

# YOUNG LIVES IN LOCKDOWN

**NYAS' SURVEY OF CARE-EXPERIENCED CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE DURING COVID-19**

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**We are living in unprecedented times. Lockdown and social distancing measures are affecting us all.**

**NYAS have been working with thousands of children and young people since the pandemic began, and created a survey to better understand the experiences of children in care and care leavers during the COVID-19 lockdown.**

We know this is a particularly challenging time for children and young people, as the number of safeguarding referrals made by our professionals and volunteers have more than tripled since we entered lockdown. We created this survey to give a snapshot of how care-experienced children and young people are getting on in England and Wales during the lockdown.

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# Key statistics

(The survey was open from 15th April – 7th May 2020)

# 230

Children and young people responded to the survey across England and Wales

# 55

Different local authorities are corporate parents to respondents

# 4 in 5

Care leavers felt lonely and anxious more often during the lockdown

# 1 in 5

Care leavers do not have the technology they need to stay in touch with friends and family during the lockdown

# 1 in 10

Children in care have had no contact with their social worker since the lockdown began

# 4x

Care leavers were four times more likely to see their personal adviser 'less often' than 'more often' during the lockdown

# half

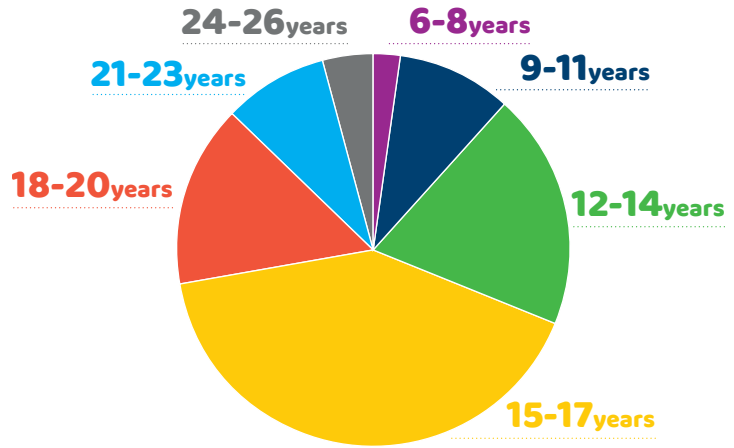
Of children in care are feeling lonely more often during the lockdown

# 99%

Of children and young people understand why there is a lockdown

# Who we spoke to

Our survey was open to 5-25-year olds, but the majority of children and young people that responded were between 12 and 20 years old. The most responses came from those aged 15 – 17. The gender balance of respondents was broadly representative of the children and young people in care.



**52%**  
of those that responded identified as female

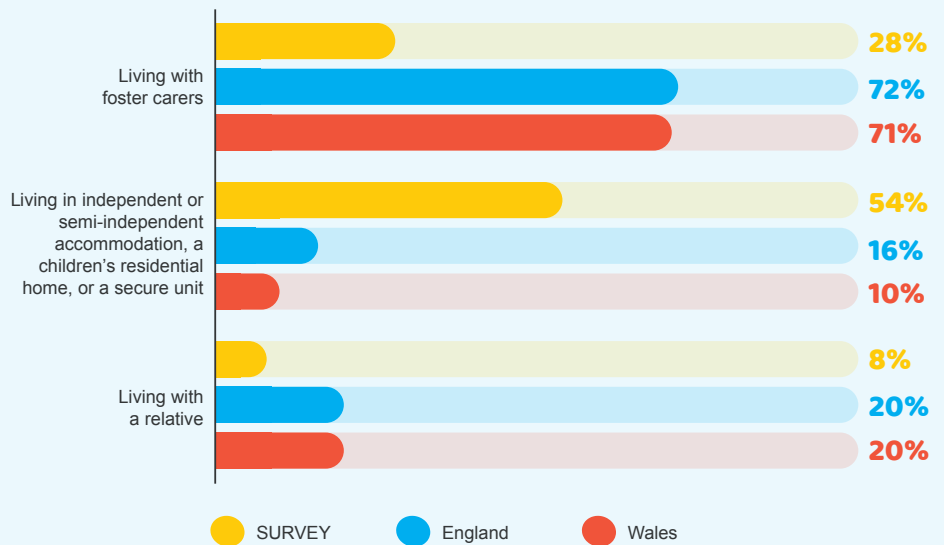
**44%**  
identified as male

**4%**  
identified as either 'Other' or did not disclose their gender

The majority of children and young people that responded to our survey (54%) live in an independent or semi-independent setting, a children's residential home or a secure unit. These young people are therefore significantly overrepresented in our survey when compared to figures from the Department for Education and Stats Wales.

We have chosen to categorise in a way that is broadly consistent with how the statistics are presented in both England and Wales, by combining categories such as children's residential homes with secure units. It is worth noting that this data is limited in that some children's foster carers will also be classed as a 'relative or friend.'

## Care arrangements of respondents compared to England and Wales rates

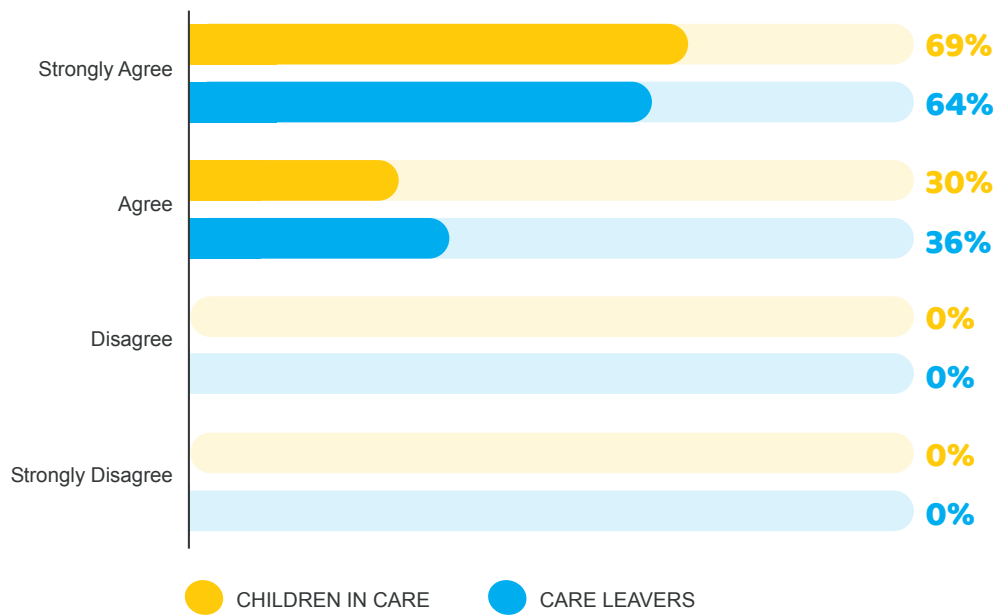




# Understanding why there is a lockdown

Every care leaver that responded, and 99% of children in care either agreed or strongly agreed that they understood why there is a lockdown.

## I understand why there is a lockdown at the moment



# Feeling lonely or anxious

Most children in care and care leavers are feeling lonely more often during the lockdown.

This is four in five (86%) care leavers, and half (50%) of children in care.

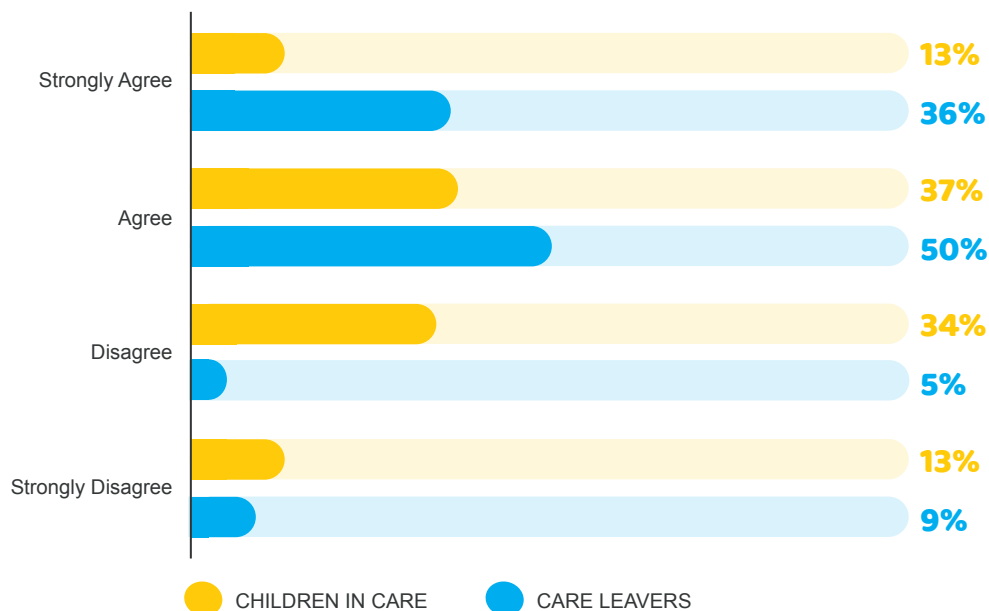
“

I am speaking to my psychologist over the phone weekly and pay to have the mental health team to give me my medication each day, but it is hard. I live in a bedsit in a hostel. My room is small, and it is hard being in all day. I was due to leave the hostel, but everything is on hold until after the lockdown. I am missing college.

”

OLIVIA, 19, CARE LEAVER

## I am feeling lonely more often during the lockdown



“

I'm rather depressed and anxious, as I am unable to talk to family and friends. I do not have a phone to be able to contact them on and the WiFi connection is too poor. I can't go on social media or Netflix.

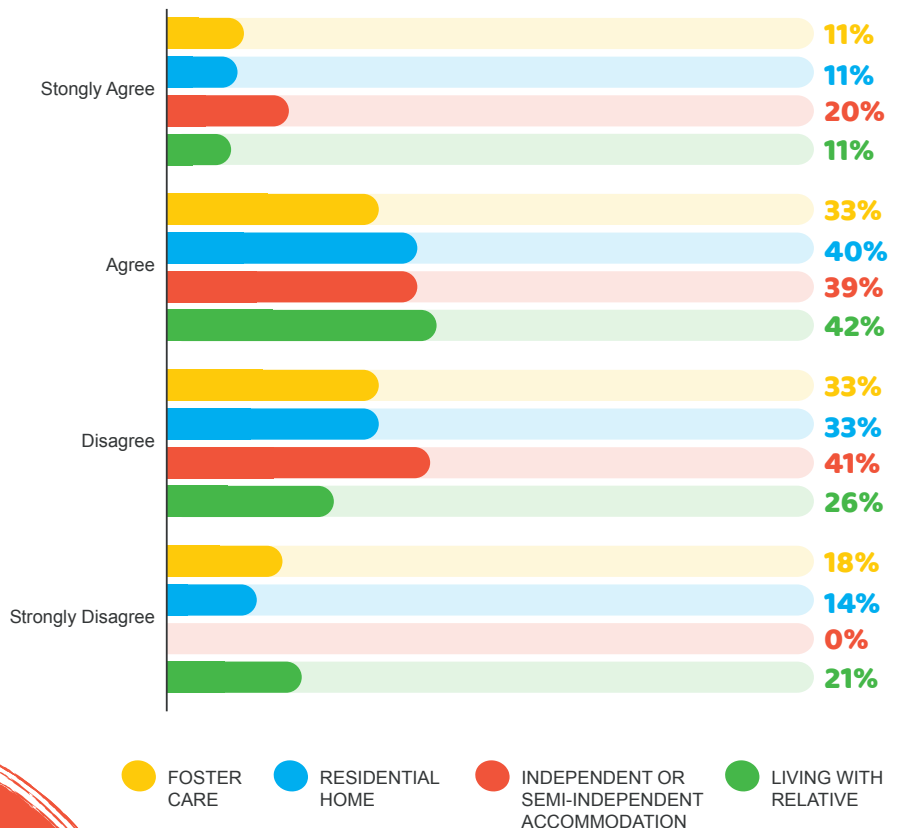
”

SOPHIE, 22, CARE LEAVER

**Children living in independent or semi-independent accommodation were more likely than other children in care to feel lonely more often during the lockdown.**

Three in five (59%) of those living in independent or semi-independent accommodation agreed or strongly agreed that they were feeling lonely more often during the lockdown. Over half (53%) of those living with a relative also agreed or strongly agreed, as did half (51%) of those living in a residential children's home, and two in five (44%) children in foster care.

**I am feeling lonely more often during the lockdown**



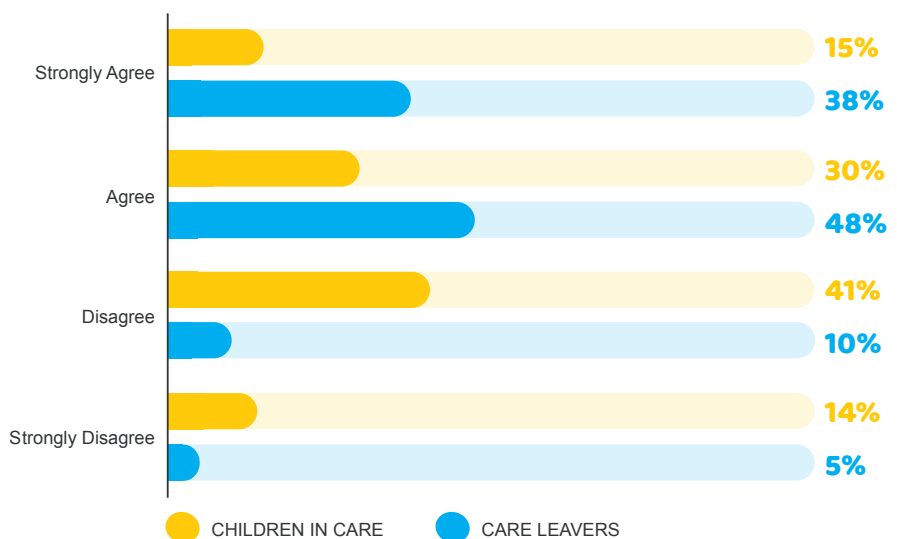
**“ Not being able to socialise has affected my mental health, increasing my anxiety levels and depression. Only being given one walk a day to grab essentials or walk the dog is not enough considering I used to go out for three or four each day of the week. ”**

**HARRY, 17, LIVING WITH RELATIVE**

**I am feeling more anxious during lockdown**

**Care leavers are twice as likely as children in care to feel more anxious during the lockdown.**

Four in five (86%) care leavers, and two in five (45%) children in care are feeling more anxious during the lockdown.







“

I am using this time to focus on my wellbeing, and I am focusing on things that I have been meaning to accomplish for years that I have never had the time to do. As worrying as this period of time is, I think after this pandemic is demolished, we will all be different and better people in our own unique ways. I hope that people can comprehend how quickly the planet has recovered whilst we have been in lockdown and that they can reduce their carbon footprint.

”

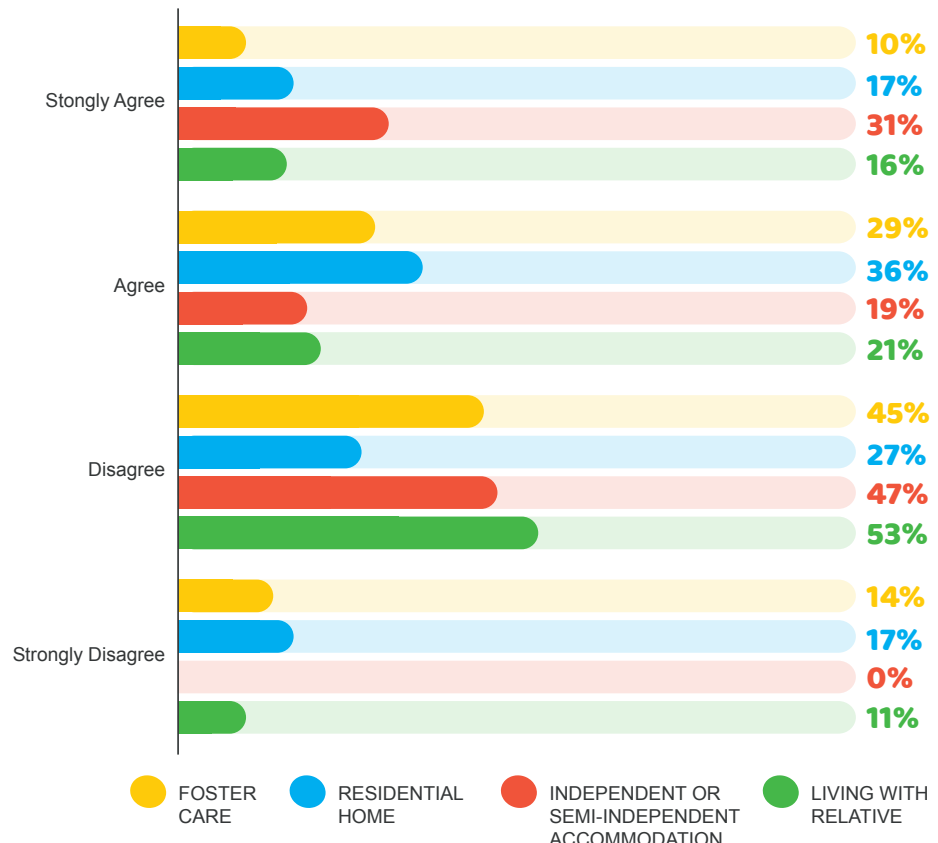
ETHAN, 17, LIVING WITH FOSTER CARERS

**Children living with relatives or in foster care were less likely than other children in care to feel more anxious during the lockdown.**

Two in five (39%) children living in foster care felt more anxious during the lockdown, and half (50%) of children living in independent or semi-independent accommodation and residential homes (53%) did too.

Children living with a relative are slightly less likely to feel anxious (37%) during lockdown.

**I am feeling more anxious during lockdown**





# Accessing technology

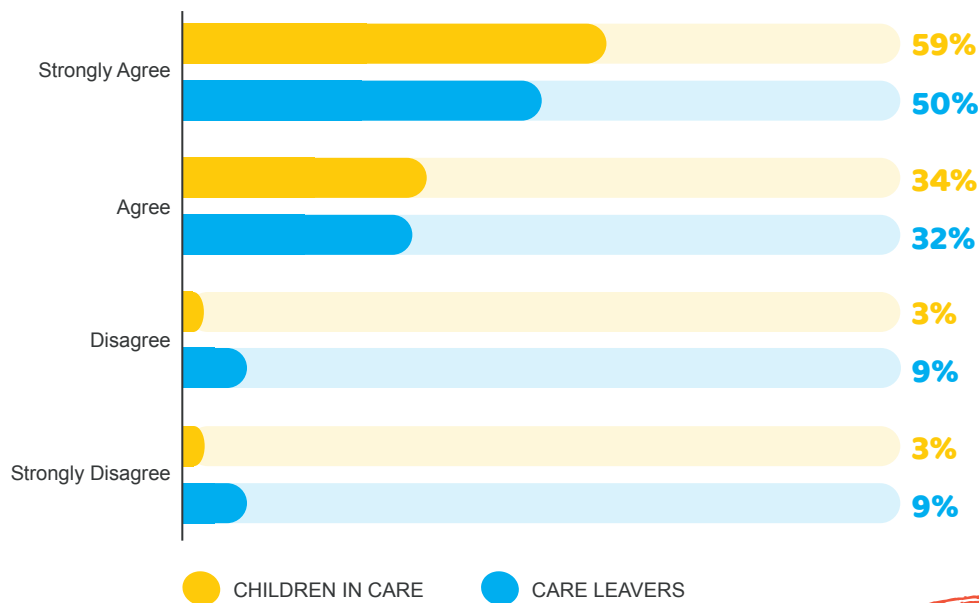
9 in 10 (93%) children in care and 8 in 10 (82%) care leavers agreed or strongly agreed that they had access to the technology they need to keep in touch with friends and family.

However, this could be an overrepresentation of those with access, given that our survey was mostly circulated and completed online. This still leaves 1 in every 5 care leavers feeling in need of better access to technology.

“ I have a unit mobile but not my own phone yet. I hope that my social worker will provide the placement with money to buy me one. My advocate is going to follow up with her about this. ”

EMILY, 14, LIVING IN A RESIDENTIAL CHILDREN'S HOME

## I have access to the technology that I need, in order to keep in contact with my friends and those I care about during the lockdown

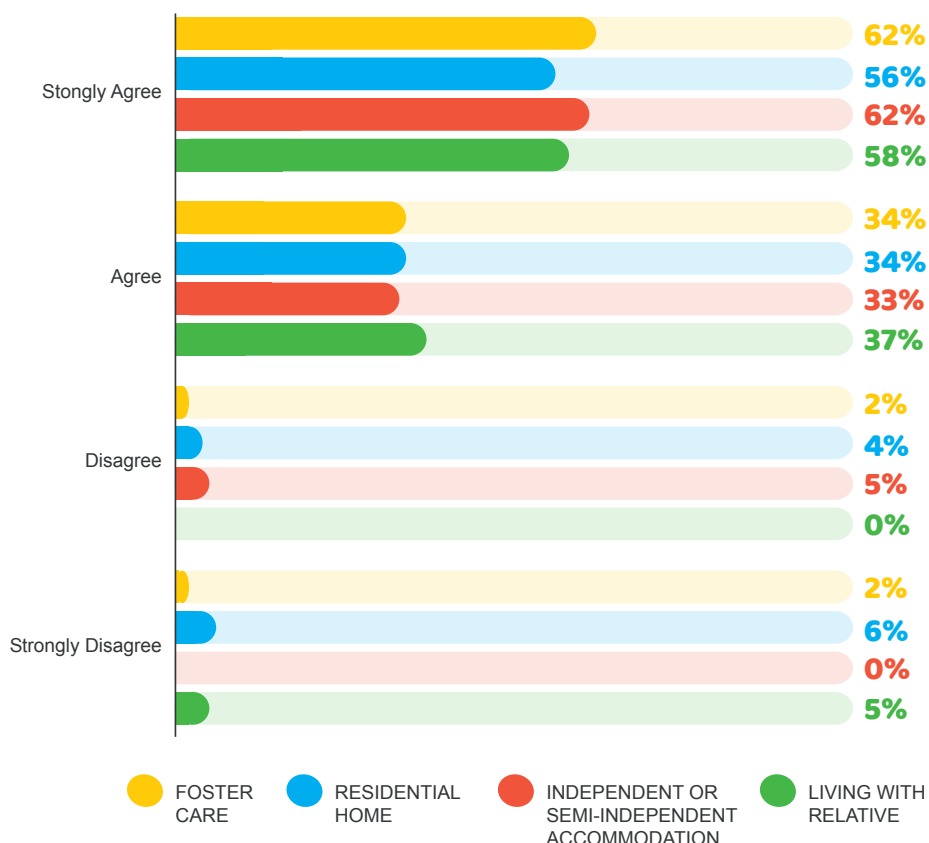


“ The hostel I am staying in does not have Wi-Fi. I do not have any data left on my phone and the signal is poor. My advocate has asked on my behalf that my personal adviser supports me in purchasing a new data package from my weekly allowance. This is being done. ”

CHLOE, 19, CARE LEAVER

There are similar high levels of access to technology reported across different types of care. Children living in a residential homes were slightly less likely than their peers to feel they had access to the technology they needed.

## I have access to the technology that I need, in order to keep in contact with my friends and those I care about during the lockdown



“  
**Staff are trying to make it fun by doing activities, so we are not bored.**  
 ”

GRACE, 12, LIVING IN A RESIDENTIAL CHILDREN'S HOME

“  
**I don't have many friends here, I just moved to a new house and then this all began. I live in the middle of nowhere and there's no service or anything!**  
 ”

ALICE, 16, LIVING WITH FOSTER CARERS

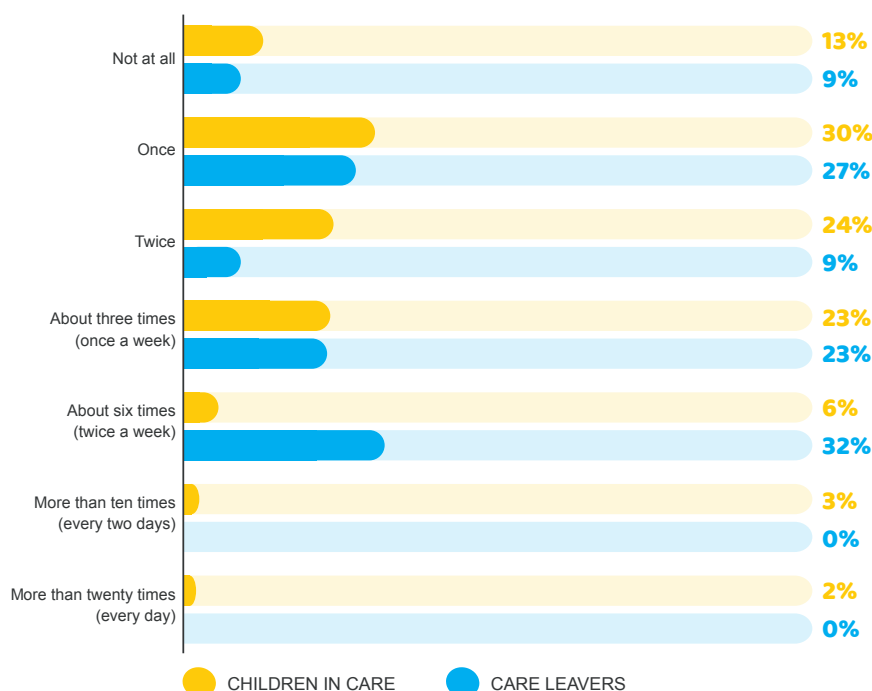


# Staying in touch with children's services

One in ten (13%) children in care, and almost one in ten (9%) care leavers said that they have not had any contact from their social worker or personal adviser since the lockdown started. Almost a third (30%) of children in care had only been in contact once.

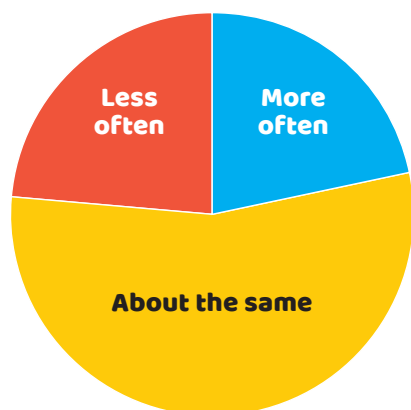


## Since the lockdown started on 23rd March 2020, I have been in contact with my social worker (or personal adviser if I have left care)...

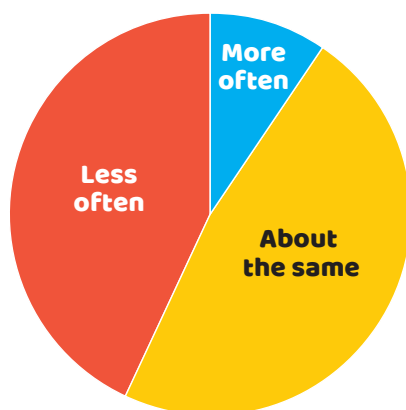


One in five children in care (23%) and two in five (43%) care leavers have had less contact with their social worker or personal adviser during the lockdown. Care leavers were four times more likely to have had less contact than more contact with their PA.

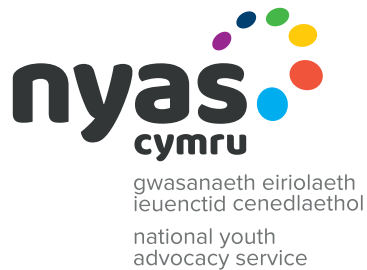
### Children in care are in touch with their social worker during lockdown...



### Care leavers are in touch with their personal advisers during lockdown...







## #ChangingYoungLives

This data report was written by Lucy Croxton, Research and Policy Assistant

We at NYAS give our heartfelt thanks to the children and young people who gave their time to share their views as part of our survey. Thank you also to the local authorities, residential children's homes, partners and advocates, who shared our survey and empowered the 230 young voices within it.

**NYAS | May 2020**

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