

# *As Eye See It*

Victorian Project Report  
2012

As

see it.

An exhibition of black and white  
photographs taken by young people  
living in Out of Home Care



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## Acknowledgements

All the young people who so honestly shared their experiences through their words and photographs

The staff and carers who supported the young people in their care to participate in this project

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Child Safety  
Commissioner

promoting  
the safety  
and wellbeing  
of children



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# Introduction

*As Eye See It* is a black and white photographic project for young people living in Out of Home Care (foster care, kinship care and residential care). Young people are provided with cameras and given two weeks to take pictures of things that are important to them. Of those pictures they are asked to select five and to provide a sixth photograph of their right eye, in close up. In addition to the photographs, each young person is asked to write a screed describing the photographs, explaining what they are trying to say with their images, or talking more generally about what is important in their world. This collection of photographs and written pieces is then launched at a public exhibition to display the work of the young people, raising awareness about Out of Home Care and providing an insight into the worlds of those who live in it.

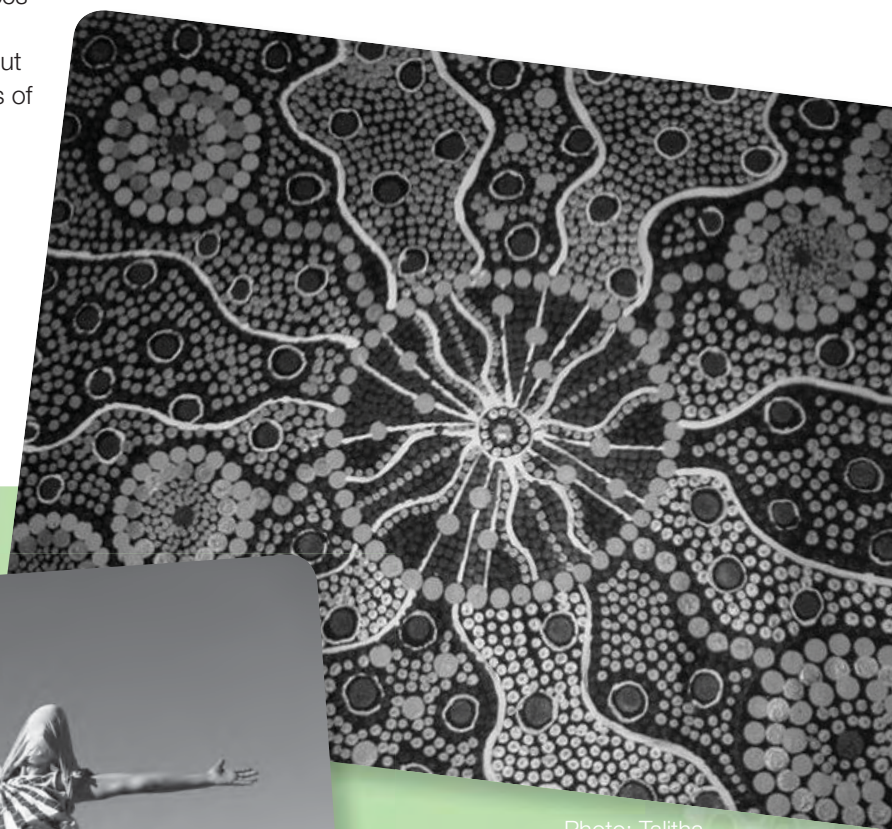
Between 2011 and 2012 *As Eye See It* was undertaken in four states and two territories across Australia. A further event is currently underway in a fifth state.

Extensive data collection was a new element to the project in 2011. It proved challenging to coordinate due to staffing changes and, perhaps, the complexity of the methodology. As a result limited data has been received from other states and there are some gaps in that received from Victorian participants. For that reason this report refers only to analysis of the Victorian data.

Photo: Dylan



Photo: Talitha



# Background

In 2008 staff at Salvation Army Westcare identified a need to provide young people living in Out of Home Care with an opportunity to express what is important to them and what it is like being in care.

Westcare then approached the Office of the Child Safety Commissioner with a proposal to provide young people living in Out of Home Care an opportunity to participate in a photographic exhibition.

Bernie Geary, the Child Safety Commissioner, personally supported the proposal as a way of:

- allowing young people to express how they see their life and what is important to them through the lens of a camera;
- enabling young people's voices to be heard through the use of a powerful medium such as photography; and
- bringing about greater public understanding about children's experiences in care.

In February 2009 the black and white photographs of 76 young people from 10 Out of Home Care provider agencies, CREATE Foundation and the Department of Human Services were exhibited at Federation Square.

The project was a success on many fronts. It proved a great example of cross-sector collaboration; it enabled the voices of some of our most marginalised young people to be heard in a public forum; it provided an activity that built on the connections between staff, carers and young people; and it communicated messages about the experience of care that had never before been heard so clearly.



Photo: Jamie



## As Eye See It 2011

The success of the 2009 project led the Project Steering Committee to investigate the potential for a national event in 2011. Three of the Committee members presented the project proposal to the Australian Children's Commissioners and Guardians and in addition to Victoria, *As Eye See It* photography projects and exhibitions have now been held in New South Wales, Western Australia, Tasmania, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory. A further project and exhibition is also being planned in Queensland.

The Victorian *As Eye See It* Exhibition was launched on 9 September 2011 at Federation Square, marking the beginning of Child Protection Week.

Sixty-five young people from twelve Community Service Organisations and CREATE Foundation had participated, submitting 325 photographs (excluding the images of their right eye). Participants ranged in age from 9 to 21 years old and were almost precisely split 50/50 between male and female. Experiences of foster care, kinship care and residential care were all represented in the work of the young people who participated.

The September event was hosted by Bernie Geary and launched by the Honourable Mary Wooldridge, Minister for Community Services, in front of over 100 guests including many of the young people themselves.



Photo: Jayden



Photo: Roxy



# Reading the Messages from Young People

In 2009 a full evaluation and analysis of the project was undertaken following the exhibition. Although surveys were used to gain feedback about the project process, the messages in the images and written words of participants could only be interpreted by the report writers. This methodology is fraught with limitations and risks of misinterpretation.

In conceptualising the 2011 project the Steering Committee agreed that a new methodology was required to reduce the need for interpretation by adults, while maintaining the creative freedom of participants. The result is a methodology that is intended to enable participants to more clearly communicate the intentions and implications of their photographs and written words.

It is important to be clear that this methodology was **not** developed as an academic research methodology. It was developed by the Steering Committee as an alternative approach and a solution to the interpretation issues presented in 2009.

## Methodology

After selecting the images they wanted to submit, participants were asked to apply three 'tags' to each image (excluding the shot of their right eye):

- A **subject tag** identifying what the image represents. A range of subject tags was developed to loosely correspond with the rights in the Charter for Children in Out of Home Care. In 2009 the analysis indicated that images and screeds could be linked to the rights despite the fact that young people had not been prompted to comment on these areas. In addition young people were given space to add their own subject tags if they did not feel those available were appropriate to their image.

- An **emotion tag** indicating what emotions this issue raises for them. A range of emotion tags was developed representing both positive and negative emotions. Again, young people were encouraged to create their own emotion tags if the list did not cover their range of emotions.
- A **numerical tag** between one and five to indicate the level at which they felt the emotion. One represented a low level of the selected emotion, while five represented a high level.

Tagging data was entered into an online survey format in order to simplify the data extraction. The detailed results can be found in the full report below.

Several participants either did not submit tagging data with their photographs or chose to attribute their own tags to their images. In these instances the report writers have endeavoured to interpret the intention behind the images by analysing screed content and the wording of subject tags created by young people.

A full list of the tags provided by As Eye See It and those created by young people is provided in Appendix 1 to this report.



# Executive Summary

Two key themes arose out of the *As Eye See It* project process. These have been reported informally during debrief discussions and anecdotally by those working on the project both at a working group level and at an agency level.

## Images of Young People

Legislation prohibits the images of children in care from being displayed as such. As a result of this *As Eye See It* does not accept any images that include the faces of participants themselves.

The project coordinators at Salvation Army Westcare reported receiving multiple phone calls and emails from staff and carers and from young people themselves to ask why, in a project that was about illustrating their own lives, they were not allowed to include images of themselves.

In one case a young woman who was over 18 argued her point and was eventually allowed to submit her images as she was considered no longer to be in care.

This continues to be an area of contention and frustration for children and young people in care. While it is based on issues of privacy and protection, it also proves an obstacle to children and young people's full and equal engagement, on their own terms.

## Engagement = Outcomes

As with the 2009 project it has been made clear through informal and anecdotal feedback that those agencies who engaged wholeheartedly with the project have seen significant relational outcomes with their clients.

In one case a worker who had believed that their client 'hated' them was brought to tears at the Exhibition Launch when he found that the screed of the young person praised him for sticking by them and for believing in them.

Others reported finding a new connection with their clients as a result of undertaking the project.

## The Images and Emotions

An overview of the key emotions expressed through the images tells us that the experiences of the young people who participated are overwhelmingly positive. Happiness, pride, a sense of being comfortable, loved and relaxed are the top emotions expressed in association with the images.

It is key to note, however, that negative emotions make up 22 of the 55 emotions young people linked to their images. The top negative emotions indicated are worry/anxiety, annoyance/anger, vulnerability and frustration.

Exploring the detail of the data tells a story; one that ought to be heard by anyone with an interest in improving the wellbeing of children and young people in Out of Home Care.

The following are key themes that emerged from the exploration of the photographs and the screeds submitted by young people for the 2011 *As Eye See It* Exhibition.

## Caring for and Being Cared for by Pets

An overwhelming number of images contained pets. These images were linked to everything from a sense of safety and being loved to enabling young people to feel 'at home' and having someone to talk to when they felt unhappy. Several of the screeds written by participants also alluded to pets, the desire to have pets, or a hope that they will be able to have a pet when they leave care.

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*"This is about my Hermit Crab that lives with me. He is safe with me and I will look after him. I care for him because I can't have any other pets in Out of Home Care. I'm proud I can look after him."*

---

The understanding that pets are 'not allowed' in Out of Home Care runs through several of the related screeds. There is a sense that this is a therapeutic opportunity missed by the sector as a whole, given the diverse benefits that young people indicate they get from their relationship with animals.

## Safety and Feeling Safe

Although only a small number of images were tagged as relating to safety and the things that make participants feel safe or unsafe, of the emotions linked to these images more than 50% were negative.

Among other emotions young people feel vulnerable, scared, hopeless and threatened in relation to their safety.

According to the images and the written screeds, a room or space of their own, pets and stability in relationships are key to creating a sense of safety. A sense of safety is not only a human right (as per the Charter for Children in Out of Home Care), but also a necessary condition for healing and growth in traumatised children and young

people. With this in mind a focus on the cultivation of safe environments and stable relationships in Out of Home Care is clearly paramount<sup>1</sup>.

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*"This was my home for approx 18 months. This was the only home I had that I felt safe in, no one kicked me out or abandoned me, and they stood by me every step of the way."*

---

## A Space of Their Own

As mentioned above, a space of their own was a theme that appeared in several (8.3%) images. In some cases this referred to a bedroom, in others a house. In all it contributed to a feeling of 'homeliness' and in some cases this was also linked to a sense of safety.

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*"This is the house I live in. It makes me feel good because it means I have a place to sleep and a bed unlike some kids in this world."*

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The emotions linked to participants' images relating to home were overwhelmingly positive. However, it is also important to note that the few negative emotions associated with some of the images reflected a level of fear and insecurity in some participants where their 'home' is concerned.

## Having Fun

The largest grouping of images (13.5%) was under the tags related to having fun. In addition a further 19.3% of images, although untagged, were deemed to fit under this theme. Some of the screeds also reflected the things that young people enjoy doing for fun, ranging from sporting activities to reading and gardening.

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*"I really love working in the garden with any form of plant and I have my own vegie patch. All plants are fascinating in my eyes and I love to be near them always."*

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What is particularly positive to note here is that having fun might be considered the stuff of any 'normal' childhood, something that the Out of Home Care sector is often at pains to provide for children and young people in care.

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<sup>1</sup> Ludy-Dobson, C.R. & Perry, B.D. (2010) *The Role of Healthy Relational Interactions in Buffering the Impact of Childhood Trauma* in Gil, E. (ed) "Working With Children to Heal Interpersonal Trauma: The Power of Play", Guildford Press

A handful of negative emotions were attached to the 'fun' tag as well. These included frustration, worry/anxiety and loneliness. This implies that there is still work to be done to ensure that children and young people have access to recreational activities as part of ensuring positive wellbeing.

## Aboriginal Culture

Three images (0.9%) were tagged with or subsequently associated with the Aboriginal culture of participants. These images were linked to four emotions, of which three were negative: annoyed/angry, negative and threatened. The screeds linked to the images, however, lead one to believe that the negative emotions are felt in defence of the individuals' culture rather than towards their culture.

---

*"This photo makes me proud to be Aboriginal. I am proud of who I am and who my people are. No matter what people say, I will always be proud of my culture."*

---

Connection to culture is, as we know, key to healing and recovery not only for individual children and young people, but for Indigenous communities as a whole<sup>2</sup>.

## Knowing or Not Knowing What is Happening to Me

Of the 15 emotions linked to the 10 (3.1%) images related to the subject 'knowing or not knowing what is happening to me', only four were positive. This issue raises worry, anxiety, sadness and frustration in young people among several other emotions.

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*"I feel like I'm lost in the ocean with the waves crashing me against the rocks."*

---

The Charter for Children in Out of Home Care tells children and young people that they have a right to information; however, the emotions and images in this area indicate that in some cases they are not receiving information, are not supported to understand it or are not being provided with access to it.

It is clear from the proliferation of negative emotions on this subject that a lack of understanding of what is taking place is causing children and young people a great deal of concern.

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<sup>2</sup> Ungar, M. & Perry, B.D. (2012) *Violence, Trauma and Resilience* in Alaggia, R. & Vine, C. (eds) "Cruel But Not Unusual: Violence in Canadian Families" 2nd ed. Wilfred Laurier University Press



## A Person to Talk to When I'm Unhappy

This issue provided a divided picture. Nine pictures were either tagged with or deemed to refer to the *absence* of a person to talk to when young people are unhappy, while five were tagged with (or referred to) the *presence* of someone to talk to.

In those that concerned not having anyone the emotions were, unsurprisingly, exclusively negative, referring to loneliness, hopelessness and frustration, among others.

In direct contrast the emotions attached to having someone to talk to were exclusively positive and included being happy, relaxed, hopeful and feeling connected.

This stark comparison on the issue of support for young people reiterates the importance of positive, supportive relationships in the lives of children and young people in care. It also aligns with the very positive emotions and comments made about a handful of workers and carers who have truly made a difference in the lives of the children they work with and care for.

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*"I never guessed when I met my new PYFS worker she would become the most important person in my life. Her patience, guidance, support, humour, understanding and affection turned my life around. She stood by me always and I know now as well as being the most important person to me, she's been my guardian angel."*

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## Conclusion

There are many more themes and emotions raised in the images, screeds and tags of the young participants, all of which are outlined in greater detail in the body of this report. However, it is clear from the standout themes that the Out of Home Care system in Victoria, through the eyes of the young people who live it every day, has cause to both congratulate itself and to knuckle down for further hard work ahead.

While many young people are experiencing positive emotions in association with various aspects of their time in care, there are some significant pockets of frustration, dissatisfaction and fear that must be addressed.



Photo: Codey

# Victorian Data

## Key Themes

### 1. Image Themes

Young people were asked to contribute photographs of things that were important in their world. A broad range of images was received, with some strong themes emerging. The five most common image themes that emerged were:

- Images of nature, seascapes and urban streetscapes
- Pets and animals
- Family, friends, workers and carers
- Young people's homes, bedrooms and backyards
- Sports

It is interesting to note the large number of images of pets and animals and the significance they played in many young people's worlds. Written screeds highlighted the importance of pets in young people's lives, and some also drew attention to the fact that young people in residential care were longing for the possibility of having a pet in their lives:

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*"This is about my Hermit Crab that lives with me. He is safe with me and I will look after him. I care for him because I can't have any other pets in Out of Home Care. I'm proud I can look after him."*

---

*"Returning home meant that I could have my own pet and be responsible for him."*

---

*"My cat reminds me of good times when I would snuggle in bed with something I know was safe and comforting."*

---

Many images also emerged of young people in the Out of Home Care system with their faces hidden, pixelated or covered in some way. The Child Youth and Family Act prohibits the identification of children and young people as being in Out of Home Care, thus participants had to work creatively to disguise their presence within the exhibited photographs. Numerous young people contacted the coordinators of the project to ask to be allowed to submit pictures of themselves and while legislation dictates that this is not possible, it seems important to consider creative ways in which children and young people can 'insert' themselves into their own story in situations such as this.

### 2. Subject Themes

Young people were asked to assign a subject tag to their photographs to describe what the image represented. Figure 1 shows that the most common subject tag was '*Something else*', with 119 out of 325 photographs (36.6%) assigned this tag. This was followed by '*Stuff I like doing*' (6.89%), '*Friends and family*' and '*Having fun*' (both 5.10%).

When young people tagged images with '*Something else*' they also provided their own tag. This was used to analyse the image 'message'. The majority were found to be aligned with existing subject tag options, with:

- 19.3% being in relation to having fun and taking part in enjoyable activities
- 17.6% being in relation to friends and family
- 4.2% being in relation to a place of importance
- 4.2% regarding not having anyone to talk to when unhappy

Over 20% of the photographs tagged '*Something else*' were difficult to fit into the existing subject categories, and were found to be in relation to hope, dreams, strength, determination and confidence, as indicated by some of the comments below.

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*"Standing tall and strong, with the right support you will get through any waves that life throws at you."*

---

*"I had two roads to take, the right road and the wrong road. It was my decision which one I took and I went down the wrong road and then had a chance to change my path or stay on the same one, and I chose to change paths."*

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*"We can do ANYTHING!"*

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*"As hard as it gets there is always light at the end."*

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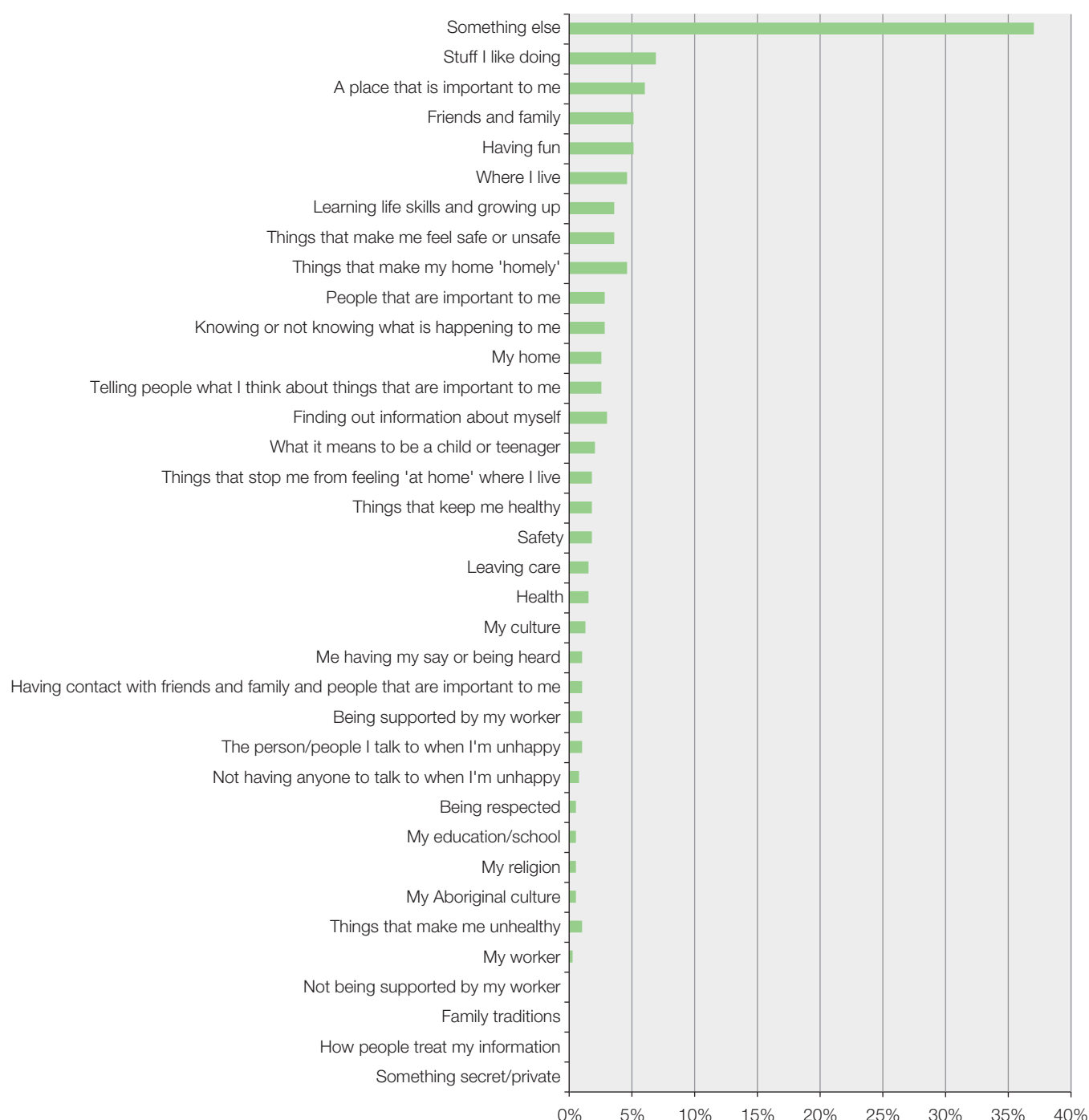


Figure 1: Subject Tags Assigned to Photographs by Participants

### 3. Emotion Themes

Young people were asked to tag each photograph with the emotion/s it raised for them, and to also assign a level to each emotion to indicate how strongly the emotion was felt. As outlined in Figure 2, the most common emotions that young people connected to their photographs were overwhelmingly positive, with 'Happiness' constituting 14.96% of the emotion tags. This was over double the amount of any other

emotions selected. 'Happiness' was followed by feeling 'Proud' (6.91%), 'Comfortable' (5.52%), Loved (4.84%) and 'Relaxed' (4.83%). The most common negative emotions selected by young people were 'Worried/Anxious', 'Annoyed/Angry', 'Vulnerable', 'Frustrated' and 'Lonely'.



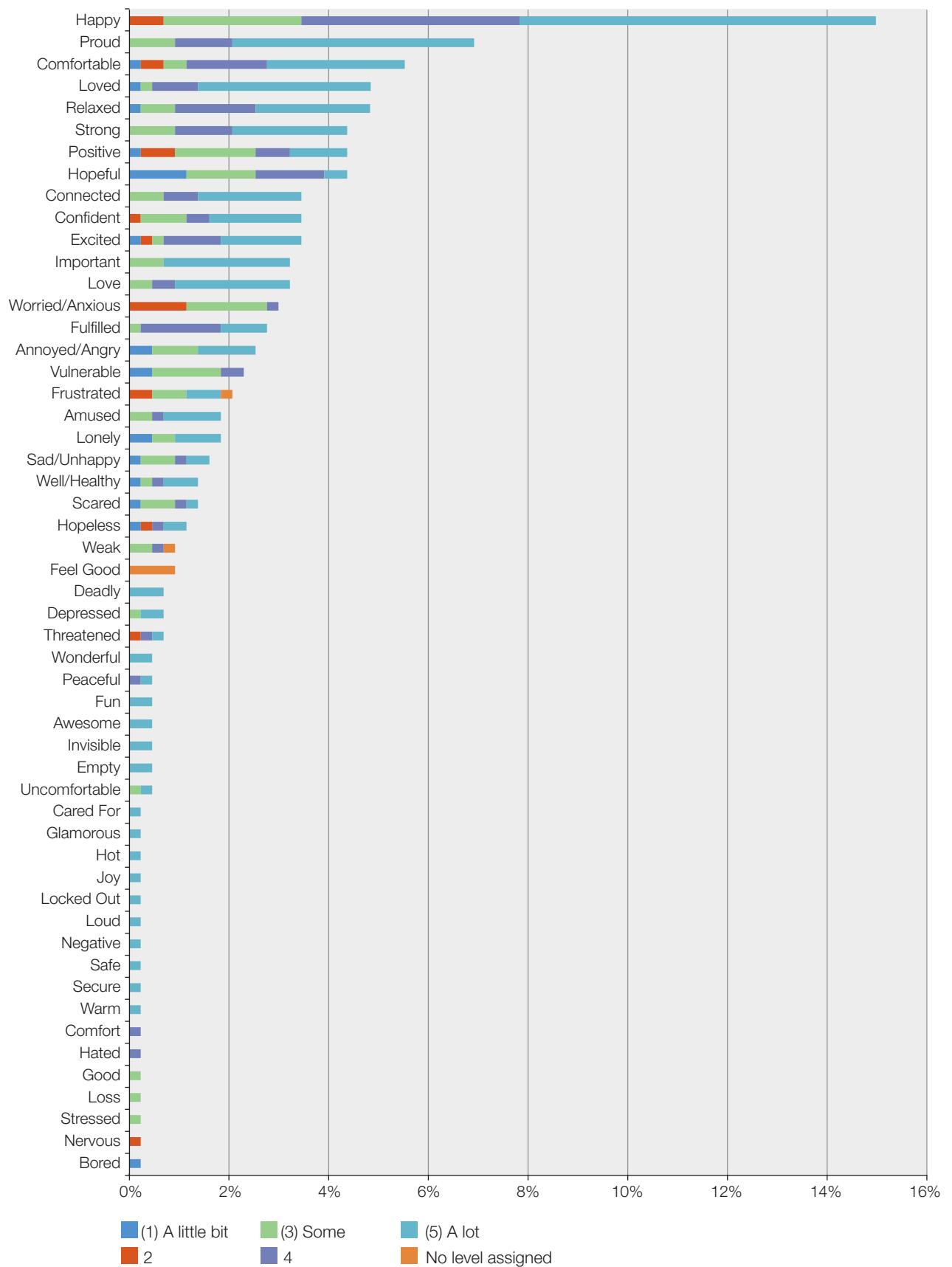


Figure 2: Emotional Tags Assigned to Photographs

#### 4. Written Themes

Young people were asked to contribute a written screed with their photographs. Screeds were analysed and categorised within the themes of the Charter for Children in Out of Home Care, with many of the screeds linking to numerous themes. Whilst many themes linked to the Charter emerged (Figure 3), nearly 60% of the

themes did not fit into the Charter categories. Strong themes of hope, determination, dreams, strength and confidence emerged. This is reflective of similar patterns in the images themselves, as will be highlighted in the **Breakdown of Data**.

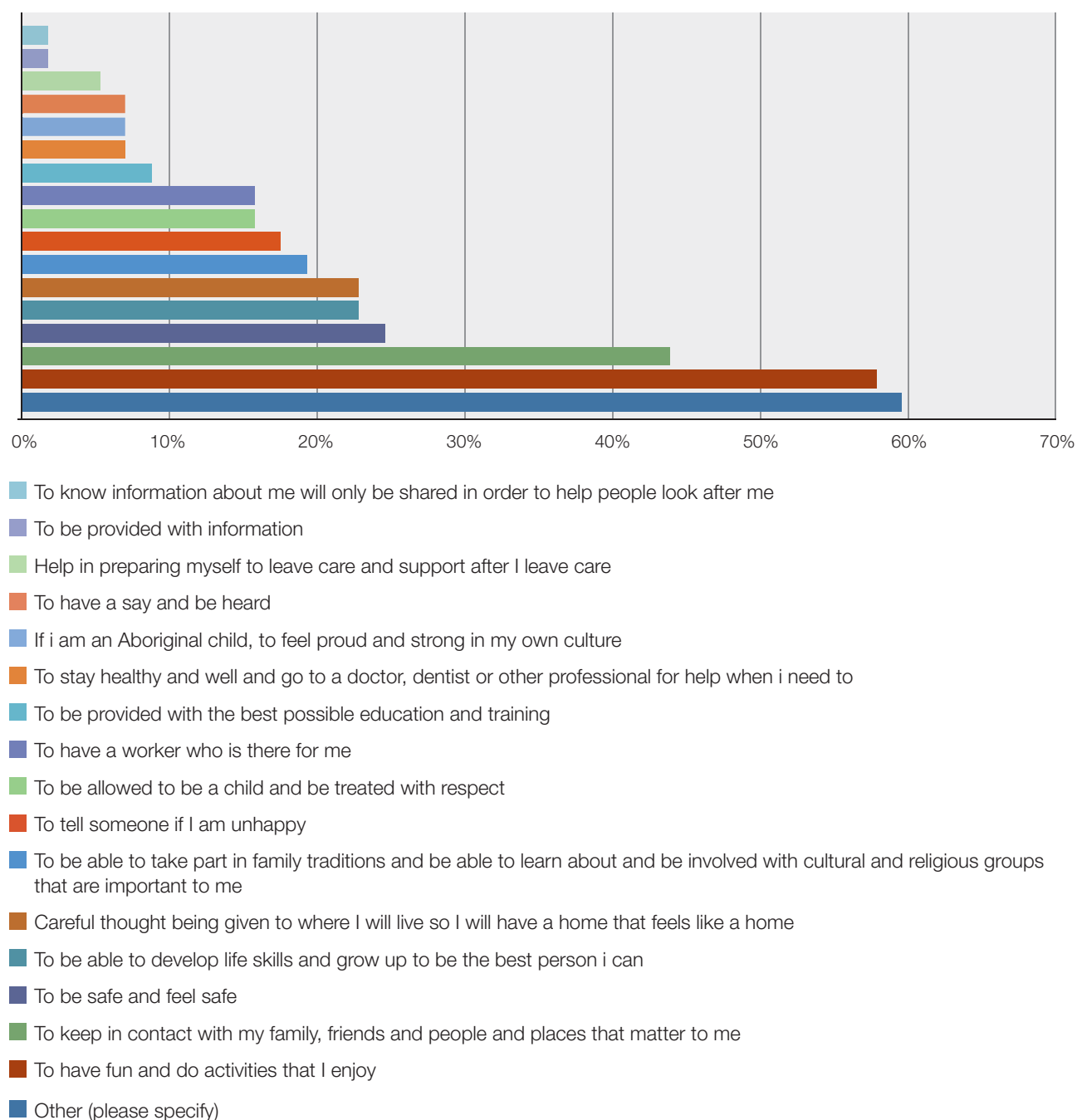


Figure 3: Themes of Screeds

# Breakdown of Data

## 1. Safety

*'As a child or young person in care I need to be safe and feel safe'*

Six out of 325 photographs (1.8%) were tagged by young people with 'Safety'. Image content of these photographs was diverse and included a person leaning over to strike another person, a dog, a young person rock climbing, a bedroom, and a woman reaching out to a young girl. Young people indicated that their photographs tagged 'Safety' elicited a range of positive and negative emotions (Figure 4). The most common emotions connected to images of safety were happiness, vulnerability and hopefulness (all 15.4%), with happiness being the strongest emotion (all selections at Level 5).

One young person who photographed their bedroom explained the importance of having their own space and how it made them feel safe:

*"My bedroom makes me feel safe. It is my OWN place and I can have space to do things in there."*

Other screeds highlighted the mix of safety and vulnerability:

*"This was my home for approx 18 months. This was the only home I had that I felt safe in, no one kicked me out or abandoned me, and they stood by me every step of the way."*

One photograph of a bedroom tagged as 'Something else' was deemed to be connected to safety, based on the comment that the young person's bedroom was "(a) place where I know will always be my safe place where I can go to calm down". The emotion the young person connected to this image was 'safe' (Level 5).

It is important to note that the data outlined in Figure 4 shows a disproportionate number of negative emotions connected with young people's images of safety. This is something significant to reflect on, as it is essential for children and young people who have experienced abuse and trauma to feel and be safe in order to move through the healing process and for calm, creative brain function.

### Feeling safe or unsafe

Fourteen out of 325 (4.3%) photographs were tagged by young people with 'Things that make me feel safe or unsafe'. Twenty-five per cent of these images were of pets, with the remaining images being diverse and included door locks, tree branches in a storm, a young

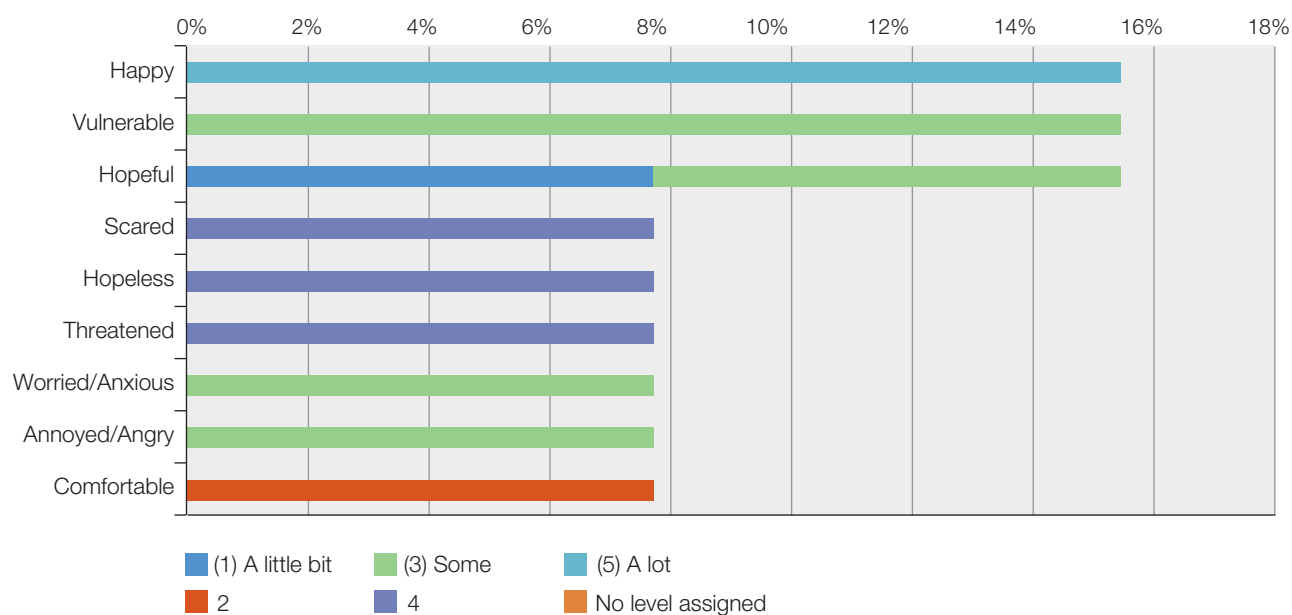


Figure 4: Emotions Connected to Images Tagged 'Safety'



person cuddling a soft toy, and a boy walking through a tunnel. Young people indicated that a broad range of emotions was elicited in response to their photographs, with feeling comfortable being the most common, followed by happiness and strength (Figure 5).

One image of a bedroom that was tagged as 'Something else' was deemed to fit the category 'Things that make me feel safe or unsafe'. The emotion connected to this image was 'Relaxed' (Level 5).

As noted above with images tagged 'Safety', images tagged 'Things that make me feel safe or unsafe' also elicited a large number of negative emotions, such as

feeling hopeless, threatened and weak. It is essential that we further explore what safety means for children and young people in Out of Home Care, and that as a sector we work towards creating environments in which they feel safe and nurtured.

## 2. Health and Wellbeing

'As a child or young person in care I need to stay healthy and well and go to a doctor, dentist or other professional for help when I need to.'

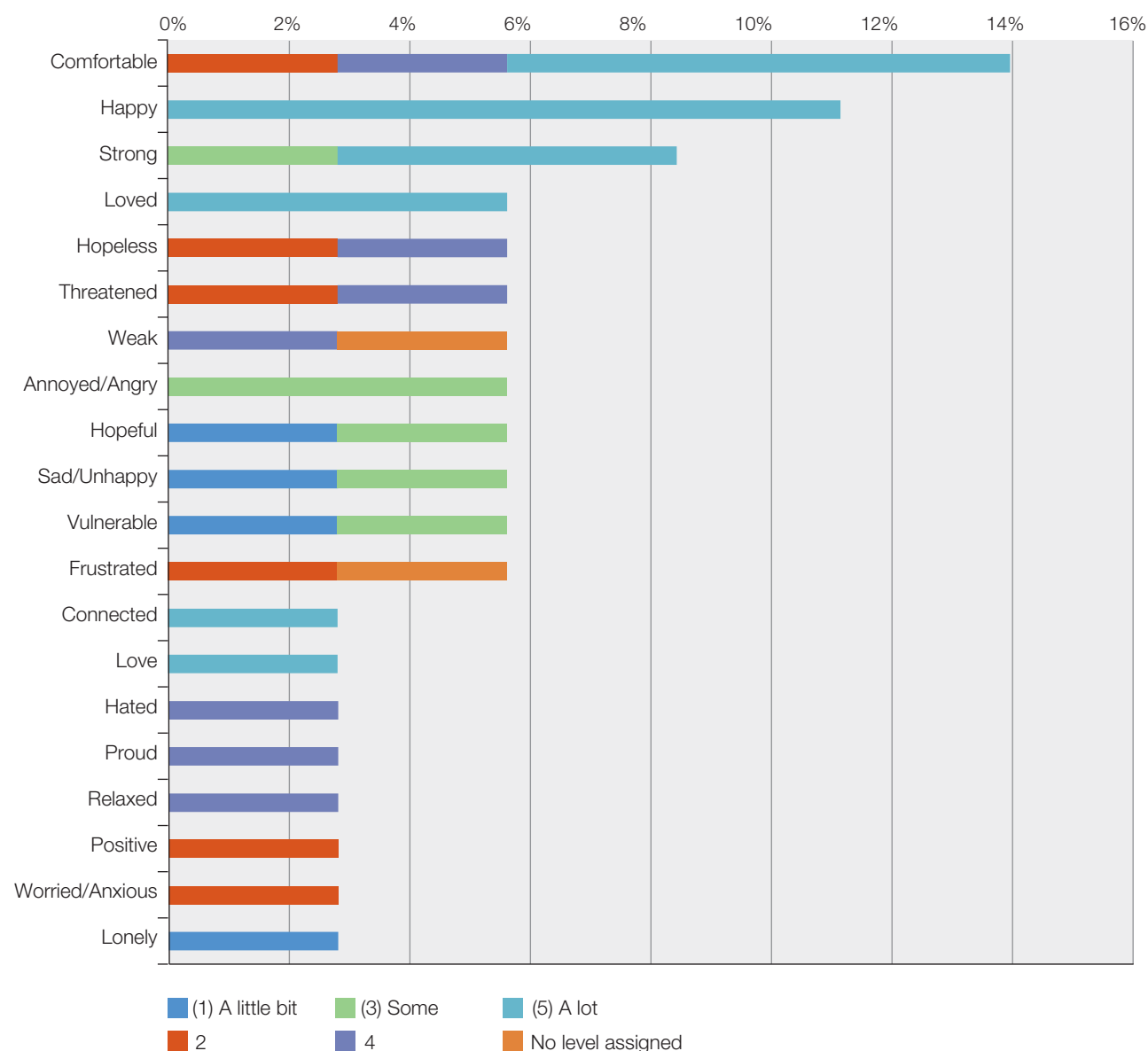


Figure 5: Emotions Connected to Images Tagged 'Things that make me feel safe or unsafe'

## Being healthy

*"I have always loved food and since I have been in foster care they make sure I never go hungry."*

Twelve out of 325 (3.7%) photographs were tagged by young people with either 'Health' or 'Things that keep me healthy'. Images covered a broad spectrum of health, including physical and emotional health. One-third of images were related to sports (e.g. kicking a football, playing basketball, using a punching bag), 16.6% involved pets, and the remainder included images of clasped hands, a fruit bowl, and ripples in the ocean. Of the 16 emotions that young people chose in connection to these images, only 4 reflected any negativity. Relaxed was the most common option selected, followed by well/healthy and happy.

Two photographs tagged with 'Something Else' were deemed to be in relation to health, and feelings of annoyance/anger (Level 5) and fulfilment (Level 4) were assigned to these images.

## Being unhealthy

One photograph of tree branches in a storm was tagged with 'Things that keep me unhealthy'. Emotions tagged with the image were weak (Level 4), sad/unhappy (Level 3), annoyed/angry (Level 3), and threatened (Level 2).

The combination of the images and emotions linked to health and lack of health indicate an imbalance in engagement with activities to promote health. It is unclear what the cause of this imbalance may be, but it could be a lack of access, lack of support to access or a lack of local opportunity.

## 3. Childhood and Respect

*'As a young person or child in care I need to be allowed to be a child and treated with respect.'*

*"Always being told to do the right thing and act our ages became annoying so it felt good when we misbehaved. We enjoyed acting like kids for a bit after all we were."*

*"It is important for a child to feel they are able to show who they are and live in a space that is just theirs."*

Nine out of 325 photographs (2.8%) were tagged with 'Being respected' or 'What it means to be a child or teenager'. Images of graffiti, trophies, bedrooms, a

young person hugging a soft toy, a waterfall, and a boy overlooking a cemetery were included. Hopefulness was the most common emotion tagged to these images, followed by happiness, vulnerability, positivity and excitement. After vulnerable, the most strongly felt negative emotion was hated.

Three photographs tagged as 'Something else' were believed to be aligned with the above category, and were connected to a range of positive emotions, including confidence, positivity and feeling loved.

One of the great challenges of caring for children and young people who have experienced trauma and neglect is to remember that they are, in the end, children. It is often too easy to see them as the sum of their trauma responses and the list of 'issues' in their file. This tagging area reminds us of the importance of remembering that opportunities to behave like any other child are important to the emotional wellbeing of children and young people in care.

## 4. Aboriginal Culture

*'As a young person or child in care I need, if I am an Aboriginal child, to feel proud and strong in my own culture.'*

Two out of 325 photographs (0.6%) were tagged with 'My Aboriginal culture' and were images of an Aboriginal painting and a 'No room for racism' poster. Figure 6 highlights the even spread of strong emotions connected to these images – annoyance/anger, feeling deadly, negative and threatened, all at the highest level (Level 5).

One photograph tagged 'Something Else' was believed to relate to this category, with a high level of pride (Level 5) connected to the image:

*"This photo makes me proud to be Aboriginal. I am proud of who I am and who my people are. No matter what people say, I will always be proud of my culture."*

It is important to highlight that although there were only three photographs directly connected to Aboriginal culture, a number of strong negative emotions were represented. It is the opinion of the report writers that these emotions were expressed in *defence* of young people's Aboriginal culture rather than *towards* their culture.

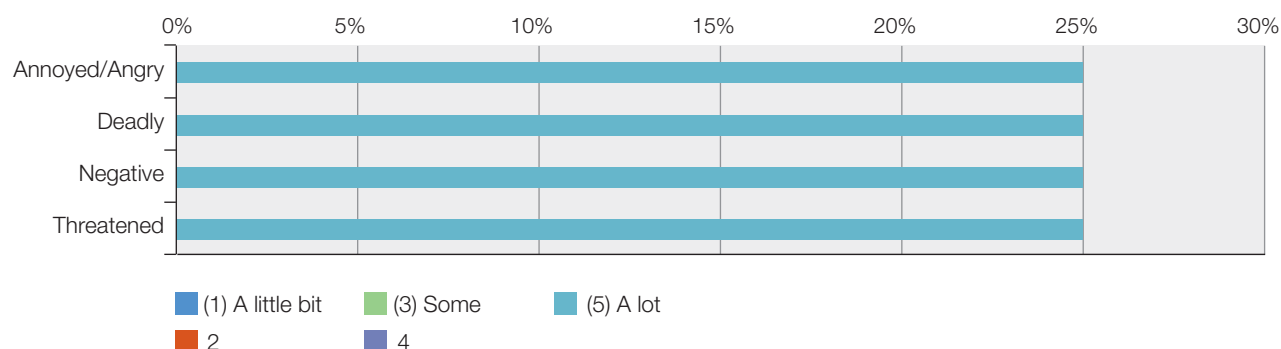


Figure 6: Emotions Connected to Images Tagged 'My Aboriginal culture'

The images and emotions linked to Aboriginal culture are important because connection to place, country and culture can be a powerful and vital element of healing. It is clear that further work needs to be undertaken to make opportunities such as *As Eye See It* more accessible to Aboriginal children and young people. This might further ensure that the Out of Home Care sector is held accountable for upholding the Charter for Children in Out of Home Care, particularly in relation to Indigenous children and young people.

## 5. Being Heard

*'As a child or young person in care I need to have a say and be heard.'*

Fourteen out of 325 photographs (4.3%) were tagged with *'Telling people what I think about things that are important to me'* or *'Me having my say or being heard'*. In this category, young people shared images of tattoos, teddy bears, musical instruments and sports. Happiness was the most common emotion that young people connected to their images of being heard, which was followed by a range of other positive emotions such as feeling important, amused, connected and proud. Some negative emotions (hated, lonely, scared, hopeless, and sad/unhappy) were expressed by a handful of young people at lower levels.

One photograph of a notebook tagged with *'Something else'* was believed to be about being heard, with fulfilment (Level 4) being connected to the image.

The level of positivity expressed regarding being heard is good to see. This is an area of Out of Home Care that has always been a challenge; developing mechanisms and ensuring that participation and opportunities to be heard are meaningful. The images and emotions linked to the issue imply that some improvement is being felt.

## 6. Access to Information

*'As a child or young person in care I need to be provided with information.'*

### Finding out information about myself

Nine out of 325 (2.8%) photographs were tagged with the category *'Finding out information about myself'*, with various images of nature, a pet and a house included. Most commonly, feelings of positivity were connected to these images, followed by feeling loved and happy (Figure 7). A number of negative emotions were also attached to these images, suggesting that there are children and young people in Out of Home Care who are not receiving adequate information about their history, or who are perhaps struggling to process the information they are receiving.

### Knowing or not knowing what is happening to me

*'I feel like I'm lost in the ocean with the waves crashing me against the rocks.'*

Ten out of 325 (3.1%) photographs were tagged with *'Knowing or not knowing what is happening to me'* and included images of nature, a police car, a young person cuddling a soft toy, and a hospital. Photographs in this category were overwhelmingly connected to negative emotions for the young people involved, with almost 20% of images eliciting feelings of worry and anxiety (Figure 8). The myriad of negative emotions also included feelings of sadness and unhappiness, frustration, annoyance and anger, feelings of being scared and hated, depressed, stressed, vulnerable, hopeless and lonely.

One photograph tagged *'Something else'* was deemed to fit this category, with the image of a house eliciting



feelings of sadness/unhappiness (Level 4) and worry/anxiety (Level 4) for the young person.

It is an interesting contrast to note that young people are feeling largely positive when it comes to finding out information about themselves, but they feel almost exclusively negative in regards to knowing what is *happening* to them. These results may be the outcome of recent work to improve record keeping in relation to the life stories of children and young people (i.e. the Who Am I? project), while the procedures for keeping children and young people informed about placement changes

and the reasons they are in care in the first place are perhaps less clear.

There is work to be done in improving the way we communicate with children and young people about what is happening to them in care. It may be a case of improving their access to information, or better supporting them to understand the information they receive. Either way, this is a clear area for improvement, based on the feelings of the young people who are experiencing the system currently.

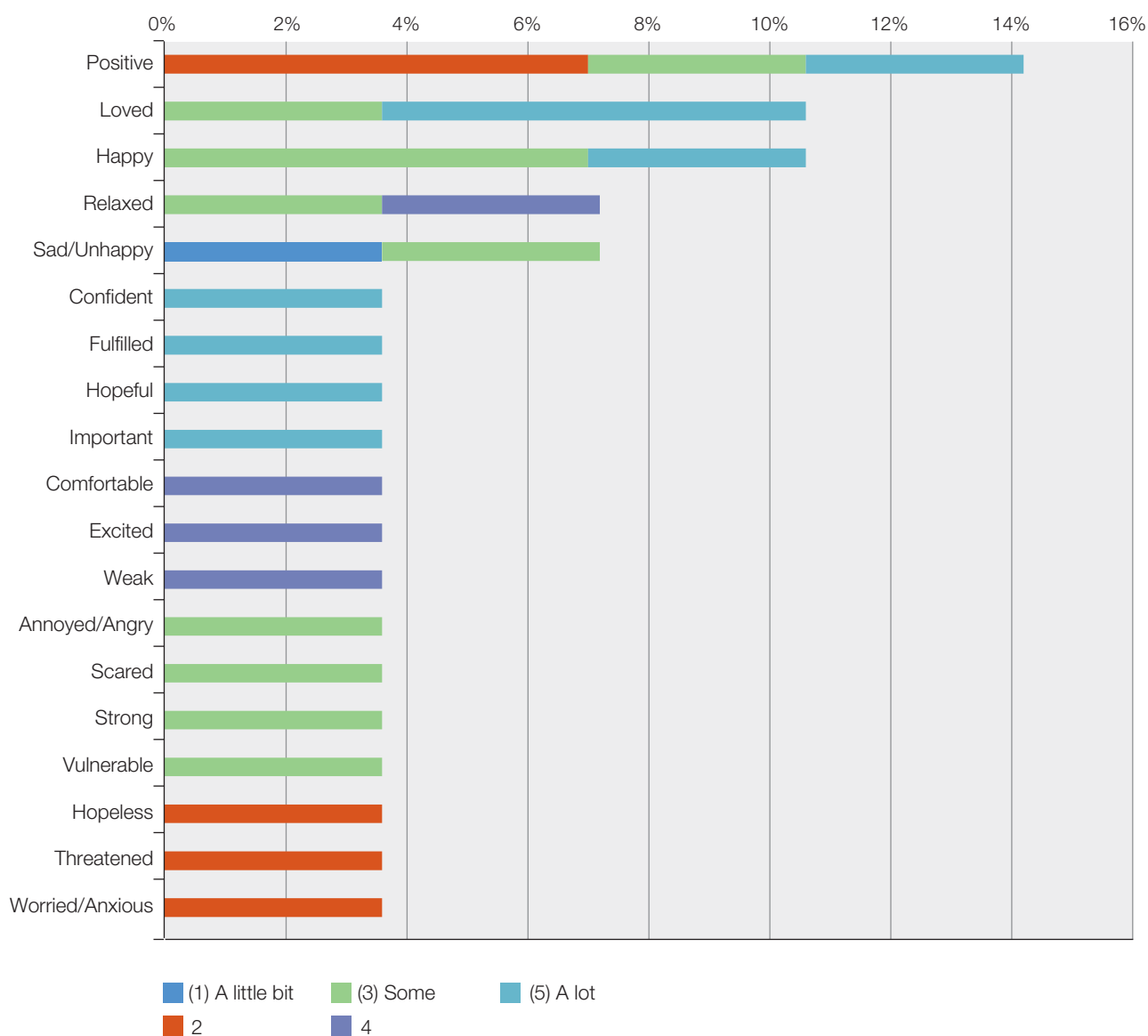


Figure 7: Emotions Connected to Images Tagged 'Finding out information about myself'

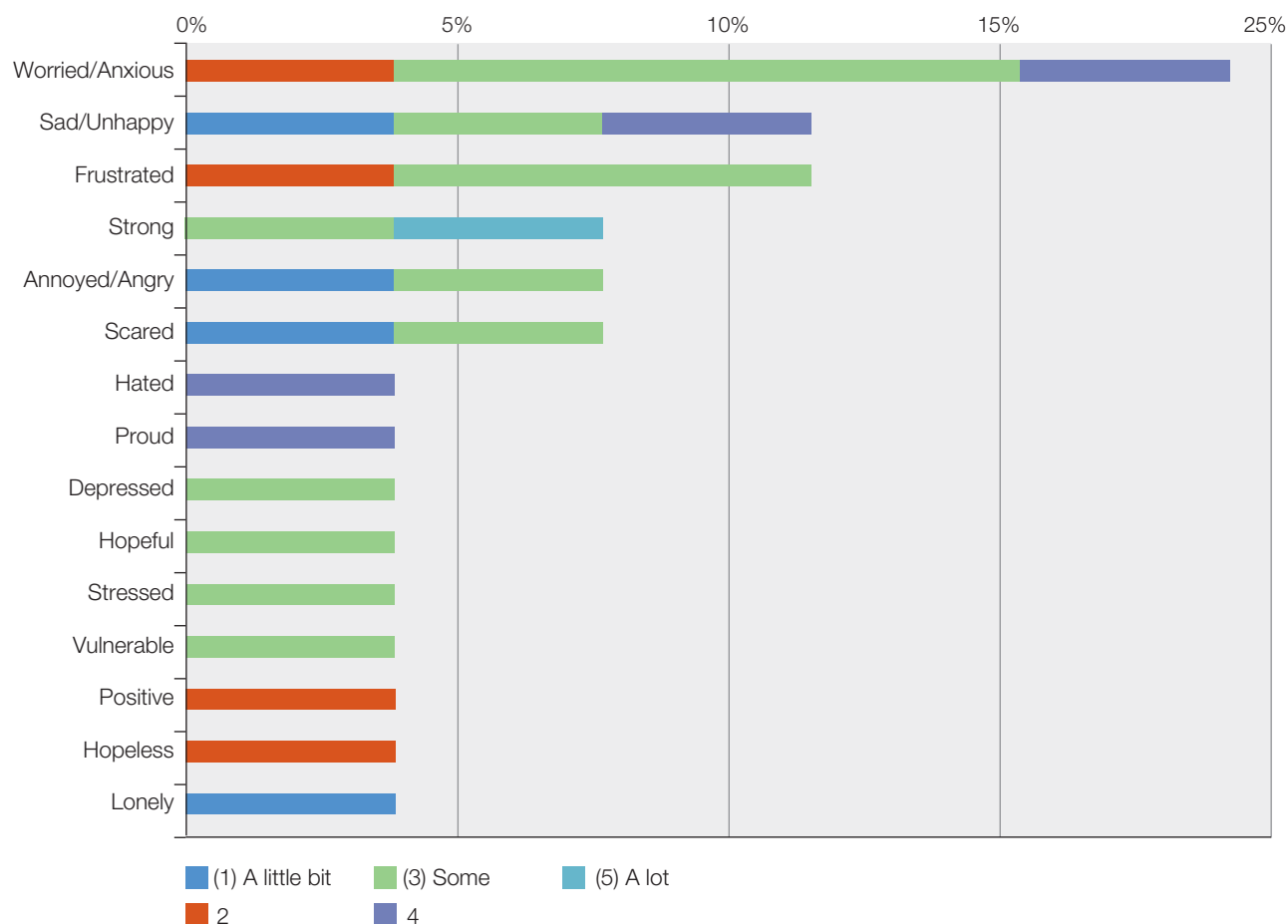


Figure 8: Emotions Connected to Images Tagged 'Knowing or not knowing what is happening to me'

## 7. Support in Difficult Times

'As a child or young person in care I need to tell someone if I am unhappy.'

*Not having anyone to talk to when I'm unhappy*

*"During tough times when there's no one to help you, sometimes you feel empty inside."*

*"Sometimes being in care is lonely because there is no one you can talk to."*

*"I am 13 years old and have been in care for 2 years. I have had some really tough times during these years where I've felt alone, got into a bit of trouble and been locked up by the police."*

Three out of 325 photographs (0.9%) were tagged with 'Not having anyone to talk to when I'm unhappy', with images of a fist hitting a wall, a door lock, and a lemon in a tree being included. The emotions associated with

these images were exclusively negative, with feelings of loneliness, hopelessness, frustration and weakness emerging.

Five (4.2%) of the photographs tagged with 'Something else' were deemed to represent participants feeling that they had no one to talk to when unhappy, and included images of a young person hugging a soft toy, a door lock, a tree, and graffiti on a door. Uncomfortableness and depression were the most common feelings selected by young people in relation to these images, followed by feelings of frustration, hopelessness, loneliness, strength and weakness.

### The person/people I talk to when I'm unhappy

Four out of 325 photographs (1.2%) were tagged with 'The person/people I talk to when I'm unhappy'. Three images were of people, and one of a group of hands clasped together. The emotions linked to these images were exclusively positive, with feelings of happiness, relaxation, hopefulness and connectedness being most common (Figure 9).

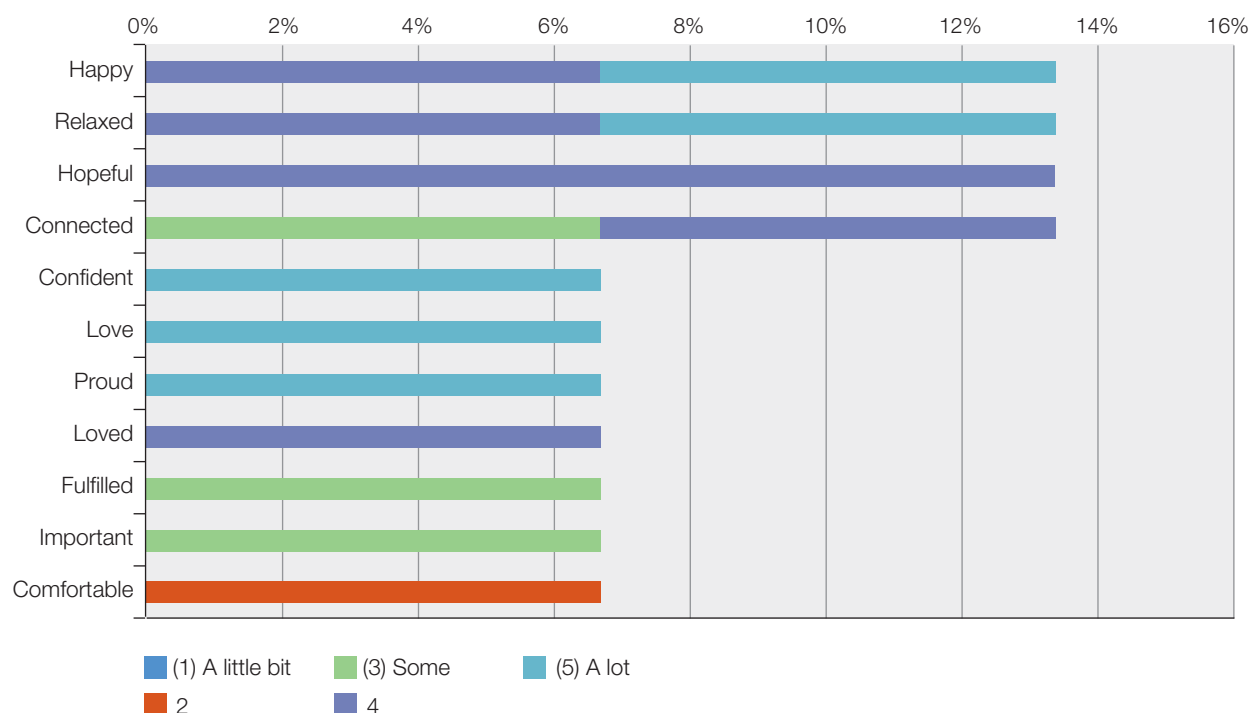


Figure 9: Emotions Connected to Images Tagged 'The person/people I talk to when I'm unhappy'

One image tagged with 'Something else' was believed to represent this category, and a high level of happiness (Level 5) was connected to the image.

Screeds fitting this theme referred to supportive carers and workers:

*"When we are having a bad day they sit there with us and talk to us and help us as much as they can."*

There is clearly a link between having a person (or in some cases a pet) to go to when they are feeling unhappy and the overall emotional wellbeing of children and young people in care. This is no great revelation, but the images and emotions in the As Eye See It Exhibition provide us with a visual reminder that this is the case. This aligns also with previous comments made regarding the importance of stable relationships in the healing of children and young people who have experienced trauma and neglect.

## 8. Privacy

*'As a child or young person in care I need to know information about me will only be shared in order to help people look after me.'*

No images were tagged with 'How people treat my information' or 'Something secret/private'. One image of a girl bent over screaming, which was not tagged with a subject or emotion, is likely to have been in relation to this, based on screed content: "Scream For Help: How people treat my information". Whilst this was the only connection to privacy of information, many images of bedrooms alluded to the importance of having a private personal space.

## 9. Access to a Worker

*'As a child or young person in care I need to have a worker who is there for me.'*

### Feeling supported by workers

Four out of 325 photographs (1.2%) were tagged with 'My worker' or 'Being supported by my worker'. Images were generally of workers and carers. A range of positive emotions was connected to these images, with feeling connected being the most common, followed by relaxed and hopeful.

While only four images were directly tagged in this category, numerous screeds made mention of the invaluable support received from workers and carers:

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*'Throughout my time living in resi, I have become a better young person and being respected by staff made me feel strong, loved, proud and important. I have become a lot more positive person and it is an experience I will never forget.'*

*"The carers that work in my residential unit they mean a lot to us kids. When we're not living at home, they're like our second parents ..."*

*"(M)ost important thing is I'M HAPPY AND I LOVE YOU for giving me and showing me a better life."*

*"There are a lot of things that are frustrating about being in care like sometimes feeling restricted and being told what to do all the time but I always feel like I can get help when I need and know that there are people that care about me."*

*"I never guessed when I met my new PYFS worker she would become the most important person in my life. Her patience, guidance, support, humour, understanding and affection turned my life around. She stood by me always and I know now as well as being the most important person to me she's been my guardian angel."*

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### Feeling unsupported by workers

No images were tagged with 'feeling unsupported by workers'. One untagged image was deemed to be related to feeling unsupported by workers, which the participant indicated was an image of "my old agency with many different workers". A medium level of annoyance/anger was associated with the image.

Similar to the conclusions drawn in relation to Support in Difficult Times above, the level of positive wellbeing linked to a strong relationship with a worker is clearly a significant factor in the overall wellbeing of children and young people.

## 10. Connection to Friends and Family

*'As a child or young person in care I need to keep in contact with my family, friends and people and places that matter to me.'*

### Places of importance

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*"I went on holiday with my family, and we went on a long walk to a waterfall. This place was where I got the chance to see the beautiful side of life, and all hard work does lead to happiness. I got to gather my thoughts here and understand that life is a climb, it is hard, but once you've made it to the top, the trip back down is easier."*

---

Nineteen out of 325 (5.8%) photographs were tagged with 'A place that is important to me' and included images of houses, nature, urban streetscapes and a church. Emotions connected to these images were generally positive, with 20% connected to feelings of happiness. This was followed by feeling comfortable, relaxed, loved and hopeful. Only three negative emotions (out of the 16 emotions selected) were expressed in relation to these images.

Five images tagged with 'Something else' were deemed to be of important places, with the majority of photographs being of nature: "Going out into nature was my escape from reality". One young person photographed a horse: "Having a place to go when I need to be alone and calm down from a tough week, or when I'm just feeling down in general and want to feel happy again." Young people's emotions in connection to these images were generally positive, with happiness and relaxation being most commonly selected. Although sadness/unhappiness is the third most common emotion, it is one of only two negative emotions expressed amongst the nine emotions.

### Friends, family and other people of importance

Twenty-nine of 325 (8.9%) photographs were tagged with 'Friends and family' or 'People that are important to me'. Images young people contributed to this category were of family members, pets, workers, friends, children and hands clasped together. One image of a ceramic hanging with the quote 'Mother you make life more beautiful' highlights the importance of having secure support figures for young people, which was also noted in screeds:



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*"Friends come and go but best friends stay with you forever."*

*"People walk up-down, in-out of your life but with the right support you will get through any waves that life throws at you. Being strong and standing tall is one of the most important things in my life."*

---

A few young people made mention of the importance of their own children in their lives, and the strength that their children give them to strive towards a more positive future:

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*"When I was 14, running around the streets; Drinking, drugs, it's all one big blah. These photos represent the main priority in my life and that's my son. He practically changed my life ... I am the one that can now think straight and able to love, nurture, and look forward to the future, because now I have something to live and be grateful for."*

---

The most common emotion that young people connected to images of friends, family and other important people was happiness, followed by love, pride, and comfortableness. Very few negative emotions were expressed.

Twenty-one (17.6%) of the photographs tagged with 'Something else' were deemed to fit the categories of 'Friends and family' or 'People that are important to me'. Similar to the above results, happiness was most commonly connected to these images, followed by feeling comfortable, connected and loved. Again, minimal negativity was expressed.

### **Having contact with my friends and family and people that are important to me**

Four out of 325 (1.2%) photographs were tagged with 'Having contact with my friends and family and people that are important to me' and included images of friends, a playground, and the sun bursting through the clouds. Although those that felt negative emotions (frustration, loneliness) felt them at a high level, positive emotions such as happiness, hopefulness and fulfilment were felt by more young people.

Two photographs tagged with 'Something else' were deemed to represent 'Having contact with friends and family and people that are important to me' and were connected to feeling proud (Level 5) and happy (Level 4).

Some screeds highlighted the complexity of being connected or disconnected from family and friends:

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*"When I was put up for care when I was about 2 or 3 years old, I thought my mum was putting me up for sale — was getting rid of me. When I was put in care it was like I was sold and couldn't see my mum anymore. Even if you are 'being sold', you gotta be brave, be bold. And never give up."*

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## **11. Placement/Home**

*'As a child or young person in care I need careful thought being given to where I will live so I will have a home that feels like a home.'*

### **Where I live / My home**

Twenty-seven out of 325 (8.3%) photographs were tagged with 'Where I live' or 'My home'. A diverse range of image content included pets, houses, bedrooms and backyards, nature and urban streetscapes. As noted in Figure 10, happiness was the most common emotion young people selected for these images, followed by strength and feeling comfortable.

Four photographs tagged with 'Something else' were deemed to represent 'My home' or 'Where I live', with three of the images being of houses or bedrooms, and one of a bush track: *"the road to my stable home"*. Emotions connected to these images were frustrated (Level 5), loved (Level 5), cared for (Level 5), warm (Level 5), comfort (Level 4) and good (no level assigned).

Screeds highlighted the importance of young people having a space to call their own:

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*"The bedroom shows stabilization and freedom to express yourself. Once you have been within the same care placement for a while your room shows signs that you are in a stable environment and are free to show who you are."*

*"It is important for a child to feel they are able to show who they are and live in a space that is just theirs."*

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*"This is the house I live in. It makes me feel good because it means I have a place to sleep and a bed unlike some kids in this world."*

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It should be noted that whilst most emotions connected to these images were positive, there were also young people who identified feelings of threat, vulnerability, and worry/anxiety, amongst other negative emotions, about their home environment. This reminds us to ensure we are having discussions with children and young people in

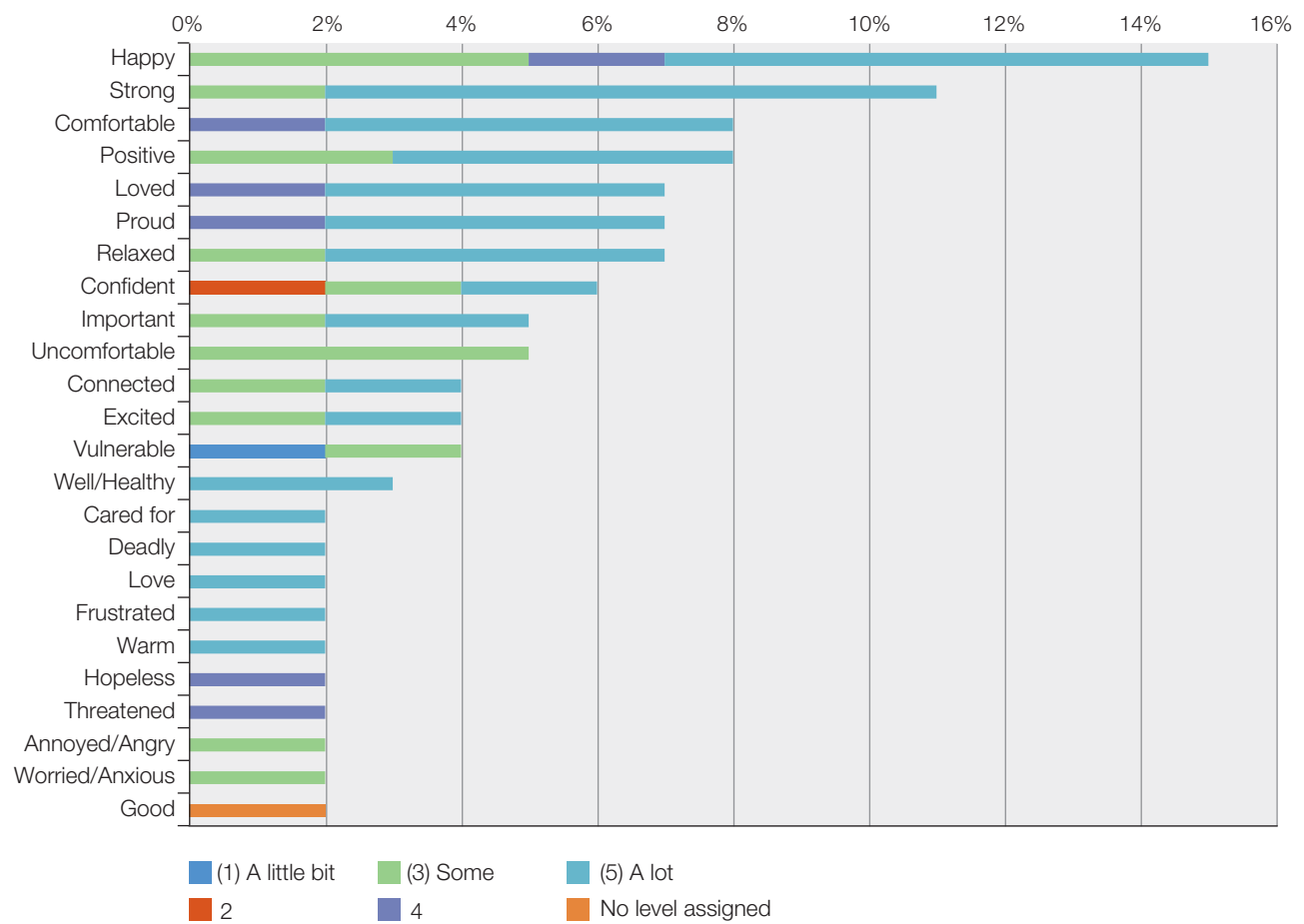


Figure 10: Emotions Connected to Images Tagged 'Where I live' or 'My home'

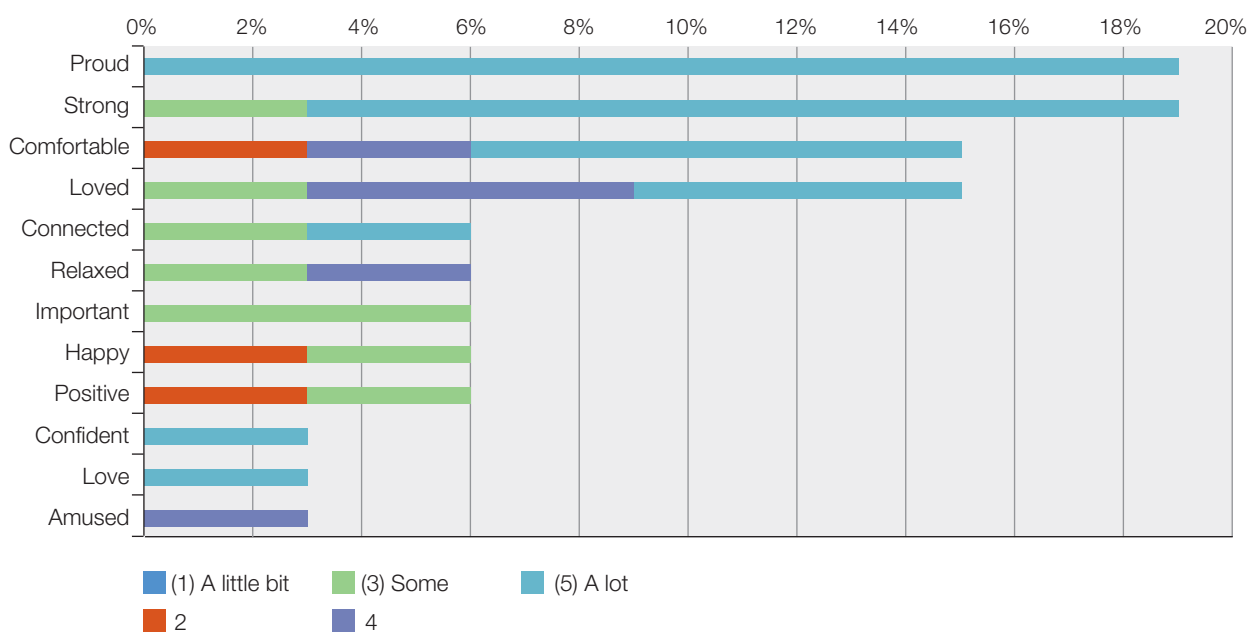


Figure 11: Emotions Connected to Images Tagged 'Things that make my home "homely"'

Out of Home Care about their experiences of where they are living, and to find out from them what we can do to ensure that they feel a sense of security and belonging.

### Things that make my home 'homely'

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*"I love my bed because when I'm tired that's where I sleep and it's soft and I know there's no monsters."*

---

Fifteen out of 325 (4.6%) photographs were tagged with 'Things that make my home "homely"'. Pets and stuffed toys were most commonly portrayed, along with televisions and gaming systems, a lounge room, a bedroom, food, hands clasped together and a kitchen sign with the words 'Mum's kitchen. Everything stirred... with a spoonful of love'. Pride and strength were most frequently attached to these images, followed by feeling comfortable and loved (Figure 11).

One photograph tagged with 'Something else' of an inspirational quote was deemed to represent 'Things that make my home "homely"', and had the emotions strong (Level 3), comfortable (Level 4) and important (Level 3) assigned to it.

These images highlight the importance of Out of Home Care settings maintaining a 'homely' environment.

### Things that stop me from feeling 'at home' where I live

Seven out of 325 (2.2%) photographs were tagged with 'Things that stop me from feeling "at home" where I live', and included images of the locked door of a residential unit, tree branches in a storm, a woman reaching out to a young girl, and a boy walking through a tunnel. Most commonly, feelings of hopelessness, annoyance/anger, loneliness and feeling threatened were attached to these images. Unsurprisingly, all emotions connected to these images were negative.

Screeds connected to this issue highlighted that some young people feel imprisoned at times in residential services, others feel embarrassed about their living conditions, and some felt unsettled due to their constantly changing environment:

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*"Living in care for me was always getting moved. Being moved pretty much every week. Having always changed houses and families means I didn't really have a childhood."*

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*"This photo is about where I live at the moment. It makes me embarrassed because it stinks and looks like shit."*

*"During some really low self abused times in my life when I really needed support, a meal and my bed Resi rules prevented staff from opening the gate and letting me in till I was sober. I hated that gate."*

*"Residential Care makes me feel positive and confident but also depressed and unhappy at the same time...I feel that the door is always open for me in residential care with workers but sometimes it can feel like a prison with all the rules and stuff that we can't do."*

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## 12. Fun

*'As a child or young person in care I need to have fun and do activities that I enjoy.'*

Forty-four out of 325 (13.5%) photographs were tagged with 'Having fun' or 'Stuff I like doing'. Images overwhelmingly displayed a range of sporting activities, with other images of playgrounds, pets and animals, musical instruments, graffiti, and television and gaming systems also being presented. Happiness was the most common emotion that young people connected to these images, followed by pride and feeling relaxed. Although not in high numbers, an unexpected number of negative emotions were attached to images depicting fun. These emotions included frustration, worry/anxiety and loneliness.

Thirteen (19.3%) images tagged with 'Something else' were deemed to represent 'Having fun' or 'Stuff I like doing'. Images consisted of graffiti and other forms of art, sports, television and gaming consoles, and young people taking part in a variety of activities (such as going to the snow). Similarly to the results above, happiness was the most common emotion that young people connected to these images, followed by feeling relaxed, fulfilled and excited. No negative emotions were expressed.

A few screeds referred to the importance of music and musical instruments for some young people:

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*"The piano is a great way to express my feeling and cures me when I am bored."*

*"I'm connected with the guitar; it is like a part of me."*

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Other screeds referred to the value of nature, and the pleasure of individual activities such as reading and gardening:

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*"I really love working in the garden with any form of plant and I have my own vegie patch. All plants are fascinating in my eyes and I love to be near them always."*

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*"I love books. It creates an imagination and a getaway to a different place when times get tough."*

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The overwhelming number of images in this category reinforce the importance of encouraging and supporting children and young people in care to identify and pursue hobbies and interests.

### 13. Traditions and religion

'As a child or young person in care I need to be able to take part in family traditions and be able to learn about and be involved with cultural and religious groups that are important to me.'

#### Culture and religion

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*"Church makes me happy. It is safe place and I can learn and listen about my religion. It is a nice place to be."*

---

Six out of 325 (1.8%) photographs were tagged with 'My culture' or 'My religion' and were most commonly connected to feelings of annoyance and anger, happiness and positivity. Images included a kitchen, a police car, gum leaves, a pillar and a boy overlooking a cemetery.

One photograph tagged 'Something else' was deemed to represent 'My culture', and was assigned with the emotions of happiness (Level 4), feeling loved (Level 5) and pride (Level 5).

#### Family traditions

No images were tagged with 'Family traditions'; however, some screeds alluded to the joy of being engaged in such traditions and events:

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*"I get to celebrate Christmas and put up lights, but we didn't get to do it before coming to my new home."*

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### 14. Education

'As a child or young person in care I need to be provided with the best possible education and training.'

Two out of 325 (0.6%) photographs were tagged with 'My education/school'. While feeling important was the strongest emotion connected to these images, all other emotions were negative and told us that young people felt annoyed and angry, frustrated, and worried and anxious about education.

Although the emotions tagged to these images were quite negative, some screeds which were deemed to fit this theme reflected positivity and hope about education and the opportunities it could offer:

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*"I like school. It gives me a good education and it is making me learn how to be a role model to others."*

---

*"I want to be one of the few family members in my life to be able to go to uni and graduate and do something with my life instead of wasting it."*

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### 15. Life Skills

'As a child or young person in care I need to be able to develop life skills and grow up to become the best person I can.'

Fourteen out of 325 (4.3%) photographs were tagged with 'Learning life skills and growing up'. Seascapes, flowers, a kitchen, a television and gaming system, a scout door, and an image of a young person rock climbing were included. Of the 17 emotions represented for these images, 6 were negative and 11 positive. The most common emotions that young people associated with these images were confidence, hopefulness, and worry/anxiety.

One photograph tagged with 'Something else' was determined to represent life skills: 'Working... pushed me to be the best I can be and I have made so many friends. I feel proud that I went and got a job myself'. This image was connected to feelings of pride (Level 4).

To some extent the emotions linked to life skills are those we might expect from other young people learning the skills they will need for living independently. It is both an exciting time and one that evokes apprehension and concern. The emotions reflected here are a reminder



that children and young people in care require focused support to ensure that they have the opportunity to develop these skills for life.

## 16. Leaving Care

*'As a child or young person in care I need help in preparing myself to leave care and support after I leave care.'*

Six out of 325 (1.8%) photographs were tagged with 'Leaving care', with a dog, a house, a young person rock climbing, and feet on the pavement being some of the images in this category. Overwhelmingly, hopefulness made up almost 40% of the emotions that young people connected to their images of leaving care, followed by feelings of worry/anxiety and excitement (Figure 12).

One photograph tagged with 'Something else' was believed to represent leaving care and elicited a range of emotions for the participant — feeling positive (Level 3), happy (Level 3), relaxed (Level 4) and fulfilled (Level 5).

Some screeds highlighted the positivity that young people felt about leaving care and going home:

*'Soon I will be going home. I feel really positive about this and have worked really hard to get home. My time at the Unit has been very good and tough but I feel that I have really grown up there. I have enjoyed living at the Unit and living with my workers but now I just want to go home. I want to go home because I belong there with my mum and my brother and sister. They are my family.'*

Similar to the life skills images and emotions above, the emotions reflected here are not unexpected. It is important to reflect on the need for focused support in relation to leaving care in order to prevent the negative emotions becoming overwhelming and to ensure that a shift to independent living is a positive experience for young people.

## 17. Hope, Strength and Dreams

Twenty-five (21%) photographs tagged 'Something else' were difficult to categorise under the charter and presented themes of hope, strength, dreams, determination, pride and courage. Image content included carers, images of nature and urban landscapes, pets, sports and feet walking on the pavement. The main emotions that young people connected to these images were strength, confidence, hopefulness and positivity (Figure 13). The most common negative emotion was worry/anxiety.

Many screeds also had strong themes of hope, strength and dreams emerging:

*"I sit here today knowing that no matter what life deals you can change the path you're walking on. Run up that hill and make yourself a new path, it may seem hard but there are always people there to help you up you may not see them but they are there in the shadows. There is strength inside you that will help you to grow learn and live life the way you want, just believe in yourself ..."*

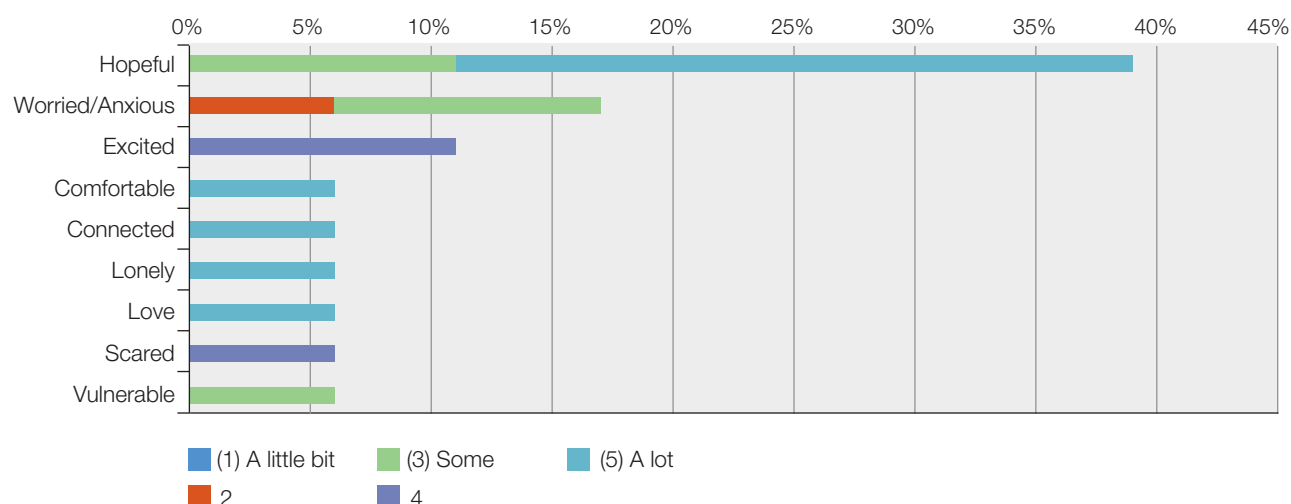


Figure 12: Emotions Connected to Images Tagged 'Leaving care'

*"All I wanted to do is show that you should never give up. I have wanted to give up so many times but I haven't. I can finally believe in myself and I am a worthy person to be here and it doesn't matter what my past was like, it's all about the future and forgetting about the past."*

*"I put make up on to make me feel better about myself. The joy is knowing that I'm going out and feeling good and looking pretty."*

*"We can do anything now!"*

*"I am a changing person who now has their mind set on going somewhere in life. I think it is very true that everything does happen for a reason, if I never moved into residential care, I would not be the person I am today. Strong and independent. Ready to take on the world!"*

*"Stand tall, never give up, try, try, try again, persevere, even when people might let you down and despise you. My mum used to say to me 'Even if people despise you, be like a kite and let the winds guide you.' Be special in your own way, because you're special in every way. You're a star, no matter what anyone else says about you. Happiness comes from the heart, even from afar."*

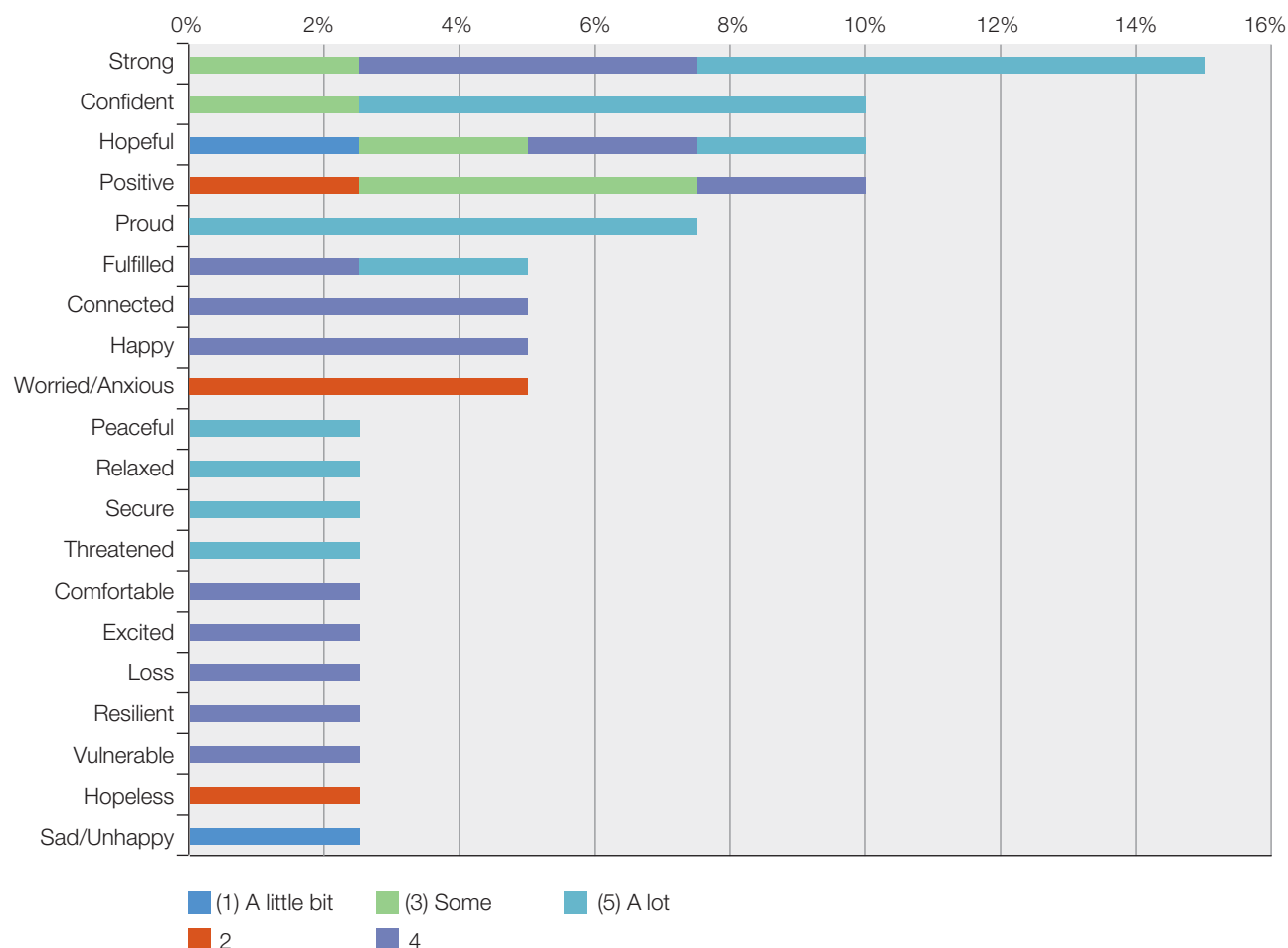


Figure 13: Emotions Connected to Untagged Images Deemed to Represent Hope, Strength and Dreams

# Conclusion

Although the methodology for interpreting meaning in the work of participants is very different from the 2009 project, it is interesting to make some comparison between the messages that emerged from the two projects. Our great challenge in continuing to undertake the *As Eye See It* project will be in exploring the ways in which we can address the messages that we see repeated over multiple years.

The tagging methodology devised for the 2011 project has enabled us to hear messages more clearly and to understand what it is that participants intended to communicate through their work. This has brought into sharper focus some specific areas for consideration.

Based on the messages communicated by participants the Out of Home Care sector can give itself a deserved pat on the back. The emotion most frequently expressed by participants in relation to their images was happiness. In fact the top 14 emotions expressed were positive. In a sector that deals so often with trauma and loss this is no small achievement.

However, given that negative emotions make up 22 of the list of 55 that participants used to explain their messages, it would be unwise to see the picture only from a positive angle. Although not as frequently expressed, the issues that raised strong negative feelings are significant and require some considered attention.

The issue of safety was linked to vulnerability, fear, hopelessness and threat for a number of young people. That of knowing or not knowing what is happening to them caused exclusively negative emotional responses among those young people who addressed it. These are perhaps not surprising messages, but they are important. We know that safety is key to creating healing environments for children and young people who have experienced trauma and neglect. It is also logical to imagine that being able to understand what is happening to them might contribute to a child or young person's sense of safety.

The small number of images that were indicated to relate to Aboriginal culture and the defensively negative emotions attached to these suggest that there is work to be done in ensuring that opportunities such as *As Eye See It* are accessible to Aboriginal children and young people in care. Their voices and messages must be given the platform to hold the sector to account in relation to its obligations under the Charter for Children in Out of Home Care.

The themes of hopes and dreams have arisen in both project years and in both reports they are to some extent presented as an 'add on' to the messages that relate to the Charter for Children in Out of Home Care. This is of interest for its latent implication that we perhaps do not consider hopes and dreams a 'right', as such. To our knowledge there are no formal rights frameworks that do; however, in relation to children and young people for whom chaos and basic survival have characterised their lives, hope and dreams might be considered entirely essential to their recovery from trauma.

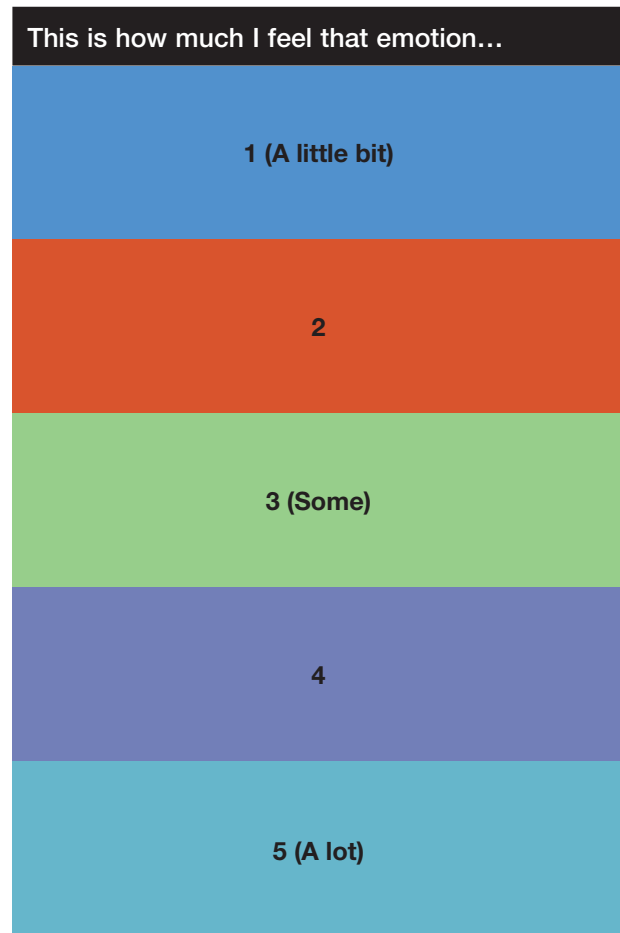
The importance of pets; issues of safety; the need for stable, positive relationships with workers, carers and other friends and family; the importance of having fun; and the key role that a space of their own can play in providing a sense of safety and stability. These are all repetitive themes. Our challenge is to find ways to address them in our practice and our policy. These themes are not requests to move mountains; they are very human, very humble and very much the kinds of opportunities and conditions for living we would want for our own children.

*As Eye See It* has proven itself once more to be a powerful mechanism for young people in Out of Home Care to be heard and to tell their own stories. We have been humbled by their honesty and impressed by their artistic skill and we look forward to hearing more in 2013.

## Appendix 1 –Tagging

The following tag options were provided to young people:

This photo makes me feel ...	
Positive	Confident
Hopeless	Negative
Bored	Vulnerable
Happy	Comfortable
Uncomfortable	Hate
Strong	Threatened
Embarrassed	Proud
Love	Worried/Anxious
Depressed	Connected
Sad/Unhappy	Important
Annoyed/Angry	Amused
Weak	Lonely
Loved	Relaxed
Hopeful	Scared
Frustrated	Fulfilled
Excited	Well/Healthy
Stressed	Deadly
Hated	



This photo is about ...	
Safety	Things that make me feel safe or unsafe
Health	Things that keep me healthy
Being respected	What it means to me to be a child or teenager
My Aboriginal culture	Me having my say or being heard
Telling people what I think about things that are important to me	Finding out information about myself
How people treat my information	The person/people I talk to when I'm unhappy
Not having anyone to talk to when I'm unhappy	Knowing or not knowing what is happening to me
My worker	Being supported by my worker
Friends and family	Having contact with my friends and family and people that are important to me
A place that is important to me	People that are important to me



Where I live	My home
Things that make my home 'homely'	Family traditions
My culture	My religion
Having fun	Stuff I like doing
My education/school	Learning life skills and growing up
Leaving care	Not being supported by my worker
Things that make me unhealthy	Things that stop me from feeling 'at home' where I live
Something else (add description)	Something secret/private

In addition to the provided tags young people created the following:

### Emotional tags

Feel good, Wonderful, Peaceful, Fun, Awesome, Invisible, Empty, Cared for, Glamorous, Hot, Joy, Locked out, Loud, Safe, Secure, Warm, Comfort, Good, Loss, Nervous.

### Subject Tags

Young people used a broad range of their own words, phrases and descriptions to apply meaning to the pictures they had taken where the provided tags were not appropriate. Their tags can be loosely divided into themes:

#### Pets

"Jackie is my pet and she makes me feel relaxed. She is fun to play with and keeps me safe."

"Having a place to go when I need to be alone and calm down from a tough week, or when I'm just feeling down in general and want to feel happy again. My horse always has a way of putting a smile on my face."

#### Hope

"This photo gives me hope that I will grow up to live a stable and successful life."

"This photo represents the future and what I would like to have."

#### A Sense of Self & Journey

"Reflecting on what I have done in the past."

"I had two roads to take, the right road and the wrong road. It was my decision which one I took and I went down the wrong road and then had a chance to change my path or stay on the same one, and I chose to change paths."

"Standing tall and strong, with the right support you will get through any waves that life throws at you."

#### Frustration & Uncertainty

"Need to break out."

"This photo represents the uncertainty that I face in not having a stable home environment and the possibility that I could be moved from my 'home' at short notice."

#### Music

"My one true passion is my guitar. I have always loved and will always love the guitar. It gives me so much pleasure as to knowing I can play some form of instrument and I really love the songs I play."

#### Achievement

"Working at Maccas is an experience I will never forget. It pushed me to be the best I can be and I have made so many friends. I feel proud that I went and got a job myself."

"Something I worked hard to get."

"We can do ANYTHING!"

#### Being Loved & Cared for

"Being in a loving foster family makes me feel a part of a loving family."

"It makes me feel good because it means I have a place to sleep and a bed unlike some kids in this world."

"I have always loved food and since I have been in foster care they make sure I never go hungry"

"Someone who cares, a new beginning with so much to look forward to."

### **Feeling Lonely & Unsupported**

"During tough times when there's no one to help you, sometimes you feel empty inside."

### **Nature**

"This photo is of a plant, I really love working in the garden with any form of plant and I have my own veggie patch. All plants are fascinating in my eyes and I love to be near them always."

"Going out into nature was my escape from reality."

### **Aboriginal Culture**

"This photo makes me proud to be Aboriginal. I am proud of who I am and who my people are. No matter what people say, I will always be proud of my culture."

### **Home**

"Being at home or having a home to go to."

"This is a wall hanging at my residential unit, there is many more like this and make me feel at home."

What I do when I'm upset

"This photo is about where I go when I am upset to watch horror movies."

"Once something that helped me to get away from all the terrible things I was experiencing."

"My comfort zone. Makes me happy when I am sad."

### **Friends**

"This is how I get around to see my friends."

"I get to play on it with my friends."

### **Uncategorised**

"This is about being able to ride to places and not having to walk."

"Makes me feel alive."

"Feeling strong."

"Make me feel pretty."

"I see the light coming my way."

"I look cool."

"When I put makeup on people's faces it makes me feel like I am in control and I think it is my job to make people feel fierce."

"Me being happy."

"My old agency with many different workers."

"That's what life's about."

"A peaceful place."

"Times that I miss."

"I feel like the world has exploded in a good way."

"Being respected and being rewarded for good things."

"Sometimes I feel stretched like a shadow but there's always time to play!"

"Lucky & content."

"Freedom."

"Takes me where I want to go."



