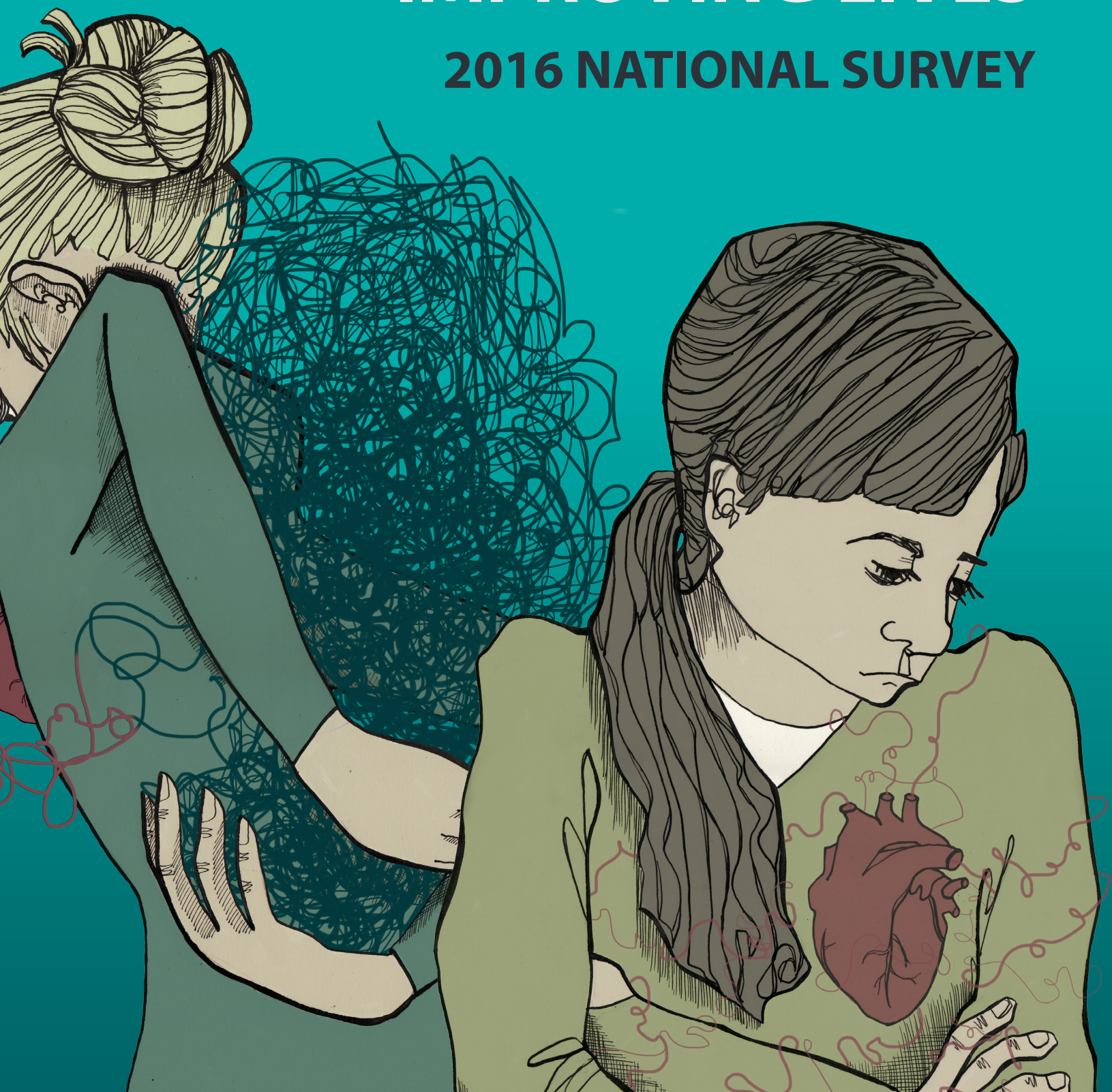


REDUCING CONFLICT IMPROVING LIVES

2016 NATIONAL SURVEY



FOREWORD

Conflict is not the normal way of nurturing and growing human relationships, yet it has become normalised. It happens in all our lives, for many reasons, often with minimal consequences but sometimes its impact can be devastating and debilitating. We know conflict can affect mental health, wellbeing and family relationships, and at times can lead to family break-ups and youth homelessness. This shouldn't be the norm.

For nearly 50 years, Cyrenians has served those on the edge of society, working with people who are homeless and vulnerable to help them change their own lives, walking with them through their own transformation. This is evident in our innovative conflict resolution services, where mediation has helped families work through very tough times, near family break ups, and at worst, homelessness.

With this in mind, we launched the Scottish Centre for Conflict Resolution (SCCR) in April 2014 - the first of its kind in Scotland. This national resource centre promotes and supports best practice in mediation, conflict resolution and early intervention work with a particular focus around young people and families. Built on partnerships with a wide variety of colleagues and collaborators across the country, the SCCR focuses on early intervention with young people and families experiencing conflict that is affecting their relationships and their lives.

At the time of the development and creation of the SCCR, Scottish Government statistics identified that nearly 6,000 young people were becoming homeless every year due to relationships at home breaking down. Today, that number is nearly 4,500 - and there is still much more that needs to be done.*

Initial survey work was conducted in 2013 with the view to assess the scale of the problem, and the needs of families and practitioners we intended to work with. The results - stark as they were - went on to influence the Centre's first three years. In 2016 we again sought to capture the views and opinions of young people, parents/carers and professionals.

The snapshot of conflict across Scotland captured in this report highlights weekly arguments often severely affecting mental health and wellbeing; young people and their parents/carers not knowing where to turn to for help; and professionals, parents and young people desperate for resources and support. Their views and opinions, along with our event evaluations, will continue to shape our services and resources going forward.

We commend this report to you in the hope that it will help shape and inform your work too. And we invite individuals and organisations from across Scotland to work towards ensuring conflict resolution and mediation is more freely and widely available.

Finally our sincere thanks to our partners, agencies and individuals which have contributed towards distribution and completion of surveys and consultations. But most importantly to all the respondents and participants that took the time to participate. Your input has been of immense value. Thank you.

Ewan Aitken CEO
Cyrenians
February 2017

*Scottish Government Homelessness Tables 2013/2014 and 2015/2016 respectively

CONTENTS

Executive Summary	3
Background	
Research & Policy Landscape	5
2013 National Survey Highlights	7
2016 National Surveys	
Aims & Methodology	10
Map: Survey Reach	11
2016 National Survey Results	13
Demographics	14
Part One: Family Conflict & Homelessness	15
Part Two: Support & Support Services	17
Part Three: Needs, Wants & Resources	21
Conclusion	23
Actions	25
Recommendations	26



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Three years following the Scottish Centre for Conflict Resolution's initial national survey and consultation work in 2013, and the publication of a three year report "Improving Relationships, Improving Lives", we again sought the views of young people, parents/carers and professionals across Scotland on the issues of family conflict, support services and their needs in relation to improving their relationships and their lives.

METHODOLOGY

Between June and November 2016, we received responses from all 32 Local Authorities, with a total of 592 individuals participating in either a survey or one of the nine consultations held across the Central Belt of Scotland.

Separate questionnaires were designed for each target group and included a mix of qualitative and quantitative questions. Some were taken directly from the 2013 surveys (so to evaluate whether there were any changes), and others were included to identify any impact the SCCR has had in its first three years.

224 young people, 83 parents/carers and 160 professionals responded to the full online surveys – this includes 49 professionals who completed an additional section from a parents' perspective. Another 77 professionals completed a shorter paper survey (handed out at training sessions over Summer 2016).

The nine consultations were held across Edinburgh, East Lothian and Inverclyde, and involved 18 professionals (13 of which were mediators), 11 parents and 19 young people (including five care leavers). Conducted as semi-formal discussions, topics included participants' understanding of family conflict, youth homelessness and mediation. Those involving mediators focused specifically on their unique perspective on and experience of family conflict.

RESULTS

The surveys and consultations provided us with views on:

- The issues families are facing in relation to interpersonal conflict and how this impacts on individuals, their relationships and health and wellbeing, and how it contributes to the risk of relationship breakdown and youth homelessness.
- The support and mediation services specific to young people and families that are available across Scotland, and whether families are aware of these services and are using them.
- The needs of young people, parents/carers and professionals/practitioners and the resources that they feel would be valuable in relation to how they deal with and manage conflict.

The information collected from the surveys and consultations, combined with data captured from the evaluations of our events, will shape and inform our training, events and digital resources over the next two years, in line with our current funding stream, the Scottish Government's *Children and Young People Early Intervention Fund*.

Note - full data sets can be made available upon request.

HIGHLIGHTS

1

45% of young people and 75% of parents say that conflict at home happens at least weekly.

2

18% of young people think about leaving home due to arguments at least on a monthly basis. In our 2013 survey, that figure was nearly one quarter of young respondents.

3

76% of parents and 30% of young people acknowledged that arguments at home have affected their mental health, and for some the effects are quite severe.

4

93% of parents would like to learn how to better manage arguments at home; with 60% of young people also agreeing.

5

87% of professionals said conflict was a regular occurrence for their clients; 80% stated that homelessness & sofa surfing was frequently experienced by the young people they work with - highlighting the hidden aspect of youth homelessness.

6

46% of professionals felt they did not have the necessary skills and knowledge to address conflict between the young people and families they work with.

7

50% of young people and 81% of parents would like more support to address conflict at home to come from outside their family and/or friends circle; 40% and 30% respectively did not know of any relevant support services in their area.

8

To improve their conflict management skills, all three target groups agree they need: better knowledge of practical skills and techniques; more information about other support services available; and more engaging online resources.

9

There remains an ongoing culture across Scotland of "what happens at home stays at home" - that asking for help is either embarrassing or shameful. Yet there is also the realisation amongst professionals and parents that this needs to change.

10

There is a lack of awareness of mediation as a possible solution for family conflict; it is still frequently used as a last resort. It also remains unclear as to the provision of mediation services for under 16s across Scotland.

BACKGROUND

RESEARCH

In 2011 and to mark 10 years of the provision of homeless mediation in Scotland, Cyrenians published “Mediation and Homelessness Prevention in Scotland: A Decade of Mediation between Young People and Families.” Written by Emma Dore, the report identified that while the available mediation services for young people and families were generally recognised as valuable and effective in reducing the number of young people becoming homeless, actual provision across the country was patchy at best, with many young people and families unaware of the services available to them in their area.

Dore also highlighted the need for increased national awareness of mediation, and stressed that it should be an earlier form of intervention, before family conflict reaches crisis. Included within her recommendations was the proposal to establish a national network of mediators to support and share on-going best practice and resources.

POLICY LANDSCAPE

The policy context for the work of the SCCR covers many areas. Our origins are in a desire to reduce youth homelessness and there is therefore a strong link between our work and [the Scottish Government’s Prevention of Homelessness Guidance \(2009\)](#) along with other strategic documentation from which that document evolved.

There are also strong links between the SCCR’s work and [the National Parenting Strategy \(2012\)](#) which aims to highlight to parents/carers the positive difference they can make to their children’s development, health and wellbeing; and to strengthen the practical help and support available to them. Two of the five issues highlighted at the start of this strategy have a strong connection with our work:

- Ensure all parents/carers have easy access to clear, concise information on everything from pregnancy to the teenage years and beyond; and
- Offer informed, coordinated support to enable parents/carers to develop their parenting skills, whatever their need, wherever they live, whether they live together or apart.

In addition, [The National Parenting Strategy](#) describes “the very real need to move away from the stigma associated with asking for help towards a culture where parents/carers feel encouraged to seek support, reassured that by doing so they will be treated fairly and their parenting responsibilities and rights will be respected”. This is again a strong fit with the SCCR’s desire for parents/carers and young people to feel comfortable in seeking and asking for support.

Though we may have a focus on parenting teenagers and reducing the risk of them becoming homeless by resolving family conflict, there is also a link between our work and younger children. [The Curriculum for Excellence](#) in schools aims to develop the knowledge, skills and attributes children and young people will need if they are to flourish in life.

With the advancement of digital technology in education, as set out in the new [Digital Learning and Teaching Strategy for Scotland](#), our innovative psycho educational digital resources will contribute towards providing an interactive learning experience for learners across Scotland.

One of the key components of [Getting It Right For Every Child \(GIRFEC\)](#) is focusing on improving outcomes for children and their families based on a shared understanding of wellbeing. Families and communities should be encouraged to acknowledge the impact that conflict has within the home and know that support is available where and when they need it. As such, [GIRFEC](#) also advocates for “maximising the skilled workforce within universal services to address needs and risks as early as possible”.

Photo, L-R: Karyn McCluskey (Violence Reduction Unit), SCCR Patron Drew Drummond (Drummond International), Aileen Campbell (then-MSP for Children and Young People), Nico McKenzie-Juetten (Office of Children and Young People’s Commissioner Scotland) & Diane Marr (SCCR) at the launch of the SCCR in April 2014.



Scottish Centre for
Conflict Resolution

Improving Relationships,
Improving Lives

...bs Untangle Arguments.....

Scottish Centre for
Conflict Resolution

Improving Relationships,
Improving Lives

..... and Stops You

SETTING THE SCENE:

2013 NATIONAL SURVEYS

At the time of the development and creation of the Scottish Centre for Conflict Resolution, Scottish Government statistics identified that nearly 6,000* young people became homeless due to relationships at home breaking down.

We set out to verify the scale of the issues and developed an initial series of national surveys to capture a snapshot of not just the views and opinions of young people, parents/carers and professionals on the topic of family conflict, but also their needs in relation to family conflict – the resources and support they needed and would benefit from.

Over October and November 2013, the SCCR received responses from 449 individuals: 216 professionals, 185 young people and 48 parents/carers. The online survey was also developed into workshops for young people; three were hosted with agencies in Paisley, Edinburgh and Falkirk, with 29 young people aged 13-21 involved.

The results, stark as they were, went on to influence and shape the first three years of our work.



Photo: Consultation held with members of the Scottish Youth Parliament in January 2014, contributing to the development of the SCCR website.

2013 NATIONAL SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

41%

Of parents said conflict at home happens at least weekly

61%

Of young people also said conflict at home happens at least weekly

1/4

Thought about leaving home at least monthly due to family conflict

When asked how family conflict made them feel, parents and young people had similar responses.



Frustration

is the most common emotion associated with family conflict.

78%

Of professionals agreed that conflict was a regular occurrence for families they work with

Young people and parents/carers wanted "someone to talk to" about arguments at home.



“...conflict in one area bleeds into other areas of life.”

But only

50%

of professionals felt they had the skills necessary to address conflict



For the full 2013 survey results and highlight report, please visit our website:

scottishconflictresolution.org.uk

What would help professionals better support families to manage and/or reduce conflict?

1

Regional/National Seminars & Conferences

2

Online Resources

3

Training Events

2016 NATIONAL SURVEYS

Three years later, we again distributed national surveys, consulting with young people, parents/carers and professionals across Scotland regarding their views on family conflict, support services and their needs in order to improve their relationships and their lives.



2016 SURVEY AIMS

The **principal aims** of this second round of national surveys were to:

1. Identify any changes and/or shifts since the 2013 National Surveys in relation to:

- A) The issues families in conflict face at home and the experiences and/or risk of youth homelessness in Scotland;
- B) The support services available across different areas in Scotland, whether families know about them and are using/would use them.

2. Determine the impact of the SCCR to date:

- A) Have target groups benefitted from SCCR events, website and resources;
- B) What else could we be doing.

3. Identify the needs of our target groups in relation to training, information & resources:

- A) What topics parents, young people and professionals would find helpful and/or useful to learn from our training events and website;
- B) What kind of online training (if any) professionals would most benefit from.

METHODOLOGY

The research for this report was conducted between June 2016 and November 2016 and consisted of online and paper surveys as well as 9 focus groups. We received a total of 544 survey respondents, with an additional 48 participating in the focus groups.

1.1 SURVEYS

The survey was administered online through Survey Monkey with separate questionnaires designed specifically for each target group (parents, professionals and young people). These included a mix of qualitative and quantitative questions. Some questions were taken directly from the 2013 surveys so to evaluate whether there were any changes. Others were included to identify any impact the SCCR has had in its first three years.

A draft version of each questionnaire was submitted to the SCCR Advisory Group as well as colleagues from across Cyrenians for comments and feedback before the final versions went live in June.

The survey was disseminated through our own distribution lists, linked on our website and shared through our social media channels. We requested our partners and other agencies to further distribute them as well, enabling us to reach new respondents through new and different channels.

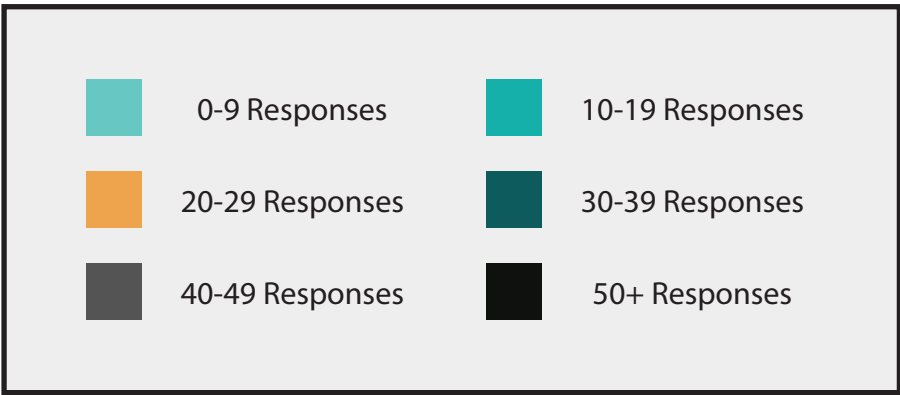
475 individuals responded to the online surveys: 224 young people, 83 parents/carers and 160 professionals. Professionals were also invited to respond to a subsection of questions as parents, and 49 participated. Not all survey questions required answers and some allowed participants to choose multiple responses.

A short paper version was adapted and handed out at three different SCCR professional training sessions. This resulted in 14% of the total 544 responses. Where professionals statistics and responses are cited, they are a combination of both paper and online versions - when possible.

Full data sets will be made available upon request.

SURVEY REACH

We received responses from all 32 Local Authorities. The map indicates response-rate per Authority:



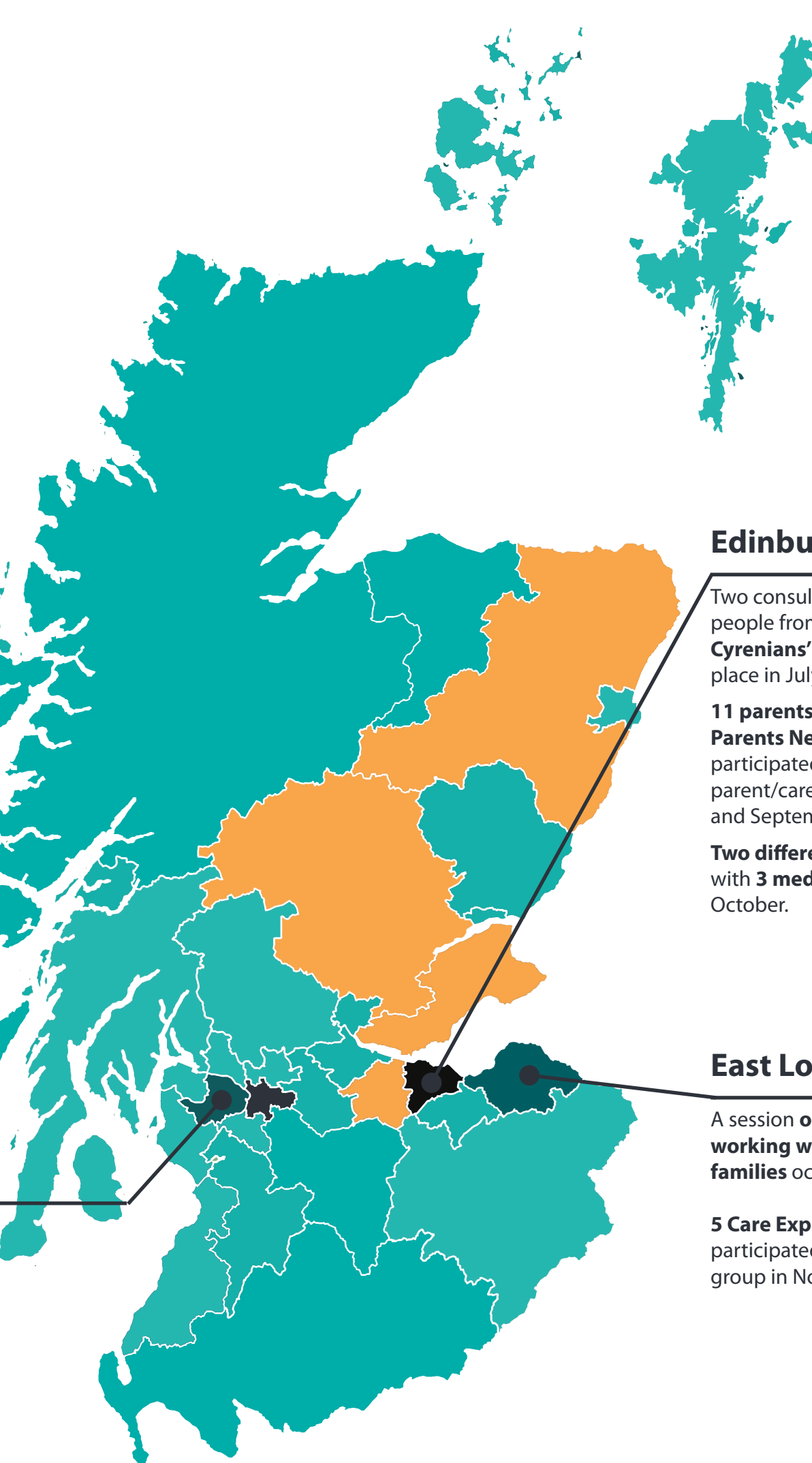
1.2 CONSULTATIONS

In addition to the online surveys, we held consultations across the Central Belt. These were conducted as semi-formal discussions around participants’ understanding of family conflict, youth homelessness, and mediation. Those involving mediators focused specifically on their unique perspective on family conflict.

Due to time constraints, the majority occurred simultaneously with the survey data collection. As such, any significant findings from the surveys were not discussed further with the focus groups.

We were intending to host consultations in the five different housing hubs across Scotland for professionals and mediators. Due to low pick-up by participants, we were unfortunately required to cancel four of the five sessions for professionals, and three of the five for mediators. We are confident however that the surveys reflect a diverse range of professional backgrounds and opinions.





Edinburgh

Two consultations with 14 young people from **Citadel Youth and Cyrenians' City Community** took place in July 2016.

11 parents from Triple P and Parents Network Scotland participated in two different parent/carers consultations in June and September.

Two different consultations with **3 mediators** also occurred in October.

East Lothian

A session **open to all practitioners working with young people and families** occurred in September.

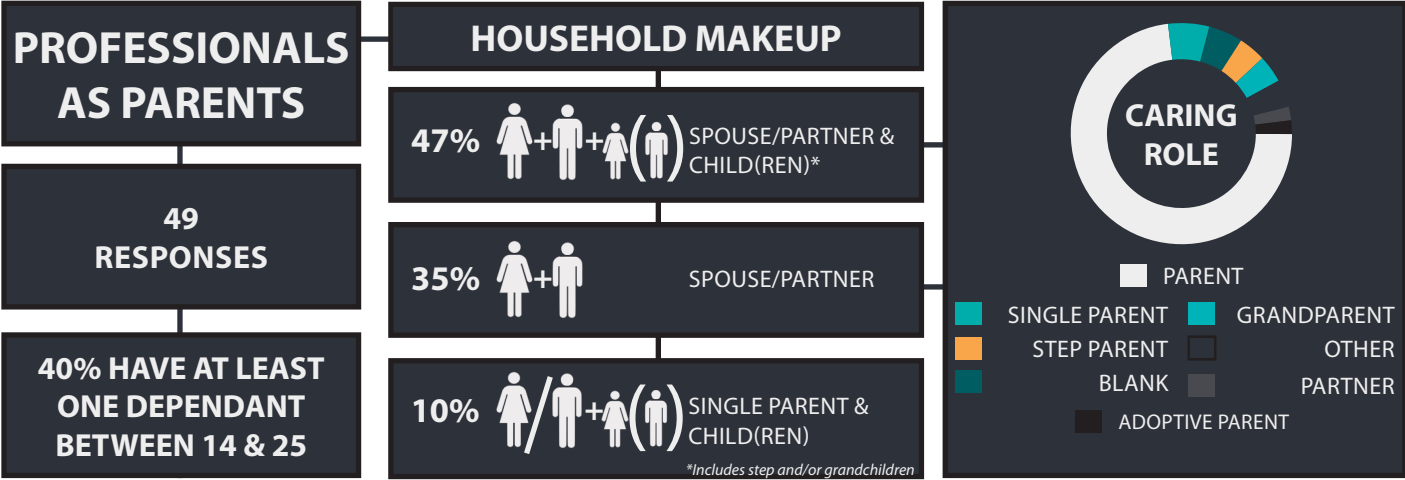
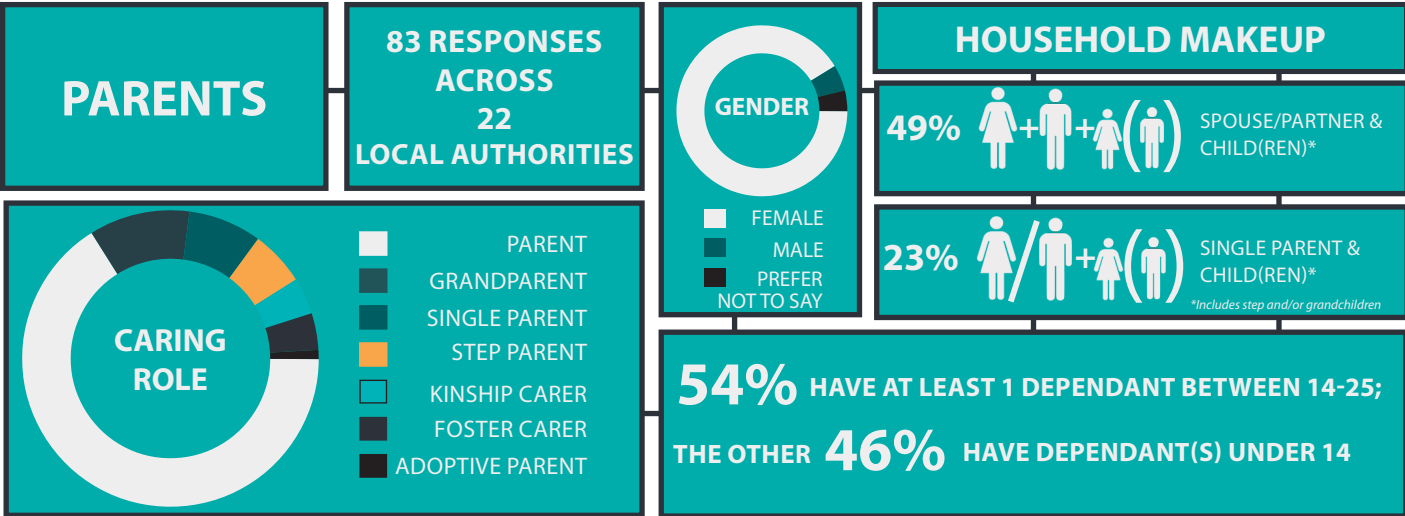
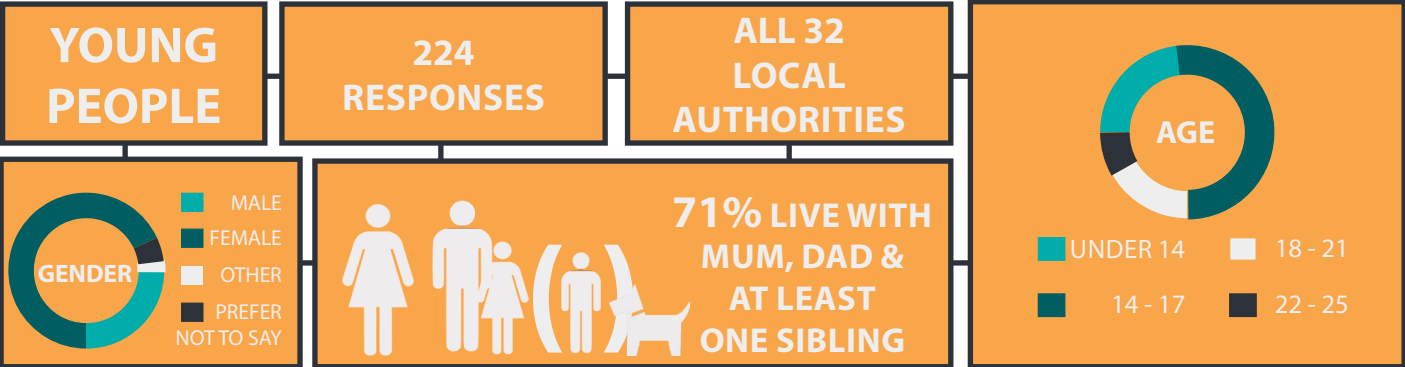
5 Care Experienced Young People participated in our final focus group in November 2016.

SURVEY RESULTS A SNAPSHOT

The results of the 2016 National Survey provide an updated snapshot of the issues facing families in Scotland and those working with and supporting them, as well as the type of support needed. The results will go on to shape and inform our work, allowing the SCCR to continue to challenge the culture of conflict in Scotland.



DEMOGRAPHICS - ONLINE SURVEYS



PART ONE: FAMILY CONFLICT & HOMELESSNESS

“The increase of 16/17 year olds presenting as homeless is alarming. [It] seems that walking out of the family home rather than dealing with issues is becoming normal.”

Professional

Conflict is prevalent in family life; everyone argues or disagrees with one another at least once in their lives. However, if not properly addressed, or left to fester, family conflict can have serious life-altering consequences.

Though official statistics of youth homelessness are dropping*, relationship breakdown is still its predominant cause in Scotland. This is just the tip of the iceberg, with many more families still struggling behind closed doors, unsure of what to do or where to turn to for support.

This section explores the frequency, causes and effects of family arguments and conflict between parents and young people, and looks at professionals’ experiences of family conflict amongst their client groups.

YOUNG PEOPLE & PARENTS/CARERS

18% of young people said they think about leaving home, at least on a monthly basis. That is **compared to nearly a quarter in the 2013 Survey results.**

That reduction is a good sign, however the frequency of arguments reported at home remains relatively steady: **45% of young people and 75% of parents** stated that conflict at home happens at least weekly.

Young people come away from arguments feeling frustrated, angry, annoyed and stressed, while for parents they are left feeling exhausted, stressed and sad.

Interestingly, **65% of young people** say they can manage conflict at home but only **41% of parents agreed.**

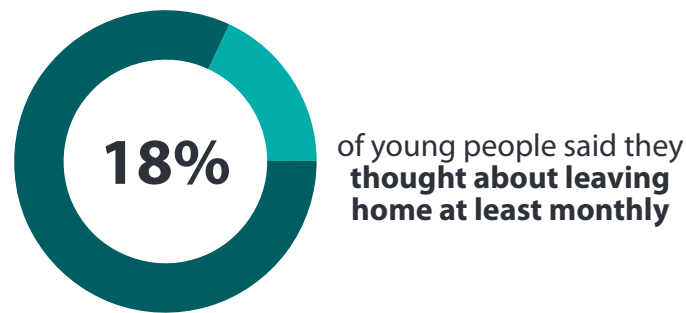
93% of parents would like to learn how to better manage arguments at home, with **60% of young people** also agreeing:

“My family seems to have a breakdown whenever we argue and it’s like we can’t fix it.”

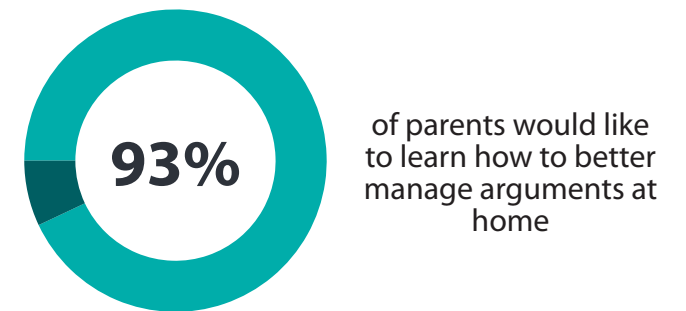
Young Person

“You can always find ways to improve things. I’d like to manage my temper better and shout less.”

Parent



TOP THREE COMMON CAUSES OF ARGUMENTS AT HOME:	
1. RESPONSIBILITY	
2. THE YOUNG PERSON DOING WHAT THEY WANT	
3. RESPECT	





THE IMPACT OF FAMILY CONFLICT ON MENTAL HEALTH

We know family arguments can have serious effects on those involved, with not just homelessness as the result.

76% of parents said it has affected their mental health at one time or another:

"[The] fact I am single parent makes you feel isolated and doubting decision making process. Can lead to lack of confidence in myself."

30% of young people felt conflict at home affected their mental health, and for some the effects are quite severe:

"Arguments make me feel very isolated from the family and I feel very suicidal at time, self-harming is frequent."

"[Conflict] actually made me feel depressed and constantly lethargic."

"It impacts on my performance at school."

PROFESSIONALS

87% of professionals agreed that conflict was a regular occurrence for families they worked with, and **80%** saying homelessness and sofa surfing was something frequently experienced by their young clients.

"I have come across a number of families experiencing conflict with varying degrees of severity. From ongoing arguments to full family breakdown."

"Generational conflicts; what is 'acceptable' behaviour in particular community and punishment against family members that are seen to transgress these codes of behaviour."

Just over half of professionals felt they had the necessary knowledge and skills to address conflict when it presents in the young people and families they work with. This **is increased from 50% in 2013** - another good sign.

Many were unsure and felt that they could always do with more support, information and training:

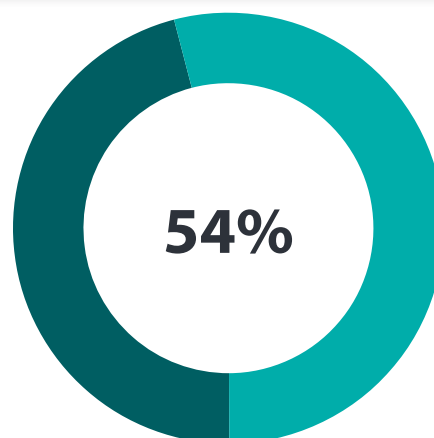
"I would imagine that many people in youth work would benefit from better training in this area."

"Sometimes I find myself out of my depth and caught up in the conflict or taking sides when I feel I need to be more a middle man."

SOFA SURFING

It is interesting to note that when asked during the consultations, some young people (from Citadel Youth and Cyrenians' Communities) did not recognise sofa surfing as a form of homelessness.

While the East Lothian Care Experienced group stated that: **"sofa surfing is so normal to those in care."**



of professionals felt they had the necessary knowledge and skills to address conflict when it presents in the young people and families they work with.

PART TWO:

SUPPORT & SUPPORT SERVICES

“Families need to feel they can seek support without being judged, or without judging themselves for doing so.” **Professional**

This section explores the existing support systems and services in place for young people and families experiencing difficulties at home: this includes to whom or where young people and parents turn to for support; their awareness of services in different areas, and whether they would be willing to access them. It also explores professionals’ awareness and knowledge of different support services available to their clients.

YOUNG PEOPLE & PARENTS/CARERS

WHO DO YOU TURN TO FOR SUPPORT?

When arguments and conflict happen at home, parents will turn to each other, as well as friends or their own mum for help and support.

A small percentage (8%) will not speak to anyone about what is going on at home.

For **young people**, just over a quarter will keep it to themselves, **33%** will look to their friends and another **25%** their mum.

“It becomes more and more difficult to speak to your parents as you are worried in case they disagree with what you say and often it is because they don’t really listen to everything you say.”

Half of the young people reported feeling alone, trapped, unsupported and thought that having an outside perspective might be helpful. The other half felt they already had good support networks both within and outside their family, and were capable of sorting out disagreements themselves.

Young people frequently cited the reason that they did not want any more support from outside sources (i.e. non-family members and/or friends) was because they do not necessarily trust outside involvement or felt it would make the situation worse:

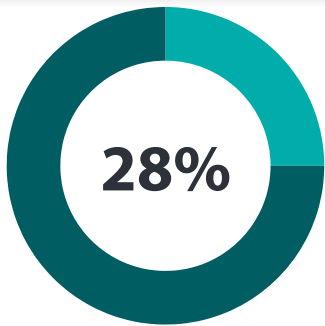
“I don’t want other people interfering and being nose.”

“I’d rather work things out with my family on a personal level rather than with a stranger.”

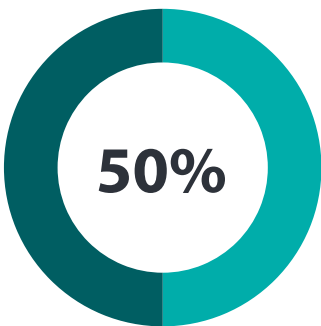
WHO DO YOU TALK TO?

There are some variations as to whom young people will speak to based on their age:

- **under 14s** will speak to their **parents**;
- **14-17** will talk to **friends** or **keep it to themselves**;
- **18-21s** say they **keep quiet or talk to their mum** – friends were the third likely option;
- while for **21-25s**, **friends** are the most common source of support.



of young people will keep problems at home to themselves



of young people felt they already had good support networks



Parents were more unilateral in their agreement that increased support around their family relationships would be beneficial – **81%** said they would like more support to come from outside their family and/or friends. **73% of parent/professionals** also felt more support would help improve their relationships at home.

“Having support makes you feel less isolated and that you’re doing the right thing.”

“External support is always welcome.”

“Having an outside source of support would be helpful as I tend to keep my struggles/stresses to myself out of shame of being judged as not coping well enough under stress.”

WHERE CAN YOU ACCESS SUPPORT?

Though parents and young people would like more support, they do not necessarily know where to go to get it: **40% of young people** and **30% of parents** did not know of any support services in their area - that is the majority answer for young people.

TOP THREE SOURCES OF SUPPORT FOR PARENTS/CARERS
1. COUNSELLING SERVICES
2. ONLINE/INTERNET RESOURCES
3. SOCIAL WORK

TOP THREE SOURCES OF SUPPORT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE
1. SCHOOLS/FURTHER EDUCATION
2. ONLINE/INTERNET RESOURCE
3. YOUTH GROUPS

Many parents/carers and young people commented that their villages or areas were too small or too remote to have local support groups or accessible support services. Other barriers include long waiting times, the inability to self-refer, age restrictions, and the lack of mental health services.

SUPPORT & SUPPORT SERVICES

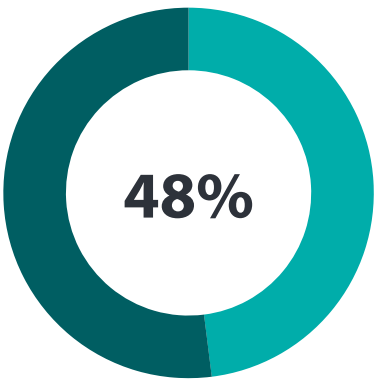
WOULD YOU USE SUPPORT SERVICES IF/WHEN REQUIRED?

Regardless of whether they knew of support options in their area or not, **nearly half the young people** were not sure if they would use them.

Some acknowledged that services can help; others reported they had not yet been in a situation where they felt they needed help.

“If you need help you should seek it.”

“It’s never to an extent that I need to.”



nearly half the young people were not sure if they would use support services

“WHAT HAPPENS IN THE HOME...”

It is reassuring that more young people said they would access support (31%) than those who said they wouldn’t (20%), but for those who did say no or were unsure, there is evidently still a sense of “what happens in the home stays in the home”:

“We are a small family, and wouldn’t want people knowing our business.”

“The problem would be between the family and nobody else, my family would close ranks if anyone else was involved.”

Parents are much more willing to use support services:

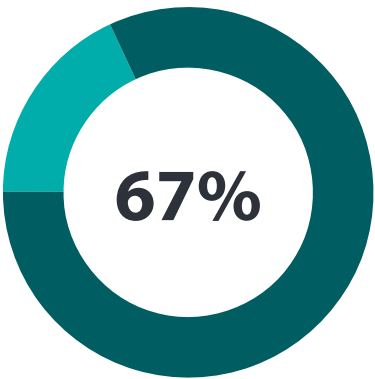
“Everyone needs help from time to time and better to access support early before escalates.”

“I have done – I’m happy to receive the help offered.”

For some parents that did try to access support, there were barriers:

“It’s too late, I asked for help and didn’t get it, my child is now living on his own at 16 and very, very vulnerable.”

“Previously tried to access help but some agencies did not respond. This is quite paralysing when in very stressful situations.”



67% of parents said they would ask for help if they or their family needed support, and a number commented that they already had.

“[I] LIKE TO KEEP IT WITH PEOPLE I KNOW.”

Young people and parents are more likely to speak to someone they know (extended family or friends) or suffer in silence than to look for help from strangers/external agencies. This could be for a variety of reasons: they are more comfortable with people they already know, or have an existing relationship with, but it also could be due to the lack of awareness of available supports, the fear of being judged, shamed or embarrassed, or that the idea of needing or asking for help is indicative of character weakness.

PROFESSIONALS

There is a need to normalise both conflict and asking for help and/or support, and to increase awareness-raising efforts and publicity of different support services.

These are all issues observed and commented on by professional respondents:

“Until we can get past the issues of judgment and pride and normalise open discussion in the community, reluctance to engage is likely to continue.”

“Change the culture of what happens at home, stays at home. Make support easier to access.”

We also asked professionals if they knew of services in the areas they could refer to in the event of their families struggling to cope with arguments/disagreements at home. The issue here is if professionals do not know where to access support, it is unlikely families would either.

Only a small percentage (8%) of professionals indicated they did not know of any relevant services.

“[We need] to make clear that services are free and not connected with social services. More visibility in day to day life. Some families have never had social service involvement but have real issues at home. These families cannot go unnoticed.”

TOP SERVICES
1. SOCIAL WORK
2. MEDIATION SERVICES
2. COUNSELLING SERVICES
3. SCHOOLS/FURTHER EDUCATION

MEDIATION

As a resource centre for best practice in mediation and conflict resolution, we wanted to know specifically about the availability of mediation services offered across Scotland, and particularly those for young people and families. All three groups were asked if they knew of any such services in their area, and unfortunately the responses were not reassuring.

Few young people and parents were aware of mediation services in their area, but those who were had some understanding of service provision:

- **67% of young people and 55% of parents** said they **did not know of any mediation services**.
- However, of those that said yes, about **40% of both young people and parents** also knew if the service was **available to under 16s**.

Professionals were slightly **more likely to know of mediation services (53%)** and even **more aware of those available to under 16s (74%)**.

Many mediation services only support those over 16 as that is the age at which a young person can be officially considered homeless, or secure a tenancy. However, offering these services to young people under the age of 16 is incredibly important – difficulties start in families sometimes long before that particular birthday, and the earlier the intervention the better.

“Mediation is successful if we are able to provide support pre meltdown.”

PART THREE:

NEEDS, WANTS & RESOURCES

“I know there are charities which provide counselling and support but I feel too shy to access them.”
Young Person

We have identified that both parents/carers and young people would like more support around their relationships, and that professionals want extra training and resources to better support their clients.

This section explores what young people, parents/carers and professionals told us they need or want in relation to improving family relationships and how the SCCR and other organisations can help.

YOUNG PEOPLE & PARENTS/CARERS

We asked young people and parents what topics they would find most helpful to learn about in relation to improving the way they manage family arguments. The topics provided were based on our existing training material and between the two groups, the top options were very similar:

TOP THREE YOUNG PEOPLE CHOICES	TOP THREE PARENT/CARER CHOICES
1. COMMUNICATION	1. CONFLICT TRIGGERS/RESOLVING CONFLICT
2. THE ANGER CYCLE	2. STAGES TO ADULthood/THE ANGER CYCLE
3. FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS/MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING	3. MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING

Parents appear to be more interested in resolving conflicts, should they occur, while young people prefer to get to the underlying causes of most family arguments – perhaps avoiding them altogether by improving communication and understanding their anger.

DIGITAL RESOURCES

The internet, digital technology and accessing information is changing the way we now seek support, advice and learn. And given that some young people and parents/carers responded that they are not necessarily comfortable with the idea of in-person outside support, the internet and digital resources are well placed to provide anonymous and confidential support and advice.

To enable us to continue to develop new and fresh digital resources, we asked parents/carers and young people what topics they would find interesting or helpful as such a resource.

Parents are looking for more information on: **conflict resolution anger management, communication techniques, teenage development (particularly the teenage brain), additional support needs and conflict, and mental health and conflict.**

Young people had similar suggestions, with **anger and anger management** the most predominant theme. They would also like **more information on mental health and conflict, and how to talk about how you feel.** Young people would also like to see **more interactive elements including videos, quizzes, games and online forums.**



Photo: SCCR's MonkeyVsLizard Online Quiz launched at 2015 Edinburgh Science Festival.

PROFESSIONALS

Professionals were asked to identify their training and development needs in relation to conflict resolution within a family context.

The resounding response was more training and learning opportunities (both basic and more in depth), that are free, accredited, and that encompass theoretical knowledge and practical conflict resolution skills and techniques.

Additionally, they would like **more online information/reading materials, e-learning opportunities (particularly where geography is the main constraint in accessing training sessions), and more networking opportunities.**

Similar to the parents and young people, they were asked for their preferred learning topics, and they are quite similar to those of their client base:

TOP THREE PROFESSIONAL CHOICES

1. CONFLICT AND RESPONSE STYLES

2. ANGER - EMOTIONS & COPING

3. CONFLICT TRIGGERS AND ESCALATION

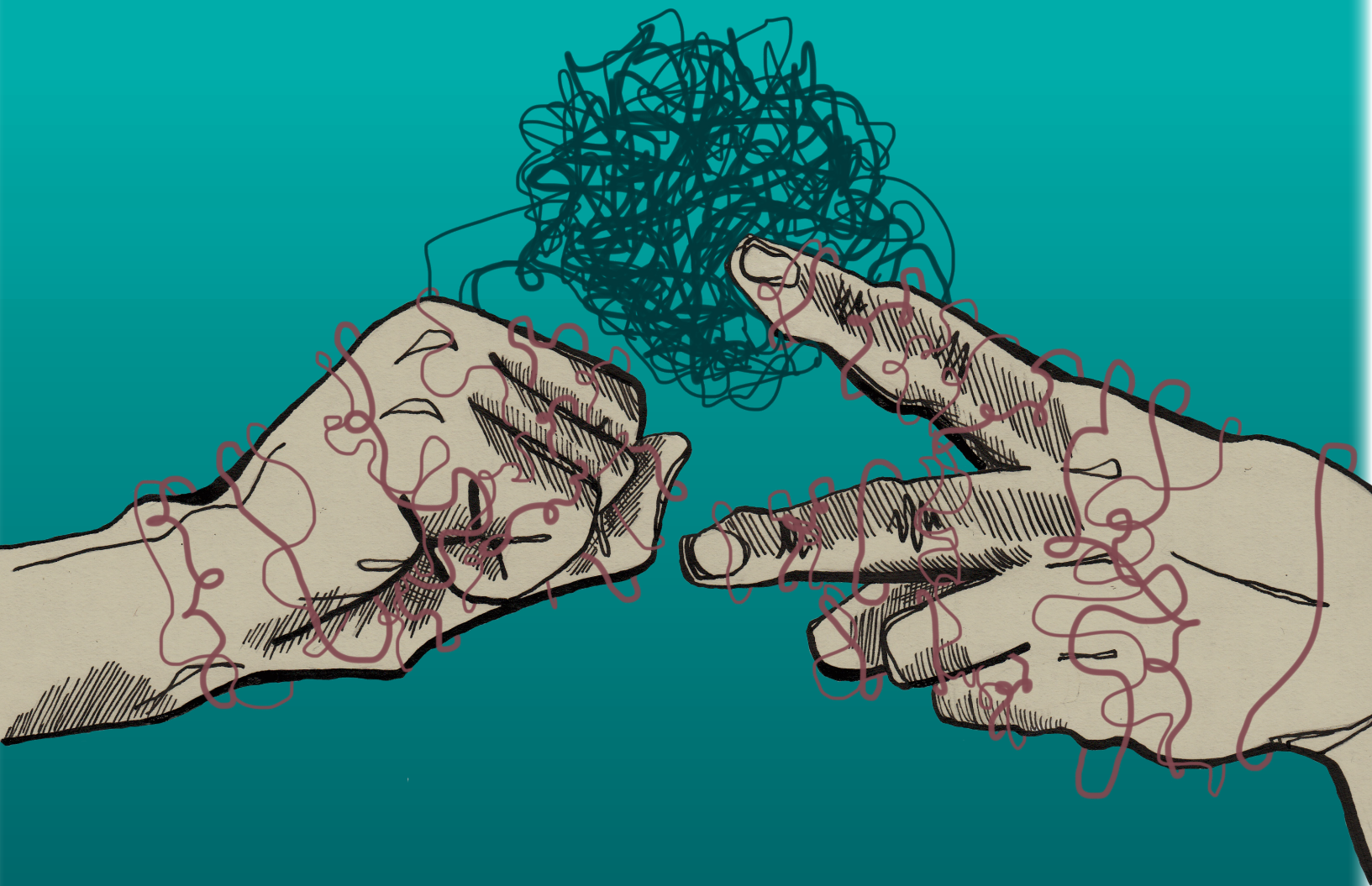
Professionals also echoed young people and parents with their suggestions for improved website content and format and would like to see more **interactive options: videos, flowcharts, infographics; more case studies, and worksheets.**

All three target groups are fundamentally looking for the same three things: more training/ knowledge of practical skills and conflict resolution techniques; increased awareness of or information on other support services available in their areas; and more engaging online digital resources.

Without a doubt, there is a significant demand for better understanding, knowledge and skills around conflict resolution and conflict management. As with the 2013 National Surveys, the results from 2016 will influence and shape our work over the next two years, aiding in the development of training materials, online resources and media campaigns.

CONCLUSION

The SCCR's 2016 National Surveys captured a snapshot of conflict and family life across Scotland. The views and opinions of the young people, parents/carers and professionals that participated will continue to shape and influence the development of our services and resources going forward. We are committed to improving relationships and life chances, and will continue to challenge the culture of conflict in Scotland.





SUMMARY

Over a 6 month period, **592 young people, parents/carers and professionals** either completed an online survey or participated in one of the nine consultations held across the Central Belt.

Responses provided us with views and opinions on:

The issues facing families in relation to interpersonal conflict and its impact on them as individuals, their relationships and their health and wellbeing:

- **45% of young people** and **75% of parents** say conflict at home happens at least weekly
- **76% of parents** and **30% of young people** said that arguments at home have affected their mental health.

How family arguments and conflict can contribute to relationship breakdown and youth homelessness;

- **18% of young people** think about leaving home due to arguments at home, at least on a monthly basis.
- **87% of professionals** agreed that conflict was a regular occurrence for families they worked with, and **80%** saying homelessness and sofa surfing was something frequently experienced by their young clients.

The availability and accessibility of support and mediation services across Scotland and whether families are aware of and/or are using these services:

- **50% of young people** and **81% of parents** would like more support to address conflict at home to come from outside the family;
- **But 40% and 30% respectively** did not know of any support services in their area.

The needs, wants and resources young people, parents/carers and professionals consider valuable in relation to reducing conflict and improving family relationships;

- To improve their conflict management skills, all three target groups agree they need: better knowledge of practical skills and techniques; more information about other support services available; and more engaging online resources.

ACTIONS

The SCCR is committed to continuing to engage with young people, families, parents/carers and professionals from a wide range of sectors across Scotland in order to ensure maximum impact and reach.

Through core funding from the Scottish Government's Children & Young People Early Intervention Fund, over the next two years we will:

ACTION 1

Work with over 1,200 professionals and practitioners from over 300 organisations and agencies across Scotland that support parents/carers and young people.

Work to increase their knowledge and ability to apply mediation skills and conflict resolution techniques in their work with families and young people that experience high levels of conflict, subsequently reducing the risk of relationship breakdown and youth homelessness and increasing improved outcomes for young people, families and communities.

Indicator 1.1

As a result of using online resources and/or training/workshops/events, organisations report a 70% greater understanding of policy and practice in relation to mediation and working with families experiencing high levels of conflict.

Indicator 1.2

Professionals and practitioners working with young people, parents/carers report a 70% increase in confidence, knowledge and ability to support families to manage and reduce conflict.

Indicator 1.3

More services working with families are applying conflict resolution tools and/or professional mediation to help improve relationships and reduce the negative impact conflict has on relationships and wellbeing.

ACTION 2

Work with over 250 parents/carers and 250 young people from across Scotland, so that they know where to seek advice, support and mediation - and to feel comfortable doing so - if they experience family conflict or their relationship is at risk of falling apart.

Work to increase their ability to resolve difficulties and conflict through accessing and using the SCCR website and online advice, guidance, support and resources.

Indicator 2.1

As a result of using the digital resources, 70% of young people and parents are better informed and able to access the support they require to manage their relationships and conflict at home.

Indicator 2.2

As a result of attending events and/or conflict resolution training, 70% of families and young people have an increased understanding and ability to manage conflict and feel better supported.

Indicator 2.2

Via a national campaign, families, young people and communities become more aware of the negative impact of conflict and youth homelessness and know where to access support.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We invite support from individuals and organisations from across Scotland to action the following:

1

As part of an early intervention model, mediation and wraparound support for young people and families should be freely available across all 32 Local Authorities and not solely available at the point of crisis. These services should also be easily accessible for young people under 16 and their parents/carers.

2

We would welcome the opportunity to collaborate with independent academic bodies on further research into the provision of mediation and conflict resolution as an early intervention approach to reduce youth homelessness across Scotland and the effects it has on health and wellbeing, criminal justice, education, housing and overall life chances.

3

In order to improve outcomes for young people and their families, more work still needs to be done to dispel the stigma attached to asking for help and support, and to raise awareness of the different available services to ensure that no one is suffering in silence.

4

We are calling on all schools and educational bodies to partner with us, and to adopt more conflict resolution training sessions within their curriculum to ensure we do Get It Right For Every Child and continue to support parents to develop their parenting skills.

5

We would welcome the opportunity to work with the Lead Local Authorities to include the SCCR's innovative digital and training resources into the Housing Option Hub Members Toolkit to support them in their work with young people at risk of homelessness.

Finally, thank you to all the individuals, organisations and agencies that have partnered with us to date.

Please contact Diane Marr, Network Development Manager, if you would like to discuss future opportunities and how we can progress these aims together: sccr@cyrenians.scot

The Scottish Centre for Conflict Resolution (SCCR) offers a range of resources to better support young people, families and the people who work with them to deal with family conflict.



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