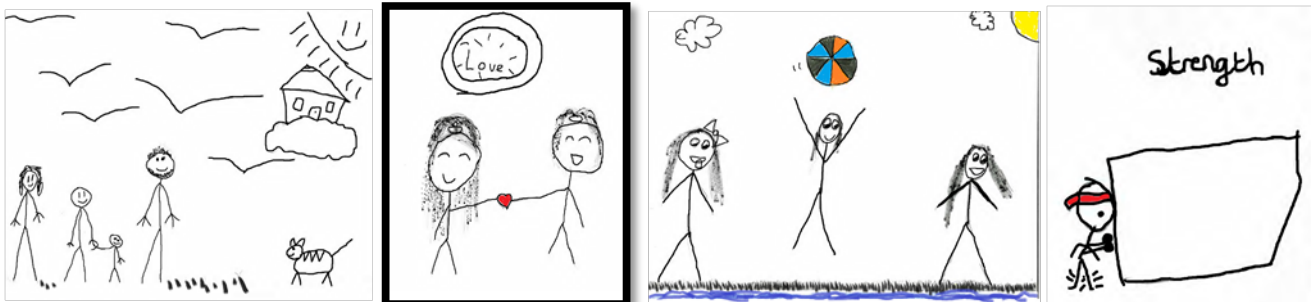


# Signs of Safety Survey of Children, Young People, Parents, Main Carers, Family and Friends

## Children's Social Care Academy

15th March, 2021



*Illustrations by children at St. Paul's Primary School, Hereford*

# Signs of Safety survey of children, young people, parents, main carers, family and friends

## Brief Summary

The Signs of Safety survey was created so that we could hear the views of children, young people, their parents, main carers, and their family and friends about how we are working with them. The survey was shared on Herefordshire Council's website from 20th November to 29th December. Workers from all parts of Herefordshire Council's children's services shared the survey link with all children and families they were supporting. The survey had three sections: a questionnaire for children or young people, one for parents or main carers, and one for family members or friends. Each questionnaire consisted of the same 10 questions.

We received 75 responses, of which seven were from children and young people, 66 were from parents or main carers, and two were from family members or friends.

## Top Five Highlights:

1. The majority of responses were positive (either "Agree" or "Strongly Agree") for all of the 10 questions, which showed an overall positive experience. For instance, the combined % of who "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" in key areas (*see page 6*):
  - *The worker has helped make my child's life experience and outcomes better. 66%*
  - *My worker notices what's working well in my family... 88%*
  - *My worker has been clear with me about how they see the difficulties...77%*
2. Areas where respondents said that we worked especially well was about how empathetic, and supportive, and how well our workers have listened to the needs of children and families. For instance, the combined % of who "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" (*see page 6*):
  - *My worker listens to me in a way that shows they really want to understand...91%*
  - *My worker does what they say they will do. 90%*
  - *I have felt involved in making plans about what to do to make things better...78%*
3. One area that was a worry was that many respondents said that frequent changes in worker had an impact on the quality of their relationships with their workers.
4. Another area that was a worry was about how we keep in touch with children and families and respond to their needs in a more timely way.
5. The survey also highlighted the impact that Covid 19 has had on our ways of working, with some respondents saying that the reduction in face to face visits had a negative impact for them.

## Our Next steps

As part of our next steps we will be sharing these findings and all the learning with our entire Children's Services workforce. This will help us celebrate what we have been doing well so we know what we need to keep doing more of, and to identify ways we can address the areas of improvement so we can strive to do even better. We will also be running this survey again in six months' time so we can see if we have made a difference from this time to next.

# Introduction

This Signs of Safety survey was created so we could hear the views of children and young people, their parents and carers, and their family and friends about how well Herefordshire Children's Services is listening to them and their needs, how well we are working with them, and how well we are making a positive difference in their lives and outcomes for the future.

The survey was shared on Herefordshire Council's website from 20th November to 29th December 2020 and we received a total of 75 responses. The survey was open to those children and families who currently had a worker and were receiving a support service from us. Workers in all parts of our service were encouraged to share the survey link with all children and families they were supporting and encouraging them to participate. They were also encouraged to seek support with completing the survey, either from their worker, their family members, or another trusted adult. Any children or young people in our care or leaving our care would be provided with an interpreter if needed. We made it clear what the purpose of this survey was (as outlined above) and that we would be sharing our findings publically once complete. This included our intent to rerun this survey every six months to we can gauge our progress in the quality of the support we provide as well as identify any areas for us to improve upon.

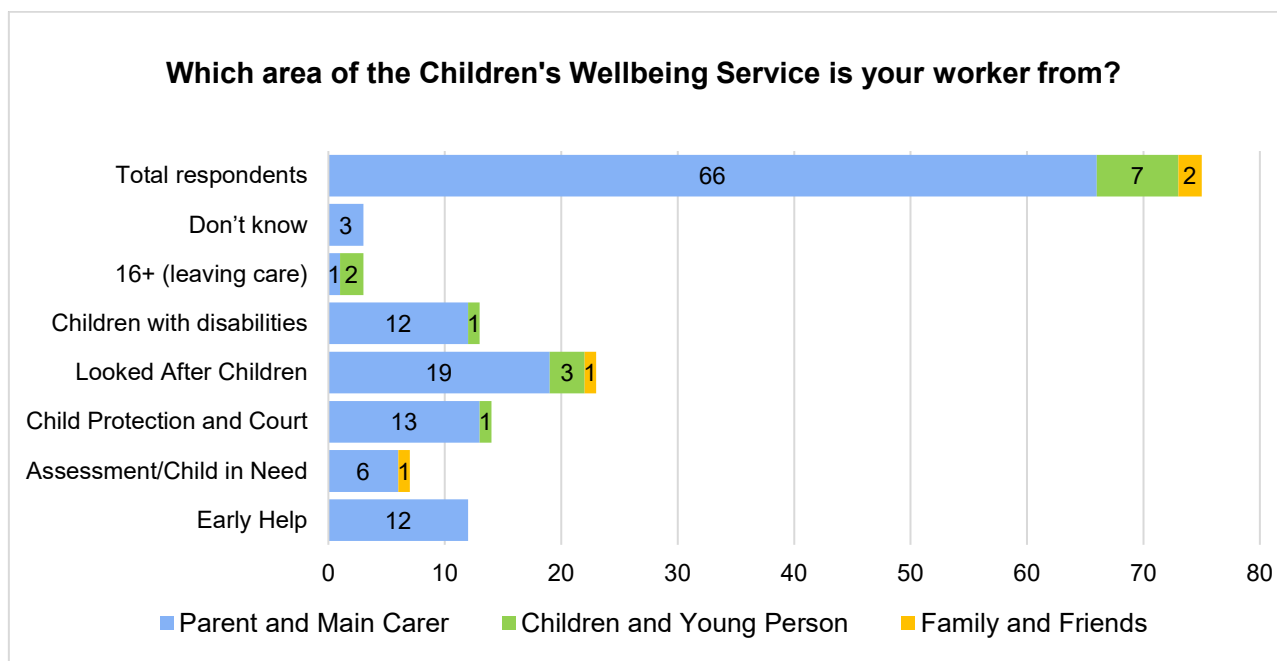
The survey had three sections: a questionnaire for children or young people, one for parents or main carers, and one for family members or friends. This report shows the results of all three sections.

Our hope was to get at least 100 responses in this first run of the survey, with a good combination of responses from children and young people and their parents or carers. Although our responses from parents and carers were strong (66), we recognise a key area of improvement next time is how we can get a much greater response from children and young people as this was very low. It is important to recognise that due to the low responses from children and young people, it is difficult to generalise much from their feedback in terms of a broad representation from all those we do support. However, we value the contributions that everyone made in this survey and will take on board and share here what they said about us.

Some of the comments in this report have been edited to preserve anonymity and others were combined where they said the same or very similar things for purposes of providing a summary.

## Findings

A total of 75 responses were shared with us from children, young people, parents, main carers, family and friends with their responses broken down as follows:

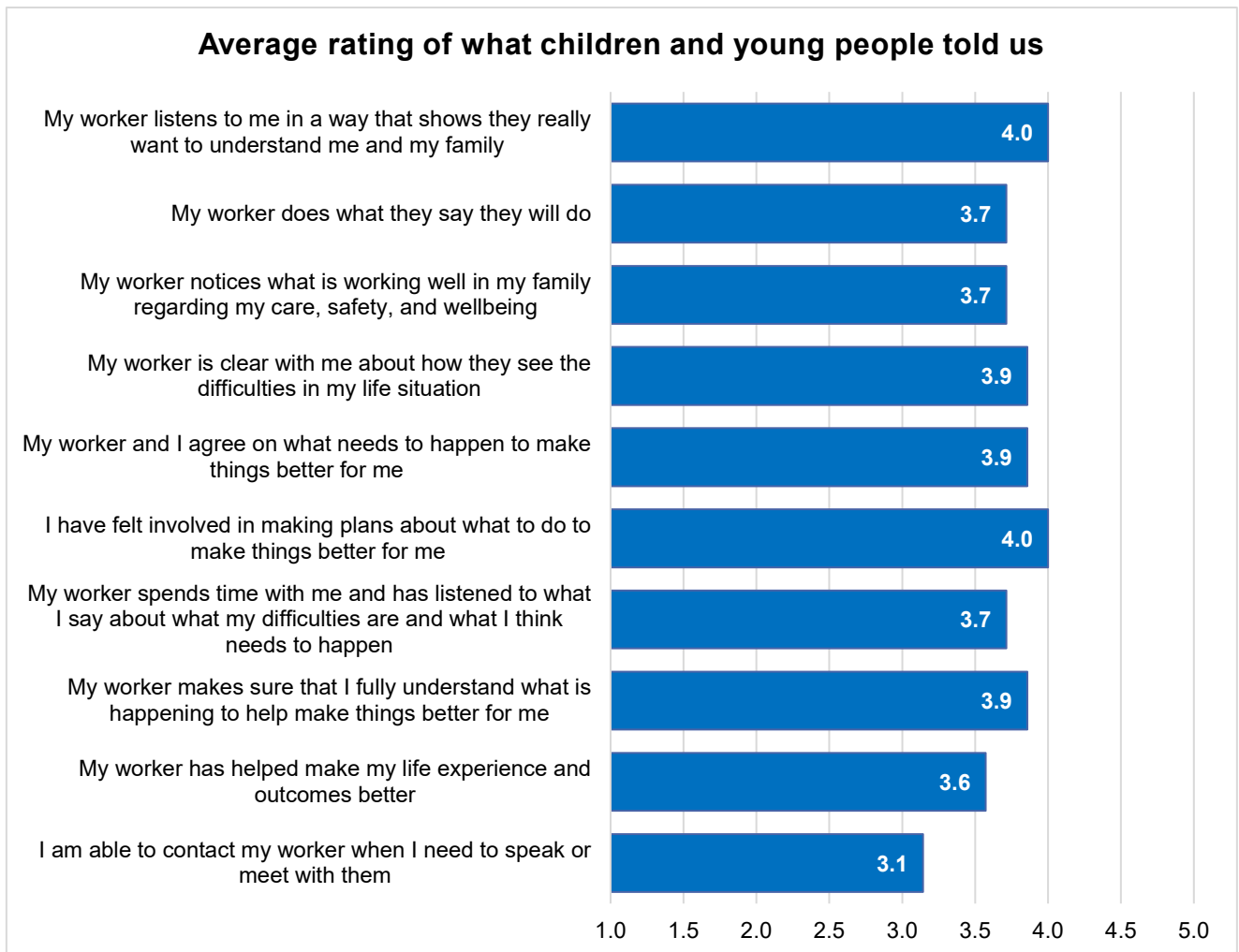


## What did children and young people tell us?

Children and young people were asked to rate each statement below on the following scale from five - agree strongly, to one - disagree strongly:

Statement	Agree Strongly	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Disagree strongly
My worker listens to me in a way that shows they really want to understand me and my family	3	3	0	0	1
My worker does what they say they will do	2	3	1	0	1
My worker notices what is working well in my family regarding my care, safety, and well-being	1	5	0	0	1
My worker is clear with me about how they see the difficulties in my life situation	2	4	0	0	1
My worker and I agree on what needs to happen to make things better for me	2	4	0	0	1

Statement	Agree Strongly	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Disagree strongly
I have felt involved in making plans about what to do to make things better for me	3	3	0	0	1
My worker spends time with me and has listened to what I say about what my difficulties are and what I think needs to happen	3	2	0	1	1
My worker makes sure that I fully understand what is happening to help make things better for me	2	4	0	0	1
My worker has helped make my life experience and outcomes better	0	6	0	0	1
I am able to contact my worker when I need to speak or meet with them	0	4	1	1	1

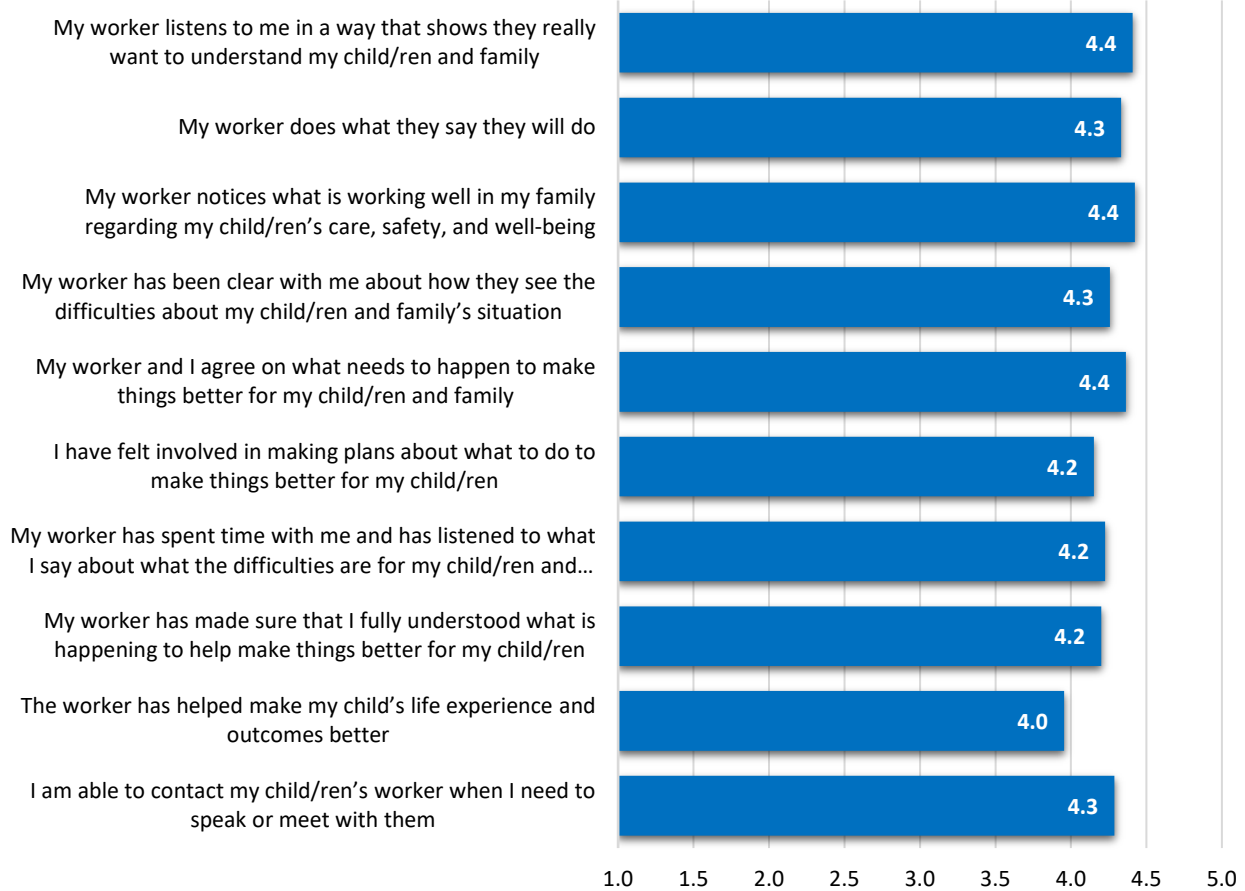


## What did parents and main carers tell us?

Parents or main carers of children and young people were asked to rate each statement below on the following scale from five - agree strongly, to one - disagree strongly:

Statement	Agree Strongly	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Disagree strongly
My worker listens to me in a way that shows they really want to understand my child/ren and family	39 (59%)	21 (32%)	1 (2%)	4 (6%)	1 (2%)
My worker does what they say they will do	36 (55%)	23 (35%)	2 (3%)	3 (5%)	2 (3%)
My worker notices what is working well in my family regarding my child/ren's care, safety, and well-being	39 (59%)	19 (29%)	6 (9%)	1 (2%)	1 (2%)
My worker has been clear with me about how they see the difficulties about my child/ren and family's situation	35 (53%)	16 (24%)	12 (18%)	3 (5%)	0 (0%)
My worker and I agree on what needs to happen to make things better for my child/ren and family	39 (59%)	16 (24%)	7 (11%)	4 (6%)	0 (0%)
I have felt involved in making plans about what to do to make things better for my child/ren	34 (52%)	17 (26%)	7 (11%)	7 (11%)	1 (2%)
My worker has spent time with me and has listened to what I say about what the difficulties are for my child/ren and what I think needs to happen	35 (53%)	21 (32%)	3 (5%)	4 (6%)	3 (5%)
My worker has made sure that I fully understood what is happening to help make things better for my child/ren	34 (52%)	18 (28%)	6 (9%)	6 (9%)	1 (2%)
The worker has helped make my child's life experience and outcomes better	28 (42%)	16 (24%)	16 (24%)	3 (5%)	3 (5%)
I am able to contact my child/ren's worker when I need to speak or meet with them	36 (55%)	17 (26%)	10 (15%)	2 (3%)	1 (2%)

## Average rating of what parents and main carers told us



## What did family and friends tell us?

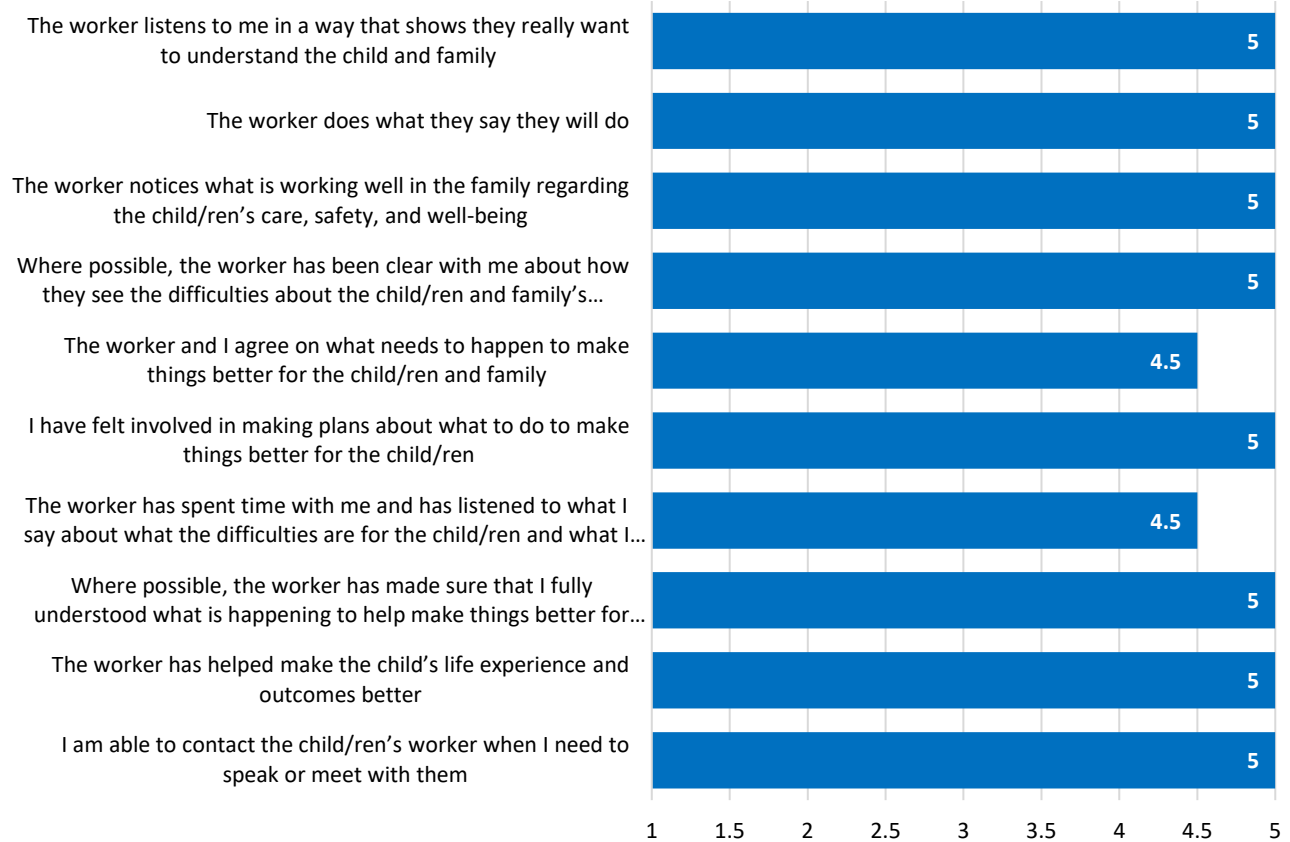
Family and friends of children and families were asked to rate each statement below on the following scale from five - agree strongly, to one - disagree strongly:

Statement	Agree Strongly	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Disagree strongly
The worker listens to me in a way that shows they really want to understand the child and family	2	0	0	0	0
The worker does what they say they will do	2	0	0	0	0
The worker notices what is working well in the family regarding the child/ren's care, safety, and well-being	2	0	0	0	0

Statement	Agree Strongly	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Disagree strongly
Where possible, the worker has been clear with me about how they see the difficulties about the child/ren and family's situation	2	0	0	0	0
The worker and I agree on what needs to happen to make things better for the child/ren and family	1	1	0	0	0
I have felt involved in making plans about what to do to make things better for the child/ren	2	0	0	0	0
The worker has spent time with me and has listened to what I say about what the difficulties are for the child/ren and what I think needs to happen	1	1	0	0	0
Where possible, the worker has made sure that I fully understood what is happening to help make things better for the child/ren	2	0	0	0	0
The worker has helped make the child's life experience and outcomes better	2	0	0	0	0
I am able to contact the child/ren's worker when I need to speak or meet with them	2	0	0	0	0



### Average rating of what family and friends told us



# What did children, young people, parents, main carers, family and friends say was working well and what needs to improve?

In addition to the statements above that respondents were asked to rate, we also asked them to share any other comments they had. The first two questions were; what did they believe was working well and what they believe needs to improve. Here is what they told us:

What would you say that your worker has done well in working with you?	
<b>Comments from Children and Young People</b>	
<b>What is working well</b>	<b>What needs to improve</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being patient and listening</li> <li>• Helped me to understand what's happening in my life and has been really good help.</li> <li>• Looking after me</li> <li>• Making sure I can see my family (two mentions)</li> <li>• The FSW (Family Support Worker) has helped us to make reward charts, by providing the resources to make them, this included stickers with smiley faces on &amp; pom poms to go in the jars, when we have achieved something or done something well.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (none stated)</li> </ul>
<b>Comments from Parents and Main Carers</b>	
<p>Unfortunately it was not discovered until after the survey was completed that this question was not asked of the parents/carers in the survey. In error, the question about what would you change about the worker working with you was repeated twice. This is regrettable as it was a missed opportunity for us to hear their comments on what our workers had done well.</p>	
<b>Comments from Family and Friends</b>	
<b>What is working well</b>	<b>What needs to improve</b>
<p>Family and friends shared the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Showed empathy and understanding regarding our family position</li> <li>• Talking to the child as if they are listened to and making their voice heard as well as other professionals and adults</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (none stated)</li> </ul>

If you could change anything about how your worker is working with you, what would it be?	
Comments from Children and Young People	
What is working well	What needs to improve
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Three children and young people told us that there is nothing they would change.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Two children and young people told us that their worker should answer their phone.</li> <li>Two children said that they would like to see or meet with their worker more often.</li> <li>One child or young person said that they would like their worker to be more supportive.</li> </ul>
Comments from Parents or Main Carers	
What is working well	What needs to improve
<p>Thirty eight parents or carers told us there is nothing that they would want to change about the way their worker is working with them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Absolutely nothing the lady who worked us was amazing she is truly amazing are [at] what she does</li> <li>By being able to keep them working with me forever</li> <li>I would change nothing my worker is a real credit to your team (two comments)</li> <li>Nothing my worker is amazing and children's services are lucky to have such amazing person committed to keeping families together and happy</li> <li>Nothing. I am happy with mine and my daughter &lt;name removed&gt; service at the moment. As &lt;name removed&gt; has been given a reduced status in the protection plan and is living with me her father and have PR (parental responsibility). She is happy and caring on with life. Which is what we want out of this plan.</li> </ul>	<p>Three parents or carers indicated a negative impact of Covid 19, telling us that this had prevented face to face visits.</p> <p>Two parents or carers commented on worker availability, with one saying that they wished their worker was not overloaded, and another wanting their worker to be employed full time.</p> <p>Four parents or carers raised an issue of suitable services being available in Herefordshire. Three of these related to difficulties with respite care services.</p> <p>Two parents or carers indicated that they would like senior managers to have a better understanding of what is happening within service areas, with one indicating that senior managers need to hear directly from parents and carers.</p> <p>Two parents or carers spoke about the need for foster carers to be treated with respect and consistently when there is a change in worker.</p> <p>Seven parents or carers told us in a variety of ways that they would like communication to improve. This included the need for their worker to respond to their emails and calling</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I like my worker she is able to listen and seems to understand the predicament I am in.</li> </ul>	<p>back in a timely manner, completing tasks in a timely way, and doing what they say they are going to do.</p> <p>Two parents or carers told us that they would like their worker to listen to them, take a genuine interest and show an understanding of their needs.</p> <p><b>Some of the comments shared with us:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At these Covid times we are restricted but phone meetings are not working well for us</li> <li>Better communication, not having to chase things up with them. Calling back in a timely manner</li> <li>To communicate better and faster. To do what they said they are going to do... quickly without constant reminders</li> <li>Wish they had more resources available.</li> </ul>
<b>Comments from Family and Friends</b>	
<b>What is working well</b>	<b>What needs to improve</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(none stated)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The social worker has a very full workload. It would help if this was not so.</li> </ul>

<p>Finally, is there anything else you would like to tell us about how your worker has worked with you or your family, or how other people in the Children's Well Being Service have worked with you, even if they are not your worker?</p>	
<b>Comments from Children and Young People</b>	
<b>What is working well</b>	<b>What needs to improve</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(none stated)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We have had 20 different social workers, during our time in care and time with mum it is a lot, and recently we were told we would be getting another social worker, this made us sad because we thought we would have the same one until they finished their work. It is difficult at times meeting new people and telling them the same story over and over again. It can make us feel quite scared of what might happen next.</li> </ul>

Comments from Parents or Main Carers	
What is working well	What needs to improve
<p>Workers were described as a “pleasure to work with”, “lovely”, “understanding” (three mentions), “fantastic”, “amazing”, “helpful” (three mentions), “kind”. Two parents or carers also said that their worker listens to them.</p> <p><b>Some of the comments shared with us:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Absolute pleasure to work with (two mentions)</li> <li>• Excellent support very good (two mentions)</li> <li>• I am grateful that someone is listening to me</li> <li>• My support worker has helped in so many ways which has had a very positive impact on my future with my family.</li> <li>• Only the other end of the phone when I need them always answers or message if I need them (two mentions)</li> <li>• Our worker was amazing. The good lady stuck with her every word and helped us to achieve all goals set and much more. I can actually say that I was very glad and thankful for the lady that supported us. Couldn't have done it without her. A person that definitely cares about family life!</li> </ul>	<p>Seven parents or carers shared their views here.</p> <p>Two commented on lack of suitable services for respite.</p> <p>One told us that there is a need for continuity in workers. Another shared their view that their worker needed to be more genuine.</p> <p>One person told us that there is a lack of support for foster carers.</p> <p><b>Some of the comments shared with us:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Essentially, our social worker's hands are tied if a suitable service isn't available.</li> <li>• I've had 3 fostering social workers in as many years &amp; whilst all have been professional and supportive we need continuity. Fostering social workers need to know the children as well as the carers. This can't happen effectively if they are forever changing</li> <li>• Our worker has been good with us as a family, however they are aware of the lack of suitable services in the county.</li> <li>• There is a lot of stress and pressure on foster carers and I feel there is a massive lack of support.</li> </ul>
Comments from Family and Friends	
What is working well	What needs to improve
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our present social worker has listened and believed all we have conveyed. Is not judgemental and is open to discussion. Past social workers have often been very lacking in understanding family concerns</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (none stated)</li> </ul>

## Summary and Next Steps

The survey shows an overwhelmingly positive response from all those who participated stating they agree or strongly agree in the survey answers. Comments about how empathetic, supportive, and how well our workers have listened to the needs of children and families is reassuring to hear that our support is making a positive impact and difference in the lives of children and young people we support.

The survey also shows we still have areas we can continue to improve upon to provide consistency in the way we support children and families. We are aware that changes in workers can have an impact on the quality of the relationships we build, which are important if we are to help bring about a positive change in the lives of children and their families. We can also improve upon how we keep in touch with children and families and respond to their needs in a more timely way.

The survey also highlighted the impacts that Covid 19 has had on our ways of working. Although we have placed great emphasis on ensuring we see children and families to the greatest and safest extent possible, we are very mindful that undertaking some areas of our work virtually can have benefits and deficits depending on the circumstances and the needs of individuals involved.

As part of our next steps we will be sharing these findings and all the learning with our entire Children's Services workforce, from frontline workers right up to our senior managers and director. This will help us celebrate what we have been doing well so we know what we need to keep doing more of for our children and families. We will also identify ways we can address in the areas of improvement so we can strive to do even better and hearing this directly from children and families will impress upon us the importance of doing just that.

We will also be running this survey again in six months' time so we can see if we have made a difference from this time to next. Most importantly, we aim to greatly increase the number of responses from our children and young people so we can get a much better sense of what they think about the quality of help and support we provide to them.