

Children's care monitor 2011

Children on the state of social care in England

Reported by the Children's Rights Director for England



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Introduction



Roger Morgan, Children's Rights Director for England

The law sets out my duties as Children's Rights Director for England. With my team, one of my main duties is to ask children and young people for their views about how both children and young people are looked after in England. My duties cover children and young people living in children's homes, in family centres, in foster care, or who have been placed for adoption, together with care leavers and children or young people getting any sort of help from council social care services, as well as children and young people living away from home in all types of boarding schools, residential special schools or further education colleges.

As well as asking children for their views and publishing what they tell us, with my team I also give advice on children's rights and welfare to the government and to Ofsted, the people who inspect social care services and schools. We also help individual children by taking up their cases when they are concerned about their rights or welfare. I also have a duty to raise any issues I think are important about the rights and welfare of children or young people living away from home or getting children's social care support.

Children have told us there are some things that are so important to them that we should check them with children every year. So in 2008 we started publishing a *Children's care monitor* each year, reporting what children and young people told us about six things which are important to their lives: keeping safe, bullying, having a say in what happens, making complaints and suggestions, education, and care planning for people being looked after in care. This is our fourth care monitor, reporting what children and young people told us about these things in 2011.

The 2011 *Children's care monitor* was carried out through a web survey. We made sure that only those we had invited to take part filled in the survey, by sending passwords to the councils and services we had invited for the children and young people to use. Our survey questionnaire was also available in a Widget symbol version.

On many subjects, what children said in our 2011 sample is close to what children told us in 2008, 2009 and 2010. That so many findings are so steady over the four years we have been carrying out the monitor is reassuring – our findings look clear and steady rather than 'all over the place'. Some small differences from one year to the next could well have happened just by chance. However, we have looked back over what children have said over the four years from 2008 to 2011, and have written in this report about any steady trends that have taken place over that time. We will keep on writing *Children's care monitor* reports each year, and we will publish our next report in the autumn of 2012.

As with all our reports, this one sets out what children themselves have told us, without leaving out things we might disagree with or adding our own comments. It is purely a report of children's views. We try to write our reports so that they can just as easily be read by children as by professionals and government ministers. This report, like all our reports, is being sent to government ministers and officials, other key people in Parliament, every children's services council in England, and the people in Ofsted who inspect services for children.

What children have told us for our reports has led to important changes to decisions about looking after children. Like all our other reports, this one is being published for everyone to read. You can find copies of all my reports on our children's website www.rights4me.org.

This report brings together the views of 1,895 children and young people. It is their assessment of how care is doing in 2011.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Roger Morgan'.



The children and young people who took part

This report gives the views of 1,870 children and young people who filled in our monitoring survey online in 2011, and 25 more children who filled in our Widget symbol questionnaire. Out of those who completed the main survey, 1,781 told us their age. The youngest was four and the oldest was a care leaver aged 24. The middle age out of everyone who took part in the survey was 15. Thirty-seven per cent were aged 13 or under, and 63% were aged 14 or over. Ten per cent of these were aged 18 or over. Out of the 1,788 children who told us whether they were boys or girls, 52% were girls and 48% were boys. There were no big differences in these figures from the 2010 monitor.¹

The children who took part in the survey were receiving services from 168 different social care services across England which had accepted our invitation to take part in the survey. They included 72 local authorities, 22 independent fostering agencies, 20 independent children's homes, 15 boarding schools, 30 residential special schools and 10 residential further education colleges. All the services are listed in the appendix at the end of this report.

Not every child or young person answered every question. For each question, we have given the number who did, and where we give percentages, these are percentages of all the people who answered that question. For some questions, children could give more than one answer, so the percentages add up to more than 100. Where they could only give one answer, the percentages are rounded to whole figures, so do not always add up to exactly 100.

Of the 1,763 children who filled in the main survey and who told us whether they were disabled, 251 (14%) said they were disabled. Out of these 251 children, 234 told us what sort of disability they had. Sixty-seven (29%) said they had a learning difficulty, 58 (25%) said they had autism or Asperger's syndrome, and 42 (18%) told us they had attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). What others told us included dyslexia, cerebral palsy, or just 'physical disability' without any further details.

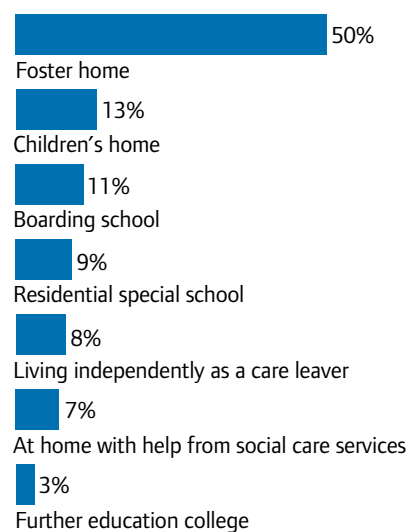
Out of the 1,870 children in the survey, 1,798 answered a question about their ethnic background. Out of these, 79% said they were white, 8% that they were Asian, 6% that they were black and 5% that they were from a mixed background. The other 2% of the children ticked the answer 'other' for this question.

A total of 1,718 children and young people answered a question about whether they were asylum seekers in this country, and 78 (5%) of those who answered this question told us they were asylum seekers.

Out of the 25 children who filled in our Widget questionnaire, 16 were boys and 8 girls. The youngest was nine and the oldest was 16.

Figure 1 shows the different settings that the children in our main survey were living in. There were no big differences from the figures for 2010.

Figure 1: Where the children lived



Based on answers from 1,763 children.

¹ Everywhere in this report, we have counted a 'big difference' as a difference of 10 percentage points or more.

For this report, we have checked whether different groups of children gave very different answers to the questions. We checked for any big differences in answers between boys and girls, and between those aged under 14 and those aged 14-plus. We also checked whether those who said they had a disability gave very different answers from the children generally.

We have looked at the findings we reported in our monitoring surveys for 2008, 2009 and 2010, and have said in this 2011 report where there appears to be a definite and steady change over these four years' findings. It is of course important not to assume that very small differences between the years mean things are actually changing, because different children answered our survey each year and some differences from one survey to the next will have happened purely by chance.



Keeping safe

Where children feel safe and unsafe

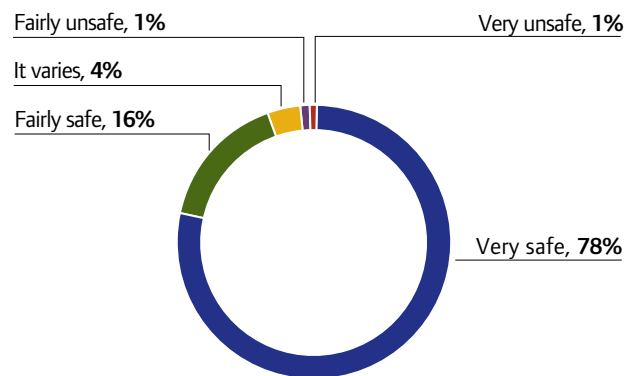
We asked children to tell us how safe they felt in different places. Overall, as in the last three years, children felt:

- safest in the building where they live
- next safest at their school or college
- next safest in the countryside
- least safe in towns or cities.

The children who filled in the Widget questionnaire gave similar views. They felt safest at school or college, next safest in the building where they lived, next safest in the countryside, and least safe in towns or cities.

The findings do not show any big change in how safe children and young people felt in different places over the last four years. Figure 2 shows how safe the children told us they felt in the buildings where they lived in 2011.

Figure 2: How safe do children feel in the building where they live?



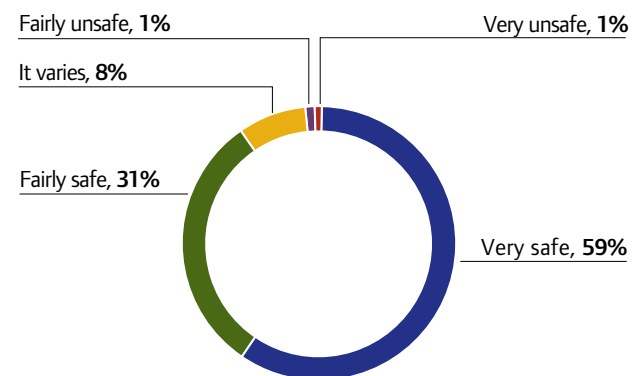
Based on answers from 1,820 children.

As this figure shows, **94% of the children and young people surveyed in 2011 said they felt very safe or fairly safe in the buildings in which they lived.**

This was the same as last year. There were no big differences in answers from boys and girls, or between those aged under 14 and those over 14. Overall, children in foster homes felt the most safe in the buildings in which they lived, and care leavers living independently felt the least safe.

Figure 3 sets out the findings for how safe the children told us they felt at their school or college in 2011.

Figure 3: How safe do children feel at school or college?

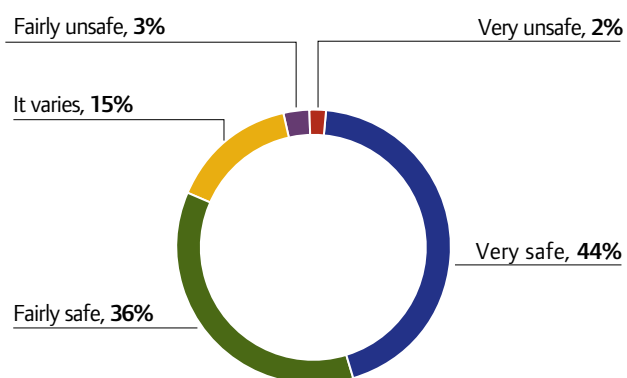


Based on answers from 1,803 children.

From Figure 3 we can see that in 2011, **90% of the children in our monitoring survey felt either very safe or fairly safe at school or college.** This is much the same as last year. There were no big differences on this question between boys and girls, or between older and younger children. Overall, students in further education colleges felt safest, and care leavers and children living at home with social care support felt least safe, at school or college.

Figure 4 sets out how safe the children told us they felt when out in the countryside.

Figure 4: How safe do children feel in the countryside?

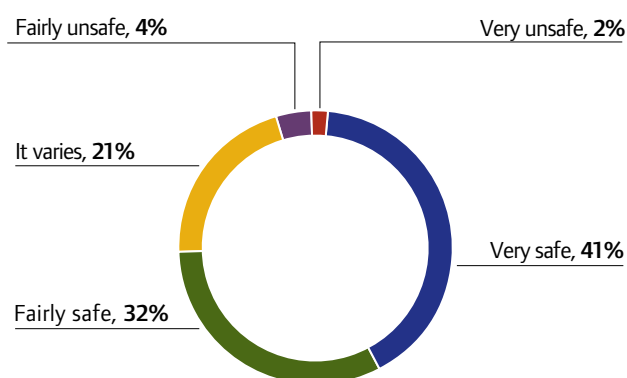


Based on answers from 1,784 children.

In the 2011 survey, **80% felt very safe or fairly safe in the countryside**. Again this is much the same as last year, and there were no big differences between boys, girls, older or younger children, or those living in different settings.

Finally, Figure 5 shows the findings for our question about how safe children felt in towns or cities.

Figure 5: How safe do children feel in towns or cities?



Based on answers from 1,803 children.

Towns and cities are the places children told us they feel least safe in, with **only 73% saying in 2011 that they feel very safe or fairly safe in towns and cities**. This total is close to last year's figure, and there were no big differences between boys and girls or between older and younger children. Some of the differences we had found in past years were not there in 2011. There were some big differences this year though. Students living in further education colleges, boarders in boarding schools and care leavers living independently all reported feeling much less safe in towns and cities than other children and young people did.

What makes children feel safe?

We asked what would make children and young people feel safer in general. We gave people the choice of the most common answers children and young people had given over the last three years, plus space to write in any further answers of their own. **Twenty-four per cent of the 1,265 who answered this question in 2011 said there was nothing that would make them feel safer**. There has been an increase in the percentage of children and young people saying that nothing would make them feel safer, from 16% in 2008 to 18% last year and 24% this year.

The most usual thing that children and young people said made them feel safer was being with adults they trust. Over half the children and young people who answered the question this year (55%) gave us this answer. The next most usual answer was having more police or security people about, which this year came from almost a quarter (23%) of those answering this question. This was the next most usual answer in each of the last three years of the monitor survey, too. Other answers to this question, although none of them from as many as one in 10 of those answering the question, included being with friends, having better locks and security in buildings, better lighting and safety measures on the streets, and being with members of the family.

There were no big differences this year between boys and girls, or between older or younger children and young people, on what would make them feel safer. Three very different groups were much more likely than others to say they would feel safer if there were more police and security staff about. These were care leavers living independently, asylum seekers and boarders in boarding schools.

Two groups this year were much more likely than others to say that being with adults they knew and trusted would make them feel safer. These were disabled children and young people, and asylum seekers. These same two groups were also less likely than others to say that there was nothing that would make them feel safer.

Dangers to children

We asked what children and young people saw as the biggest danger to people their age. Again, we listed the most usual answers from the last three years, and gave everyone the chance to tell us about any other big dangers. Here is the list of the five top dangers children had told us about over the past three years, with the percentages of children this year who scored each of them as one of the biggest dangers. The percentages are out of the 1,827 who answered the question this year.

The top five dangers to children	% of the children giving this answer
Drugs	66%
Alcohol	60%
Bullying	56%
Knives	50%
Kidnappers or strangers	48%

Based on 5,597 answers from 1,827 children.

Although there have been slight changes in the order of these dangers over the past four years, drugs has been top of the list each year since we started the monitor in 2008, and the danger of knives has been fourth on the list for the past three years.

As we found in each of the past three years, **more girls than boys said that alcohol was a danger.** This year, 67% of girls thought alcohol was one of the biggest dangers, compared with 55% of the boys.

As in our past monitors, there were age differences too: **69% of those aged 14 and over listed alcohol as a danger, compared with 48% of those aged under 14.**

Children under 14 were more likely than those aged over 14 to list strangers and kidnappers, and bullying, as dangers. Those aged over 14 were more likely than younger children to list drugs as dangers.

The top three dangers listed by children under 14 were bullying, kidnappers and strangers, and drugs. The top three dangers listed by young people over 14 were drugs, alcohol and knives.

Drugs were much more likely to be seen as a big danger by care leavers living independently, by asylum seekers, and by children living in children's homes. Drugs were much less likely to be seen as a big danger by children living at home with social care support.

Alcohol was more likely to be seen as a big danger by care leavers living independently, and less likely to be seen as a big danger by students living in further education colleges and by children living at home with social care support.

Bullying was this year more likely to be listed as a big danger by disabled children than by children generally. Bullying was less likely to be listed by residential students in further education colleges.

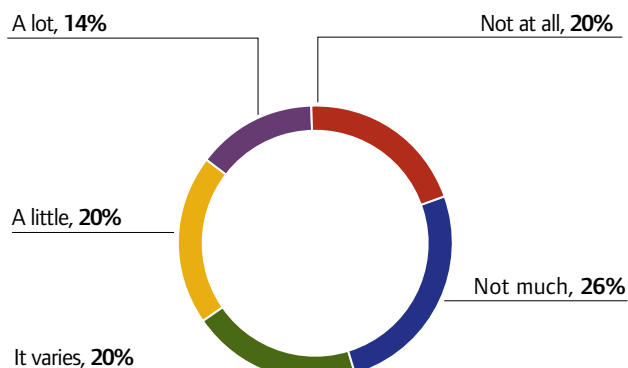
Knives were more likely to be listed as a big danger to young people their age by care leavers and asylum seekers, and were less likely to be listed by boarders in boarding schools and children living at home with social care support.

Kidnappers and strangers were less likely to be listed as a big danger by young people over 14, so were not surprisingly less likely to be on the lists given by care leavers, asylum seekers and students in further education colleges.

Worrying about safety

Children have told us that worrying about whether you are safe can be just as important as how safe you actually are. Figure 6 shows what the children told us in 2011 about how much they worry about their safety.

Figure 6: How much children worry about their safety



Based on answers from 1,814 children.

As in the last three years, children varied a lot in how much they worried about their own safety. **There has been a slight trend downwards in how many children told us they worry about their safety. This year, 34% said they worry a little or a lot about their safety. This was down from 36% last year and 43% the year before.**

There were no big differences between boys and girls, disabled children and children generally, or over- and under-14s, in how much children worried about their safety. This year, one group of children – those living at home with social care support – were much less likely to worry about their safety than children generally. There were no other big differences this year between children in different sorts of placement in how much they said they worried about their safety. Although the numbers were small, asylum seekers were slightly more likely than others to tell us they worried about their safety.

Asking for help

From many discussions with children over the years, we know that it is important to have someone you trust to go to if you don't feel safe. In the monitoring survey, we asked children who they would go to. Here are the top 10 answers, each of which came from at least one in five of the children who answered this question.

Who children would go to for help if they felt unsafe	% of the children giving this answer
A friend	57%
Police	55%
A teacher	55%
Foster carer	52%
A parent	51%
Social worker	50%
Brother or sister	39%
Someone else in the family	38%
Staff who look after me where I live	31%
The person in charge of where I am	25%

Based on 9,320 answers from 1,865 children.

Clearly, as in every year before, **a friend is overall the most likely person for a child or young person to go to if they feel unsafe.** Police score highly, ahead of teachers, foster carers, a parent or social workers. Although there are some changes in the exact order of people to go to, there have been no big changes in who children would go to since we started the monitor in 2008.

Out of the people who answered this question in 2011, 14% said they would use a telephone helpline for help if they didn't feel safe. This is much the same percentage as over the last three years.

There were 60 children in the 2011 monitor survey who told us that there was nobody they felt they could go to if they felt unsafe. This is 3% of all the children who answered this question – it was almost the same, at 4%, in each of the last three years.

There were some big differences between groups of children in how they answered this question in 2011. **Girls were much more likely than boys to go to a friend for help if they felt unsafe.** Sixty-three per cent of girls said they would go to a friend, compared with 53% of boys. **Boys living away from home were much more likely than girls to go for help to a member of staff where they lived.**

Children aged under 14 were much more likely than young people aged over 14 to go for help to their teachers, social workers or someone in their own family, or to their foster carers if they were in foster care.

Those in children's homes and foster care were equally likely to go to their social workers for help if they felt unsafe.

Eighty-nine per cent of children in foster care said that they would go to their foster carers for help if they felt unsafe.

Sixty-nine per cent of children living at home with social care support said they would go to their parent if they felt unsafe.

Care leavers were more likely than others to go to teachers, and much less likely than others to go to a parent or to a brother or sister, for help if they felt unsafe.

Compared with other children and young people, boarders in boarding schools were much less likely to go to the police if they felt unsafe, but much more likely to go to a parent. They were not much more or less likely to go to a teacher, but were slightly more likely than others to go to a friend.

Children living in residential special schools were much more likely than other children to tell us they would go to a parent or to a member of staff, or to a brother or sister, if they felt unsafe.

There were no big differences between disabled children and others in who they were most likely to go to if they felt unsafe. The children who filled in the Widget questionnaire gave slightly different answers though. They told us they were most likely to go for help to a parent, then a teacher, then to house staff, and then to a friend.

Accidents

The next table shows what the children in 2011 thought were the most likely things to cause accidents to people of their age. We asked them to choose from the list of the most usual causes of accidents that children and young people had told us about in earlier monitor surveys.

'Not enough know that the life they lead is easily changed by certain choices they choose to make'

Most likely accidents to children	% of the children giving this answer
Injury while being beaten up or fighting	57%
Road traffic accident	53%
Results of too much alcohol	51%
Results of drugs	47%
Falling over	33%

Based on 4,693 answers from 1,842 children.

The list, as in the last three years, is a mixture of accidents caused by other people, and things children might bring on themselves, like the results of drugs or having too much alcohol. The order of these causes of accidents has changed since last year. Road accidents had fallen from first place to second on the list, and injuries while being beaten up or fighting had taken their place at the top of the list.

We asked children to suggest any other causes of accidents that they thought were most likely to happen to people of their age, but no other cause of accident was suggested by more than one in 50 of those who answered the question.

In 2011, girls were much more likely than boys to list road accidents as a likely sort of accident. That was not a difference last year.

‘Yes; it’s a big world, with lots of people and stuff – there are bound to be complications and fatalities’

Over the last four years, the difference between boys and girls in how many listed too much alcohol as a likely cause of accidents has disappeared. In 2009 girls were much more likely than boys to list this as a likely cause of accidents, this difference was less last year, and it has disappeared altogether this year.

Young people over 14 were much more likely than children under 14 to list alcohol and drugs as likely causes of accidents. Children under 14 were much more likely than over-14s to list road accidents and falls.

Care leavers and those in children’s homes were much more likely than others to list drugs as a likely cause of accidents. Care leavers were also much more likely than others to list alcohol, and less likely than others to list falls, as likely causes of accident to those of their age.

Children living at home with social care support were much less likely than others to list road accidents, alcohol, drugs or fighting as likely causes of accident.

Boarders in boarding schools were much less likely than others to list fighting or drugs as their most likely causes of accidents. There were no big differences between those living in residential schools and others in listing the most likely causes of accidents. Care leavers and residential students in further education colleges were much less likely than others to list falls.

Compared with others, disabled children were more likely to give falls as likely causes of accidents.

Asylum-seeking young people reported a very different pattern of likely accidents to other children and young people. Compared with others, they listed fights, drugs and alcohol much more often as likely causes of accidents, but road accidents and falls were listed much less often.

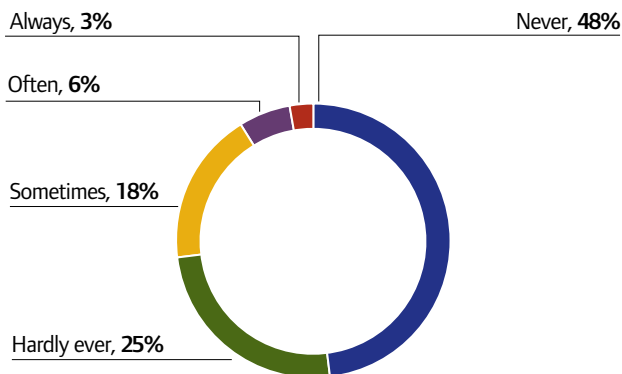
Bullying

How much bullying there is

Bullying is a major issue identified by children for us to monitor with them each year. We do not say what we think counts as bullying, but, as in other reports which deal with bullying, we leave it to children themselves to decide whether what is happening to them counts as bullying. We do, though, ask them to tell us exactly what happens to them.

Here are the figures for how often children told us they were being bullied in 2011.

Figure 7: How often children are bullied



Based on answers from 1,782 children.

In 2011, 9% of children said they were being bullied often or always. The percentage of children who told us they are often or always bullied has stayed much the same over the last three years. It was 9% in both 2008 and 2009, exactly the same as this year's figure, and it was 8% in 2010.

Looking at our monitor figures over the past four years, **there had been a steady reduction in how much bullying children reported between 2008 and 2010, but that reduction has stopped and the figures for bullying have gone up slightly again in 2011.** In 2008, 35% of children told us they were being bullied 'sometimes', 'often' or 'always'. In 2009, this had gone down to 31%. It had gone down again to 24% in 2010. In 2011, though, it had gone back up slightly to 27%.

In 2008, 38% of children said they were never bullied. In 2009 this had gone up to 45% and it went up again to 52% in 2010. In 2011 the percentage of children who told us they were never bullied had fallen slightly again, to 48%.

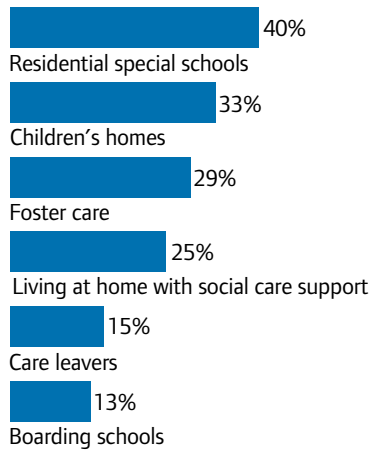
As in earlier years, **those aged under 14 were more likely to report being bullied than those aged 14-plus.** In 2011, 33% of those under 14 said they were sometimes, often or always bullied, compared with 24% of those aged 14-plus. Sixty-eight per cent of under-14s said they were never or hardly ever bullied, compared with 75% of over-14s. This is the same difference as last year.

As in each of the last three years, disabled children in 2011 reported being much more likely to be bullied than children generally. In 2011, 41% of disabled children told us they were sometimes, often or always bullied, compared with 27% of children generally. Only 37% of disabled children said they were never bullied, compared with 48% of children generally.

In 2011 (unlike last year), asylum-seeking young people did not report being more likely to be bullied than children generally.

There were big differences in how often children living in different settings reported being bullied. Figure 8 gives the percentages of children reporting being bullied sometimes, often or always, in different settings.

Figure 8: Percentages of children sometimes, often or always bullied in different settings



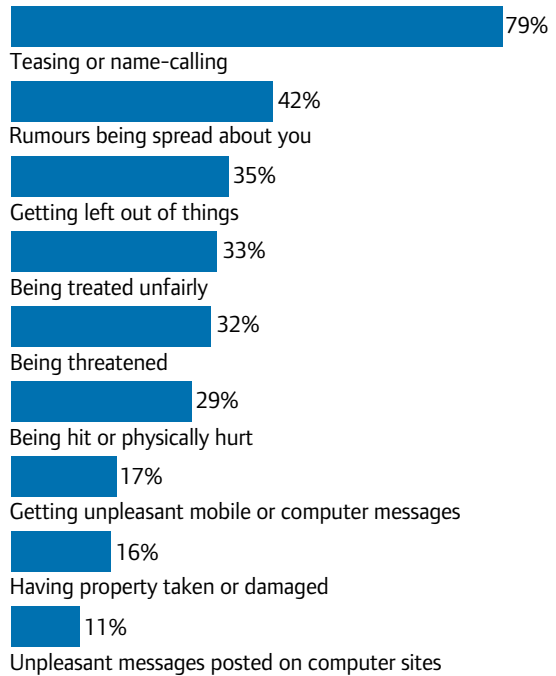
Based on answers from 1,672 children. Percentage for all children across all settings was 27%.

In 2011, bullying was reported as happening most often in residential special schools, followed by children's homes. Bullying was reported as happening least often in boarding schools. In residential special schools, 40% of the children reported being bullied sometimes, often or always, compared with 27% of children generally. In boarding schools, 13% of boarders reported being bullied sometimes, often or always.

What bullying is

Because we let people decide for themselves whether what happened to them counted as bullying, we then asked exactly what happened when they were bullied. People could give more than one answer. Figure 9 gives all the types of bullying that were listed by at least one in 10 of the children who told us about bullying.

Figure 9: Types of bullying



Based on 2,546 answers from 871 children.

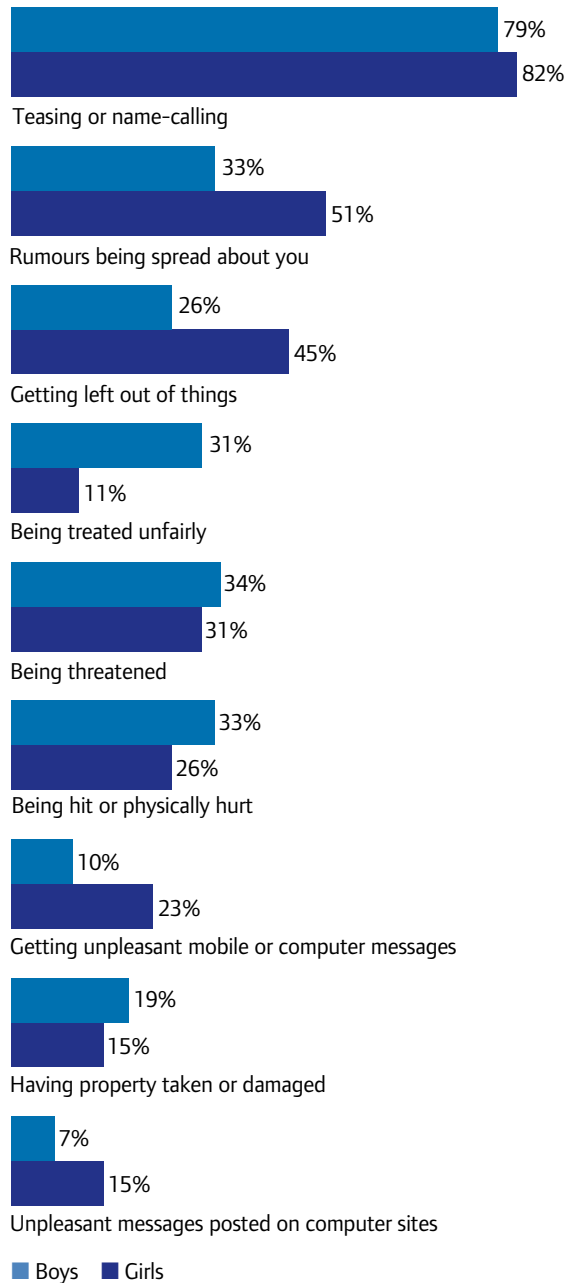
As we found over the past three years, the most usual type of bullying is teasing or name-calling. There are two main changes since last year's monitor: in 2011 children reported much more bullying by spreading rumours about people, and posting unpleasant messages on computer social networking sites has grown to join the list of types of bullying reported by over one in 10 children. Bullying by spreading rumours about people was reported by 32% of children who reported being bullied last year, and this was up to 42% this year. Posting unpleasant messages on computer sites was reported by 5% of children reporting being bullied last year, and had risen to 11% in 2011.



Reports of physical bullying, by being hit or hurt, had steadily reduced over the three years from 2008 to 2010, but this fall had stopped in 2011. Last year, 28% of children reported being hit or hurt, and this year the percentage was much the same at 29%.

Using our usual rule that a difference of 10 percentage points counts as a big difference, there were some big differences between boys and girls in the sorts of bullying they reported. **Boys were more likely to report being treated unfairly, and girls were more likely to report getting left out of things, being sent bullying messages on mobile phones or computers, and unpleasant rumours being spread.** Boys were slightly more likely to report being hit or physically hurt, but this difference was less than it was last year and was now less than 10 percentage points. Figure 10 shows the main differences in the types of bullying reported by boys and girls in 2011.

Figure 10: Main differences in types of bullying reported by boys and girls



Based on 2,382 answers from 825 children.

There were two big differences in the sorts of bullying most reported by children of different ages. **Children aged under 14 reported more bullying by being hit or hurt, and those over 14 reported more bullying by being sent unpleasant mobile or computer messages.** Thirty-five per cent of under-14s who reported bullying said they had been hit or hurt, compared with 25% of over-14s. Twenty-three per cent of over-14s who had been bullied reported being sent unpleasant mobile or computer messages, compared with 8% of under-14s.

In 2011, **disabled children reported being hit or hurt more often than children did generally.**

Thirty-nine per cent of disabled children who reported bullying said they had been hit or hurt, compared with 29% of children generally.

As in earlier years, where you lived made a big difference to the way you were likely to be bullied.

- Children in children’s homes were more likely than others to report being threatened, being hit or hurt, or having their property taken or damaged.
- Care leavers were more likely to report being threatened, but were less likely to report being teased or called names, or getting left out of things.
- Boarders in boarding schools were more likely to report being treated unfairly or getting left out of things, but less likely to report being threatened, or being bullied by being sent unpleasant mobile or computer messages, or having unpleasant messages left about them on social networking sites.
- Residential students in further education colleges were more likely to report having unpleasant rumours spread about them, but less likely to report being hit or physically hurt.
- Pupils in residential special schools were more likely to report being hit or hurt, but less likely to report being treated unfairly or having unpleasant rumours spread about them.

- Children in care but living at home with parents or relatives were more likely than others to report having unpleasant rumours spread about them.

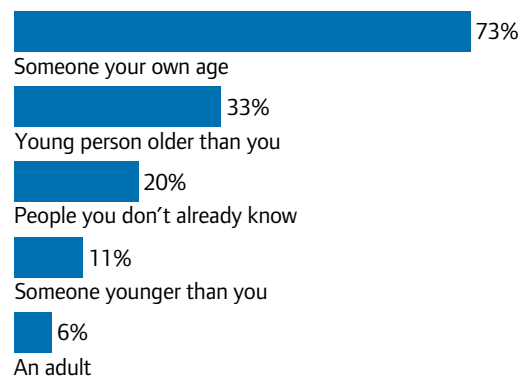
In 2011 asylum seekers were less likely than other people to report being bullied by being threatened, hit or hurt, getting left out of things, or having unpleasant rumours spread about them.

Most of these differences change a lot from one year to the next, so **there is no clear pattern of different sorts of bullying always happening for children living in different sorts of places.**

Who does the bullying?

Figure 11 shows who children who answered the question told us usually bullied them.

Figure 11: Who the bullies are



Based on 1,223 answers from 859 children.

Nearly three quarters of the children who were being bullied (73%) were usually bullied by someone of around their own age. This is what we found in each of the last three years too.

There was just one big difference between boys and girls in who they said was most likely to bully them. **Boys were more likely than girls to report being bullied by a young person older than them.** We found this difference last year too. In 2011, 39% of boys and 29% of girls reported that bullying was by a young person older than them.

Girls were more likely to report being bullied by someone their own age than boys were, although this difference was just under 10 percentage points this year, so did not quite count as a big difference.

Children aged under 14 and those aged 14-plus were both most likely to be bullied by someone in their own age group, but this year, **over-14s were much more likely than under-14s to say they were being bullied by someone younger than they were.**

As in our past monitors, there were some big differences between different groups of children and young people in who they said was most likely to bully them.

- Children in children's homes were more likely than others to be bullied by someone of a different age – including both older and younger children and young people.
- Care leavers were more likely than others to be bullied by adults and by people younger than themselves, but less likely to be bullied either by someone of their own age or by someone they didn't already know. This was different from the last two years, when care leavers reported being more, rather than less, likely to be bullied by people they didn't already know.
- Boarders in boarding schools were (as last year) less likely than others to be bullied by people they didn't already know.
- Students in further education colleges were more likely than others to report being bullied by people younger than themselves or by adults, but less likely to report being bullied by people they didn't already know.

- Asylum-seeking young people were less likely than others to be bullied by someone their own age or by people they didn't already know, and more likely than others to report being bullied by adults or by young people either younger or older than themselves.
- Disabled children were more likely than others to be bullied by someone younger than themselves. We found the same in 2008, 2009 and 2010.

Being bullied for being in care

From our three annual monitor surveys so far, and from our other consultations, we know that children in care can often be bullied just for being in care. In 2011, 1,244 children in care answered a question about this in our survey. **Fifteen per cent of children in care reported being bullied for being in care.**

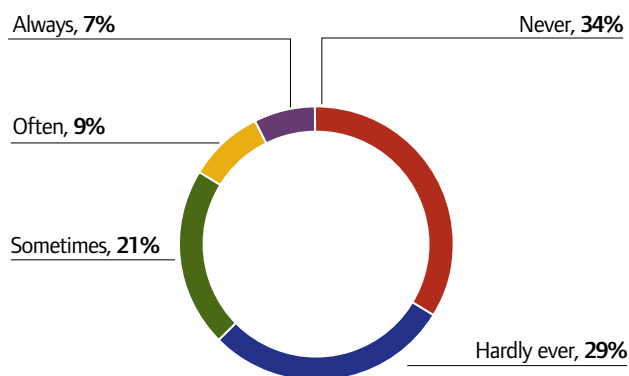
There has been a slight but steady drop over the past four years in how often children have told us they are bullied just for being in care. Back in 2008, 21% of children had told us they were being bullied for being in care.

There were no big differences between girls and boys in care, over- or under-14s, those in children's homes and those in foster homes, or disabled children in care and other children in care, in whether they reported being bullied just for being in care.

Worrying about bullying

From our earlier monitor surveys we know that many children worry about getting bullied, and that children can worry about this even if they are not actually being bullied. Figure 12 shows how much children told us they worry about bullying in 2011.

Figure 12: How often children worry about being bullied



Based on answers from 1,830 children.

Sixteen per cent of the children in our 2011 survey were often or always worried about getting bullied, while 63% never or hardly ever worried about it.

The numbers reporting worrying about bullying had gone down slightly last year, but this year the reduction has stopped. This year's finding that 16% of children often or always worry about getting bullied compares with 15% in 2008. The percentage of children saying that they never or hardly ever worry about bullying had been going up since 2008, and last year was up to 69%, but this year the percentage who never or hardly ever worry about bullying has gone back down to 63%, which is close to the figure of 62% we had found in 2008.

There is slightly more worrying about bullying than actual bullying. In 2011, 9% of the children reported being often or always bullied, but 16% said they often or always worry about getting bullied. The amount of reported worrying about bullying over and above actual bullying had been getting slightly less each year until 2011, but in 2011 the amount of worrying over and above actual bullying had gone up again.

In the 2011 survey there was no big difference between boys and girls, or between over- and under-14s, in how much they worried about bullying. This was the same last year.

As well as reporting more actual bullying, **disabled children were much more worried about getting bullied than other children were. In 2011, a quarter (25%) of all the 250 disabled children who took part in our survey said they often or always worried about getting bullied, up from 20% last year. However, the percentage of disabled children who never or hardly ever worry about getting bullied in 2011 was much the same as last year. This year it was 51%, compared with 52% last year.**

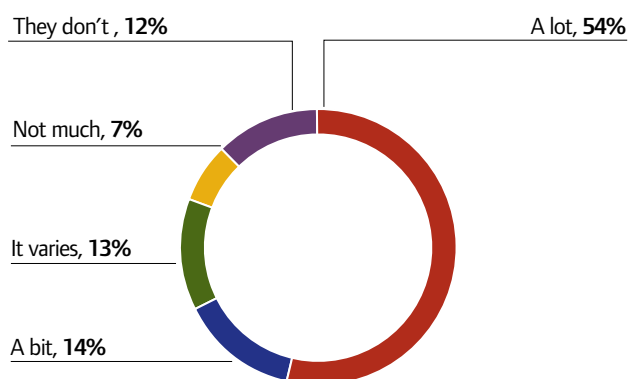
Over the first three years we had been monitoring this, the percentage of disabled children saying they often or always worried about being bullied had fallen. This year the fall has stopped and the percentage worrying often or always has gone back up again. The percentage of disabled children saying they never or hardly ever worried about bullying had been going up a lot over the past three years (from 40% in 2008 to 52% in 2010), but this year the improvement has stopped.

This year, there were no big differences between children living in different settings and children generally in how much they reported worrying about bullying.

In 2011 we asked a new question about bullying, to find out how much children thought the adults looking after them helped to stop them being bullied. We have started to ask this to keep a check on how well, according to children themselves, adults are working to counter bullying among children they are responsible for.

Figure 13 shows how much children overall thought the adults looking after them helped to stop them being bullied.

Figure 13: How much children consider the people looking after them help to stop them being bullied



Based on answers from 1,766 children.

Overall, **54% of children answering in our 2011 survey thought the adults looking after them helped a lot to stop them getting bullied. One in eight (12%) thought that the adults looking after them didn't help at all to stop them being bullied.**

There was no big difference between girls and boys in how much they thought the adults looking after them countered bullying.

Children aged under 14 thought their adults helped much more to stop bullying than did the children aged 14-plus. Out of the children aged under 14 answering this question, 64% said the adults looking after them helped a lot to stop bullying, compared with 46% of the over-14s.

More disabled children than others said the adults looking after them helped a lot to stop them from being bullied. Sixty-four per cent of disabled children said the adults looking after them helped a lot, compared with 53% of children generally.

Children and young people in two particular settings were less likely than children generally to report that the adults looking after them helped a lot to stop them being bullied. These were students in further education colleges and boarders in boarding schools. The findings for boarding schools were quite different from those for other settings in which children were living away from home. **Boarders reported a low level of actual bullying (3% of boarders said they were often or always bullied, compared with 9% of the children generally in our survey). But boarders in boarding schools also reported that they had less staff help to stop bullying (31% of boarders said their staff helped a lot to stop bullying, compared with 53% of the children generally).** It might be that there is less bullying in boarding schools so staff don't need to do so much to stop it. Or perhaps what staff do isn't the main reason for the lower level of bullying in boarding schools. Or, of course, both of these might play a part.

One other big difference between settings was that children living in residential special schools were much less likely than children generally to report that their staff did nothing or not much to help stop them being bullied. Only 7% of children in residential special schools reported that the adults looking after them did nothing or not much to help stop them being bullied, compared with 19% of children generally. **Children in residential special schools had reported more bullying than in other settings, but also reported that their staff were more involved in trying to stop bullying.** Sixty-one per cent of residential special school pupils said their staff did a lot to help stop bullying, compared with 53% of children generally.



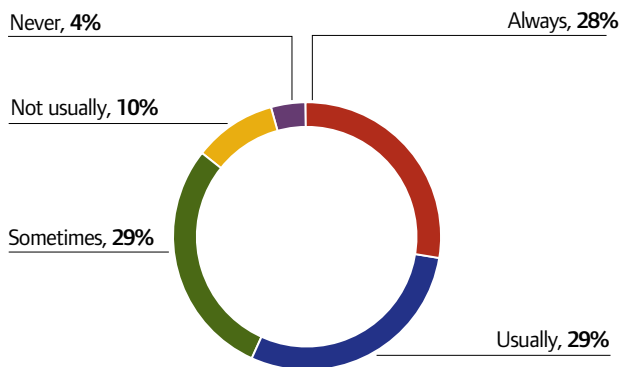
Having a say in what happens

How much children are asked for their opinions

There are many laws, government standards and guidelines saying that it is important that children, especially children in care or living away from home, are asked for their views, and that their views and feelings are taken into account in decisions about their lives. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (a treaty the UK has signed up to) says that children must be given a say in things that matter to them.

This section of the monitor checks how far children say they are asked for their views, and how much difference they think their views and feelings make. Figure 14 shows how often children told us they get asked for their opinions about things that matter to them.

Figure 14: How often children are asked for their opinions on things that matter



Based on answers from 1,826 children.

Over half the children (57%) said their opinions were usually or always asked on things that mattered to them. Fourteen per cent said their opinions were not usually, or never, asked. These figures are very close to those we reported back in 2008.

There were no big differences between boys and girls, or between children under or over 14, in the percentages who said their opinions were usually or always asked. Disabled children were more likely to say their opinions were asked than children were generally, but this was not quite enough to count as a big difference.

In 2011, children living in children's homes were much more likely than others to say their opinions were usually or always asked. Sixty-nine per cent of those in children's homes said this, compared with 57% of children generally in the monitor survey.

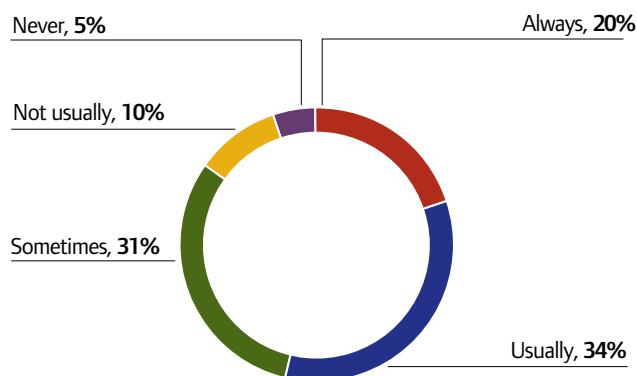
Boarders in boarding schools and students in residential further education colleges were much less likely than children and young people generally in the survey to say their opinions were often or always asked.

How much difference children's opinions make

Of course, being asked for your opinion is one thing, but your opinions making a difference to decisions about you is quite another. Children have told us in many other consultations that professionals are quite good nowadays at asking children for their views, but they have also often told us that their views don't so often make a big difference to decisions being made about their lives.

Figure 15 shows how much difference children said their opinions, once asked for, made to decisions about their lives.

Figure 15: How often children's opinions make a difference to decisions about their lives



Based on answers from 1,819 children.

Overall, over half the children (54%) said their opinions usually or always made a difference to decisions about their lives, while 15% said their decisions didn't usually or ever make a difference. These figures are close to those we found in our 2008, 2009 and 2010 monitors.

There were no big differences between boys and girls, between over-14s and under-14s, between disabled children and other children, or between asylum-seeking young people and others in how much difference they told us their opinions made.

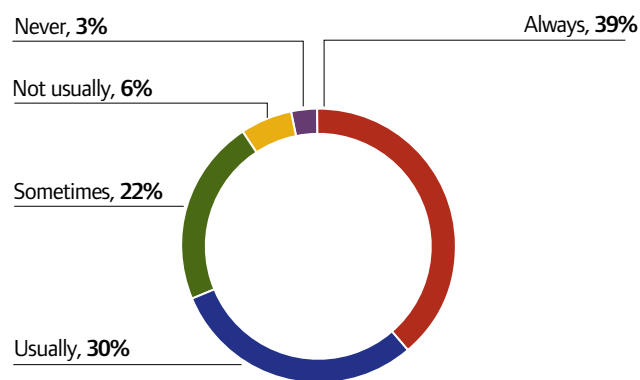
There were no big differences either between children living in different settings in how much difference they told us their opinions made to their lives.

We looked at two sets of our findings together – how often children told us they were asked for their opinions, and how much their opinions made a difference to their lives when they did get asked. Although children in children's homes get asked their opinions more often, their opinions didn't make any more difference to their lives than those of children generally. And although boarders in boarding schools and students in residential further education colleges told us that they are not asked for their opinions as often as children generally, when they are asked, their opinions make as much difference to their lives as the opinions of children who get asked more often.

Being told about changes in your life

In many of our consultations, children tell us that being told what is happening to you, and why, can be as important as having a say in what is happening. In each year's monitor, we ask how often children are told about major changes that are going to happen in their lives. Figure 16 shows what children told us in 2011.

Figure 16: How often do adults tell children about major changes that are going to happen in their lives



Based on answers from 1,814 children.

Just over two thirds of children (69%) told us that they are usually or always told what is going on when major changes are going to happen in their lives. Nine per cent said they are not usually, or never, told. There has been little change in these figures over the past four years.

There was no big difference between boys and girls in how many told us they were usually or always told what is going to happen, though boys were slightly more likely to be told than girls were. There were no big differences between disabled children and other children, or between asylum-seeking young people and others, in how many told us they were usually or always told what is going to happen.

Younger children were much more likely to be told what was going to happen than older young people were. Seventy-seven per cent of children aged under 14 said they were usually or always told when major changes were going to happen in their lives, compared with 65% of those aged over 14.

There were no big differences this year between those living in different sorts of placement in how often children reported being told what is going to happen. **One change was that this year, care leavers were just as likely as children and young people generally to be told when major changes were going to happen in their lives. In 2009 and 2010, care leavers had told us that they were much less likely than others to be told when major changes were going to happen.**

What decisions children think they should have more say about

We asked what decisions children and young people thought they should have more say about than they usually do. We did not give any suggestions, so the answers came entirely from the children and young people themselves. Three answers came from more than one in 10 of the children who answered this question. Here are those top three answers.

What children should have more say about than they do now	% of the children giving this answer
Deciding on the placement for me to live in	15%
Decisions about my future	14%
Decisions about contact with my family	11%

Based on 982 answers from 882 children.

The top three answers are exactly the same as last year. **The top three decisions where children believe they should have more say than they do now are care decisions: about the future, about placements to live in and about family contacts when living away from the family.** A quarter (25%) of the children answering this question told us that they did not think they should have more say about any particular decision.

There were no big differences between boys and girls in answers to this question, or between disabled children and children generally, but there was one big age difference. **Young people over 14 were much more likely than those under 14 to want more say in decisions about their future. Nineteen per cent of the over-14s thought they should have more say in decisions about their future,** compared with 9% of those aged under 14. These findings are much the same as last year.

There were some big differences in answers to this question from children living in different settings.

- Children in children’s homes were much more likely than others to want more say in placement decisions.
- Care leavers were much more likely than others to want more say in decisions about their future and about their placements and accommodation.
- Students in residential further education colleges were more likely than others to want more say in decisions about their future.
- Wanting a say about contact with their families was not a major issue for care leavers or those living in boarding or residential schools or colleges. Nor was it a major issue for asylum seekers.

Making complaints and suggestions

If children are not happy with the way they are being looked after, or with the social care help they are getting, they may need to make a complaint. Children in care or supported by social care services have the right to do this. They also have the right to make a suggestion that might help to improve the services they are getting, whether or not something has gone wrong for them. Children in care also have the right to have the help of an advocate (someone to speak on their behalf) in making a complaint or a suggestion.

There are official complaints and 'representations' procedures set up by law for children to use. As well as having these to use, children and young people have often told us that they want to be able to raise worries and concerns, and have these sorted out for them, before having to think about having to use these formal procedures.

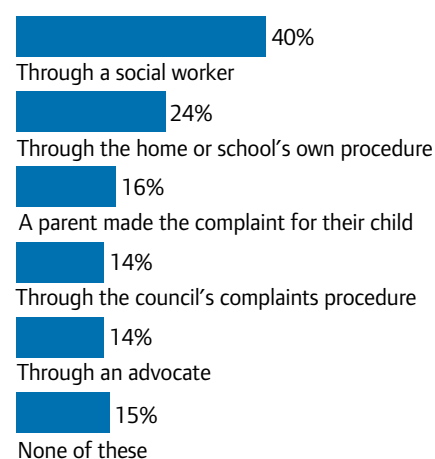
Making a complaint

We had 1,394 answers to our question about whether children had ever made a complaint. Just under a quarter of the children (23%) told us they had made a complaint at some time. **Over the past three years, there has been a big fall in the number of children telling us they have made a complaint at some time. In 2008, 43% of the children answering the same question told us they had made a complaint. In 2009 this had fallen to 37%, in 2010 it had fallen again to 25%, and this year it was 23%.**

In 2011, **young people over 14 were slightly more likely to have made a complaint than children under 14.** Twenty-six per cent of over-14s told us they had made a complaint, compared with 17% of those aged under 14. These were much the same percentages as last year. Care leavers and children in children's homes were much more likely than other children and young people to have made a complaint. Thirty-six per cent of children in children's homes had made a complaint, compared with 23% of children generally, and 38% of care leavers had made a complaint.

Figure 17 shows how those who had made a complaint told us they had done this.

Figure 17: How children had made complaints



Based on answers from 422 children.

The two most usual ways of making a complaint were through a social worker, or by using the procedure of the home or school where the child was living.

Whether a child is in care, and where they are living, make a big difference to how they can make a complaint. For those in care, **children in children's homes were most likely to use the home's complaints procedure.** Fifty-eight per cent of children in children's homes who had made a complaint had done this through their home's procedure. Foster children were more likely to make a complaint through their parents than children in children's homes were. **Children in children's homes were much more likely than those in foster care to use the council's complaints procedures.** Twenty-three per cent of children in children's homes who had made a complaint had used the council's complaints procedure, compared with 10% of those in foster care who had made a complaint.

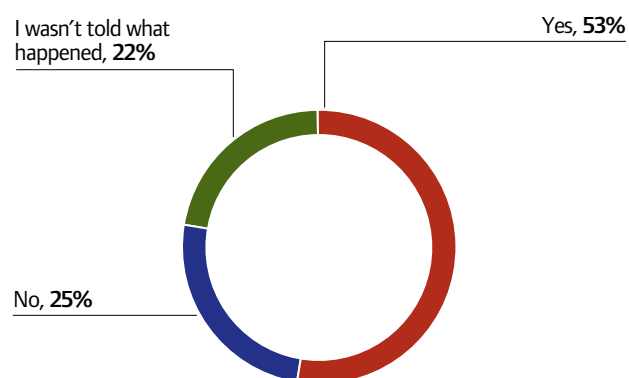
Those aged over 14 were more likely than those under 14 to use the council's complaints procedure. Care leavers were also more likely than others to use the council's procedure.

Disabled children were most likely to use the complaints procedure of the home or school where they lived to make a complaint. A third of the disabled children who told us about making a complaint had done this.

Boarders in boarding schools and residential pupils in residential special schools were most likely to make any complaints they had to make through the school's own complaints procedure, and next most likely to make a complaint through their parents.

We asked children who had made a complaint how well their last complaint had turned out. We asked them whether they thought it had been sorted out fairly, not whether it had been upheld. We also wanted to find out whether children knew, or hadn't been told, what had happened to their complaint. Figure 18 shows the answers.

Figure 18: Was your last complaint sorted out fairly?



Based on answers from 405 children.

Just over half (53%) of children thought that their last complaint had been sorted out fairly. This has gone down over the last four years, from 65% in both 2008 and 2009 and 60% in 2010.

Twenty-two per cent of the children told us they didn't know what had happened to the last complaint they had made. Girls were much more likely than boys to say they didn't know what had happened to the last complaint they had made.

Twenty-six per cent of girls answering our question told us that, compared with 16% of boys. We had found the same thing last year.

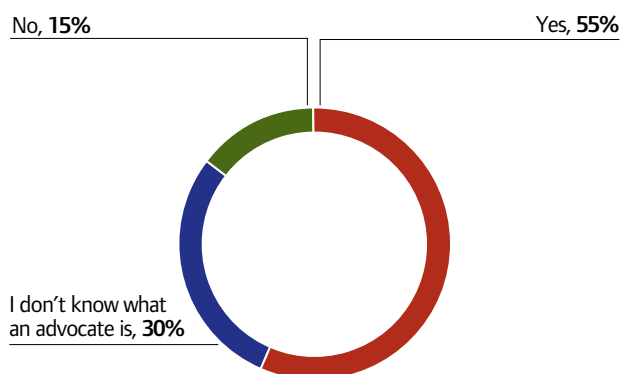
This year, a big age difference had opened up in how fairly children who had made complaints thought their last complaint had been sorted out. Out of all the children and young people who had made complaints, **far more of those aged under 14 than those over this age thought their last complaint had been sorted out fairly.** Sixty-one per cent of under-14s thought their last complaint had been sorted out fairly, compared with 51% of over-14s.

There were no big differences between disabled children and children generally in how many told us their last complaint had been sorted out fairly. Boarders in boarding schools were less likely than others to tell us this.

Seven of the 25 children who filled in our Widget symbol questionnaire said they had made a complaint, and four of these said it had been sorted out properly.

Children in care have a legal right to have an advocate to help them whenever they use their council's complaints procedure. Many children and young people have told us that having an advocate can be very important when making a complaint. We asked children and young people whether they knew how to get hold of an advocate if they needed one to help them to make a complaint. Figure 19 sets out their answers.

Figure 19: How many children know how to get an advocate



Based on answers from 1,795 children.

From Figure 19, **over half the children and young people answering this question (55%) knew how to get an advocate to help in making a formal complaint, but just under a third (30%) didn't know what an advocate was.** These figures are close to our findings in 2009 and 2010.

Young people over 14 were much more likely than younger children to know what an advocate is, and to know how to get hold of one. Sixty per cent of those aged over 14 told us they knew how to get an advocate, compared with 47% of those under 14. Twenty-five per cent of those aged over 14 didn't know what an advocate was, but 39% of those aged under 14 told us they didn't know.

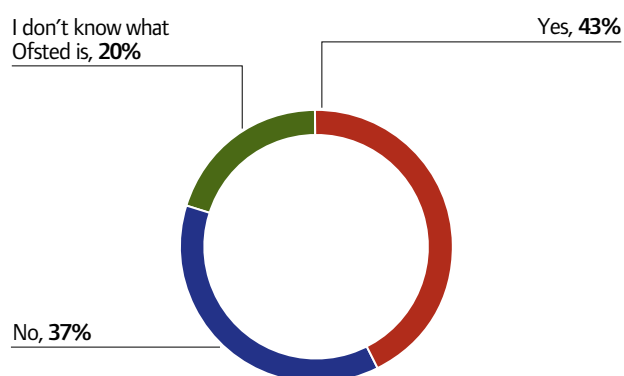
Disabled children were much less likely than children generally to how to get hold of an advocate. Thirty-seven per cent of disabled children answering this question told us they didn't know how to get hold of an advocate, compared with 55% of all children answering the question.

Children living in children's homes were much more likely to know what an advocate is and how to get hold of one than children in foster care. Seventy-two per cent of those in children's homes answering this question said they knew how to get an advocate, compared with 56% of foster children. Care leavers were also more likely than others to know what an advocate is and how to get hold of one.

Contacting Ofsted

Figure 20 shows how many children told us they knew how to contact Ofsted to tell them about something they think an inspector needs to check up on. (Ofsted is the organisation that inspects how well children are looked after in care or when they are living away from home.)

Figure 20: How many children know how to contact Ofsted



Based on answers from 1,804 children.

Eighty per cent of the children answering this question knew what Ofsted is, and just under half the children (43%) knew how to contact Ofsted. One in five children (20%) didn't know what Ofsted is.

Over the three years from 2008 to 2010, the percentages of children who knew what Ofsted is and who knew how to contact Ofsted had both been going up. These trends have now stopped. In 2008, 72% of children answering this question knew what Ofsted is, and 35% of all children answering this question knew how to contact Ofsted. By 2010, these percentages had risen to 82% who knew what Ofsted is, and 45% who knew how to contact Ofsted. The percentages for this year had both dropped again very slightly to 80% and 43%.

As we have found in the last three years' monitor surveys, **children aged over 14 were much more likely to know what Ofsted is than children aged under 14.** In 2011, 84% of over-14s knew what Ofsted is, compared with 73% of under-14s. Those over 14 were also much more likely to know how to contact Ofsted. Forty-seven per cent of over-14s answering our question in 2011 knew how to contact Ofsted, compared with 35% of those aged under 14.

Children living in children's homes were much more likely than foster children to know what Ofsted is, and to know how to contact Ofsted. In children's homes, 91% of those answering knew what Ofsted is, and 59% knew how to contact Ofsted. In foster care, 77% knew what Ofsted is and 40% knew how to contact Ofsted.

As in 2009 and 2010, asylum-seeking young people were less likely than children generally to know what Ofsted is or how to contact Ofsted.

Students living in residential further education colleges were less likely than children generally to know how to contact Ofsted. There were no big differences between boarders in boarding schools or children living in residential special schools and children generally in the percentages who knew about Ofsted and knew how to contact Ofsted.

Making a suggestion

As well as having the right to make a complaint, children in care or getting help from children's social care services have the right to make a suggestion about how their services could be improved. Boarding schools and colleges often have ways for boarders and residential students to make positive suggestions too.

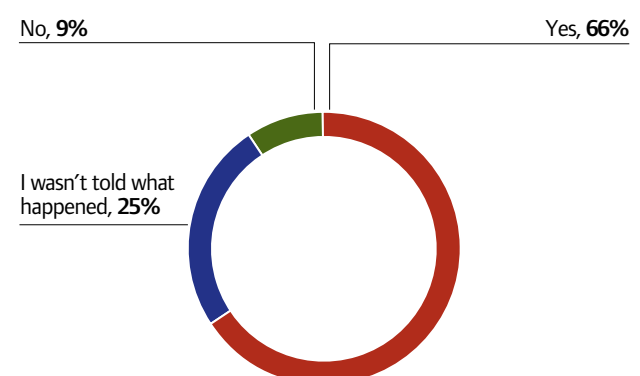
We asked children whether they had ever made a suggestion to improve how children and young people are cared for. In 2011, **34% of the 1,791 children who answered this monitor question said they**

had made a suggestion to improve how children are looked after, and 66% said they hadn't. The percentage saying they had made a suggestion was down from 39% last year.

Those aged over 14 were much more likely to have made a suggestion to improve services than those under 14. Children living in children's homes were much more likely to have made a suggestion than children in foster care. Around half the children in children's homes (49%) told us they had made a suggestion for improvement, compared with 29% of foster children.

Figure 21 shows whether the children who had made a suggestion to improve something thought their suggestion had been dealt with properly, and whether they knew what had happened to their suggestion.

Figure 21: Were suggestions dealt with properly?



Based on answers from 600 children.

Figure 21 shows that exactly **two thirds of the children (66%) who had made suggestions to improve something about their services thought their suggestion had been dealt with properly.** Twenty-five per cent said they weren't told what had happened to their suggestion. These figures are similar to those for the past three years.



There were no big differences between disabled children and others, between girls and boys, or between those aged over or under 14, in the percentages who reported that suggestions they had made were dealt with fairly.

Children living in children's homes were much more likely than foster children to report that their suggestions had been considered fairly. Seventy-seven per cent of those in children's homes said their suggestions had been considered fairly, compared with 59% of foster children. **Those in children's homes were also more likely than foster children to be told what had happened to suggestions they had made.** Twelve per cent of those in children's homes answering this question said that they weren't told what had happened to their suggestion, while many more, one in three (33%), of those in foster homes said they weren't told the results of the suggestion they had made.

From what children told us in the 2011 monitor, **children in care or living away from home are much more likely to make suggestions to improve their services than complaints about their services, and in their experience suggestions are more likely to be dealt with fairly than complaints are.** Under a quarter of the children had made a complaint, and of those over half thought their complaint had been considered fairly. Two thirds had made a suggestion, and two thirds of those thought their suggestion had been considered fairly.

Twenty-three out of the 25 children who filled in our Widget symbol questionnaire said they had made a suggestion, and all of them said their suggestion had been sorted out properly.

Education

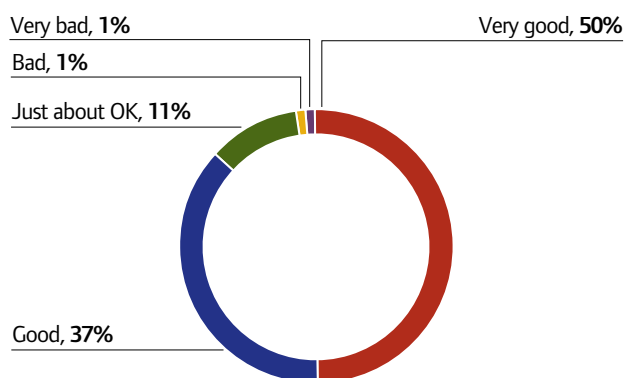
Even though this is a care monitor and not an education monitor, children have often told us in other consultations how important their education is to them. Those who are in care have told us how changes in their care, such as changing their living placement, can have a big effect on their education.

Out of all the children and young people answering the monitor survey, 1,675 were in some sort of education. This was 91% of the 1,832 who answered our question on this. **Children living in foster care were much more likely to be in education than those living in children's homes. Ninety-five per cent of foster children answering our survey told us they were in education, compared with 85% of children living in children's homes.** We found this difference last year too. The percentages of both foster children and children in children's homes who told us they were in education went up from 2009 to 2010, but these stayed much the same from 2010 to 2011.

How do children rate their education?

Figure 22 shows how the children rated their education in 2011.

Figure 22: How children rate their education



Based on answers from 1,624 children.

Overall, **87% of the children rated their education as good or very good, and 2% rated it as bad or very bad.** These are exactly the same figures as last year. There were no big differences between girls and boys, or between over- and under-14s, or between disabled children and others, in how well they rated their education. Asylum-seeking young people rated their education similarly to other children and young people.

Out of 1,227 children and young people in care, care leavers, or living in residential special schools and taking part in this year's care monitor, 86% rated their education as good or very good. Again, this is exactly the same as last year. Children living in foster care were more likely than those living in children's homes to rate their education highly, although this was not quite such a wide difference as last year. Children living in children's homes gave their education the lowest rating in the 2011 monitor, with 77% rating their education as good or very good. Out of those in foster care, 86% rated their education as good or very good.

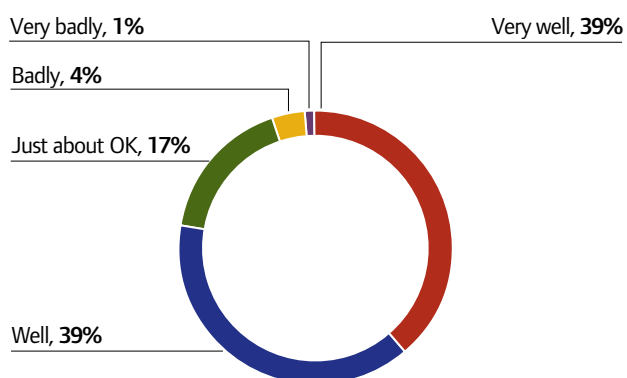
Boarders in boarding schools rated their education highest of all the different settings children were living in, with 92% of boarders rating their education as good or very good. This is exactly the same percentage as last year. Residential students in further education colleges rated their education next highest, with 91% rating it as good or very good. Residential special schools followed next, with 90% of their pupils rating their education as good or very good.

How well are children doing in education?

When people write about how well children are doing in their education, they usually rate this according to things like examination results. In our monitor reports, we ask the children themselves how they think they are doing in their education at school or college.

Figure 23 shows how the children in our 2011 monitor thought they were doing in their education.

Figure 23: How well children say they are doing in education



Based on answers from 1,625 children.

Overall, **78% of the children and young people in education told us they were doing well or very well in their education in 2010. Five per cent said they were doing badly or very badly.** These figures do not show any big changes over the past four years.

‘Personal and home problems have affected me greatly in the last few years. No help or motivation to do work’

There were no big differences between girls and boys, or between over- and under-14s, or between disabled children or asylum-seeking young people and others.

Out of the 1,226 children answering this question from children’s homes, foster care, care leavers and residential special schools, 77% thought they were doing well or very well in their education.

This is much the same figure as for all children in the 2011 monitor.

Boarders in boarding schools thought they were doing best in their education, with 82% of boarders telling us they thought they were doing well or very well. This compares with 87% last year.

Children living in children’s homes and pupils in residential special schools both thought they were doing the worst in their education, with 74% of both groups answering this question telling us they thought they were doing well or very well.

Seventy-nine per cent of foster children answering the question thought they were doing well or very well in their education. Last year, 72% of children in children’s homes thought they were doing well or very well.

The next table sets out the top reasons given by children for doing well in their education. This question was answered by 1,261 children this year.

Reasons children gave for doing well in education	% of the children giving this answer
Working hard	68%
Good teaching	56%
Keeping up with work	55%
Enjoying learning	47%

Based on 3,007 answers from 1,261 children.

The answers came in the same order as last year. There were some big differences between groups of children. **Girls were much more likely than boys to say that having good teachers led to them doing well in their education. Those aged over 14 were more likely than those under 14 to say that they were doing well because they kept up to date with the work they were given.** Disabled children were also more likely than others to say that they were doing well by keeping up with their work.

Boarders in boarding schools were also more likely than children generally to say that they were doing well because they kept up to date with work they were given. Children in residential special schools were more likely than children generally to say that having good teachers helped them to do well.

We also asked the children who thought they were doing badly or very badly at school or college to tell us what they thought were the reasons for this. Here are the three top answers, which came from at least one in 10 of the 78 children who answered this question.

Reasons children gave for doing badly in education	Number of the children giving this answer
Being easily distracted or misbehaving	31
Not being interested in learning	21
Needing more help with difficult subjects	20
Poor attendance	11

Based on 104 answers from 78 children.



According to what the children told us, **doing well or very well in education comes from a combination of the child working hard, good teaching and enjoying learning, while doing badly or very badly comes mainly from getting easily distracted and then misbehaving, but also not being interested in learning, needing help with difficult subjects and not attending school or college regularly enough.** One change since last year's monitor was that needing more help with difficult subjects made it into the list for the first time as a reason coming from more than one in 10 children answering the question.

'Good teachers, good foster carers, I do all my homework'

Being in care

The final two sections of this report are about children either in care or leaving care, rather than all the children included in my work as Children's Rights Director for England.

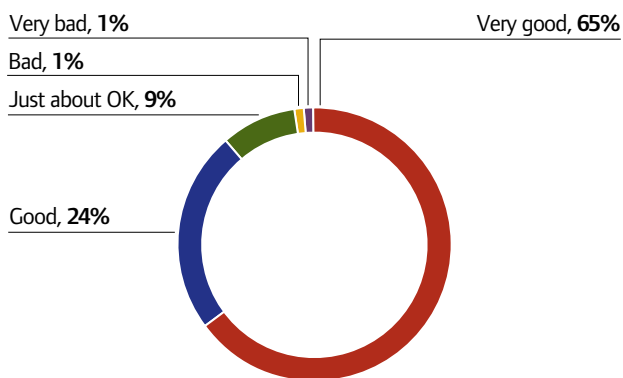
Altogether, 1,333 children and young people who completed our 2011 monitor survey were from care. Of those who told us about themselves, 46% were boys and 54% girls, 42% were aged under 14 and 58% were 14-plus, and 12% said they were disabled.

Seventy per cent lived in foster homes, 18% in children's homes, 5% lived at home with social care support, 3% were placed in boarding schools, 3% were placed in residential special schools, and 1% were placed in residential further education colleges.

Quality of care

In each year's monitor, we ask children to rate the quality of their own care for us. Figure 24 shows the overall ratings for 2011.

Figure 24: How children rate their care



Based on answers from 1,284 children.

In 2011, 89% of the children in care in our monitor survey rated their care overall as good or very good. Last year and the year before the figure was 90%. The percentage of children who rated their care as bad or very bad was 2%, exactly the same as last year and the year before.

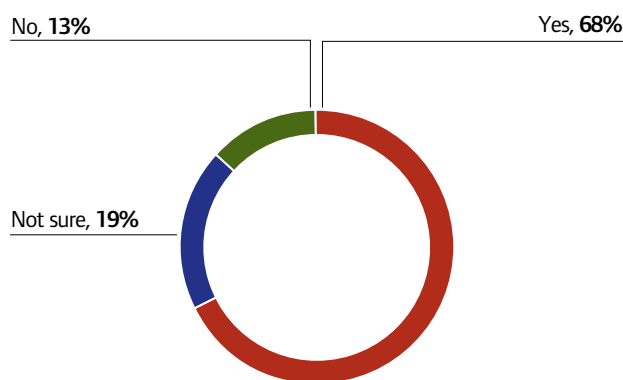
As we found in each of the last three years, there were again this year no big differences between girls and boys, disabled children and other children, or asylum-seeking and other young people in care in how well they rated their care. This year, those aged over 14 were slightly less likely than younger children to give their care a good rating. Eighty-four per cent of those over 14 rated their care as good or very good, compared with 93% of those aged under 14.

Children living in foster care rated their care much more highly than those living in children's homes. Ninety-three per cent of foster children rated their care as good or very good, compared with 77% in children's homes. These percentages are slightly down on the 95% in foster care and 82% in children's homes that we found both last year and the year before.

Whether it is right to be in care

For the first time in our care monitor, this year we asked children to tell us whether they thought coming into care had been the right thing for them at the time. Then we asked whether they thought being in care was the right thing for them now. This is the first time such a large survey has asked children themselves whether care was, and still is, the right place for them to be. Figure 25 sets out children's views on whether they thought coming into care was the right thing for them at the time.

Figure 25: Was coming into care the right thing at the time?

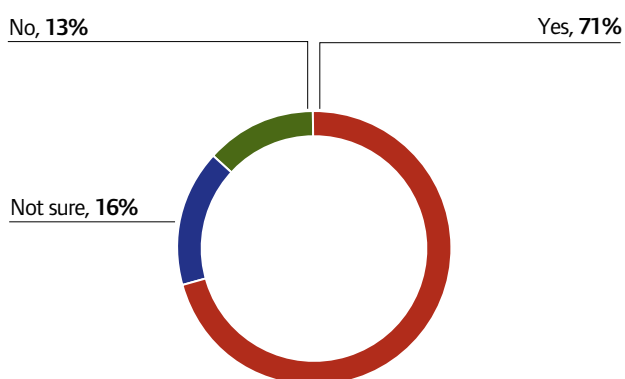


Based on answers from 1,282 children.

Just over two thirds (68%) of the children in care told us that they thought coming into care was the right thing for them at the time. Around one in five were not sure, and just over one in eight (13%) thought that coming into care was the wrong thing for them at the time.

We wanted to know how their views had changed now that they were in care. Our next question was whether the children and young people in care thought being in care was the right thing for them now, at the time they were filling in our monitor survey. Figure 26 gives their answers.

Figure 26: Is being in care the right thing for you now?



Based on answers from 1,269 children.

Overall, the views of children in our survey about whether they should be in care now were very close to the views of children about whether coming into care was the right thing for them in the first place. Sixty-eight per cent said it was right for them to come into care in the first place, and 71% said it was right that they were still in care at the time they filled in the monitor survey. The percentage who thought they should not be in care was exactly the same as the percentage who said they should not have come into care in the first place. Seventy-one per cent of children in care thought they should still be in care, and 13% thought they should not still be in care.

There were some clear differences between children in children's homes and children in foster homes at the time of the monitor. **Many more children in children's homes thought they should not have come into care in the first place, and many more children in children's homes thought they should not still be in care.**

Among children in children's homes at the time of the 2011 monitor, 61% thought that it was right that they had come into care when they did, and 57% thought it was still right for them to be in care. Among foster children, 70% thought that it had been right to come into care when they did, and 75% thought it was still right for them to be in care.

There were no big differences between boys and girls, under- or over-14s, or disabled children in care and others in care, on whether it had been right to come into care in the first place, or on whether it was right to be in care at the time of the monitor survey. Children placed at home with support were slightly less likely than other children in care to say that it was right that they were still in care.

Although the numbers were too small to be sure (there were only 66 asylum seekers among those who answered this question), asylum seekers in care were much more likely than other young people to say that coming into care had been the right thing for them.

We asked children to give their reasons for saying whether or not coming into care had been right for them, and for saying whether they should or should not still be in care. We did not suggest any answers, so the findings below come straight from the children themselves. Children could give more than one answer.

Here are the top three reasons children gave for saying it had been right for them to come into care in the first place. These are all the reasons given by more than one in 10 of the children answering this question.

Reasons for coming into care being the right thing at the time	Percentage of children giving this answer
Have had a better life in care	26%
Was not being looked after properly at home	22%
Was not safe at home	20%

Based on 658 answers from 598 children.

Some quotes from children themselves put these reasons in their own words.

'I wouldn't have got a good job, and I wouldn't be doing anything with my life except wasting it and I also wouldn't have had a good life.'

'My life was really bad at home and now I have a good education and the support from my foster family is amazing and I am achieving very well.'

'Unstable and unhappy family life.'

'Was living in an abusive household.'

'Where I used to live I could do what I wanted whenever I wanted and nobody would tell me off, so I was naughty.'

'Where I was living with my family I wasn't looking after properly because there was drinking but I am happy where I am living now.'

'I used to live with my parents... and I used to look after them with sorting out their benefits and look after my little brother and I never had a childhood and now that I am in care my life is better.'

'I am a 10-year-old and I should not be around violence, drugs, alcohol and smoking.'

'Daddy was not able to look after me properly, but he loves me very much.'

'At the time it was the best option I had.'

Next are the reasons given by at least one in 10 children answering this question for saying that it was still right for them to be in care.

Reasons for still being in care being the right thing	Percentage of children giving this answer
Doing better in care	36%
Am being looked after well	31%
Am happy	12%
Things haven't changed at home since I came into care	10%

Based on 688 answers from 569 children.

From these two tables, it is clear that **children thought coming into care was right if it meant they would have a better life, and be better looked after, than if they had not come into care.** These two were the strongest reasons for believing it had been right to come into care in the first place, and were even stronger reasons for staying in care for those who thought they should still be in care.

Children thought not being safe at home at the time was one of the major reasons for it being right to take them into care, but this was not seen as a major reason for staying in care. However, **one of the major reasons for staying in care was if things were still the same at home as they had been when the child first came into care. Simply being happy in care was also a major reason for staying in care.**

One hundred and twenty-five children gave us their reasons for telling us that it had been wrong to take them into care. Just one reason came way above any others, from almost half (49%) of these 125 children. **The one main reason for saying they should not have come into care was that they had wanted to stay with their family.**

Some told us how bad they had felt at being taken from their families: 'I was split up from my sisters'; 'I was upset with my parents for abandoning me the week before Christmas and I was upset and confused. I didn't know why my adoptive parents would want to get rid of me'. Some didn't understand why they had been taken into care: 'I wanted to stay with my mum. I didn't know how ill she was because no one told me and my sister.' Others thought the decision to remove them from home had been wrong at the time, because the problems were caused by someone else: 'They took me into care because my dad may come back to the house I was living at – but he'd had a restraining order placed on him'; 'I wanted to stay with my mum and I wanted my step-brother to be in foster care because I do not think it was fair for him to rape me at three years old'.

Some children thought they had been taken into care at the wrong time: 'it should have been sooner'; 'the worst was over and everything was getting better again, then I got put into care'.

Some had changed their minds since not wanting to come into care: 'When I came into care 10 years ago I didn't want to leave my mum but now I know it was for the best and I wouldn't change it.'

The next table gives all the reasons that came from at least one in 10 children who told us why they thought they should not still be in care.

Reasons for still being in care being the wrong thing	Percentage of children giving this answer
Wanting to be with my family	37%
Things at home have changed since I came into care	22%
Not getting on well in care	17%
It is time to move on	10%

Based on 119 answers from 114 children.

Just as wanting to stay with the family was the top reason for not thinking it was right to come into care, so wanting to go back to the family was the top reason for thinking it was wrong to be staying in care. For some young people, it was wrong to be staying in care now, as the time had come to move on or to leave care and live independently: 'I would like a place with more independency.'

From the children's viewpoint, being happy in care was a reason for staying in care, and not getting on well in care was a reason given for care no longer being the right thing. Whether or not things had changed at home was one of the main factors that made the difference between whether it was right or wrong to stay in care.

'My mother couldn't look after me because she preferred drugs and alcohol over her four kids'

Having a social worker

In many of our other consultations, children in care have told us that their social workers are very important to their lives. Every child in care should have a social worker or another caseworker (like a leaving care worker). We checked this in our survey. In 2011, 94% of the 1,282 children in care answering this question told us they had a social worker, and another 2% had another sort of caseworker. That left 4% who told us they didn't have a social worker or other caseworker at the moment. These figures have stayed much the same over the past four years.

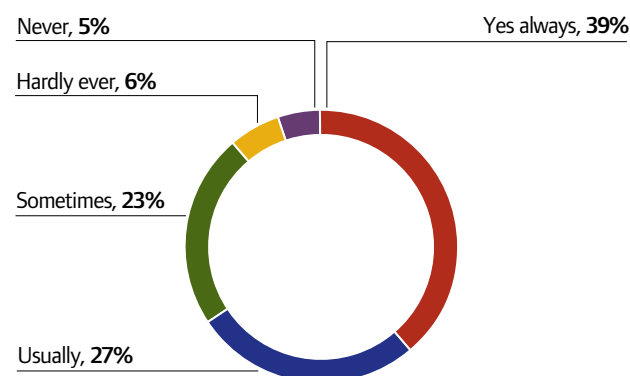
Speaking to a caseworker in private

In the past, children have told us that they are not always able to speak to their social worker or caseworker on their own when they visit, in private and without anyone else listening. They have told us being able to do this is very important if the social worker or caseworker is checking on how well they are being treated. They have said it is difficult to tell someone about any problems or ill treatment if other people, like the carers you want to talk about, are listening to what you are saying.

The law changed in 2011 to say very clearly that a social worker or other caseworker visiting a child in care must speak to that child in private unless the child doesn't want to or isn't able to understand enough to have a private talk, or it just isn't possible.² We will therefore be monitoring each year how many children tell us their social worker or caseworker does speak to them in private, starting this year.

Figure 27 shows how many children told us they are spoken to in private by their social workers or caseworkers in 2011. We were asking this question after the law had changed to say that this must happen.

Figure 27: When your social worker or caseworker visits you, do they talk to you on your own, without anyone listening?



Based on answers from 1,272 children.

Even though the law now says that visiting social workers or caseworkers should speak to children in care in private, only 39% of children in this year's monitor told us this happens on every visit. Two thirds (66%) told us it always or usually happens. One in 20 (5%) told us it never happens.

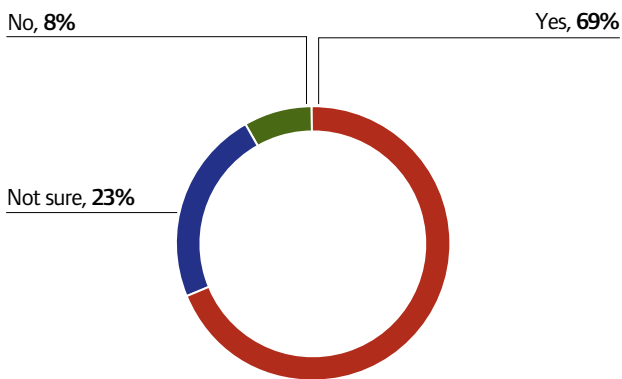
Sometimes there may be reasons why the visiting social worker or caseworker cannot speak to the child in private. The child may not want to do that, and they do have the right to say no. Or it may be that there is some reason that makes it not possible on that visit. It is likely, though, that children who were able to answer this monitor question would have been able to understand enough to talk with their social worker or caseworker in private. Since the law is now clear on this, we will be checking to see if there is any change in that 66% next year.

There were no big differences in how many children reported speaking to their social worker or caseworker in private between boys and girls, those aged under or over 14, or between disabled children and other children. Although the numbers were too small to be sure (only 56 children placed at home answered this question), children in care but placed to live at home with their parents were less likely than other children in care to speak to their social workers in private.

Keeping things confidential

In our other consultations with children in care, many have told us they are worried that personal information about them is not always kept as confidential as it should be. In this year's monitor we have started checking what children say about this. Figure 28 shows whether children in care in 2011 thought their personal information was kept confidential enough.

Figure 28: Is personal information about you kept confidential enough?



Based on answers from 1,279 children.

Over two thirds (69%) of children in care told us that they thought their personal information was kept confidential enough, with 8% saying they thought it wasn't. Almost a quarter (23%) weren't sure about the confidentiality of their personal information.

There was a big difference between girls and boys on this question. **Boys were more likely than girls to think that their personal information was kept confidential enough.** Seventy-six per cent of boys told us they thought it was, compared with 62% of girls. There was no difference at all between children aged under 14 and young people aged 14-plus in the percentage who told us they thought their information was kept confidential enough. There was no big difference in the percentage for disabled children and others.

Children living in children's homes were much more likely than foster children to think that their personal information was kept confidential enough.

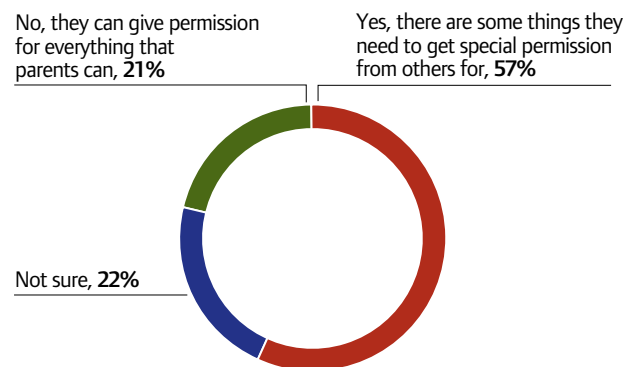
Seventy-seven per cent of those in children's homes told us they thought it was, compared with 66% of foster children answering this monitor question. The difference was mainly because many more foster children were not sure whether or not their personal information was kept confidential enough.

Needing special permission for things

Something else we have started monitoring in the 2011 monitor is how many children report that their carers or the staff looking after them have to get special permission for them to do certain things. Children have often told us that a problem with being in care is that foster carers or children's home staff are not allowed to give permission themselves for things that other children's parents would be able to decide about. Because so many children have raised this with us, in 2011 the Children's Minister said that the carers or staff of children in care should be able to give the same sorts of permissions that other children's parents can give, unless the child's care plan clearly says differently.

Figure 29 shows the answers we got when we asked children whether there is anything their carers or staff have to get special permission to let them do.

Figure 29: Is there anything your carers or staff where you live have to get special permission to let you do?



Based on answers from 1,267 children.

Well over half the children in care reported that there are some things that their carers, or the staff looking after them, have to get special permission from other people to let them do, and only 21% said their carers or staff can give permission for everything that parents can.

Of course, a child’s care plan may say there is something their carers or staff must not let them do without someone else’s permission, but we will be monitoring whether that 21% goes up in future years.

There were no big differences between girls and boys, or between disabled children and others, on this question. As we had expected, younger children did report that there were more things that their carers or staff needed to get someone else’s permission for. Sixty-four per cent of those aged under 14 said their carers or staff needed to get special permission to allow some things, compared with 54% of those aged 14 and over.

There was hardly any difference between foster children and children living in children’s homes on how many reported that their carers or staff could give the same permissions that parents could.

We asked children what sorts of things their carers or staff needed to get special permission to let them do. We did not make any suggestions of our own. Here are all the answers that came from more than one in 10 of the children who answered this question.

Things carers or staff looking after children in care need to get someone else’s permission to allow children to do	Percentage of children giving this answer
Going on a holiday	34%
Going on school or other trips	29%
Staying overnight with friends or having friends stay with you	27%
Piercings, tattoos, new hairstyles	13%
Going out socially	13%
Health treatments	13%

Based on 936 answers from 584 children.

Of course, some of these might need approval for the money needed, but others are clearly things that children thought other people’s parents would be able to agree to but their carers or home staff could not. Staying overnight with friends is something children have long told us is something their carers or staff are not allowed to agree to on their own, like other children’s parents do. There is a special question about this later in this monitor report.

Having contact with children’s own families was something that did not quite make it to the list of top things carers or staff had to ask someone else’s permission for. Getting permission for family contact did however make it to the top list for children in children’s homes.

Boys and girls gave slightly different lists. Girls included piercings, tattoos and new hairstyles in their top list, but boys didn’t. Boys on the other hand included permissions for activities like football, karate and horse riding in the top list, but girls didn’t.

For children in foster care, their carers needing permission to take them on holiday came top of the list, while children in children's homes put staying overnight with friends or having friends staying with them at the top. Those in children's homes also included needing permission to take part in activities in their top list.

Disabled children in care put getting permission to take part in activities such as sports in their list of top things their carers or staff had to ask someone else for. Otherwise their list was much the same as for other children in care.

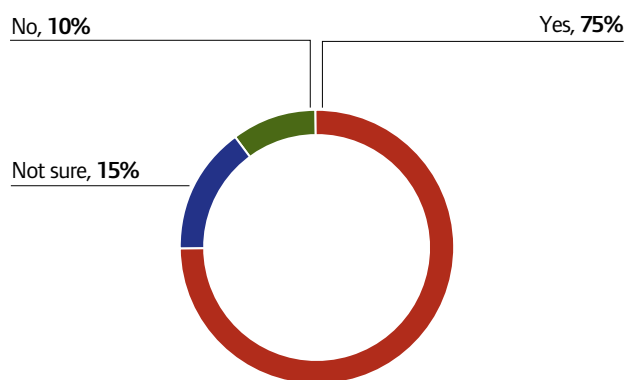
Here are some examples of the things carers or staff have to get permission to allow, in the children's own words: 'when I sleep round with my friends, when I want to go on school trips'; 'holidays, doctors, dentist things'; 'trips, medication, change in educational qualifications, off site activities'; 'to sleep out because of CRB checks'; 'to sleep at others' houses, to go on a school trip to Alton Towers'; 'colouring my hair, body piercings, hazardous activities'; 'photos where you go to school'; 'to go on school trips, injections for school, piercings'. As one young person put it, 'Party, staying over at friends, school trips, activity, this is bad, makes me feel different!'



Are foster children treated the same as foster carers' own children?

Another new question we have started checking on each year is whether children in foster care feel that they are treated the same as their foster carers' own children. Figure 30 gives foster children's answers to this question in 2011.

Figure 30: Are you treated the same as your foster carers' own children?



Based on answers from 939 children.

There were 1,077 foster children who answered this question, but 138 (13%) of them said their foster carers didn't have any children of their own. Figure 30 gives the answers from the other 939 who said their foster carers did have children of their own as well as foster children.

Exactly three quarters (75%) of foster children whose foster parents had their own children told us that they were treated the same as their foster carers' children. One in 10 (10%) said they were treated differently. The others weren't sure how to answer this question.

Forty-two children who had said they were treated differently by their foster carers told us the main way in which they were treated differently. Here are their answers.

How foster children say they are treated differently from their foster carers' own children	Number of children giving this answer
The foster carers' own children are treated better	18
Not allowed to do things the foster carers' children are	7
More likely to be blamed when things go wrong	6
Not feeling I am their child	5
Foster carers' children get more money and things given to them	4
Foster carers have to get social worker permissions for things they can allow their own children to do	3

Based on 43 answers from 42 children.

These numbers are too small to give very certain answers. But they do show the reasons children gave for thinking their foster carers treated them differently. On this list, the issue about getting permission to do things is an important one. Some children told us they do not feel they are allowed to do things their foster carers' own children are. A few said this was to do with their foster carers having to get permissions from social workers, which they did not have to do for their own children. For some, it was not just that their foster carers treated them differently in any particular way, but that they simply felt different because they were not their foster carers' children.

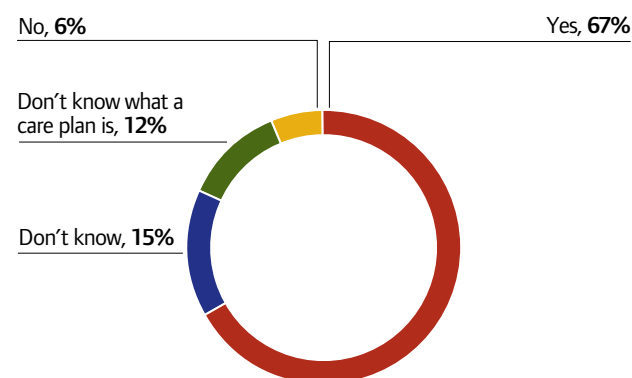
In their own words, here are some examples of what the one in 10 children who said they were treated differently told us: 'they treat their children a lot better than what they treat me'; 'they make it very clear that I am not their child and never will be'; 'they get in less trouble when they do things wrong'; 'obviously if they have their own children they can let them do things they ask to do, but we can't because our social worker doesn't let us'. One child wrote about how they had not been allowed to eat together with the family, another that their foster sister was allowed bubble baths but they were only allowed a shower, and another felt that 'at the end you're just money and a hobby to them'. Sometimes foster children were clear that there were good reasons for being treated differently, for example if their foster siblings were a very different age to themselves.

Care plans

Every child in care should have a care plan which sets out how they are to be cared for and the plans for their future care. Children should have a say in what goes into their care plan, the plan should be regularly reviewed and kept up to date, and the plan should be carried out.

Figure 31 shows whether the children in our 2011 monitor survey thought they did or didn't have a care plan.

Figure 31: Do children in care have a care plan?



Based on answers from 1,275 children.

In 2011, just over two thirds (68%) of the children in our survey told us they knew what a care plan is, and knew that they had one. Last year, the percentage was 72%, and had stayed around that level for three years before falling slightly this year.

Apart from the children who knew what a care plan is but didn't think they had one, there were still **15% of children in 2011 who told us they didn't know what a care plan is. That is exactly the same as the percentage we found in 2009 and 2010.**

As we had found in 2009 and again in 2010, **children in children's homes were far more likely than children in foster care to know they had care plans.** In 2011, 85% of children in children's homes knew they had care plans, compared with 66% of foster children.

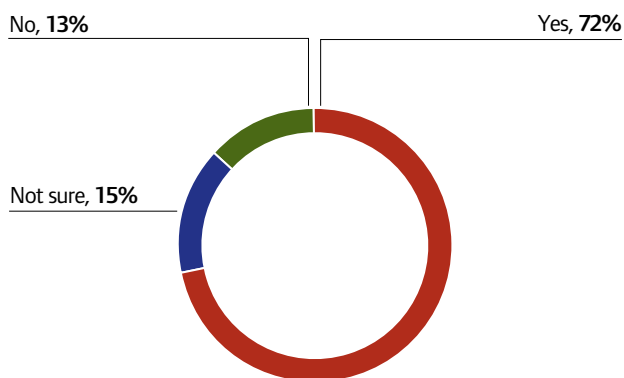
There was no big difference between children over- and under 14 in whether they knew they had a care plan.

Sixteen of the children who filled in our Widget symbol questionnaire told us about care plans, and all but one of the 16 said they did have a care plan.

Knowing what your care plan says

As we had found in the last two years of our care monitor, children could know they had a care plan, but not know what was in it. The figures for this in 2011 are set out in Figure 32.

Figure 32: Do children know what their care plan says?



Based on answers from 855 children.

In 2011, 72% of children who knew they had a care plan also knew what was in it. The increase in the percentage of children saying they knew what was in their care plan that had continued each year since 2008 has now stopped and this percentage has fallen again. Over the first three years we monitored this, there had been a steady increase in the percentage of children knowing what was in their care plan. In 2008, 73% knew what was in their plan, in 2009 76% said they knew, and in 2010 the figure was up again to 81%. This trend has now reversed, and this year's percentage of 72% is back down to the level we found three years ago.

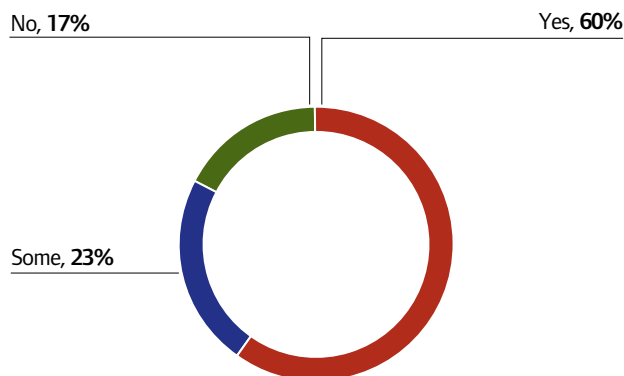
This year disabled children in care were much less likely than other children to tell us they knew what was in their care plan. Young people over 14 were slightly more likely than younger children to know what was in their care plan.

Having a say in your care plan

Children have told us in many past consultations how important it is that they have a real say in the big decisions about their lives and their future. Their care plans contain those decisions, and the law requires that children have a say in their care plans, depending on their age and understanding.

Figure 33 shows how many children, out of those who knew they had a care plan, told us in 2011 that they had a say in what was planned for their future.

Figure 33: Do children have a say in their care plan?



Based on answers from 840 children.

In 2011, 60% of children who knew they had a care plan told us they had a say in what it said, and another 23% told us they had some say in it. These figures are close to those we found last year. The percentage telling us they definitely had a say in their care plans had gone up from 52% in 2008 to 65% in 2009, and had fallen again last year to 61%.

The percentage of children telling us they had no say in their care plan was 17% in 2011, much the same as in the last two years.

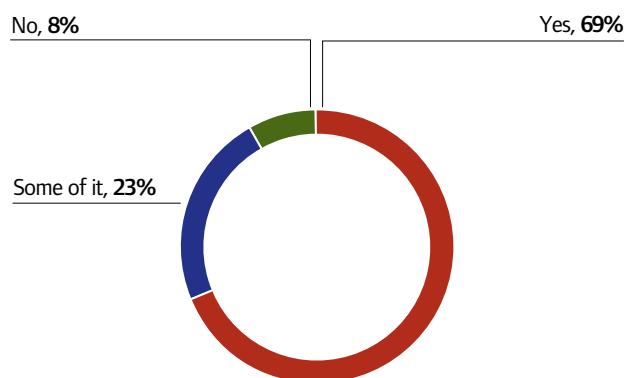
In 2011, unlike last year, **those aged over 14 were much more likely than children under 14 to tell us they had a say in their care plans.** Sixty-seven per cent of over-14s said yes, they had a say, compared with 51% of under-14s. Thirteen per cent of over-14s said they had no say, compared with 23% of under-14s.

There were no big differences in answers to this question between boys and girls, disabled children and others, or between children in children's homes and foster children.

Agreeing with your care plan

We know from the answers to other questions in our annual monitor that children can be asked for their views, but sometimes these may not make much difference. So each year we ask children who know what is in their care plan whether they agree with what their care plan says should happen. Their answers are in Figure 34.

Figure 34: Do children agree with their care plan?



Based on answers from 820 children.

Over two thirds (69%) of the children who knew what their care plan said told us in 2011 that they agreed with it. Almost another quarter (23%) agreed with some of it. Only 8% did not agree with their care plan at all. These figures show slightly more agreement than last year, when 66% said they agreed with all of their care plan, and 9% disagreed with all of it.

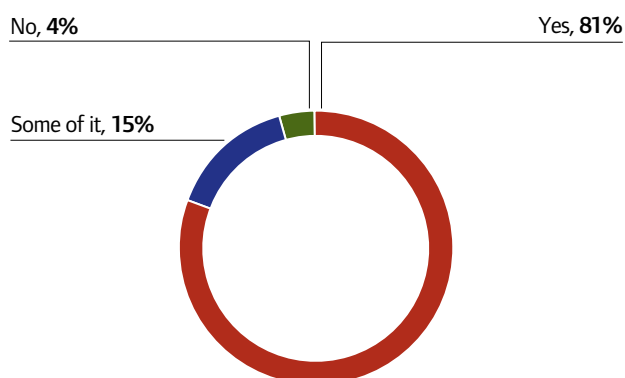
Boys were this year much more likely than girls to agree with their care plans. Seventy-five per cent of boys agreed with all of their care plans, compared with 64% of girls. There were no big differences between those aged under and over 14. Disabled children were, as we found last year, slightly more likely to agree with their care plans than children generally, but this didn't quite make it to being a big difference.

Foster children were this year much more likely than those in children’s homes to agree with their care plans. Seventy-three per cent of foster children agreed with their care plans, compared with 59% of those living in children’s homes.

Keeping to care plans

Sometimes children in care contact the Office of the Children’s Rights Director for help and advice when a major change in their lives is made which was not in their care plan. We use the annual care monitor to check how well children’s care plans are being kept to, according to the children who know what their care plans say. Figure 35 gives the answers for 2011.

Figure 35: Is your care plan being kept to?



Based on answers from 826 children.

From Figure 35, **81% of children in care in 2011 told us that their care plan was being fully kept to. This is exactly the same as last year. Another 15% said that some, but not all, of it was being kept to. This is very close to last year’s figure. Only 4% said that their care plan was not being kept to at all.** These figures have not changed much over the four years of our monitor so far.

There were no big differences between girls and boys, children in foster care and children in children’s homes, or disabled children and other children in how well they said their care plans were being kept to.

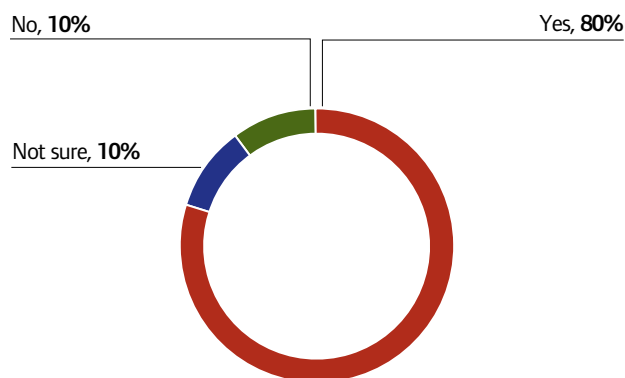
This year, children aged under 14 were much more likely than those aged 14-plus to say their care plans were being fully kept to. Eighty-seven per cent of those aged under 14 said this, compared with 77% of over-14s.

Being in the right placement

Getting the right placement for a child in care to live in is one of the biggest and most important decisions that can be made in their lives. We use our annual care monitor to check whether, across the country, children believe that they have been put in the right placement for them.

Figure 36 sets out the findings on placements for 2011.

Figure 36: Are you in the right placement for you?



Based on answers from 1,275 children.

In 2011, eight out of 10 children in care (80%) told us that they were in the right placement for them, and one in 10 (10%) said that the placement they were in was not right for them. Last year’s figures were 83% and 9%. These percentages have gone up and down slightly over the four years we have been monitoring them, but there has been no clear change in one direction or the other over that time in the children’s assessment of how well social care services are doing in getting the right placements for children in care.

There were no big differences between girls and boys, or between those aged over or under 14, or between disabled children and others, in the percentage saying they were in the right placement for them.

As we have found in every year so far, **children in foster homes were much more likely than children in children’s homes to say that they were in the right placement for them. In 2011, 86% of foster children thought they were in the right placement for them, compared with 64% of children in children’s homes.** These are close to last year’s figures.

We asked children who said they were in the right placement for them to tell us why they thought this. We listed reasons children had given us in past years’ monitoring surveys. We had answers from 1,020 children.

The reasons for saying their placement was the right one came in the same order as last year. Top was being happy and settled. Next came being safe and well looked-after. Close behind that came having kind and supportive carers.

We also asked the children who thought they were in the wrong placement for them to tell us why they said that. Again we listed reasons children had given us in past years’ monitoring surveys. We had answers from 122 children. Here are the top five answers this year.

Reasons given by foster children for saying they were in the wrong placement	% of the children giving this answer
I would rather be with my own family	59%
I would like to live independently in my own place	52%
I don’t get along with the adults here	26%
I don’t get on with the other young people here	25%
I am in residential care and would rather be in foster care	19%

Based on 228 answers from 122 children.

Rather like the answers to our earlier question about whether children should still be in care, **the top reasons given by children and young people who said they were not in the right placement included preferring to be back home and wanting to leave care and live independently. Getting on with both adults and other children in the placement are clearly important, and not getting on is a reason for a placement not being the right one. Preferring to be in foster care rather than residential care also comes through as a top reason for a placement not being the right one.**

Changing placements

The children who took part in our 2011 monitor had most often had just one change of placement in their life in care so far. But because some children had had a lot of changes, the average number of placements so far was five. The average number of placements so far had gone up from four in each of the past three years to five this year.

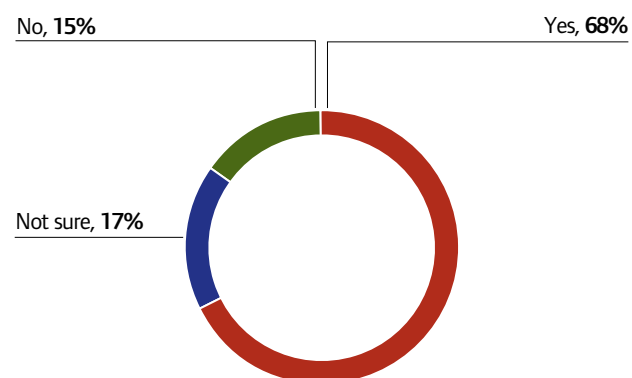
‘I would like to nominate my foster carers as one of the BEST carers in England!’

Many people see changes in living placements as something to be avoided if possible, and say that staying in the same placement should be the aim. In our past consultations, though, children have often told us that sometimes a change of placement can be the right thing to happen, and can be a change for the better. On the other hand, some of the children we help through our individual children's casework tell us that they are told they are being moved to a new placement when they do not think this is the best thing for them. This is sometimes because of the cost of their placement, or because their placement was not planned to be for a long time even though it has worked out well for them.

So in our monitor each year we check whether the last time each child moved to a new placement, the child thought the move was, or was not, in their best interests. As money becomes tighter for everyone, we can also see whether children's assessment of whether placement changes are, or are not, in their best interests, is changing over time.

Figure 37 shows what children told us in 2011.

Figure 37: Was your last placement change in your best interests?



Based on answers from 1,135 children.

In 2011, 68% of the children in care in our monitor assessed their last placement change as being in their best interests. There has been little change in this assessment over the past four years. The percentage was 69% in 2008, 68% in 2009, and 70% in 2010. **In 2011, 15% of children in care assessed their last change of placement as not being in their best interests. This is exactly the same percentage as last year.**

There were no big differences between girls and boys, between those aged over or under 14, or between disabled children and other children, in whether children and young people rated their last placement change as being in their best interests.

As last year, children now in foster care were much more likely in 2011 to rate their move into their present foster home as being in their best interests than children in children's homes were to rate their move into their present children's home as being in their best interests. Nearly three quarters (73%) of foster children rated their last move as in their best interests, compared with 58% of children in children's homes.

'The staff that work at my care home treat me like family and I enjoy their company a lot'

We asked children to tell us what they understood had been the reason for their last placement move. We gave them the list of what children had told us were the main reasons in our earlier monitor surveys, but children could add other reasons to the list. Out of 1,054 children who answered this question, here are the reasons given by over one in 10 of the children answering.

Reasons given by children for their last change of placement	% of the children giving this answer
Unhappy/did not settle	37%
To go to a more permanent placement	35%
My behaviour	29%

Based on 1,298 answers from 1,054 children.

Just as being happy and settled in a placement was the top reason children gave when they felt they were in the right placement for them, being unhappy and not settling in a placement was the top reason for having to change placements. This year children scored these reasons in a different order from last year. Moving to a more permanent placement has moved up from third place to second place.

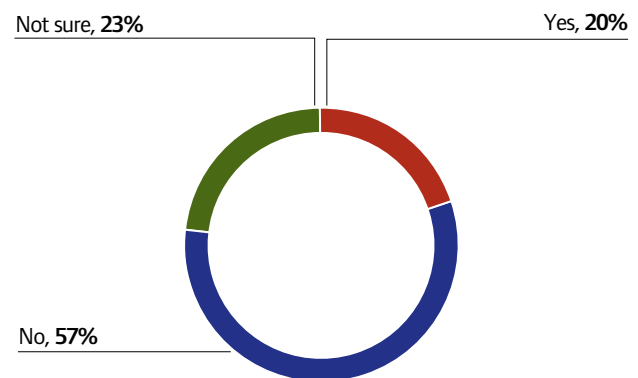
In 2011, 40 children (4% of those who answered this question) told us the reason for their last move of placement was to save money. None of the children answering the same question in 2010 had said this.

‘The foster carer wasn’t giving me the support I needed. I wasn’t in her best interests’

Having a choice of placements

For the first time this year, we asked children whether there had been a choice of different placements for them the last time they had moved. Figure 38 gives their answers.

Figure 38: Last time you moved placements was there a choice of placement for you?



Based on answers from 1,071 children.

Well over half (57%) of the children answering this question told us there had been no choice of placement the last time they moved to a new one. Almost another quarter (23%) were not sure whether or not there had been a choice. One in five said there had been a choice of new placements for them.

There were no big differences between boys and girls in having a choice of placement. Neither foster children nor children living in children’s homes were more likely than the others to have had a choice of placement when they moved into the placement they were in.

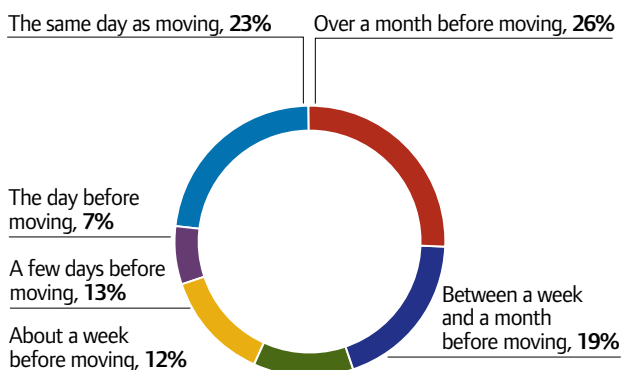
We did find two big differences. **Children aged over 14 were much more likely than those under 14 to say they had a choice of placements last time they moved.** A quarter (25%) of over-14s said they had a choice, compared with 14% of the under-14s.

We also found that **disabled children were much more likely than other children to have had a choice of placements when they moved to the placement they were now in.** Forty-three per cent of the 112 disabled children answering this question said there had been no choice, compared with 57% of children generally.

How much notice children get before moving to a new placement

Another new question we started asking in this year's monitor was how much notice children were given before they were moved from where they were living to a new placement. Figure 39 sets out their answers.

Figure 39: Last time you moved to live in a new placement, when were you told you would be moving?



Based on answers from 1,006 children.

Forty-five per cent of children told us that they had more than a week's notice last time they had to move to a new placement. Just over a quarter (26%) had more than a month's notice. Thirty per cent had no more than a day's notice, and almost a quarter (23%) reported that they were told they were moving on the same day the move took place. We will be monitoring this in our next annual monitor.

There were no big differences between girls and boys or between those over or under 14 in how much notice children were given before moving to a new placement. Neither children moving into children's homes nor those moving into foster homes were much more likely to have more notice of the move. **Disabled children were however much more likely than other children to have more than a week's notice before moving to a new placement.**

Whether children visit new placements before moving there

A further new question in this year's monitor was whether children in care had visited their new placement before they were moved in to live there. We had answers to this question from 1,160 children.

Fifty-eight per cent of children said they had visited the placement where they are living now before they moved in to live there. Forty-two per cent said they had not visited it before moving in.

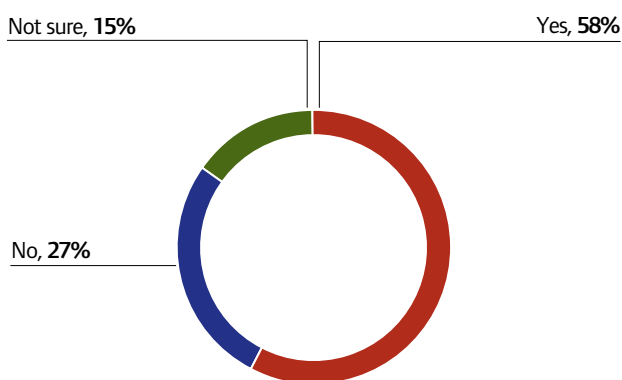
Although it was not a big difference, boys were slightly more likely than girls to tell us they had visited their placement before moving in. There was no big difference between under- and over-14s in answering this question. We had expected to find that there was a difference between children now living in children's homes and those now living in foster homes, but neither were much more likely than the others to have visited their present placement before moving in.

'I have a seven-month-old baby and the place I live is surrounded by drugs and trouble'

Whether children are given enough information about new placements

Another of our new questions for 2011 about placements was to ask whether children thought they were given enough information about the placement they were living in, before they moved there. Figure 40 gives the answers.

Figure 40: Were you given enough information about the placement you are in before you moved there?



Based on answers from 1,162 children.

Fifty-eight per cent of children told us they had been given enough information about their present placement before they had moved in. Over a quarter (27%) of children told us they had not been given enough information. There were no big differences between different groups of children in answering this question.

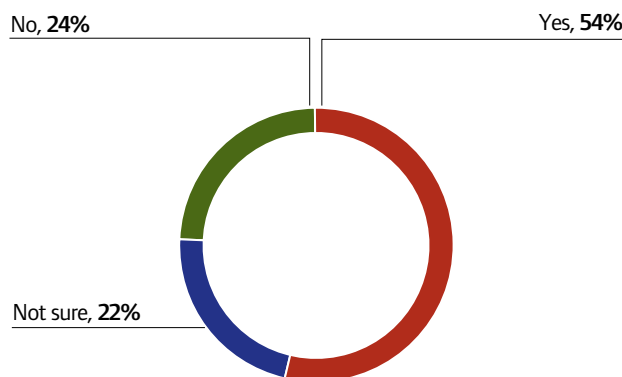
Changing schools when changing placements

When children in care move to live in a new placement, they often have to change to a new school as well. In 2011, the majority of children in care in our monitor survey had changed schools at least once because of a change of living placement. Up to the time of our survey, 19% of the children taking part in the monitor had already changed school three or more times because of a change of placement. The average

number of changes was two, because some children had very many changes of school. These figures were the same as in the past two years.

It is often said that having to change school is a bad thing for children in care. But children have told us in the past that a change of school has been a good thing for them. It all depends on whether the new school is a better one for their education, or whether they settle better there than at their old school. In our monitor each year, we ask children whether the last time they had to change school because they moved to a new placement, they thought the change of school was in their best interests. Figure 41 gives their answers for 2011.

Figure 41: Last time you had to change schools because you moved to a new placement, was the change of school in your best interests?



Based on answers from 884 children.

Just over half (54%) of the children in the 2011 monitor thought that the last time they changed school when they changed placements, the change of school was in their best interests. Only just under a quarter (24%) thought the change of school was definitely not in their best interests. The rest were not sure. The figure of 54% was exactly the same as in both 2009 and 2010. Last year, 26% of the children in the monitor said their last change of school was definitely not in their best interests.

As we have found in each of the three years we have carried out the care monitor so far, **according to children themselves, changing school when changing placement is much more likely than not to be in the child's best interests.**

There were no big differences between boys and girls, children in children's homes and foster children, or children with a disability and other children, in whether they thought their last change of school when changing placement was in their best interests. Children aged under 14 were slightly more likely than those over 14 to say their last change of school was in their best interests, but this was not a big difference.

We asked children to tell us why they thought their last change of school when changing placement was in their best interests. As usual with this sort of question, we did not give any suggested answers, so all the reasons came straight from the children themselves. Two top reasons stood out from all the others. The two most usual reasons given by children who thought their last change of school when changing placements was in their best interests were that the new school was nearer to where the child now lived (this came from 43% of the children), and that the new school met the child's educational needs better (this came from 30% of the children). These are the same two top reasons as last year, although the percentage of children who said the change of school was in their best interests because it met their educational needs better had gone up.

We also asked children for their reasons when they thought their last change of school when changing placement had definitely not been in their best interests. Again, we did not suggest any answers. **The top three reasons given where children thought the change of school had not been in their best interests were that they didn't want to leave their friends, they were happy and settled at their old school, and that the new school was not so good for their education.**

Designated teachers

Schools are now expected to have a member of staff especially there to help and support children in care in the school. These are usually called 'designated teachers'. Colleges may also have a member of staff with the specific job of helping young people in care while they are at the college.

Out of 1,215 children in care in school or college who answered our question on this, just over two thirds (67%) said they had a member of staff at school or college who was there specifically to help children in care. This was slightly up on last year's figure of 65%.

Out of the under-14 age group who were at school rather than college, 72% said they had a member of staff to help children in care. This too was slightly up on last year's figure of 70%.

There were no big differences between different groups of children in answers to this question.

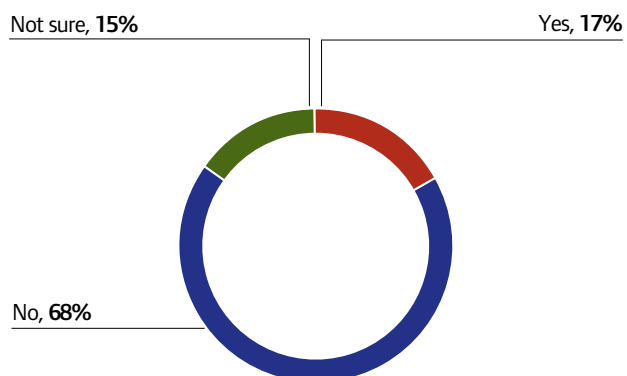
Whether children in care feel they are made to stand out from others at school

Children in care have often told us that at school they want to be given help they need, but in a way which does not make them feel that they stand out as different from other children at their school. We asked about this for the first time in the 2011 monitor.

'I don't know what is a good change for me any more. They have done it too many times'

Figure 42 gives the answers to this new question.

Figure 42: Do you feel you are made to stand out from others at school or college because you are in care?

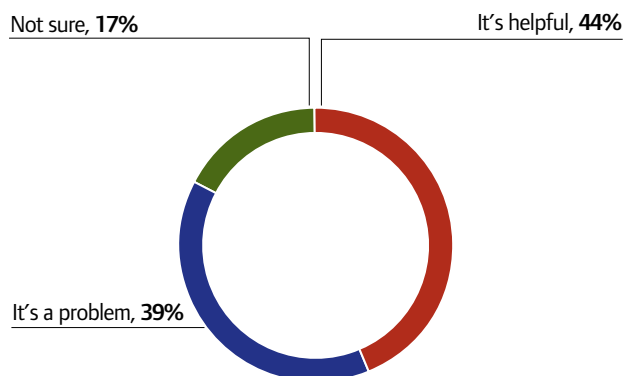


Based on answers from 1,212 children.

Over two thirds (68%) of children and young people in care told us that they do not feel they are made to stand out from other children or young people at school or college because they are in care. Seventeen per cent told us they did feel made to stand out. There were no big differences on this between girls and boys, those under or over 14, disabled children and others, or children in children’s homes and foster children.

Some children have told us that although they do feel made to stand out at school or college, this is because they get extra help or better treatment than others, and so feeling you stand out is not always a bad thing. So we asked those who said they did feel they were made to stand out whether this was helpful or a problem for them. Out of the 211 children who had told us they did feel made to stand out, 208 answered this question about whether it was helpful or a problem. Their answers are in Figure 43.

Figure 43: Is being made to feel you stand out as someone from care at school or college helpful or a problem to you?



Based on answers from 208 children.

Out of those children who said they felt they were made to stand out as children in care at school or college, 39% said this was a problem for them, and 44% said it was in fact helpful. Clearly being made to feel you stand out as a child in care can be a good or bad thing for the child, and it all depends on how it makes the individual child feel.

However, there were some big differences between different groups of children in how they felt about being made to stand out as a child in care at school. **Boys were much more likely than girls to feel it was helpful to be made to feel they stood out as someone from care. Girls were much more likely than boys to feel it was a problem for them.**

Fifty-nine per cent of boys thought it was helpful, compared with 34% of girls. Forty-eight per cent of girls thought it was a problem, compared with 27% of boys.

Young people aged over 14 had stronger feelings than those under 14 about being made to feel they stood out as people from care. Only 10% of over-14s were not sure how it made them feel, compared with 32% of those under 14. **Young people aged over**

14 were much more likely than younger children to feel that being made to stand out as someone from care at school or college made a difference to them. Over half (53%) told us it was helpful, and just over a third (36%) told us it was a problem.

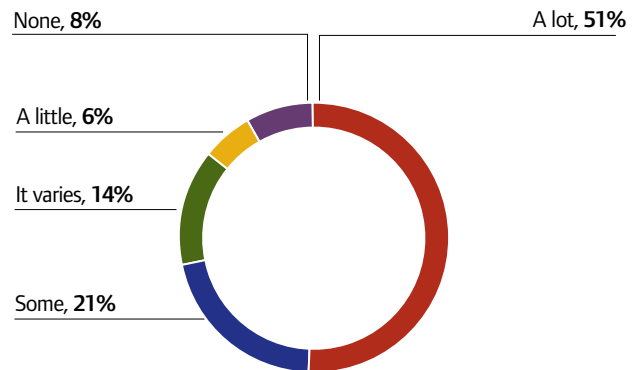
Only six out of the 21 disabled children who said they were made to feel they stood out as children in care at school or college said this was a problem for them.

Help at home with school or college work

Something else we asked about for the first time in 2011 was how much help children in care got with their school or college work in their children's home, foster home or other placement. The answers are in Figure 44.



Figure 44: How much help do your carers or staff give you with your school or college work?



Based on answers from 1,187 children.

Just over half of all children in care in the 2011 monitor told us their carers or staff gave them a lot of help with their school or college work. Eight per cent said they got no help from them.

There were no big differences between girls and boys in how much help they said they got from carers or staff with their school or college work. As we had expected, those aged under 14 were much more likely to get help than those over 14.

Children in foster care were much more likely to get help from carers with their school or college work than those in children's homes. Fifty-six per cent of foster children, compared with only 46% of children in children's homes, said they got a lot of help from their carers or staff.

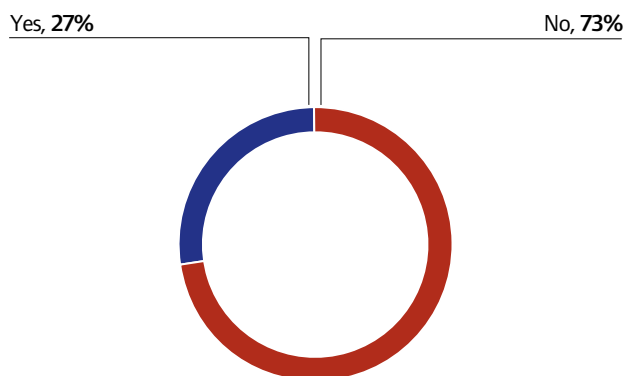
Disabled children were much more likely than other children to say they got a lot of help with their school or college work.

Separation of siblings in care

In our consultations, children in care have told us that siblings (brothers and sisters) are often separated and placed in different placements in care. Many have told us that this is a major issue for children in care, and that siblings should be placed together unless there is a good reason for them to be separated in their best interests. This is something we check each year in the care monitor.

Out of 1,238 children and young people in care who answered the question in the 2011 monitor, 59% had at least one brother or sister who was also in care. Figure 45 shows the proportion of children who told us they were living in the same placement as any brothers or sisters in care.

Figure 45: Do children with brothers or sisters in care live in the same placement together?



Based on answers from 727 children who had brothers or sisters also in care.

In 2011, nearly three quarters (73%) of the children in care who had one or more siblings also in care were separated from brothers or sisters by being placed to live in different placements. This percentage is falling very slightly. In 2009 the figure was 76%, and in 2010 it was 74%.

There were no big differences in 2011 between boys and girls or between over- and under-14s in how likely siblings were to have been separated in care. **Disabled children in care were much more likely than other children in care to be placed separately from their siblings.** This may of course be because they needed specialist placements which their brothers or sisters did not.

One big difference we did find, as we found in 2009 and again in 2010, was that **children living in children's homes were much more likely than children in foster homes to have been separated from siblings in care. Ninety-six per cent of children in children's homes had been separated from siblings in care, compared with 69% of those in foster care.** Last year's figures were 94% of those in children's homes, and 71% of those in foster care.

We also asked both the children who had been separated from one or more of their siblings, and the children who were placed in the same placement with all their siblings, whether they thought what had happened was right in their case. **Ninety-two per cent of those who had been placed together with their siblings thought this had been right in their case. Forty-one per cent of those who had been separated from one or more siblings in a different placement thought that this was right in their case. Children in foster homes were much more likely than children in children's homes to say that being separated in different placements had been right in their case.**

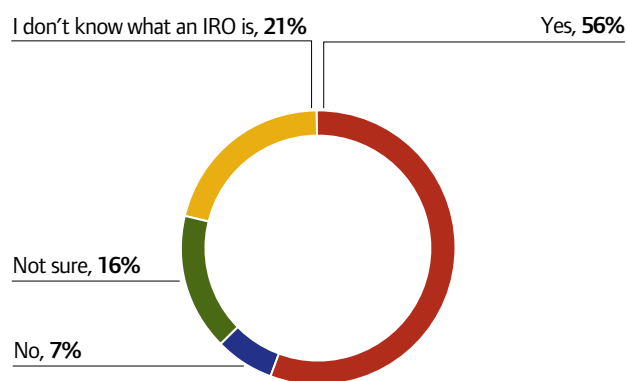
Disabled children who had been placed separately from one or more of their siblings were much more likely than other children to tell us that this had been the right decision in their case.

Independent Reviewing Officers

Every child in care should have an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO). Among other things, their job is to make sure the council is doing what it should be doing for the child, to go to all the child's care reviews to make sure these are done properly, and to make sure the council takes proper notice of the child's wishes and feelings when it makes decisions and plans for the child.

Figure 46 shows how many children told us in 2011 that they had an IRO.

Figure 46: Do you have an Independent Reviewing Officer at the moment?



Based on answers from 1,240 children.

This year, 57% of children answering this question knew they had an IRO. Sixteen per cent knew what an IRO was, but weren't sure whether they had one or not.

There were no big differences between boys and girls, between over- and under-14s, or between disabled children in care and others in care, in the percentages who knew they had an IRO. **Foster children were less likely than children in children's homes to say they**

had an IRO. Fifty-nine per cent of foster children said they knew they had an IRO, compared with 69% of children in children's homes. **Children in care but placed at home, and children in care placed in residential or boarding schools or colleges, were all less likely than other children in care to tell us they had an IRO.**

Just over one in five children (21%) said they didn't know what an Independent Reviewing Officer is. The number of children who did not know what an Independent Reviewing Officer is was very slightly down on last year's figure of 22%.

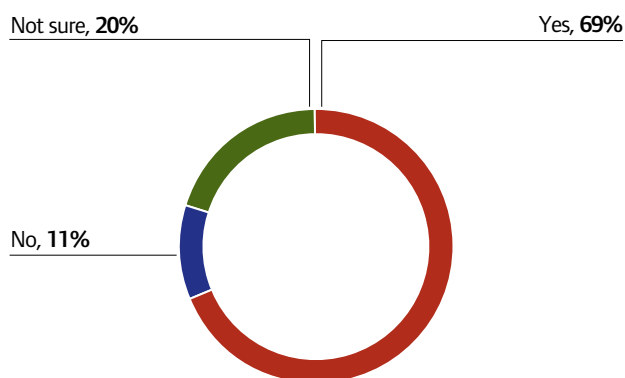
Children aged under 14 were much less likely than those over 14 to know what an IRO is. Twenty-eight per cent of under-14s said they didn't know what an IRO is, compared with 16% of those aged 14-plus.

Children in children's homes were much more likely than children in care generally to know what an IRO is.

We also asked those who had an IRO whether they were able to get in touch with their IRO if they needed to. Figure 47 gives their answers.

'She makes sure things get done'

Figure 47: Do children know how to get in touch with their Independent Reviewing Officer?



Based on answers from 686 children.

In 2011 over two thirds (69%) of children who had an IRO said they were able to get in touch with their IRO if they needed to. Fewer disabled children in care than others in care told us that they were able to get in touch with their IRO.

There were no other big differences between different groups of children on this. Although foster children were less likely than those in children’s homes to tell us they had an IRO, those foster children who did have one were just as likely as anyone else with an IRO to be able to get in touch with them.

‘I know she chairs my LAC reviews but other than that I don’t know’

We asked what support children had been given by their Independent Reviewing Officer. We did not suggest any answers. Here are all the answers which came from at least one in 10 of the children who answered this question.

Support children had received from their Independent Reviewing Officers	% of the children giving this answer
Making sure the child gets their point of view across in reviews	23%
Giving advice and explaining things when decisions are made	15%
Listening to the child’s views and wishes	14%
Being there with support when the child needs it	14%
Making sure the child is being looked after properly	13%

Based on 434 answers from 373 children.

The percentage of children saying their IRO had supported them by talking to them before reviews and helping them to get their views and wishes across at reviews was much the same as last year. The percentage saying their IRO had helped with advice and explanations when decisions were being made was up from last year, and made it into the top support list for the first time. The percentage saying their IRO’s support had been in generally listening to their views and wishes had fallen since last year.

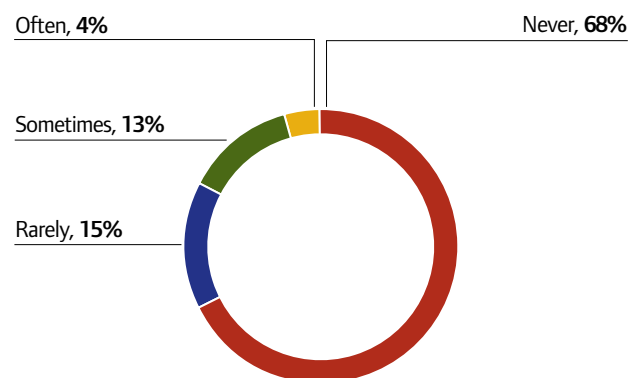
This year we asked two new questions about IROs. We asked whether children thought their IRO was independent enough, and whether they thought they were powerful enough. We asked these because in our consultations over the past year about IROs we had heard that although there was a lot of discussion about whether IROs were independent enough (because they still work for local care authorities), children were not so much concerned about where they worked, as whether they had enough power to challenge things that were going wrong for the child. A total of 683 children answered both these questions, and here is their assessment for 2011.

Sixty-four per cent of children said their IRO is independent enough, and 66% said their IRO is powerful enough to make sure things are being done for them as they should be.

Discrimination against people in care

We asked children in care whether or not they felt they were discriminated against for being in care. Their answers for 2011 are in Figure 48.

Figure 48: Are children in care discriminated against for being in care?



Based on answers from 1,215 children.

From these answers, **over two thirds (69%) of children in care answering this question do not think they suffer any discrimination for being in care.** Fifteen per cent believe that they are only rarely discriminated against for being in care. But **17%, around one in six, say they are sometimes or often discriminated against because they are in care.** These figures are almost the same as last year.

There were no big differences between boys and girls, over- and under-14s, or children in children's homes or foster homes, in answers to this question. Disabled children were less likely than others to feel discriminated against solely for being in care.

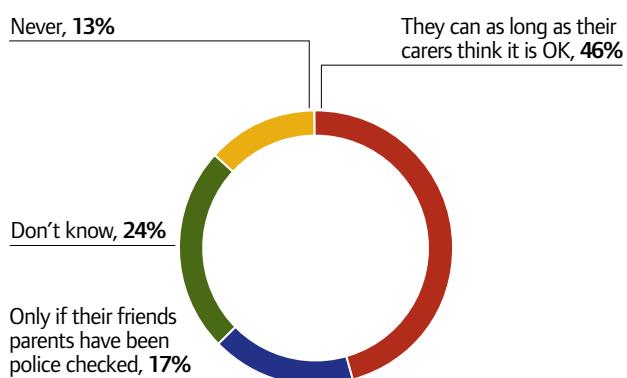
Overnight stays with friends

In very many of our consultations, children in care tell us that they are not allowed to stay overnight with friends unless their friends' parents have been police-checked first. There is no government rule that says that friends' parents have to be police-checked before children in care can come to stay overnight. Government ministers have issued guidance saying there is no such rule, and that unless there is some special reason in their care plans, children in care should be allowed to stay overnight with friends without any police checks being needed, if their carers or staff think it is OK, in exactly the same way as other children of their age.

'They review me then solve the problem I have told them'

Because this is a problem that is still being raised by children in our consultations, we have started to check on this in the care monitor. The situation in 2011, according to children in the care monitor, is set out in Figure 49.

Figure 49: Are children in care allowed to stay overnight with friends?



Based on answers from 1,230 children.

The 2011 position, as reported by children in care in the care monitor, is that **46% of children in care are allowed to stay overnight with friends as long as their carers think that it is OK, and 17% are only allowed to stay overnight if their friends' parents have been police-checked.**

There has been no change at all since last year in the percentage of children reporting that they can stay overnight with friends if their carers think it is OK.

The percentage of children who reported that they are never allowed to stay overnight with friends is 13%, exactly the same as last year.

The percentage reporting that they can only stay overnight with friends if their friends' parents have been police-checked has fallen from 21% last year to 17% this year – but this is because the percentage of children who don't know whether they would be allowed to stay overnight with friends has gone up from 20% last year to 24% this year. The figures show that it is not because more children believe their carers can decide whether it is OK for them to stay overnight.

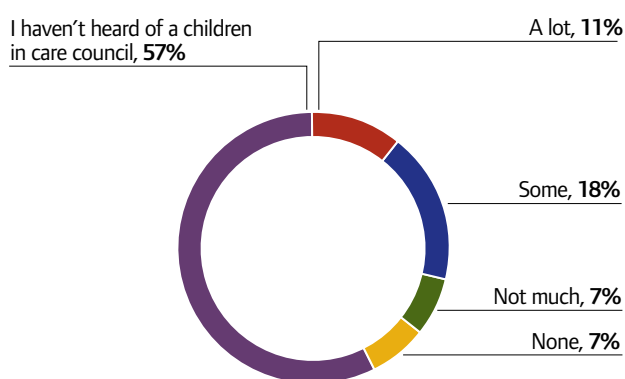
There were no big differences in these figures between boys and girls, or for children aged over 14 compared with those under 14, or between disabled children in care and other children in care.

However, there were some big differences between children in children's homes and foster children. **Children in children's homes were much less likely than foster children to say they could stay overnight with friends if their carers thought it was OK, and much more likely than foster children to report that they were never allowed to stay overnight with friends.** Thirty-four per cent of those in children's homes told us they were allowed to stay overnight at friends' houses if their carers thought it was OK, compared with 51% of foster children. Twenty-three per cent, almost a quarter, of children in children's homes told us they are never allowed to stay overnight in friends' houses, compared with only 8% of foster children. The figures for never being allowed to stay overnight with friends were very close to those we found last year.

Children in care councils

Children in care councils have now been set up in all local care authorities in England to represent the views of children in care in their areas. We asked children in care whether they thought their children in care council's opinions made a difference to what happens for children in care in their areas. Their answers are in Figure 50.

Figure 50: How much difference does the children in care council make to what happens for children in care in your area?



Based on answers from 1,189 children.

Overall, 29% of all children in care answering this question in our 2011 monitor thought their local children in care council made some or a lot of difference for children in care in their area. Fourteen per cent thought it made no or not much difference.

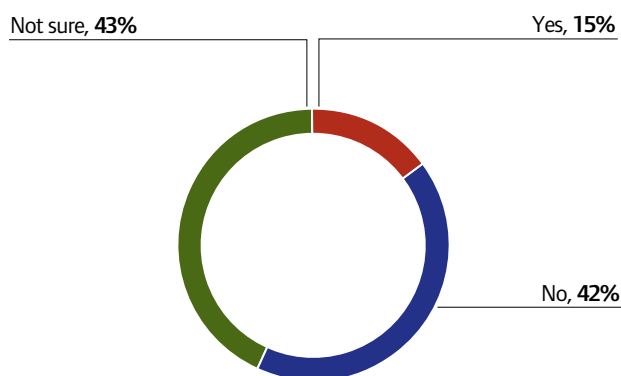
Well over half the children (57%) told us they didn't know about a children in care council in their area. This was up from 49% last year.

We checked how many children who did know about their children in care council thought it was making a difference for children in care. **In 2011, 68% of those who knew about their local children in care council thought it was making some or a lot of difference for children in care. This had gone up a lot from 54% last year.**

Effects of budget cuts

This year, for the first time, we asked children in care to tell us whether any budget cuts in their local council were actually affecting them personally. Figure 51 gives this year's answers.

Figure 51: Is there any way that your council having less money these days has actually affected you personally?



Based on answers from 1,173 children.

Similar numbers of children answering this question were unsure whether any cuts were affecting them, or were sure that they weren't. **Forty-two per cent of children in care in the 2011 monitor reported that their local council having less money was not affecting them personally. Fifteen per cent reported that it was affecting them personally.** There were no big differences in this between different groups of children.

We asked those who said they were being affected by budget cuts to tell us in what way they were being affected. Out of the 175 children who told us they were being affected by cuts, 128 told us how they thought they were being affected. The top three effects of budget cuts they told us about are shown in the table on page 59. These were all the effects that more than one in 10 of these 128 children told us about.



How children reported budget cuts as affecting them personally	Number of the children giving this answer
Less educational help	39
Lower personal allowances	21
Fewer activities to do	18

Based on answers from 128 children.

Overall, in 2011, 15% of children reported being personally affected by reductions in local council budgets, and the main effects were reductions in personal education expenditure, lower personal allowances for things like clothes and toiletries, and having fewer activities available for them to do.

Here are some final comments from children on their experience of care.

'My mum has tried very hard and sorted her problems out so hopefully soon I can go home'

'I'm glad I'm protected from my father but I wish I was still living at home'

'Moving back into my original home would affect my education. Also, my mum's mental condition does occasionally play up and she struggles for money'

'I'm safe but I miss my mum'

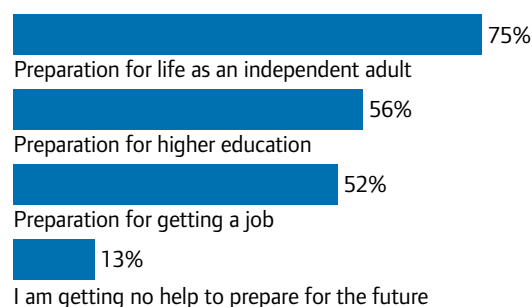
Leaving care

The last section of the care monitor is about children and young people leaving care.

Preparing to leave care

Figure 52 shows how many children told us they were being helped in various ways to prepare for their future. For this question we gave a list of suggested answers, which was the same as in the last two years so that we could compare the percentages over time. The question was answered in 2011 by 574 young people who told us they would soon be leaving care.

Figure 52: Percentage of those soon to leave care who are getting each kind of support



Based on answers from 574 young people.

The most usual help for the future was general help to prepare for independence as an adult, followed by help to prepare for higher education and then help to prepare for getting a job. Thirteen per cent of those about to leave care told us they were not getting any help they needed in preparing for their future life after care.

Over the past three years, the percentage saying they were being helped to prepare for higher education has fallen, from 65% in 2009, to 59% in 2010 and now to 56%. The percentage who said they were not getting any help they needed has not shown any steady change over the last three years. In 2009 it was 13%, in 2010 it was 15%, and this year it is back to 13% again.

The percentage saying they were getting general help to prepare for independence as an adult had varied over the last three years, from 78% in 2009 to 80% in 2010 and down to 75% this year. These are very small changes, though, and may just be random changes from one survey to the next.

The percentage of those about to leave care saying they are having help to prepare for getting a job fell from 60% last year to 52% this year.

There were no big differences in how they were being helped to prepare for the future between girls and boys. **Just under one in five (19%) of the children aged under 14 who answered this question told us that they were being helped to prepare for their future after leaving care.** This is very close to last year's figure.

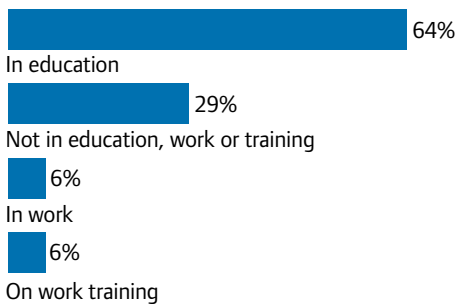
A much higher percentage of children about to leave care from children's homes this year reported getting general help to prepare for independence as an adult, compared with children about to leave foster care. Eighty-seven per cent of those about to leave care from a children's home said they were being helped to prepare for life as an independent adult, compared with 76% of those about to leave care from foster homes.

Although numbers were small, **the 60 disabled children about to leave care who answered this question were more likely than other children about to leave care to say that they had been helped to prepare for life as an independent adult.** Fifty-four of those 60 disabled children leaving care said this.

Education and work

A total of 199 young people who had left care took part in the 2011 care monitor. Out of these, 174 told us what they were now doing. This is shown in Figure 53.

Figure 53: What care leavers are doing



Based on answers from 174 care leavers.

Of the care leavers taking part in the 2011 care monitor, nearly two thirds (64%) were in some sort of education, 6% were in work, and another 6% were in some form of work training. Nearly one in three (29%) were not in education, employment or training.

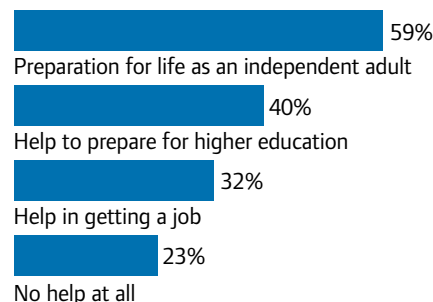
Looking over the past three years, there was a big increase between 2009 and 2010 in the percentage of care leavers staying in some form of education, and the percentage staying in education this year was exactly the same as last year. The percentage of care leavers in work or work training has been falling steadily, from 17% in 2009 to 15% in 2010, and down again to 12% this year. The percentage of care leavers not in education, employment or training had fallen from 36% in 2009 to 21% last year, and risen again this year to 29%.

Support for care leavers

In 2011, 64% of care leavers in the monitor survey told us they had a social worker, and another 21% that they had another sort of caseworker, making a total of **85% of these care leavers who had either a social worker or other caseworker. This is up from 81% last year.**

We had already asked children preparing to leave care what sort of help they were getting to prepare them for their future after leaving care. We now asked young people who had already left care what help and support they were getting for the future. Figure 54 gives their answers.

Figure 54: What help care leavers are getting for their future



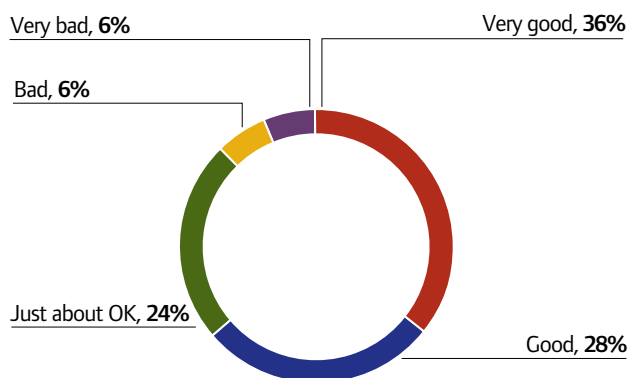
Based on answers from 182 care leavers.

Seventy-seven per cent of the young people who had already left care told us that they were getting definite help as care leavers for their future lives. This was down from the figure of 83% last year. Twenty-three per cent of the care leavers taking part in the 2011 monitor said they were getting no help at all for their future, up from 17% last year.

The help care leavers reported getting was most usually general help in preparing for life as independent adults, followed by help in preparing to enter higher education, followed by help in getting a job. There were no big differences from last year in the percentages getting each sort of help.

Figure 55 shows how care leavers in the 2011 care monitor rated the support they were getting.

Figure 55: How care leavers rate the support they are getting



Based on answers from 184 care leavers.

Overall, **64% of care leavers in the 2011 care monitor rated the support they were getting as good or very good, and 12% as bad or very bad.** These figures are a slight improvement on last year, when 60% rated their support as good or very good, and 16% as bad or very bad. The slight increase in the percentage saying their support was bad or very bad over the three years from 2008 to 2010 has now stopped, and the percentage has gone down again slightly.

Accommodation

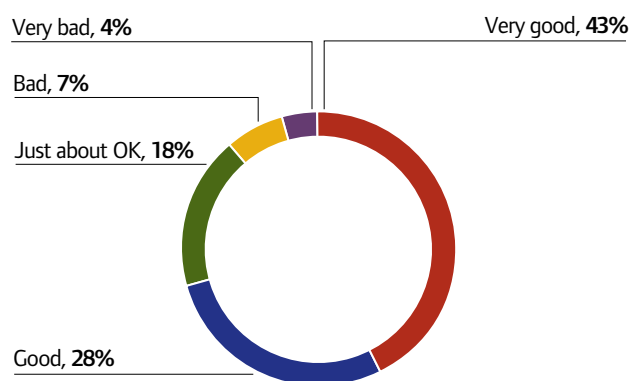
We know from our past consultations with care leavers that accommodation is an important issue for many. In each year's care monitor we check where care leavers are living, how they rate their accommodation, and whether they think the place they are living is right for them. In the 2011 monitor survey, 180 care leavers told us where they were living. The most usual places were: alone in their own flat (29% of care leavers); with their parents (16% of care leavers); and in supported lodgings (12% of care leavers).

There were no other places where as many as one in 10 of the care leavers were living.

The percentage living in their own flat was close to the 27% we found last year. **The percentage of care leavers who are living back with their parents has gone up steadily over the past three years. In 2009, it was 6% of care leavers, in 2010 this had gone up to 10%, and this year it is up again to 16% of care leavers.**

Figure 56 shows how care leavers rated their accommodation in the 2011 care monitor.

Figure 56: The quality of care leavers' accommodation

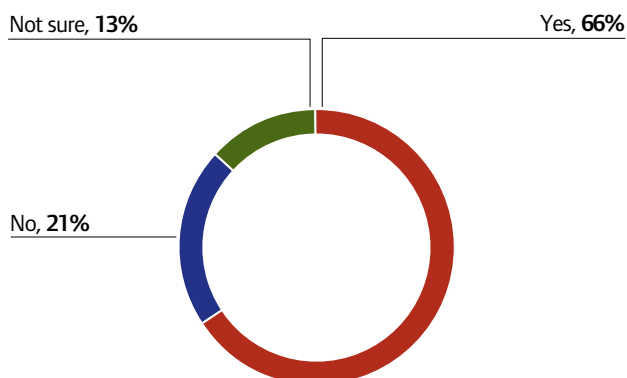


Based on answers from 180 care leavers.

Overall, in 2011 71% of care leavers rated their accommodation as either good or very good, and 11% as bad or very bad. The 2010 figures were 70% and 11%, so there has not been any major change this year in the quality of accommodation for care leavers, as rated by themselves.

Figure 57 shows whether the care leavers thought they were living in the right accommodation for them. This is very different from whether the accommodation itself is good or bad.

Figure 57: Are care leavers living in the right place for them?



Based on answers from 182 care leavers.

Two thirds of the care leavers (66%) thought they were in the right accommodation for them, and just over one in five (21%) thought that they were living in accommodation that was wrong for them. These figures have improved somewhat over the last three years. In 2009, 58% of care leavers said their accommodation was right for them. This had gone up to 64% in 2010 and is up again to 66% this year.

Sixty-six care leavers who thought their accommodation was right for them told us why they thought this. The top reason was that they felt happy, safe and settled there. This was followed by those who said their accommodation suited their needs, and then those who thought their accommodation was right because they had moved back to live with relatives. Then came those who told us it was right because they were still being supported there to become more independent.

As with children in care, being happy and settled was a key reason for care leavers saying they were in the right accommodation. Leaving care to go back home was also an important reason, as were both being independent and having help to be independent.

Care leavers' experience of bullying and discrimination

We asked care leavers whether they were being bullied because they had been in care, and this year 180 care leavers answered this question. **Twenty-four per cent of these care leavers told us they were being bullied because they had been in care.** This has not changed significantly since last year, when the figure was 25%.

For the first time this year, we asked care leavers whether they felt they were discriminated against because they had been in care. **Twenty-six per cent of the 180 care leavers who answered this question told us they are sometimes or often discriminated against for having been in care. Over half (54%) said they are never discriminated against for having been in care.**

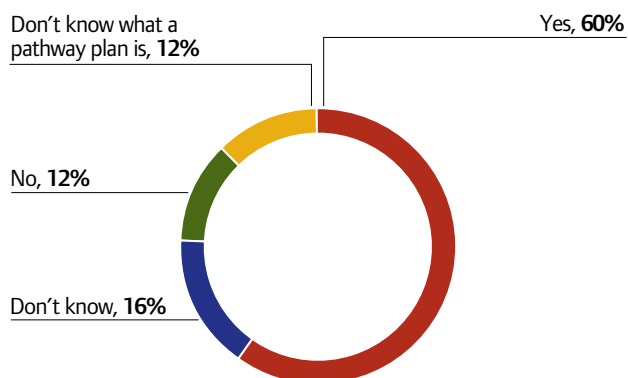
Effects of budget cuts

We know that 15% of children still in care who answered our question about budget cuts reported that they were being personally affected by their council having less money. We asked the same question of care leavers this year. **Twenty-four per cent of care leavers said that their council having less money had affected them personally.**

Pathway plans

Plans for care leavers and their support are called 'pathway plans'. Just as we asked children in care about their care plans, we asked care leavers about their pathway plans. Figure 58 shows our findings for 2011.

Figure 58: Do care leavers have pathway plans?



Based on answers from 182 care leavers.

Six out of 10 care leavers (60%) in the 2011 monitor told us they had a pathway plan. One in eight (12%) didn't know what a pathway plan is. Sixteen per cent knew what a pathway plan was but didn't know whether or not they had one. One in eight (12%) knew what a pathway plan was but told us they definitely didn't have one.

The percentage of care leavers who told us they definitely had a pathway plan fell between 2009 and 2010, but then did not change more than one percentage point from last year to this year. **The percentage of care leavers who said they didn't know what a pathway plan was has been rising very slightly but steadily over the last four years, from 6% in 2008 to 7% in 2009, 9% in 2010, and then 12% this year.** The percentage of care leavers who know what a pathway plan is but report that they haven't got one has not changed more than one percentage point over the last three years.

Out of the care leavers who told us they had pathway plans in 2011, 87% told us they knew what was in it. This was a big improvement on the figure of 77% last year.

The percentage of care leavers who both knew about their pathway plans and told us they had a say in what was in their plans has stayed exactly the same as last year, at 78%.

The percentage of care leavers who told us they agreed with their pathway plans has gone up this year to 76%, from 68% last year.

This year, 70% of care leavers who knew about their pathway plans told us their plans were being kept to. This is close to last year's figure of 71%.



Appendix

I am grateful as always to the children and staff of the establishments, local authorities and services that took part in the annual care monitor. I look forward to working with many of them again in next year's care monitor.

Children and young people from the following all took part in the 2011 monitor.

Boarding Schools

Abingdon School
Bellerby's College
Canford School
Coral College
Denstone College
Downe House School
Kingswood School
New Hall School
Queenswood School
Sherborne International College
St Bede's School
St Felix School
St Lawrence College
St Mary's School
Thomas Adams School

Children's Homes

21 Avondale Street
49 Liscard Road
Beech Tree Children's Home
Broadfields
Brookfield House
Burbank Children's Home
Godbey House
Handstand
Jackanory Cottage
Kingfisher
Lower Lodge Cottage
Lower Roach End Farm
Marsden Hall Road
Moor Lane
Northampton Road
Peartree
Routledge Road
Shawclough
The Forum School
The Oaks

Independent Fostering Agencies

Eden Foster Care
Focus on Fostering Ltd
Foster Care Associates – South West
Foster Care Link
Foster CARES Limited
Fostering North East
Fostering People Ltd
Fostering People Too Ltd
Fosterplus Ltd
Futures for Children
Hillcrest Care – Orange Grove FosterCare
Hope Fostering Services
Jay Fostering
Moments
National Fostering Agency Limited
Nene Valley Fostering Agency
Nexus Fostering
Oasis Fostering Services
Phoenix Fostering
SWAP Foster Care
TACT East London
The Adolescent and Children's Trust

Further Education Colleges

Askham Bryan College
Bridgwater College
Chichester College
Duchy College
Easton College
Grantham College
Moulton College
Myerscough College
Peter Symonds College
RNIB College

Local Authorities

Bath & North East Somerset
Birmingham
Blackpool
Bournemouth
Bracknell Forest
Bradford
Brighton & Hove
Bristol
Buckinghamshire
Bury
Central Bedfordshire
Cheshire West & Chester
City of York
Cornwall
Coventry
Darlington
Devon
Doncaster
Dorset
East Riding
East Sussex
Essex
Gateshead
Gloucestershire
Hampshire
Herefordshire
Hertfordshire
Isle of Wight
Kent
Kirklees
Knowsley
Lancashire
Leicester City
London Borough of Brent
London Borough of Enfield
London Borough of Greenwich
London Borough of Hackney
London Borough of Harrow
London Borough of Hounslow
London Borough of Islington
London Borough of Kensington & Chelsea
London Borough of Lambeth

London Borough of Waltham Forest
Medway
Milton Keynes
Newcastle
Norfolk
North Lincolnshire
Northumberland
Nottinghamshire
Oldham
Peterborough
Redcar & Cleveland
Sefton
Shropshire
Solihull
South Gloucestershire
South Tyneside
Southampton
Southend on Sea
Staffordshire
Stockport
Stockton-on-Tees
Stoke-on-Trent
Swindon
Telford & Wrekin
Torbay
West Berkshire
West Sussex
Wirral
Wolverhampton
Worcestershire

Residential Special Schools

Birkett House
Charlton School
Clarence High School
Cloughwood Special School
Doucecroft School
Downland School
Falconer School
Fred Nicholson School
Furness School
High Close School
Lakeside School

Maplewell Hall
Mossbrook School
Northfield School
Priory School
Romans Field
Shenstone Lodge School
Southlands School
St Catherine's School
St Francis Community Special School
St Mary's School
Talbot House
The National Centre for Young People with Epilepsy
Valence School
Westlands School
William Henry Smith School
Witherslack Hall School
Woodeaton Manor School

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