care are likely to modify the characteristics of carers over time to increase rates of Aboriginal and kinship carers.

Carers are essential to supporting restoration, which can be emotionally complex and necessitates a high level of carer support and training. In the current survey, carers highlighted the need for restoration support, demonstrating opportunities to further support carers in this significant area.

In light of this context, the current Carer Survey provides a necessary opportunity to explore and better understand the needs of carers, supporting them to best meet the needs of children and young people across NSW and encouraging placement stability.

4. Kaltner (2020), 'For children in foster care, the coronavirus pandemic could be extremely destabilising'

4. SURVEY DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Purpose

The My Forever Family NSW Carer Survey 2022 aims to explore the needs of carers across the state, and:

- Provide a point-in-time snapshot of how well carers consider they have been supported in the past 12 months.
- Report on the factors that would make carers more likely to recommend caring to others.
- Summarise carers' perceptions of their wellbeing and how well placed they are to care for the child/ren and young people in their care.
- Identify areas of improvement in the sector to better support carers' needs and inform future service delivery and sector planning.
- Obtain comparison data for My Forever Family NSW in its fifth year of operation.
- Consider how support needs may have changed due to a range of exceptional events in recent years.

Survey design approach

The My Forever Family NSW Carer Survey has been administered previously, and wherever possible items were maintained for the 2022 Carer Survey to enable reflection in trends over time.

Prior to distribution, the 2020 Carer Survey questions were reviewed by key internal My Forever Family NSW and external stakeholders including the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) to ensure relevance to the current policy environment and to ensure that questions covered a breadth of areas relating to carers' needs. New questions were added, others removed and some rephrased, resulting in a total of 44 questions.

A range of modifications to the previous Carer Survey were made including the following key additions:

- Additional questions exploring how long carers have been and intend to be a carer.
- Focused questions on carer experiences, particularly during the last 12 months.
- Additional questions on carer wellbeing and connection.

Alongside these additions, some of the response options were also altered and removed to support ease of understanding and the current environment.

Additional qualitative items were also added to promote open feedback on issues not covered in the survey itself, to ensure carers were able to share their views across a range of areas.

Additional items related to carers wellbeing were adapted from the Personal Wellbeing Index⁵ (PWI) and added to this year's Carer Survey, allowing for comparison in future surveys. To keep the Carer Survey as concise as possible, a refined set of items were chosen for integration as opposed to the full PWI scale.

Following revision, the Carer Survey was piloted with a select group of carers to ensure questions were easy to comprehend, test the time taken to complete the Carer Survey and minimise repetition. Carer feedback from this pilot was integrated into the final Carer Survey, which was uploaded onto a survey platform and distributed to key stakeholders to support circulation to carers. A paper-based survey was also made available via the same channels.

Capturing wellbeing

Personal Wellbeing Index

The Personal Wellbeing Index (PWI) was developed from the Comprehensive Quality of Life Scale⁶ (ComQoL), a measure of life quality. The PWI is used internationally as a measure of wellbeing, and explores respondent satisfaction across seven different domains: standard of living, health, achieving in life, relationships, safety, community-connectedness and future security.

Respondents select a number between 0 and 10 that best represents how satisfied they are with each relevant domain. 0 indicates no satisfaction at all and 10 indicates that the respondent is completely satisfied.

The Carer Survey 2022 has adapted questions from three of the domains: health, community-connectedness and achieving in life to better capture carers' sense of wellbeing whilst ensuring that the Carer Survey was able to be completed within 15 minutes. The integration of these items provides a comparable measure for future surveys to support examining carer wellbeing through the Carer Survey over time.

Carer Survey 2022

There were 44 questions in the final Carer Survey 2022, two questions more than the 2020 Carer Survey.

The questions were split into the following six sections:

- Carer demographics
- Recruitment/becoming a carer
- Your experience
- Training and development
- Wellbeing and connection
- My Forever Family NSW

An online link to the final Carer Survey 2022 was distributed through the My Forever Family NSW mailing list and newsletter database, DCJ Fostering our Future newsletter database, and social media, as well as through multiple peak organisations including NSW Child, Family and Community Peak Aboriginal Corporation (AbSec), Association of Children's Welfare Agencies (ACWA) and DCJ, Permanency Support Program (PSP) agency mailing lists.

AbSec was provided with posters to be displayed in offices to encourage the elevation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carer voices in the Carer Survey. To support coverage of the carer population and address differing preferences, carers were also given the option to complete a paper-based version of the Carer Survey.

In addition to the online and paper-based Carer Survey, telephone interviews were conducted with 6 carers by an independent interviewing team. Carers were identified via a range of means, including through My Forever Family NSW and related peak bodies. Telephone interviews were significant in capturing a more detailed carer voice and elevating the voice of carer groups who were underrepresented in the main survey results. Carers were provided with information and consent packages to support and inform their decision to participate. Telephone interviews were semi-structured, with questions based on the 2022 Carer Survey.

5. International Wellbeing Group (2013), 'Personal Wellbeing Index – Adult'

6. Cummins (1991), 'The comprehensive Quality of Life scale'

Survey methodology, representativeness and limitations

As the Carer Survey is a voluntary survey, respondents represent a convenience sample of carer perceptions and preferences at the time of completion. This limitation also extends to interview participants.

While the voluntary nature of the Carer Survey and interviews may affect how representative the respondents are of the entire carer population when compared to broader databases such as the Office of the Children's Guardian (OCG) carer register data, given the large number of carers participating within the Carer Survey, it provides meaningful insight into the experiences of carers in the last 12 months.

To ensure a robust representative sample, Carer Survey respondent characteristics were compared to OCG carer registration data, noting that OCG data is subject to its own limitations given that carer circumstances may change, and as such no one source of data is likely to be wholly representative of NSW carer demographics. Nevertheless, the similarity between OCG data and the Carer Survey respondents provides validation of the representativeness of the Carer Survey.

When compared to OCG data on carer households, the Carer Survey sample was observed to be slightly less representative of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers – 13% in survey respondents as opposed to 14% in OCG data. The Carer Survey was also more representative of females (89%) when compared to the general carer population as recorded in OCG data (62%). Additionally, 61% of carer respondents were managed by an NGO compared to OCG data which indicates that approximately 54% of carer households in NSW are with an NGO.

In regard to carer type, 66% of the sample were foster carers with 32% reported being relative/kinship carers, noting that carers at times may provide multiple care types. DCJ data indicates that the proportion of children placed in foster care as at 31 March 2022 was 39%, with children placed in relative/kin representing 56% of all placements. As such, the sample responding to the Carer Survey are more heavily weighted to foster carers than is representative of the experience of children and young people in care.

Analysis approach

Carer Survey results were analysed to explore key emerging themes, and compared to Carer Survey data from 2019 and 2020 to identify trends and changes in carer experiences over time.

Frequency analysis was the primary analysis strategy used to explore Carer Survey responses, explored through breakdown by relevant cohorts, such as carer type, and in trends on previous years findings against similar items to examine responses on individual items.

Demographic data was presented against breakdown from OCG where relevant to explore representativeness of the Carer Survey sample, as well as providing a holistic examination of carer demographics across NSW.

Qualitative responses were analysed thematically. Comments and responses to open-ended questions were grouped where multiple reviewers agreed that carers were articulating the same sentiments.

A mixed-methods approach to analysis presenting key findings arising through synthesising both qualitative and quantitative data was applied, enabling a breadth of carer views alongside qualitative depth through interview findings.

5. CARER SURVEY AND INTERVIEW RESULTS

Overview

The Carer Survey findings are a snapshot of carers’ perception of their experiences in the last 12 months, including the rewards and challenges of being a carer and their suggestions for improving the carer experience. These findings are set in a post COVID-19 lockdown context, with carers, children and young people having experienced a range of ongoing pandemic related challenges throughout the two years since the last Carer Survey was undertaken.

The Carer Survey 2022 had 1,897 respondents, slightly lower than the 2,365 respondents in 2020 and 2,087 respondents in 2019. Additionally, 6 carers participated in a detailed telephone interview that explored similar questions to those contained in the survey.

Carer Survey results

Carer demographics

Questions 1 – 12 focus on the demographics of respondents.

Question 1 asked carers what type of carer they are, with the opportunity to choose more than one option. This change was made based on carer feedback from previous surveys, where respondents could only choose one option. These results may not be comparable across prior years of administration.

Chart 1 presents the carer breakdown, highlighting that the majority (66%) of carers responding to the Carer Survey identified as foster carers. 15% of these carers also identified as other carer types.

Question 2 asked foster and relative/kinship carers what type of care they provide, with the option to select more than one type (see **Chart 2**).

The majority (83%) of the 1,560 foster, relative and kinship carers who responded provide long term care. 54% of these carers providing long term care also provide at least one other type of care.

Chart 1: What type of carer are you?

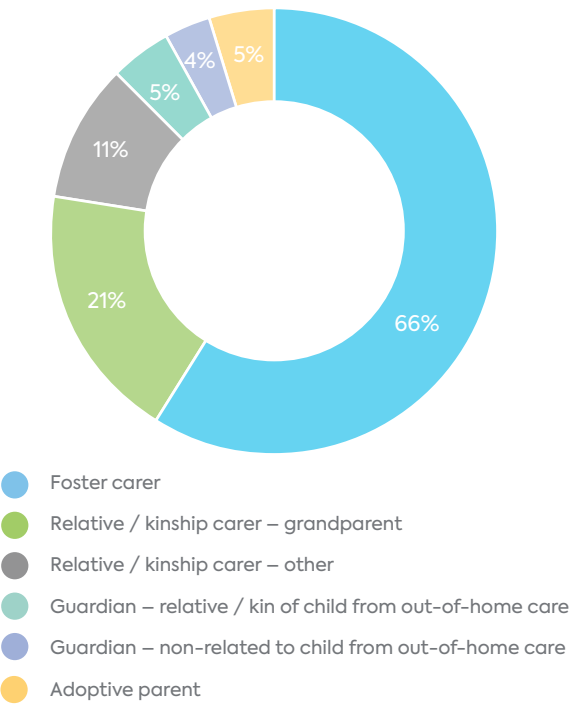
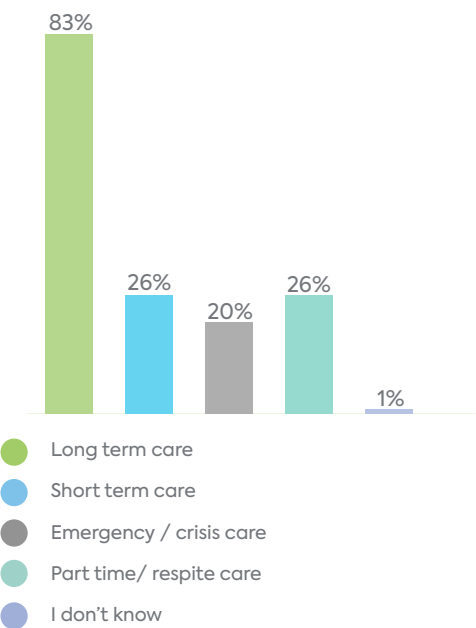


Chart 2: If you are a foster carer or relative/ kin carer, what type of carer are you?

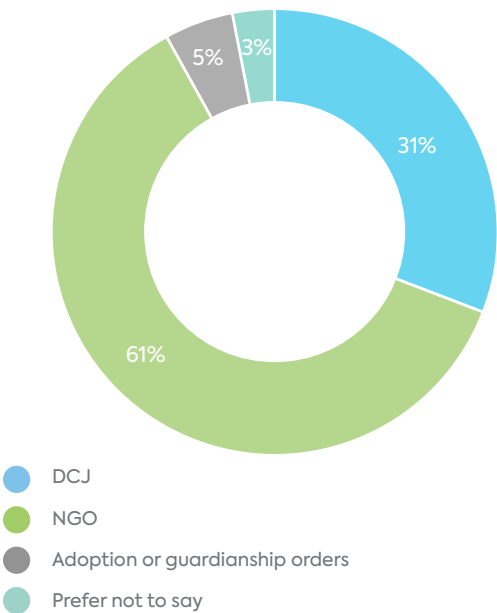


Box 1: Demographic and care snapshot

- 66% (1,241) were foster carers, 21% (400) were grandparent relative/kinship carers, 11% (199) were other relative/kinship carers, 5% (100) were guardians (relative/kinship), 4% (80) were non-related guardians and 5% (102) were adoptive parents.
- 89% (1,627) of survey respondents identified as female, 11% (197) as male and 0.3% (7) identified as other.
- 54%, or 995 carers were aged between 51 – 70 years. 39% (706) were aged between 31-50, with 5% (95) aged 71 years or older. 2% (35) were aged between 18-30.
- 13% (229) of 1,808 respondents were Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
- 101 respondent households (8%) speak a language other than English at home. Of these, the most common languages reported were Aboriginal languages (2%) and Arabic (1%).
- Most respondents (40% or 716) care for one child; 28% (499) care for two children; 12% (224) care for 3 children; 8% (135) care for 4 or more children.
- 12%, or 221 had no children in their care at the time of completing the survey.
- 61%, or 1,119 of survey respondents are case managed by an agency, 31% (569) are with DCJ, 5% (89) have adoption or guardianship orders and 3% (60) preferred not to say.

Chart 3 shows 31% (569) of 1,837 survey respondents are managed by DCJ, 61% (1,119) are managed by a non-government organisation (NGO), 5% (89) have adoption or guardianship orders and 3% (60) preferred not to say.

Chart 3: Are you with DCJ or another agency?



Question 4 asked respondents to indicate their gender. The majority (89%) of the 1,831 respondents to this question identified as female, 11% (197) identified as male and 0.4% (7) as other.

Question 5 asked respondents their age. Table 1 shows the age distribution of the 1,831 responses to question 5 compared to OCG data, with generally similar trends across age groups.

Table 1: Age of Carer Survey respondents compared to OCG data.

Age group	OCG	Carer Survey
18-30	5%	2%
31-40	15%	12%
41-50	24%	26%
51-60	29%	33%
61-70	20%	21%
71-100	7%	5%

Question 6: Which part of NSW are you located in?

Consistent with previous survey results and the OCG data on carer locations, the highest number of respondents are located in the Hunter region (13% or 240), followed by Western Sydney and Illawarra Shoalhaven. Table 2 shows the geographical distribution of carer respondents compared to OCG Carer Register data. There may be discrepancies between OCG geographical location classifications and where carers identify as their geographical location.

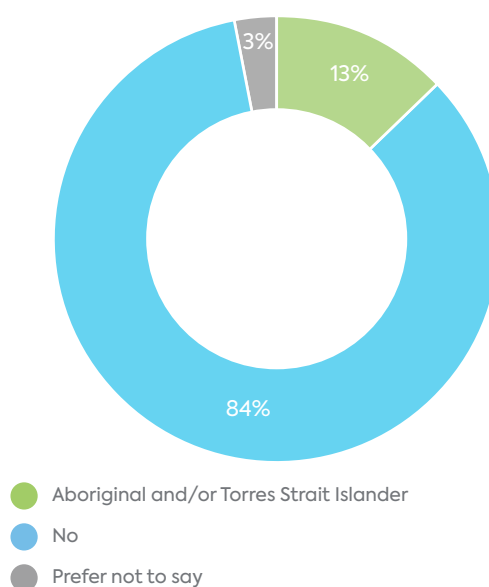
Table 2: Location of Carer Survey respondents compared to OCG data

District	OCG	Carer Survey ⁷
Central Coast	7%	7%
Far West	1%	2%
Hunter	15%	13%
New England	4%	4%
Illawarra Shoalhaven	8%	10%
Mid North Coast	6%	7%
Murrumbidgee	5%	5%
Nepean Blue Mountains	11%	5%
Northern NSW	5%	7%
Northern Sydney	4%	3%
South Eastern Sydney	4%	2%
South Western Sydney	13%	7%
Sydney Metro	3%	5%
Western Sydney	6%	10%
Southern NSW	2%	5%
Western NSW	6%	7%
Grand total	100%	100%

Question 7: Do you identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander?

Chart 4 shows 13% (229) of survey respondents identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, compared to 14% of carers in NSW as recorded in OCG data. The percentage of Aboriginal respondents has increased by 3% since the 2019 survey.

Chart 4: Do you identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander?

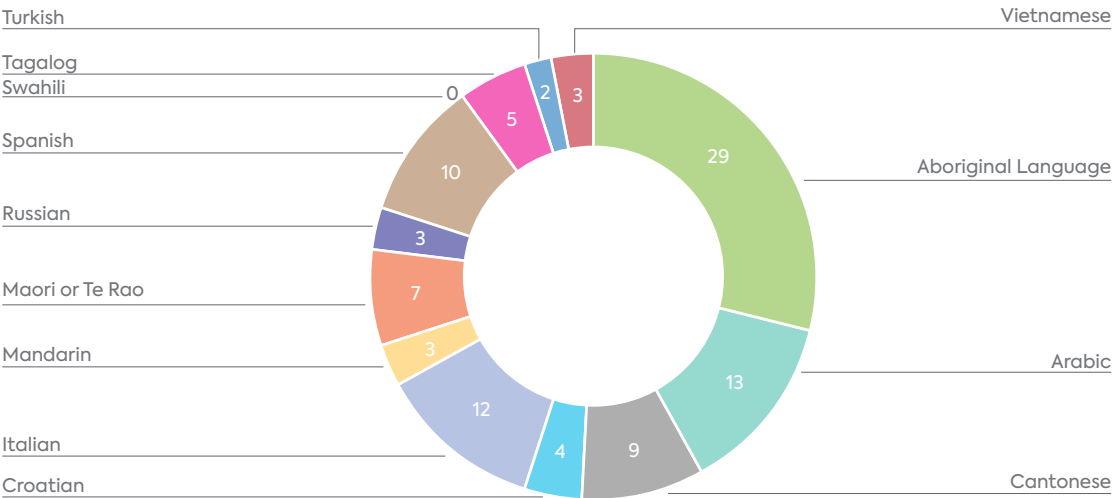


7. Due to rounding, may not equal 100%

Question 8: Which language/s do you speak at home other than English?

This question was slightly rephrased from the 2020 survey. As highlighted by **Chart 5**, almost all (92%) of the 1,228 respondents to this question did not speak a language other than English at home. The most common languages spoken other than English were Aboriginal languages (2% or 29 households), followed by Arabic (1% or 13 households) and Italian (1% or 12 households).

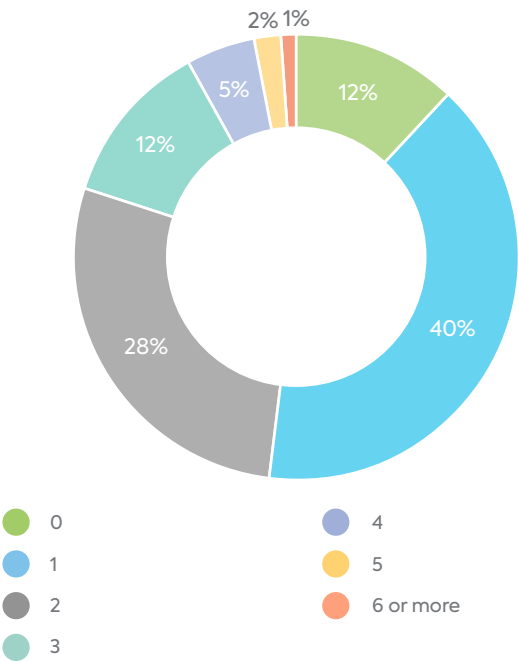
Chart 5: Languages spoken at home other than English



Question 9: How many children are currently in your care (excluding biological and/or stepchildren)?

Chart 6 shows 40% of respondents had one child in their care at the time of completing the Carer Survey, similar to previous findings of 39% in the 2020 Carer Survey. Over a quarter of respondents (28% or 499) reported that they had two children in their care, 12% (224) had three children in their care and 12% (221) had no children in their care. 3% or 47 carers had five or more children in their care.

Chart 6: How many children are in your care?



Question 10: Are there Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children in your care?

Of 1,807 respondents to this question, 37% (663) reported that they have Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander child/ren in their care. As outlined above, only 13% (229) of respondents identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander themselves.

78% of carers who identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander in question 7 reported having Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children in their care. Almost a third (30%) of respondents who did not identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander reported having Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children in their care.

Questions 11 and 12: How long have you been a carer? How much longer do you plan to be a carer?

Question 11 and 12 are new questions. These questions provide an indication of the carer pool capacity and support informed recommendations to promote longer and more sustainable journeys for carers.

- 34% (613) of the 1,804 respondents have been a carer for 1–5 years.
- 9% (163) have been a carer for less than 1 year
- 27% (480) have been a carer for 6–10 years
- 30% (547) have been carers for 11 or more years, with 7% caring for over 20 years.

A third of carers (33% or 591) were unsure how much longer they would be a carer, with most indicating they intended to continue caring for the following timeframes:

- 6% (113) said they plan to stop caring in less than 1 year.
- 11% (197) plan to be a carer for another for 1 – 5 years.
- 16% (285) plan to be a carer for another 6 – 10 years.
- 34% (617) plan to be a carer for another 11 years or more.

Of the 163 carers who have been a carer for less than a year, most intended to continue caring for the following timeframes:

- 9% said they plan to stop caring in less than 1 year
- 11% plan to be a carer for another for 1 – 5 years
- 9% plan to be a carer for another for 6 – 10 years
- 33% plan to be a carer for another 11 years or more
- 39% were unsure how much longer they would be a carer

Recruitment/becoming a carer

This section covers respondents' responses to questions 13 – 15 and their experiences of becoming a carer.

Questions 13: Were you authorised for the first time in the last 12 months?

Of 1,795 respondents, 228 (13%) reported that they were authorised in the last 12 months. The discrepancy between the number that said they have been a carer for less than 12 months and those that were authorised in the last 12 months could be due to carers interpreting the question to mean any reauthorisation, rather than their first authorisation. It is notable that one third (33%) of those who said they had been authorised for the first time in the last 12 months indicated that had been a carer for 1– 5 years in question 11.

Question 14: Were you satisfied with the process of becoming a carer?

Of those authorised in the last 12 months:

- 61% were very satisfied or satisfied with the process of becoming a carer.
- 23% were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the process of becoming a carer.
- 7% were unsatisfied with the process of becoming a carer.
- 8% were very unsatisfied with the process.

Question 15: Thinking about the last 12 months, being new to caring and the child/ren placed in your care, was there training or information that could have assisted you/prepared you for the placement of the child/ren in your care?

Question 15 was only available to respondents that reported being authorised in the past 12 months. 203 carers provided a response to this question.

44% of respondents indicated that information on how to access support could have assisted/prepared them for their placement.

Receiving more information about the child, talking with another carer and self-care for carers were also commonly reported needs. See **Table 3** for details of responses to this question, noting that carers were able to select multiple response options.

Table 3: Training and information that could have assisted and prepared carers for the placement of children in their care

Answer choices	Responses	
How to access support	44%	89
More information about the child	39%	78
Self-care for carers	34%	67
Talking with another carer	34%	69
Planning for family visits	31%	62
Understanding guardianship	27%	54
Information on the types of care available	27%	54
How to access latest agency policies and guidelines	25%	50
Therapeutic parenting	24%	48
Cultural knowledge/training	22%	45
Planning for placement change	18%	36
Understanding adoption	14%	27
Other	18%	37

A number of carers who selected 'other' mentioned specific information that could have prepared them for their caring role, including:

- More trauma-informed training, alongside deeper specific training on caring for children with trauma.
- Caring for children with special needs
- A 'cheat sheet' or easy reference listing of support available.
- Information on where to escalate concerns when requests and questions are not resolved adequately.

"Training on the code of conduct would be useful as it can be difficult to understand as a new carer." – Interviewee

Carer experiences

Questions 16 – 19 focus on the carer's experience.

Question 16 asked how likely respondents were to recommend becoming a carer to others.

Of 1,557 respondents to this question, 41% reported that they were very likely or likely to recommend becoming a carer. 27% were neutral and 32% were unlikely or very unlikely to recommend caring.

A positive sentiment about providing care itself was echoed by interview participants, with half of participants indicating that they currently recommend and would continue to recommend caring to others.

"[Caring] is the greatest thing I have ever done. The 'suckiness' of the system doesn't change this" – Interviewee

One of the reasons that carers reported a reluctance to recommend caring were frustrations with the lack of timely support.

"I don't actively recommend becoming a carer, due to frustrations with having no one to call at the 11th hour for support. However, if people approach me about caring, I will say there are a lot of good things to come out of it."
- Interviewee

"Carers would be more likely to recommend caring if there was an independent carer support system with more influence/power. Carers need someone in a position to hold NGOs accountable" - Interviewee

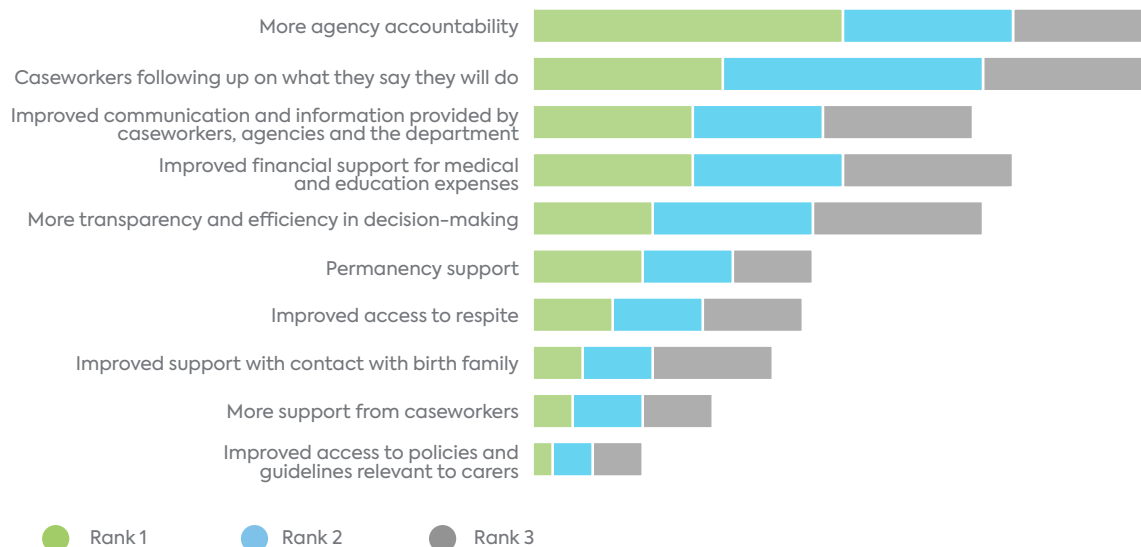
Question 17 asked carers to rank the top 3 reasons that would make them more likely to recommend caring to others. 1,537 carers responded to this question.

The items ranked number one to carers were:

- More agency accountability (31%)
- Caseworkers following up on what they say they will do (19%)
- Improved financial support for medical and education expenses (16%).

No respondents ranked an improved recruitment process, better accountability of birth family, a more professional sector or training in the top three actions that would make them more likely to recommend caring.

Chart 7: What would make you more likely to recommend caring to others? Please rank your top 3 in order, with 1 being what would make you most likely to recommend caring



Question 18: asked carers to complete sentences based on their caring experiences, focused on: (a) what they liked (b) what they didn't like and (c) what it takes so long to do.

Themes that were common in response to question 18 (a) included feeling supported and being included in decision making, as presented below in **Box 2**.

Box 2: 18 (a) I like it when...

"I feel supported." Foster carer, 41 – 50, NGO, Hunter

"My concerns are validated and in stressful situations I am not left to deal with it alone." Foster carer, 51 – 60, NGO, Central Coast

"Our knowledge as a child's carer is valued and considered when making a decision relating to the child." Foster carer, 31 – 40, NGO, Southern NSW

"I feel included in discussions about decisions relating to the child in my care" – Foster carer, 41-50, NGO, Nepean Blue Mountains

"Everyone works collaboratively to find the best approach." – Foster carer, 31-40, NGO, Sydney Metro

Carers reported that they didn't like it when they weren't supported, particularly by caseworkers, or excluded from decision-making. Carers also raised in response to question 18 (b) disliking having insufficient information to make informed decisions, as presented in **Box 3**.

Box 3: 18 (b) I don't like it when...

"The agency doesn't follow through with promises." Foster carer, 51 – 60, NGO, South Western Sydney

"I'm undermined or left out of decision making." Relative / kinship carer – grandparent, 51 – 60, DCJ, Murrumbidgee

"I am not listened to as a carer – as the person who knows the child the best." Foster carer, 31 – 40, Southern NSW

"It takes so long to get support when needed." – Relative/kinship carer, 51-60, DCJ, Murrumbidgee

"Case worker turn over just goes on and on; I feel like I am completing case worker work." – Foster carer, 61-70, NGO, Mid North Coast

In relation to question 18 (c), key issues carers highlighted included receiving support, receiving reimbursements, and obtaining approvals.

Carers interviewed raised similar issues, and reported that it took so long to receive support and respite when required, as highlighted in **Box 4**.

Box 4: 18 (c) It takes so long to...

"Get the help that is needed, this seems to be due to a shortage of caseworkers and support services." Guardian – relative kin of child from out of home care, 41 – 50, DCJ, Mid North Coast

"Get official documents like birth certificates." Foster carer, 41 – 50, NGO, South Western Sydney

"Get respite when you really need it and support when it matters the most." Foster carer, 31 – 40, NGO, Far West

"To get anything from an agency." – Foster carer, 31-40, NGO, Sydney Metro

"Get services for the children." – Relative/kinship carer – grandparent, 51-60, DCJ, Southern NSW

Question 19 asked carers to rate how satisfied they are in their caring role.

Of 1,554 responses, 66% (1,028) said they were satisfied or very satisfied, and 16% (249) said they were unsatisfied or very unsatisfied. Carers aged over 60 reported the highest levels of satisfaction with being a carer, with 78% reporting they are very satisfied or satisfied with their caring role. **See Table 4.**

Table 4: How satisfied are you in your role as a carer?

Answer choices	Responses ⁸	
Very satisfied	33%	507
Satisfied	34%	521
Neutral	18%	277
Unsatisfied	9%	133
Very unsatisfied	7%	116

Support for you

Question 20 asked carers whether they receive the support they need from their caseworker or case manager to care for the children and/or young people in their care.

Of the 1,527 responses:

- 46% (consistent with 46% in 2020 and 47% in 2019) always or mostly received the support they needed.
- 35% (consistent with 35% in 2020 and 33% in 2019) sometimes received the support they needed.
- 11% (consistent with 11% in 2020 and 10% in 2019) never received the support they needed.
- 8% (consistent with 8% in 2020 and 10% in 2019) either did not need support or considered the question not applicable to them.

It is notable that these results are entirely consistent with the previous Carer Survey, highlighting existing ongoing needs.

When the results were explored by carer type, 12% of relative / kinship carers reported they never received the support they needed from their caseworker/ case manager, compared with 10% of foster carers.

Looking at the geographic location of carers, 42% living outside of Greater Sydney districts advised that they always or mostly received the support they needed, compared with 48% in Greater Sydney.

I am thinking of stopping being a foster carer because the caseworker the children have is making things difficult.” – Foster carer, 41 – 50, NGO, Sydney Metro

Carers who participated in interviews relayed mixed experiences with receiving the support they need from caseworkers. The majority (67%) reported they do not currently receive support from their caseworker and frequently noted issues with caseworker turnover.

“I was without a caseworker for three weeks. I felt like I had no support, guidance or sense of direction.” – Interviewee

Interviewees reported that the support provided can vary significantly between caseworkers. Most reported having at least one supportive caseworker during their caring journey.

“DCJ have been fabulous in providing support.” – Interviewee

In some cases, however, caseworker support was highlighted by interviewees as being perceived to be lacking, and relationships with caseworkers and their managers highlighted as key challenges by some interview participants who felt unsupported.

“[Casework Manager] doesn’t trust me since I complained. They don’t listen and don’t take accountability” – Interviewee

8. Due to rounding, may not equal 100%

Questions 21 and 22 considered the support carers needed in the last 12 months for the children and young people in their care.

In **Question 21**, 1,373 carers identified the various support they required for the children in their care. Respondents could select as many as they needed.

The top three supports carers reported that they needed for the children and young people in their care were:

1. Counselling/psychologist services, reported as needed by 846 (62%) respondents:

- 40% (334) always or mostly received this support when needed.
- 27% (226) reported they never received this support when needed.

2. Behaviour support, reported as needed by 59% of respondents:

- 34% (270) always or mostly received this support when needed.
- 30% (239) indicated that they never received this support when needed.

3. Specialist medical care, reported as needed by 46% of respondents:

- 53% (326) always or mostly received this support when needed.
- 17% (105) indicated that they never received this support when needed.

"I found it very difficult to get respite care, I had to justify in detail my reasons for requesting respite care." Interviewee

The most common supports carers reported they needed for children in their care but **did not** receive in the last 12 months were:

- Specialist carer support service (54%)
- Additional financial support (above their carer allowance) (45%)
- Support with the restoration of the children in their care (40%)
- Informal respite care (40%)
- Respite care (formal respite, not including friends/family) (40%).

Support needs that carers indicated they did not receive when required were compared by carer type to explore differences in both the needs carers have and these needs being met.

Chart 8: How often carers support needs were met

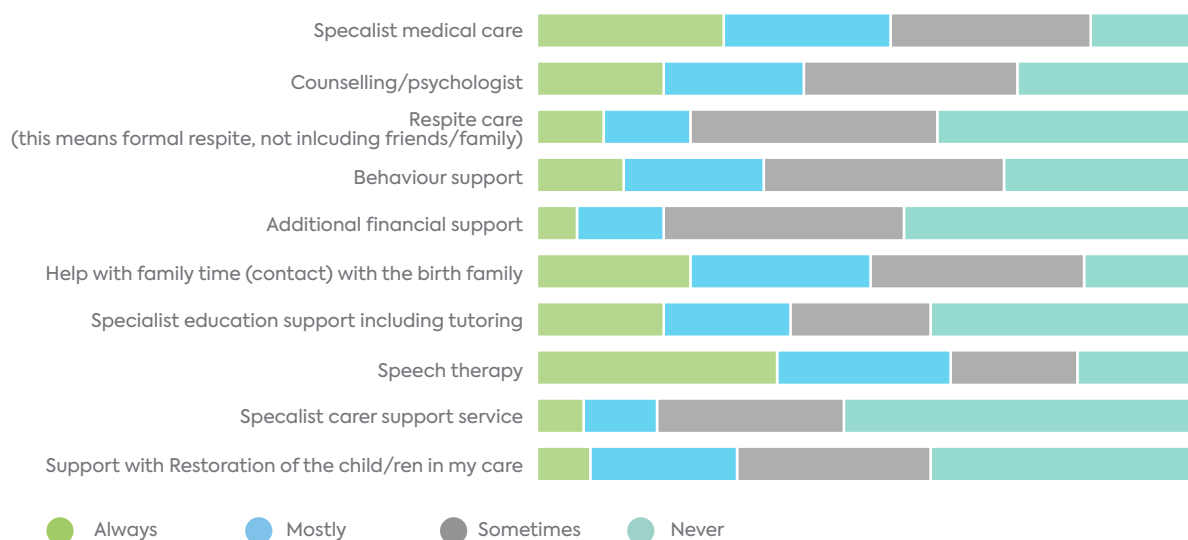


Table 5 highlights that relative and kinship carers reported facing more challenges receiving the support they required for the child in their care when it was needed, and, more frequently reported requiring financial and restoration supports than foster carers.

Table 5: Comparison by carer type of carers who never received supports when required.

Support service	Foster carers (902)	Relative/ kinship carers (394)
Specialist carer support services	53%	56%
Additional financial support	41%	51%
Support with the restoration of children in their care	37%	43%
Formal respite care	33%	55%
Specialist education support including tutoring	34%	48%
Counselling / psychologist	24%	34%

Question 23 asked carers to identify which of the following supports they had used in the last 12 months to look after the child/ren in their care. **Carers were asked to indicate how satisfied they were with each support. Carers could identify multiple supports in response to this question.**

Of the 1,463 responses, 78% of carers contacted their agency for support services. Of those, 44% were satisfied or very satisfied, 24% were neither satisfied nor unsatisfied, and 31% were either unsatisfied or very unsatisfied.

Relative and kinship carers were less likely to seek support from their agency than foster carers, with 68% of relative/kinship carers seeking agency support in the last 12 months, compared to 83% of foster carers. Satisfaction with this support was similar for both groups.

“Agencies need to communicate, collaborate, listen and then take action, then carers will be more inclined to go to them and actually speak.”
– Foster carer, 41 – 50, NGO, Sydney Metro

My Forever Family NSW support services were used by 750 respondents (54%) in the last 12 months. Of those, 64% indicated that they were either satisfied or very satisfied with the support received, 23% were neutral, and 13% were either unsatisfied or very unsatisfied.

709 carers (48%) received informal support from another carer. 75% of these were satisfied with the support received, 20% were neutral and 5% were unsatisfied or very unsatisfied.

Informal support from a carer group was used for support by 430 respondents (29%) in the last 12 months. Of those, 60% were either satisfied or very satisfied, 33% were neutral, and 7% were either unsatisfied or very unsatisfied.

Training and development

Questions 24 – 31 relate to training and development for carers. While findings indicated a similar number of carers attended training, there has been an increase in the number of training sessions carers have attended in the past 12 months compared to previous surveys.

Question 24: In the last 12 months, have you attended any training?

Of 1,489 responses, 53% attended training in the last 12 months (54% in 2020).

Question 25 asked who organised the training that carers attended. Carers could select multiple responses. Of 788 respondents, 61% attended training organised by My Forever Family NSW, 37% attended training by their agency, 8% attended DCJ training and 27% attended training from another provider.

Question 26 asked how many training topics carers completed in the past 12 months. Almost half (45%) of 781 respondents completed training on 2–3 topics in the last 12 months (as compared to 33% in 2020); 22% reported being trained on 4–6 topics (12% in 2020) and 12% attended training on 7 or more topics in the last 12 months.

Question 27 asked what topics carers would like training on, with a range of options for carers to select and a free text option so carers could enter any topics not listed. Carers' top preference is for training on challenging behaviours and behaviour support, selected by 50% of 1,378 respondents, as highlighted below in **Table 6**.

"Non-Indigenous carers who care for Indigenous children should do some cultural workshops. These should be in place for all children from culturally diverse backgrounds."
– Interviewee

Table 6: Topics that carers would like training on.

Training topics	Responses	
Challenging behaviours / behaviour support	50%	693
Healing from trauma	46%	628
Advocating for kids in your care	32%	440
Self-care for carers	30%	413
Helping teenagers	28%	387
Building resilience	27%	371
Therapeutic parenting	26%	359
First aid	26%	357
Guardianship	22%	302
Online safety and bullying	20%	269
Caring for a child with disability	18%	242
Achieving better health and education outcomes	17%	232
Caring for an Aboriginal child	17%	231
How to work effectively with your agency	16%	224
Leaving care and after care	15%	207
Cultural connection / competency	15%	204
Children in care with sexualised behaviours	15%	204
Understanding allegations	13%	174
Open Adoption	12%	165
Other topic	12%	162
Contact, family time and building positive regard	12%	160
Responding to disclosures	10%	136
Supporting children through restoration	8%	116
Code of Conduct	8%	106

In open-ended items, other topics carers indicated they would like training on included understanding Autism and ADHD, the escalation process for carers when complaints aren't addressed by agencies, and how to find local support.

Carers who participated in interviews reported that they would like more general training to help them with the basics such as understanding the code of conduct, caseworker / agency expectations and required documentation.

Question 28 asked carers how satisfied they were with the availability of training.

Of the 1,294 respondents to this item, the majority reported they were satisfied with the availability of training:

- 56% were very satisfied or satisfied
- 28% were neither satisfied nor unsatisfied
- 16% were unsatisfied or very unsatisfied

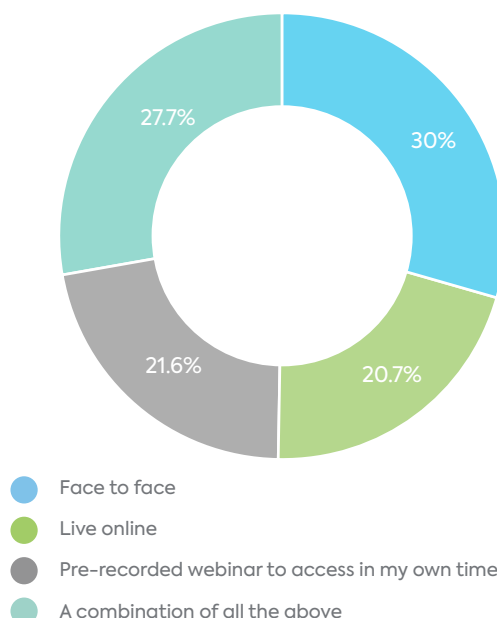
Other comments carers made around training availability included requests for more face to face training to assist rapport and relationship building between carers and trainers. Carers also indicated a desire for online options for training, particularly in the evening for carers who work full time, as carers reported that the majority of online training options were during business hours.

Question 29 asked carers how they preferred to access training. The responses indicated an increased preference for online training since the 2020 survey. Of 1,439 respondents:

- 30% reported that they preferred face to face (36% in 2020)
- 21% preferred live online (14% in 2020)
- 22% preferred pre-recorded webinars that they could access in their own time (20% in 2020)
- 28% preferred a combination of all of the above delivery modes (31% in 2020).

43% of respondents aged over 60 preferred face to face training, compared with 26% of respondents aged 60 or under.

Chart 9: How do you prefer to access training?



Question 30 asked carers who selected an online option in Question 29, to select the reasons they preferred online training. Carers were able to select more than one option.

Of the 939 respondents:

- The most common response (67%) was that it is easier to make time for online training.
- 48% indicated they could access a greater range of training options online than offered in their geographic area.
- 34% indicated online training takes up less time.
- 29% responded that they found it hard to access face to face training due to their geographical location.
- 16% said they preferred an online style of learning as opposed to face to face

"I prefer online training so that I can it in my own time and in the comfort of my own home" - Interviewee

Question 31 asked carers who selected a face to face option in Question 29, the reasons they preferred face to face training. Of the 722 respondents:

- 67% indicated they liked meeting/socialising with other carers in person.
- 64% liked learning from other carers.
- 64% liked interacting with the presenter.
- 41% found face to face training easier than online.
- 31% said there were more opportunities to practice skills.
- 18% reported that they were not comfortable with online training.

"I really like face to face training; I get to meet other carers and feel less alone. It's really hard to do that online." – Interviewee

Wellbeing and connection

Questions 32 – 38 relate to carers' wellbeing and connection with others.

Question 32 asked carers which online services provided by My Forever Family NSW they have accessed. Carers were able to select multiple options.

Over half of the carers responding to this question reported having accessed at least one of the My Forever Family NSW online services. Of 1,298 respondents:

- 37% (474) attended webinars or other live online training.
- 25% (329) accessed pre-recorded webinars in their own time.
- 14% (185) attended Online Lounge Rooms for support and connection.
- 2% (29) used one on one video carer coaching services.

A number of carers did not access the My Forever Family NSW online services, and some were unaware of their existence:

- 30% (392) do not access any online services.
- 18% (235) did not know about My Forever Family NSW online services.

Question 33 asked carers how satisfied they were with the carer activities they attended over the last 12 months. Activities included carer organised event/catch-up, agency organised event/catch-up, training and online forums.

Of the 811 carers who attended training:

- 64% (517) were satisfied or very satisfied.

Of the 535 carers who attended online forums:

- 58% (311) were satisfied or very satisfied.

Of the 472 who attended an agency organised event/catch-up:

- 47% (224) who satisfied or very satisfied.

Of the 474 that attended a carer-organised event/catch-up.

- 64% (302) were satisfied or very satisfied.

Chart 10 provides a snapshot of carer responses in relation to their satisfaction with carer activities, highlighting that carers were generally satisfied with all relevant carer activities.

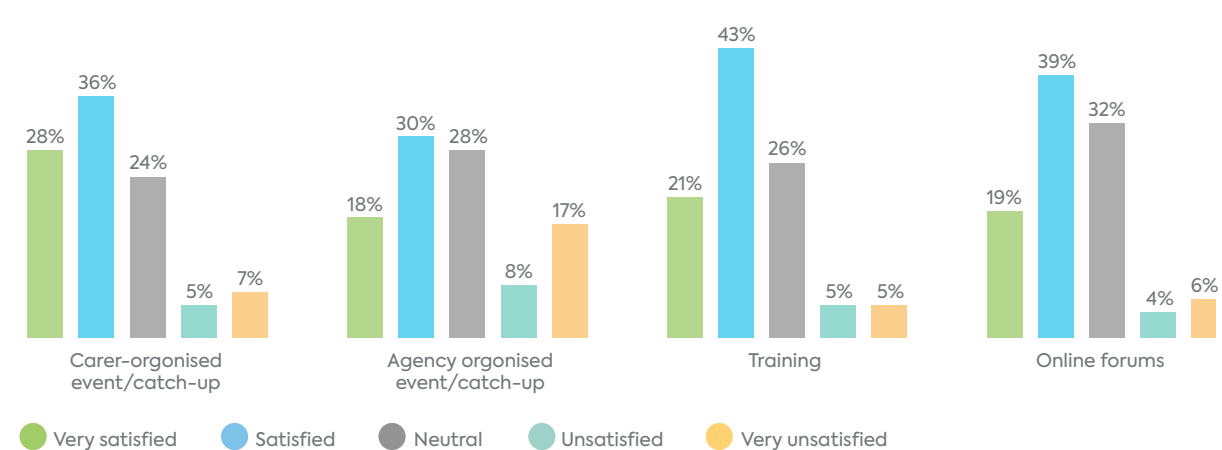
Carers were invited to comment in relation to the availability of carer activities. As highlighted by **Box 5**, a number of carers were unaware that the events listed were available to them. Carers commented on the impact of COVID in relation to the availability of carer events to attend. Other carers expressed difficulty with finding the time to attend carer events, or that events were held during times they were unable to attend.

Box 5:

“I did not attend any events as I was not aware of any face to face events in my area.” Relative / kinship carer, 41 – 50, DCJ, Central Coast

“None of the above were offered to me? Are these actually available?” Guardian – non-related to child from out-of-home care, 51 – 60, DCJ, Far West

Chart 10: Over the last year, how satisfied were you with the carer activities you attended?



Question 34 asked if carers were not connected with other carers, what are the reasons. Carers could choose multiple options. Of 1,335 respondents, 33% (439) reported that they were connected with other carers.

The reasons for not connecting with other carers included:

- 42% indicated they found it hard to find the time to connect to other carers (38% in 2020, 40% in 2019).
- 34% of carers indicated they were not aware how to connect (31% in 2020, 35% in 2019).
- 23% of carers indicated they did not receive information about events (23% in 2020).
- 14% of carers suggested they did not want to connect with other carers (14% in 2020).
- A significant percentage (22% or 218) opted for 'other' and explained their reasoning for this. See **Box 6** for a few of these comments.

Box 6:

"I have brilliant support from my carer friends, I met them at agency training events and fostered my own relationships." Adoptive parent, 41 – 50, Sydney Metro

"The last time I attended a carer support group they all just complained about being a carer and it was very negative." Relative / kinship carer, 31 – 40, DCJ, Nepean Blue Mountains

"I have asked my agency to connect with other carers and they never provided any contacts." Foster carer, 41 – 50, NGO, Northern Sydney

The majority of carers who had connected with others indicated that these connections were beneficial. Others indicated they were unaware of carer support groups and reported not having received any information regarding ways to connect with other carers, highlighting opportunities to provide this support to carers. Again, some carers expressed difficulty finding the time to connect with other carers.

"I am connected with other carers through my own doing... Carers should be made aware of other groups to connect with"
– Interviewee

Question 35 asked carers how they would rate their personal health and wellbeing out of 10. Carer responses highlighted that overall, carers have a strong positive sense of personal health and wellbeing.

Of the 1,413 respondents:

- 72% rated their personal health and wellbeing as 7 out of 10 or higher, with 15% rating 10/10.
- On average, foster carers rated their personal health and wellbeing (7.32 out of 10) higher than relative / kinship carers (7.10 out of 10).
- On average, foster carers rated their personal health and wellbeing as higher than the average satisfaction with health in Australia in 2021 (7.24).⁹

Question 36 asked carers to rate their sense of connection with others out of 10. This analysis revealed that carers generally experienced a strong sense of connection to others.

Of 1,401 respondents:

- 70% rated their sense of connection with others as 7 or higher out of 10, with 19% saying they are completely satisfied.
- On average, foster carers rated their sense of connection (7.5 out of 10) higher than relative and kinship carers (7.0 out of 10).
- On average, kinship carers rated their sense of connection as slightly lower than the average satisfaction with community connectedness in Australia in 2021 (7.1)¹⁰, while foster carers rated their sense of connection as higher than the Australian average.

9. Khor et al. (2021), Subjective wellbeing in Australia during the second year of the pandemic.

10. Khor et al. (2021), Subjective wellbeing in Australia during the second year of the pandemic.

11. Khor et al. (2021), Subjective wellbeing in Australia during the second year of the pandemic

Question 37 asked carers to rate their sense of achievement and fulfilment out of 10. The results highlighted that carers generally feel fulfilled.

Of 1,403 respondents:

- 76% (1,071) rated their sense of achievement and fulfilment as 7 out of 10 or higher, with 18% scoring the highest rating of 10.
- On average, foster carers rated their personal health and wellbeing (7.61 out of 10) higher than relative / kinship carers (7.25 out of 10).
- On average, foster carers and kinship carers rated their sense of connection as higher than the average satisfaction with achieving in life in Australia in 2021 (7.24).¹¹

Question 38 asked carers how often they feel stressed. 44% of respondent carers reported feeling stressed sometimes, with 35% of carers reporting feeling stressed quite often or all of the time.

Of the 1,412 respondents:

- 2% (30) did not feel stressed at all.
- 20% (280) felt stressed not very often.
- 44% (617) felt stressed sometimes.
- 28% (392) felt stressed quite often.
- 7% (93) felt stressed all the time.

My Forever Family NSW

The final questions within the Carer Survey related to carers' interactions with My Forever Family NSW.

Question 39 asked if respondents had heard of My Forever Family NSW before completing this survey. Of the 1,422 respondent carers, the majority (71%) had heard of My Forever Family NSW and were a member. An additional 21% had heard of My Forever Family NSW but were not members. The total percentage of carers who had heard of My Forever Family NSW prior to completing the Carer Survey increased by 2% when compared to 2020.

A small percentage of respondents (6%) said they had not heard about My Forever Family NSW and 3% didn't know if they had heard of My Forever Family NSW.

Question 40 asked respondents how they heard of My Forever Family NSW, allowing more than one response. The most common way (39%) that carers reported that they had heard of My Forever Family NSW was through their agency. In addition:

- 22% heard of My Forever Family NSW via DCJ.
- 20% heard via social media.
- 16% heard through another carer.
- 15% heard in a different way. This included online searches or referrals from other carer services

Question 41 asked if respondents had contacted My Forever Family NSW in the last 12 months. 39% (500) of the 1,292 respondents to this question contacted My Forever Family NSW in the last 12 months.

New carers were more likely to have contacted My Forever Family NSW in the last 12 months, with 55% of carers who reported being authorised in the last 12 months indicating that they had contacted My Forever Family NSW in the last 12 months. Carers case managed by an agency were also more likely to have contacted My Forever Family NSW in the past 12 months (43%) than carers with DCJ (33%).

In **Question 42**, carers who had contacted My Forever Family NSW in the last 12 months were asked to indicate how satisfied they were regarding a range of services offered.

- 78% of carers who contacted My Forever Family NSW in the last 12 months indicated they were either very satisfied or satisfied with the customer service received.
- 75% of 480 carers who contacted My Forever Family NSW regarding Information on caring for children in the last 12 months were very satisfied or satisfied.
- 72% of 470 carers who contacted My Forever Family NSW about training events provided by My Forever Family NSW in the last 12 months were very satisfied or satisfied.
- 62% of 470 carers who contacted My Forever Family NSW for support to talk through an issue in the last 12 months were very satisfied or satisfied.
- 49% of 451 carers who contacted My Forever Family NSW to advocate on their behalf in the last 12 months were very satisfied or satisfied.

Question 43 was an opened ended question asking if there was any other information respondents would like to share. 547 respondents left a comment to this question.

Much of this feedback focused on challenges faced by individual carers and reiterated themes arising from earlier questions within the survey.

Key themes across this feedback included challenges in the sector, with caseworkers, agencies and DCJ.

Box 7

"The child protection sector is completely broken and is doing more harm than good. The trauma I have experienced as an adult is terrible, and the children's trauma due to being in OOHC is horrendous." Foster carer, 51 – 60, NGO, New England

"Kinship carers are not supported like other carers which is unfair. They think because we are family, we are better off which is not true." Relative/ kinship carer – other, 41 – 50, DCJ, Nepean Blue Mountains

"I've been repeatedly lied to by agencies, emotionally exploited and even forced to look after aged out kids out of pocket." Foster carer, 18 – 30, NGO, New England

"Until we look after the carers we have, we will continue to lose carers and won't encourage new families to join in the journey." Foster carer & Adoptive parent, 51 – 60, DCJ, Illawarra Shoalhaven

"More information when your children have been diagnosed with a disability. Otherwise, I'm very happy with the way I've been treated. It's been 8 years and we're still going strong." Guardian – non-related to child from out-of-home care, 51 – 60, DCJ, Northern NSW

"It is very difficult when you are guardian of a child with mental health problems. However my caseworker is very kind and psychologist invaluable." Guardian – relative/kin of child from out-of-home care, 71 – 100, DCJ, Northern Sydney

Alongside these challenges, carers highlighted unique supports which have enabled them throughout their carer journey, including specialist supports such as those highlighted in examples provided in **Box 7** below.

Question 44 asked whether respondents had any other comments to make about My Forever Family NSW. 469 comments were made in this section.

Key responses are highlighted in **Box 8** demonstrating the value carers perceived in My Forever Family NSW and the services they had accessed. Where critical feedback was noted, this frequently centred around desiring a higher level of advocacy than was provided.

Box 8: Appreciative feedback

"[My Forever Family] Were my saving grace in my darkest time of caring." Foster carer, 51 – 60, NGO, Southern NSW

"A wonderful organisation which has provided me with much needed support over the past three years. They respond promptly and communicate well." Relative / kinship carer – grandparent, 61 – 70, NGO, Illawarra Shoalhaven

"I am grateful I have someone that listened when I voiced my opinions." Foster carer, 51 – 60, NGO, Central Coast

Critical feedback

"I've been directed several times to engage help from MFF, however my current understanding from other carers is that you don't 'have teeth' so are unable to help in situations like mine beyond giving advice." Foster carer, 31 – 40, NGO, Illawarra Shoalhaven

Conclusion

The Carer Survey provides valuable information on the views and needs of carers across NSW.

The findings of the current survey and accompanying interviews presented in this report highlight consistency in perceived carer needs over time, with a range of support needs which can be addressed through collaborative sector efforts.

These key areas of focus can guide the sector to ensure carers are best supported in this important role, enabling children and young people in care to thrive. In the context of the current challenges facing the NSW OOHC sector these findings provide clear guidance around steps that can be taken to support existing carers, prevent placement breakdown and sustain placements for children in OOHC in the longer term. When considered in the context of a significant body of research that identifies the inextricable link between carer retention and a sector's ability to recruit new carers, it becomes evident that this report and the insights contained are a roadmap setting out concrete steps for the sector to take to improve not only carers experience, but the experience and outcomes of children in OOHC in NSW.

‘...recruitment and retention are linked and create a cycle: satisfied carers may interest others in caring through word of mouth.’

Thomson L. McArthur M and Barry E,
Recruiting and Retaining Foster Carers,
Institute of Child Protection Studies

ABOUT MY FOREVER FAMILY NSW

My Forever Family NSW is funded by the NSW Government and operated by Adopt Change Limited, to recruit, support, train and advocate for foster and kinship carers, guardians and adoptive parents from out-of-home care across the state. Since its inception in July 2018, we have referred over 2,461 potential carer households to agencies across NSW, have over 7,511 recorded attendances by carers at training sessions, and on average, the Carer Support Team assists over 157 carer households each month.

Carers and agencies can contact **My Forever Family NSW** on **1300 782 975** or via email: enquiries@myforeverfamily.org.au

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Khor, S. et al. 2021, 'Subjective wellbeing in Australia during the second year of the pandemic', Australian Unity Wellbeing Index – Report 38, Deakin University, Geelong, Australia, www.acqol.com.au/projects#reports.

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6 APPENDIX | NSW Carer Survey 2022



NSW CARER SURVEY 2022

Thank you for agreeing to take part in the NSW Carer Survey 2022.

The survey will take approximately 20 minutes to finish. It is completely anonymous for you and, where relevant, your agency. Because it is anonymous your privacy is protected and no-one is identified. It is also voluntary and that means you can choose not to complete it. Questions marked with an asterisk (*) are required.

If you prefer not to respond to a question, you can skip to the next question. My Forever Family NSW aims to help improve the lives of carers through information, support and training. To do this we need to hear from current foster carers, relative and kinship carers with a non-government agency or the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ), guardians and adoptive parents. The results will help us understand your experience, the support you currently receive and how the sector can support you better.

My Forever Family NSW will report back to carers, DCJ and non-government agencies on the survey results so that they can also work on improvements to the system.

1. What type of carer are you? You can choose more than one.

- ☐ Foster carer
- ☐ Relative / kinship carer – grandparent
- ☐ Relative / kinship carer – other
- ☐ Guardian – relative / kin of child from out-of-home care
- ☐ Guardian – non-related to child from out-of-home care
- ☐ Adoptive parent

2. If you are a foster carer or relative/kin carer, what type of care do you provide? You can choose more than one.

- ☐ Long term care
- ☐ Short term care
- ☐ Emergency / crisis care
- ☐ Respite care
- ☐ I don't know

3. Are you with Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ – formerly FACS or DOCS) or another agency?*

- ☐ DCJ
- ☐ Another agency
- ☐ Have adoption or guardianship orders
- ☐ Prefer not to say

4. What is your gender?

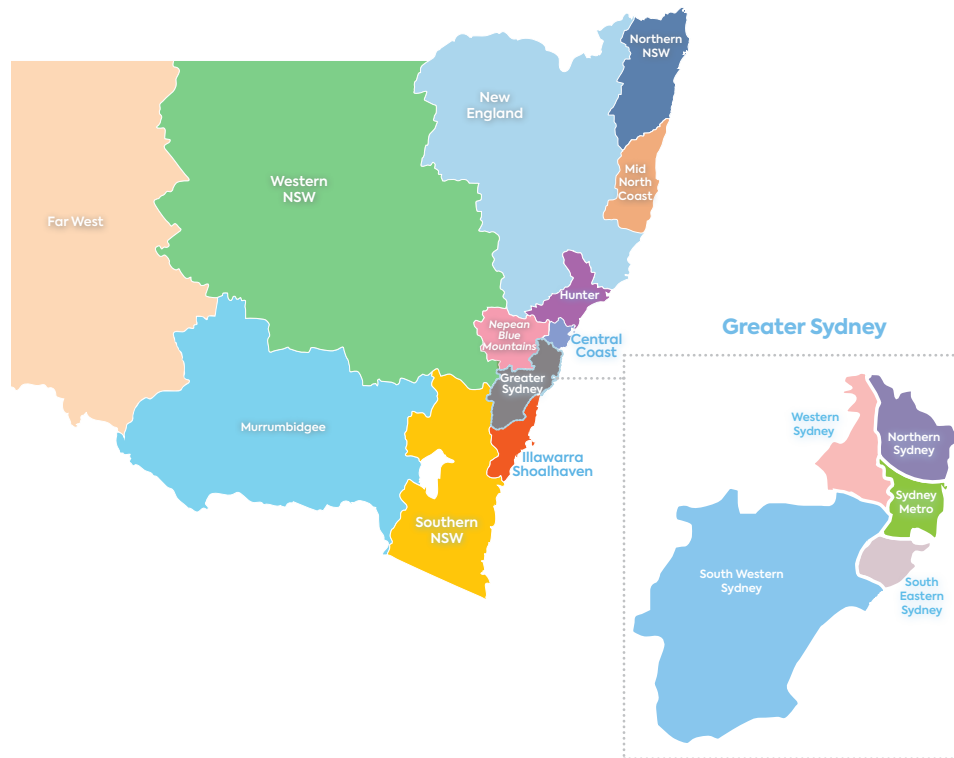
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Other

5. What is your age?

- ☐ 18-30
- ☐ 31-40
- ☐ 41-50
- ☐ 51-60
- ☐ 61-70
- ☐ 71-100



6. What part of NSW are you located in? If not sure, see the map and select the district closest to your location.



- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Central Coast | <input type="checkbox"/> Far West | <input type="checkbox"/> Hunter |
| <input type="checkbox"/> New England | <input type="checkbox"/> Illawarra Shoalhaven | <input type="checkbox"/> Mid North Coast |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Murrumbidgee | <input type="checkbox"/> Nepean Blue Mountains | <input type="checkbox"/> Northern NSW |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Northern Sydney | <input type="checkbox"/> South Eastern Sydney | <input type="checkbox"/> South Western Sydney |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sydney Metro | <input type="checkbox"/> Western Sydney | <input type="checkbox"/> Southern NSW |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Western NSW | | |

7. Do you identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?

- ☐ Aboriginal
☐ Torres Strait Islander
☐ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
☐ No
☐ Prefer not to say



8. Which language/s do you speak at home other than English?

- ☐ Aboriginal language ☐ Arabic ☐ Cantonese ☐ Croatian ☐ Italian
☐ Mandarin ☐ Maori or Te Rao ☐ Russian ☐ Spanish ☐ Swahili
☐ Tagalog ☐ Turkish ☐ Vietnamese ☐ Other language (please specify)

9. How many children are currently in your care? Please exclude children in your care that are biological and/or step children.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6 or more
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

10. Are there Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children in your care?

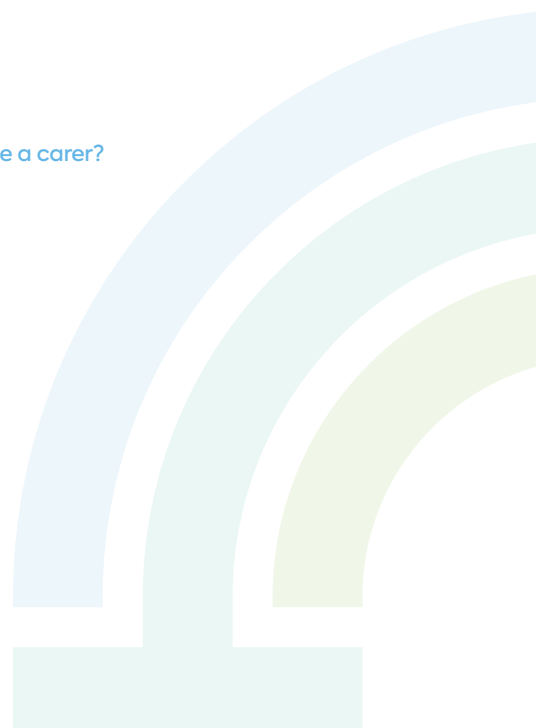
- ☐ Yes
☐ No

11. How long have you been a carer?

- ☐ Less than 1 year
☐ 1 - 5 years
☐ 6 - 10 years
☐ 11 - 15 years
☐ 16 - 20 years
☐ More than 20 years

12. How much longer do you plan to be a carer?

- ☐ Less than 1 year
☐ 1 - 5 years
☐ 6 - 10 years
☐ 11 - 15 years
☐ 16 - 20 years
☐ More than 20 years
☐ I don't know





RECRUITMENT/BECOMING A CARER

13. Were you authorised for the first time in the last 12 months?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

14. Were you satisfied with the process of becoming a carer?

Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Unsatisfied	Very unsatisfied	N/A
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

15. Thinking about the last 12 months, being new to caring and the child/ren placed in your care, was there training or information that could have assisted you/prepared you for the placement of the child/ren in your care? You can choose more than one.

- ☐ Information on the types of care available
☐ Understanding guardianship
☐ Understanding adoption
☐ Therapeutic parenting
☐ Planning for family visits
☐ Planning for placement change
☐ More information about the child
☐ Talking with another carer
☐ Self care for carers
☐ How to access support
☐ How to access latest agency policies and guidelines
☐ Cultural knowledge/ training
☐ Other (please specify)

YOUR EXPERIENCE

16. How likely are you to recommend becoming a carer to others?

Very likely	Likely	Neutral	Unlikely	Very unlikely
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



17. What would make you more likely to recommend caring to others? Please rank your top 3 in order, with 1 being what would make you most likely to recommend caring.

- ☐ More agency accountability
- ☐ Caseworkers following up on what they say they will do
- ☐ Improved support with contact with birth family
- ☐ Improved financial support for medical and education expenses
- ☐ More transparency and efficiency in decision-making
- ☐ Permanency support
- ☐ Improved access to respite
- ☐ More support from caseworkers
- ☐ Improved access to policies and guidelines relevant to carers
- ☐ Improved communication and information provided by caseworkers, agencies and the department

18. To help us further understand your experience, complete the sentences that are relevant for you.

I like it when

I don't like it when

It takes so long to

19. How satisfied are you in your role as a carer?

Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Unsatisfied	Very unsatisfied
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



SUPPORT FOR YOU

Support to voice concerns, access information, defend your rights and explore choices and options.

20. Do you receive the support you need from your caseworker / case manager to care for the child/ren and/or young people in your care?

Always	Mostly	Sometimes	Never	I don't need support	Not relevant
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

21. This question considers the last 12 months and whether you needed support for the child/ren and young people in your care. Choose the ones you needed.

- ☐ Specialist medical care
- ☐ Behaviour support
- ☐ Counselling /psychologist
- ☐ Speech therapy
- ☐ Specialist education support including tutoring
- ☐ Specialist carer support service
- ☐ Help with family time (contact) with the birth family
- ☐ Respite care (this means formal respite, not including friends/family)
- ☐ Informal respite care
- ☐ Additional financial support (to your carer allowance)
- ☐ Support with Restoration of the child/ren in my care

22. Use the scale to indicate how often you received the support when needed.

	Always	Mostly	Sometimes	Never
Specialist medical care	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Behaviour support	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Counselling /psychologist	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Speech therapy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Specialist education support including tutoring	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Specialist carer support service	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Help with family time (contact) with the birth family	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Respite care (this means formal respite, not including friends/family)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Informal respite care	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Additional financial support (to your carer allowance)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Support with Restoration of the child/ren in my care	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



23. In the last 12 months have you used any of the below support to help you look after the child/ren in your care? Choose the ones you used and use the scale to indicate how satisfied you were with this support?

	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Unsatisfied	Very unsatisfied	Not used in the last 12 months
From your agency	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Carer reference group	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Carer support service – AbSec	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Carer support service – My Forever Family NSW	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
After hours crisis support	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lifeline, Kids helpline, Parent line or similar	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
National Carer Support line	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Carer coaching	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Informal support from a carer group	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Informal support from other carers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

24. In the last 12 months, have you attended any training?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not sure

25. Who organised the training that you attended? You can select more than one.

- ☐ Your agency
- ☐ My Forever Family NSW
- ☐ Department of Communities and Justice
- ☐ Other provider

26. In the last 12 months, how many training topics did you complete?

0	1	2-3	4-6	7 or more
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



27. What topics would you like training on? You can choose more than one.

- ☐ Therapeutic parenting
- ☐ Challenging behaviours / behaviour support
- ☐ Healing from trauma
- ☐ Building resilience
- ☐ Helping teenagers
- ☐ Online safety and bullying
- ☐ Guardianship
- ☐ Open Adoption
- ☐ Cultural connection / competency
- ☐ Caring for an Aboriginal child
- ☐ Children in care with sexualised behaviours
- ☐ Caring for a child with disability
- ☐ Advocating for kids in your care
- ☐ Achieving better health and education outcomes
- ☐ Understanding allegations
- ☐ Contact, family time and building positive regard
- ☐ Self-care for carers
- ☐ First aid
- ☐ Leaving care and after care
- ☐ How to work effectively with your agency
- ☐ Supporting children through restoration
- ☐ Code of Conduct
- ☐ Responding to disclosures
- ☐ Other topic (please specify)

28. Generally, how satisfied were you with the availability of training?

Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Unsatisfied	Very unsatisfied	N/A
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Any other comments about availability of courses?



29. How do you prefer to access training?

- ☐ Face to face
- ☐ Live online
- ☐ Pre-recorded webinar to access in my own time
- ☐ A combination of all the above

30. If you selected online, what is the reason? You can choose more than one.

- ☐ I find it hard to access face to face training due to my geographic location
- ☐ I find it easier to make time for online training
- ☐ Online training takes up less time
- ☐ I can access a greater range of training options online than what is offered in my area
- ☐ I prefer this style of learning to face to face

31. If you selected face-to-face, what is the reason? You can choose more than one.

- ☐ I like interacting with the presenter
- ☐ I like meeting/socialising with other carers in person
- ☐ I like learning from other carers
- ☐ There are more opportunities to practice skills
- ☐ I find it easier face to face than online
- ☐ I am not comfortable with online learning

WELLBEING AND CONNECTION

More services have been delivered online because of the COVID-19 pandemic and My Forever Family NSW has met some new carers during this period.

32. Which online services provided by My Forever Family NSW have you accessed? You can select more than one.

- ☐ Online Lounge Rooms for connection and support
- ☐ Webinar or other live online training
- ☐ Pre-recorded webinar to access in own time
- ☐ One on one video carer coaching
- ☐ I don't access online services
- ☐ I did not know about My Forever Family NSW online services



33. Over the last 12 months, how satisfied were you with the carer activities you attended?
You can choose more than one.

	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Unsatisfied	Very unsatisfied	N/A
Carer-organised event / catch up	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Agency organised event/ catch up	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Online forums	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Any other comment? (please specify)						

34. If you are not connected to other carers, what are the reasons? You can choose more than one.

- ☐ Not aware of how to connect
- ☐ I don't receive information about events
- ☐ It is hard to find the time
- ☐ I don't want to connect with other carers
- ☐ I am connected with other carers
- ☐ Other (please specify)

35. How would you rate your personal health and wellbeing out of 10?

No satisfaction at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Completely satisfied 10
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

36. How would you rate your sense of connection with others out of 10?

No satisfaction at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Completely satisfied 10
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



37. How would you rate your sense of achievement and fulfilment out of 10?

No satisfaction at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Completely satisfied 10
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

38. How often do you feel stressed?

Not at all	Not very often	Sometimes	Quite often	All the time
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

MY FOREVER FAMILY NSW

39. Had you heard of My Forever Family NSW before completing this survey? *

- ☐ Yes and I am a member (Being a member of My Forever Family NSW means you receive our information on support, training and resources and you're an authorised carer, guardian or adoptive parent.)
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't know

40. How did you hear of My Forever Family NSW? You can choose more than one.

- ☐ Through another carer
- ☐ Through my agency
- ☐ Through the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ)
- ☐ Through social media (Facebook, etc)
- ☐ Other (please specify)

41. Did you contact My Forever Family NSW in the last 12 months?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

42. How satisfied were you regarding:

	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Unsatisfied	Very unsatisfied
Customer service	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Information provided about caring for children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Training events provided by My Forever Family NSW	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Support to talk through an issue	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Advocacy on your behalf	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



43. Is there any other information that you would like to share?

44. Any other comments about My Forever Family NSW?

Thank you for completing this survey.

If you are not yet a My Forever Family NSW member, sign up on our website after completing this survey to get access to newsletters, resources, support, free training.

Return your completed hard copy survey to your agency or

My Forever Family

PO Box 595

Dulwich Hill NSW 2203

You can ring My Forever Family NSW on **1300 782 975** if you have any questions about this survey, free membership or about caring, training or support.



MY FOREVER FAMILY NSW

My Forever Family NSW provides carers with the support, training and resources they need to ensure the best possible outcomes for the children and young people in out-of-home care, as well as themselves.

Carer Support

The My Forever Family NSW Carer Support Team is qualified and knowledgeable and is available via phone or email to provide carers with information, guidance and support. This includes support during the process of becoming a guardian, guidance on a range of topics including caring for children who have experienced trauma and casework support.

You can contact My Forever Family NSW Carer Support by calling **1300 782 975**.

Training and Resources

My Forever Family NSW offers a range of high quality, easily accessible training. Our training options ensure that carers feel supported, well informed and equipped to care for children and young people who may have experienced trauma.

The training timetable and recorded webinars are available on our website www.myforeverfamily.org.au/training/

The My Forever Family NSW website also offers an extensive library of free resources available to all authorised carers in NSW, providing guides, factsheets and information packs on topics such as caring for kids with disabilities or learning disorders, tips and guides to navigating the system, understanding and responding to trauma and more.

You can find carer resources on our website
www.myforeverfamily.org.au/resources/

Carer Support Groups

Carer Support Groups are a place for carers to share experiences and knowledge and support one another emotionally, socially and practically. They are run by local foster carers, for foster carers, kinship carers, adoptive parents and guardians.

They are a space for carers to express themselves with confidence that they will be understood and accepted by other carers who share similar lived experience, build resilience, learn new perspectives and parenting approaches and make lifelong friendships.

Carer Support Groups are available across NSW. Carers can find their local group through our interactive map available on the My Forever Family NSW website
www.myforeverfamily.org.au/carer-support/carer-support-groups/

Carer Coaching Program

The Carer Coaching Program assists carers through intensive 1:1 support sessions. The sessions are goal-focused, motivational and encouraging to support carers on their carer journey.

The program offers 1 hour coaching sessions as well as shorter discussions through video conferences or phone calls. The sessions focus on placement stability and strengthening the relationship between the carer and child.

The Carer Coaching Program is available for a limited time. You can find out more through our website
www.myforeverfamily.org.au/carer-support/carer-coaching-program/

1300 782 975

www.myforeverfamily.org.au

CARER 
SUPPORT LINE
1300 782 975

Monday to Friday | 9am – 5pm

CARER 
SUPPORT

enquiries@myforeverfamily.org.au

www.myforeverfamily.org.au