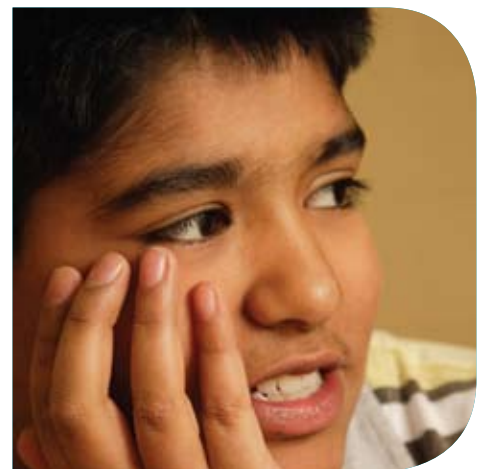


# Children's care monitor 2008

Children's views on how care is doing

A report by the Children's Rights Director



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your say  
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# About the Children's Rights Director



Roger Morgan, Children's Rights Director for England

My duties as Children's Rights Director for England are set out by law.<sup>1</sup> With my team, the law says I must ask children and young people for their views about how they are looked after when they are living away from home, or being helped by council children's social care services.

The children and young people the law says I must ask are those living in children's homes, boarding schools, foster care, residential special schools, further education colleges, adoption placements, or residential family centres, those who are getting help from council social care services, and those who have left care.

All my reports of children's and young peoples' views are published. You can find them on our children's website, [www.rights4me.org](http://www.rights4me.org), or on the Ofsted website [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). I also send every report to Government ministers, key people in Parliament, every council children's services department in England, and the people at Ofsted who do inspections of services for children. What children and young people have said through these reports has led to important changes to decisions about looking after children made by the Government and local councils.

As well as asking children and young people for their views, I and my team must give advice about children's rights and welfare to Her Majesty's Chief Inspector at Ofsted and to the Government. We have a duty to raise issues we think are important about the rights and welfare of children living away from home or being helped by council social care services. We can raise things that are important for just one child who has got in touch with us, or issues about government or council decisions that affect lots of children.

We try to write all our reports so that they can easily be read by children and young people, and by Government ministers. I hope that we have managed that with this report!

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

<sup>1</sup> In section 120 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, and the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Children's Rights Director) Regulations 2007.



# Introduction to the Children's care monitor

When we ask children for their views and write a report of what they tell us, we usually ask about a particular issue – such as bullying, or how children think they should be kept safe. But over the last year or so, children have told us they think some things are so important to children and young people that we should check with children about them every year. That way, we can see what is changing and what is getting better or worse for children.

That is exactly what the *Children's care monitor* is. Every year from now on we will report what children and young people tell us about six things they have said are important to their lives. Those things are: **keeping safe, bullying, having a say in what happens to them, making complaints and suggestions, education, and care planning for people being looked after in care.**

Each year, starting with this year, 2008, we are asking children and young people living away from home or getting help from children's social care services to tell us what is happening for them in each of these six areas. We asked children and young people from across England to tell us about their experiences of these six things. We chose the places we invited children from at random so everyone had an equal chance of being invited to take part. Children gave their views through a web survey on our own website ([www.rights4me.org](http://www.rights4me.org)), and we gave out passwords so that only people we had invited could take part in the survey. This year, **921 children and young people took part, from 102 different children's services, homes, schools and colleges.** This is a big survey, and taking part was as fair and representative as we could make it.

Next year, we will go back to the same children and young people, plus some new ones, to ask the same questions again. Then we will be able to compare next year's results with the ones in this report to see what children tell us has changed between 2008 and 2009. We will publish that in next year's monitor.

Like all our reports, this one sets out exactly what the children and young people told us. We have not added our own views or comments, and we have not left out anything the children said that we might disagree with. This is the children's own monitor of how things were for them in 2008.

# The children and young people who took part

Out of the 921 children and young people who took part in this year's monitoring survey, the youngest was aged five and the oldest was a care leaver of 22. The middle age out of everyone who took part in the survey was 14. Forty-four per cent were aged 13 or under and 56% were 14 or over. Fifty-six per cent were boys and 44% were girls. Fourteen of the children had a disability which made it difficult for them to fill in a web survey, so they filled in a special questionnaire for us which asked them questions using 'Widgit' symbols.

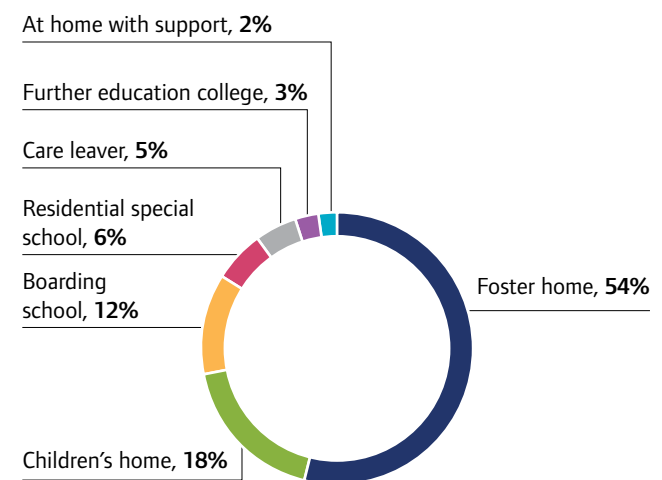
Not every child or young person answered every question, so fewer than 921 people answered each question. We have not given results where we think too few people answered a question to give us a reliable result.

Fifteen per cent of the children told us they had a disability. A quarter of these said their disability was attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), just under one in five said it was a learning disability, another one in five said they had a physical disability, and just under one in six said they had autism or Asperger's syndrome. Ten children said they had dyslexia.

Eighty-seven per cent of the children told us they were white, 6% that they were black, 3% said they were Asian, and 4% that they were from a mixed background.

The chart shows where the children were living at the time they filled in the survey:

Where the children lived



As the chart shows, almost all the children and young people were living away from home, and over half were living in foster homes. Seven per cent were either living in their own homes as care leavers, or were children living with their own parents with help from social care services.

In this report, we checked whether different groups of children and young people gave very different answers to the questions. The different groups we looked at were boys and girls, those aged under 14 and those aged 14 and over, and those who said they had a disability and those who didn't. We also checked whether people living in different types of places (such as children's homes or foster care) gave very different answers. Where we found very different answers, we have said this in the report.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> We counted differences of 10 percentage points or more in answers from different groups as big enough to write about.



# Keeping safe

## Where children feel safe and unsafe

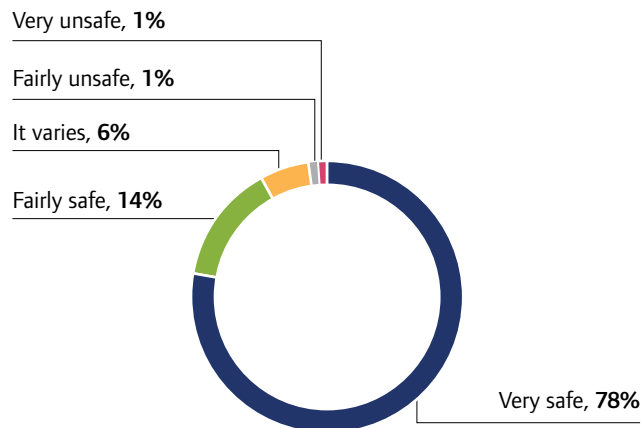
Our first survey questions were about how safe children and young people felt in different places. Overall:

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

## In the building where children live

The chart shows how safe children and young people felt in the building where they live.

How safe do you feel in the building where you live?



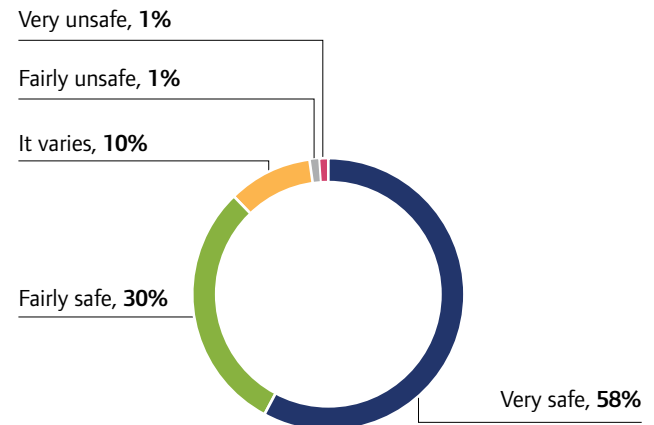
Over nine out of ten (92%) felt fairly or very safe in the building where they live, and only 2% felt fairly or very unsafe. There were no big differences between boys and girls, those aged under or over 14, or for those with a disability.

Fewer care leavers than others felt safe in the building where they were living. Fewer than three quarters of care leavers (73%) felt fairly or very safe, and one in ten felt fairly or very unsafe. **Children living in children's homes were more likely to say that how safe they were varied from time to time.** Few in children's homes felt unsafe, but fewer felt fairly or very safe either; exactly three quarters of those in children's homes felt fairly or very safe compared with over nine out of ten for everyone in the survey.

## At school or college

The next chart shows how safe children felt at their school or college.

How safe do you feel at school or college?



Nearly nine out of ten (88%) felt fairly or very safe at school or college, and only 2% felt fairly or very unsafe. There were no big differences between boys and girls, or between those aged under 14 and those aged 14 plus. Those who said they had a disability generally felt as safe as everyone else at school or college. There were **no big differences between people who lived at their school or college, or who went there each day from somewhere else.**



**Three quarters (76%) felt safe or very safe in the countryside, and 8% felt fairly or very unsafe.** This time, there were no big differences between boys and girls, and those aged under 14 and those aged 14 plus, or between those with a disability and everyone else. But **far fewer care leavers and children living at home with their own families felt safe in the countryside, and far more of those living in boarding schools (rather than residential special schools) felt safe in the countryside.** Nine out of ten boarders in boarding schools felt fairly or very safe in the countryside, but only 62% of care leavers and 38% of those living at home with council support felt fairly or very safe.

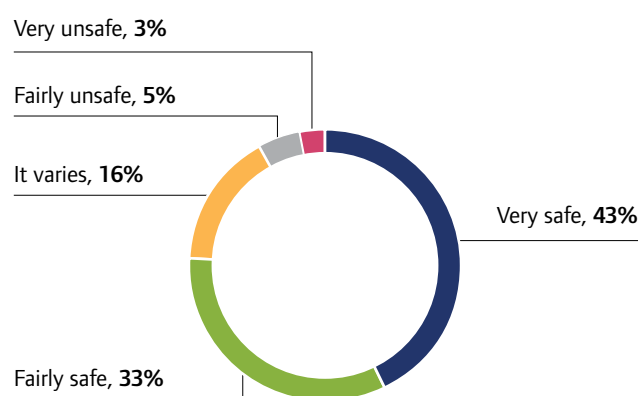
### In the town or city

The last of these charts shows how safe children and young people felt in the town or city.

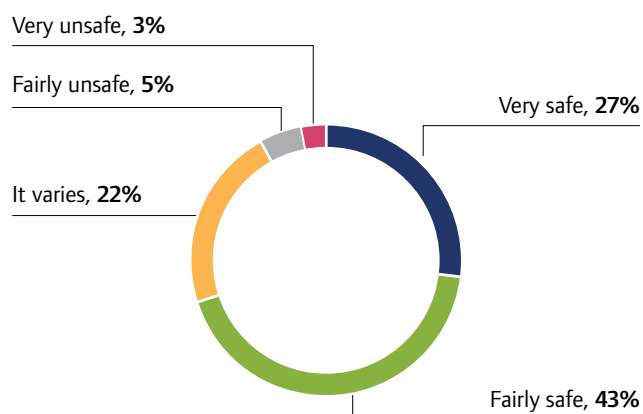
### In the countryside

The next chart shows how safe children and young people felt in the countryside.

How safe do you feel in the countryside?



How safe do you feel in the town or city?



**Just over two thirds (70%) felt very or fairly safe in the town or city, but 8% felt fairly or very unsafe.** Again there were no big differences between boys and girls, or between those aged under 14 and those aged 14 plus.

This time, though, there were some big differences between people living in different places. **Children and young people living with their own families at home and young people living at further education colleges were less likely to feel safe in the town or city.** Only half of those living in further education colleges said they felt very safe or fairly safe in the town or city. Only 43% of those living with their own families at home felt safe or fairly safe.

Just as many children with a disability felt safe or very safe, but **one in five (21%) of children with a disability felt fairly or very unsafe in the town or city.** This was much more than the 8% of everyone in the survey who felt fairly or very unsafe in the town or city.

Although just as many children living in residential special schools said they felt very safe or fairly safe in the town or city, **more children in residential special schools felt fairly or very unsafe in the town or city.** Eighteen per cent of those in residential special schools felt fairly or very unsafe compared with 8% for everyone in the survey.

## Helping children feel safer

We asked what would make children and young people feel safer in general. We did not give any suggested answers. **Around one in six said there was nothing that would make them feel generally safer. Around one in eight said that being with adults they trust would always make them feel safer.** Seven per cent said that having more police or security guards around would make them feel generally safer. Most children gave very different answers, including having more street lights, going around with friends, having fewer dangerous criminals around and having fewer bullies around.

*'I feel safe already well most of the time'*

*'When you watch the news you see and hear about all these murders and stabbing or rapes or burglaries etc and when you see that it make you think it could happen to you and it play on my mind where ever I am'*

What would make you feel safer in general?

*'Living with grown up trusted people'*

What would make you feel safer in general?

*'My own awareness to everything around me'*

## Dangers to children

We asked what children and young people saw as the biggest danger to people their age. Again, we did not give any suggested answers. Here is the list of the top dangers (the numbers tell you how many children wrote each one):

Drugs	197 children
Strangers and kidnappers	120 children
Alcohol	120 children
Bullying	73 children
Road accidents	56 children
Rapists	52 children
Violence	50 children
Knives	40 children
Gangs	38 children
Paedophiles	35 children
Smoking	34 children

There was one main difference between boys and girls in what they listed as a danger, and that was alcohol. **Nearly a quarter of girls (24%) saw alcohol as a danger, compared with 11% of boys.**

**Younger children more often listed strangers and kidnappers as a danger, and older children more often listed drugs and alcohol.**

The table shows the percentages of each age group who listed each of these dangers.

	Under 14s	14 plus
Strangers and kidnappers	28%	9%
Drugs	19%	38%
Alcohol	9%	27%

Children with a disability generally listed the same dangers as everyone else.

What is the biggest danger to people your age?  
*'Ourselves. Lack of responsibility and perhaps even lack of understanding of consequences'*

*'The biggest danger to people my age is kidnapping'*

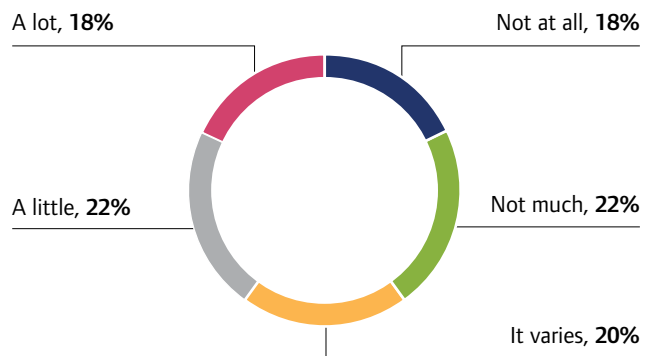
What is the biggest danger to people your age?  
*'Peer pressure into drugs and drink'*

**Worrying about safety**

From talking to children and young people, we know that worrying about being unsafe can be just as bad as actually being unsafe. So we asked how much children and young people worry about their safety.

The next chart shows how much children and young people in our survey worry about their safety.

How much do you worry about your safety?

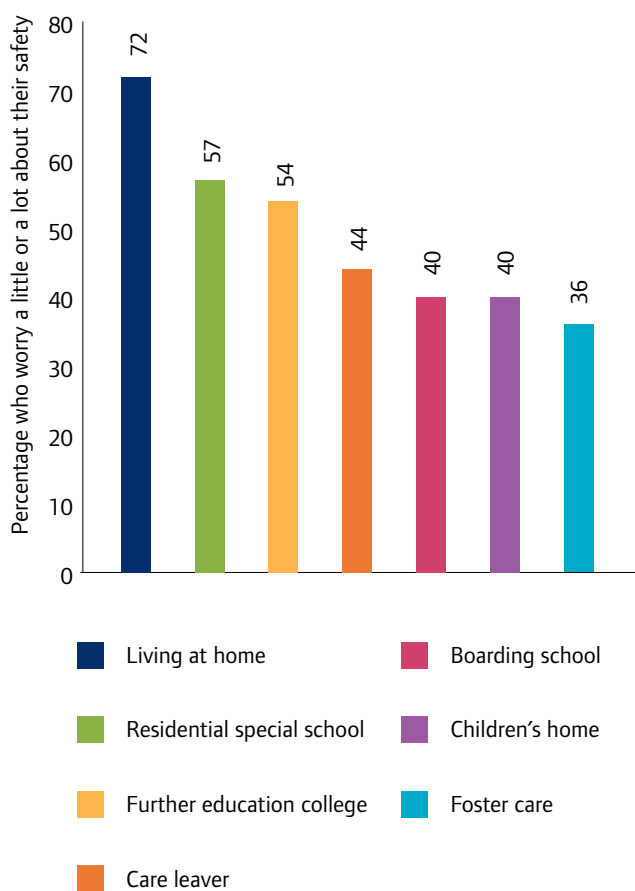


Children varied very much in how much they worried about safety, from those who said 'not at all' through to those who said 'a lot'. **Four in ten children (40%) worried either a little or a lot about their safety. Exactly the same percentage didn't worry much or at all.**

There was no big difference between boys and girls in how many said they worried about their safety. There was also no big difference between children with a disability and other children. **Young people aged 14 and over were just as likely as children under 14 to worry as little or a lot, but more of those aged under 14 told us they didn't worry much or at all about their own safety.** Forty-nine per cent of the under 14s said they didn't worry much or at all, compared with 39% of those aged 14 and over.

The next chart shows the percentages of children in each type of placement who told us they worried either a little or a lot about their safety. Overall, **the children and young people who worried most about their safety were those living at home with their own families, followed by those in residential special schools. The figures for those in boarding schools and children’s homes came in the middle, and children in foster care worried least.**

Worrying about safety



*'As long as you're confident you won't be touched – from experience'*

*'Be aware of the danger of strangers'*

*'Be aware of the people you are with, the place you are in, and the dangers which may lie there'*

*'Always keep an adult with u'*

*'I am worried about being on my own'*

*'I keep my bedroom window shut and make sure that the doors are locked so burglars can't get in'*

### Asking for help

We asked who children and young people would go to for help if they didn't feel safe. Here are the top answers (as usual, the numbers are the numbers of children and young people who gave each answer – each person could give more than one answer):

A friend	508 children
A parent	471 children
Foster carer	466 children
Police	464 children
Teacher	443 children
Social worker	415 children
Someone else in the family	378 children
Brother or sister	363 children
Staff where I live	260 children
The person in charge of where I live	238 children
An older young person	140 children
A telephone helpline	113 children

**Boys were less likely than girls to go to a foster carer, and were less likely to go to their social worker, but boys were much more likely than girls to go to a teacher.**

Younger children (aged under 14) were more likely than those aged 14 plus to go to a parent, foster carer, the police, a teacher, their social worker, someone else in their family (though not much more likely to go to their brother or sister), to the person in charge of where they live, or to use a helpline.

The top four people for under 14s to go to were a foster carer, followed by a teacher, followed equally by a parent or the police. The top four people for those aged 14 plus to go to were a friend (60% said they would go to a friend), followed by the police, then a parent, then their social worker.

The top four people those living in children's homes said they would go to were the staff of the home (64% said they would go to staff), followed by the police, with a friend or their social worker scoring equally after that.

For those living in foster care, the top person to go to was their foster carer (87%), then they were equally likely to go to a friend or their social worker, then the police.

Boarders in boarding schools said they would be most likely to go to a parent (77% of boarders would go to their parent), followed by a friend, then a teacher, then a brother or sister.

For children in residential special schools, the top three people they were most likely to go to were a parent, a teacher and the care staff – these all scored the same, with 76% of children giving each answer. Next came the police.

Students living in further education colleges said they would be most likely to go to a friend (73% said this), followed by a parent, then college staff, then someone else in their family.

Care leavers were most likely to go to a friend (63% said this), followed by the police, then their social worker (or leaving care worker) and then their parent or someone else in their family.



For children living at home with their families, the most likely person to go to was a parent (89% said this), followed by a friend, and they were then equally likely to go to the police or a teacher. Fewer than half (42%) would go to their social worker if they were feeling unsafe, which is important to know, because they were being supported by the council.

The top people for children with a disability to go to were a teacher (55%), then a friend, followed by a parent.

**Fifteen children (just under 2% of the 908 children who answered the question) said that there was nobody at all they could go to if they felt unsafe.** Most (11) of these 15 were boys, all were aged at least 13, and they lived in different sorts of placement.

We asked whether children and young people would go to an advocate if they felt unsafe. Altogether, **8% said they would go to an advocate.** Children in children's homes were twice as likely as children generally to say they would go to an advocate.

## Accidents

To find out more about accidents, we asked what accidents children thought were most likely to happen to someone of their own age. Here are the top ten likely accidents, with the numbers of children giving each answer:

Road traffic accident	329 children
Results of too much alcohol	72 children
Falling over	72 children
Injury during fighting	70 children
Results of drugs	66 children
Being stabbed or shot	42 children
Sports injury	41 children
Cycling/skateboarding accident	38 children
Broken bones	35 children
Being kidnapped	32 children

**Road traffic accidents are seen by children as by far the most likely to happen.** Forty-six per cent of the 709 people who answered this question saw road accidents as among the most likely accidents to happen to people their age. The other things on the list are a mixture of things that young people might bring on themselves (like the results of drugs or too much alcohol), accidents during activities like sports or skateboarding, and the results of other people committing serious crimes like stabbing, shooting or kidnapping.

There were no big differences between boys and girls in likely accidents. But **children aged under 14 thought road accidents were more likely to happen to them than did those aged 14 plus.** Fifty-six per cent of under 14s thought road accidents were the most likely thing to happen to them, compared with 43% of the over 14s. **Younger children thought falling over was more likely to happen to them than over 14s did, while the older young people thought they were more likely than the under 14s to have accidents because of drugs or too much alcohol.**

Children and young people with disabilities saw themselves as likely to have much the same sorts of accidents as all other children and young people.

*'Staying safe is about looking at whats around you and caring for the people around you'*

*'You need to stay safe to be happy and cheerful'*

*'Where I live, the boys give us girls their numbers so that if we are in trouble or need help, then we ring them and they come and help'*

*'Night times it is scary to travel especially at the weekends. Towns and all the stations are surrounded by people who are looking for trouble'*

*'Just remember – safety in numbers'*

*'I have a limited understanding of safety. I rely on other people ... to keep me safe'*

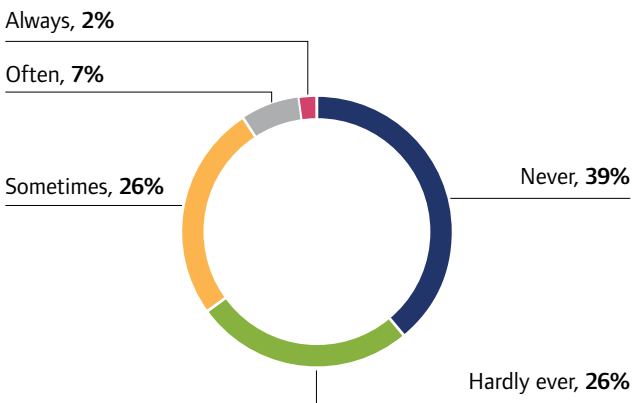
# Bullying

## How much bullying there is

To keep a check each year on whether bullying is getting more, staying the same or getting less for children living away from home or at home with help from children's social care, we have started asking the same question each year about how often children and young people say they get bullied. We do not say what we think counts as bullying, but, as in our other reports about bullying, we leave it to children themselves to decide whether what is happening to them counts as bullying. We do, however, ask them what exactly happens to them.

Here are the figures for how often children are being bullied in 2008.

How often are you bullied?



**Nine per cent of children and young people say they are being bullied often or always, and 65% say they are hardly ever or never bullied. Thirty-nine per cent say they are never bullied.**

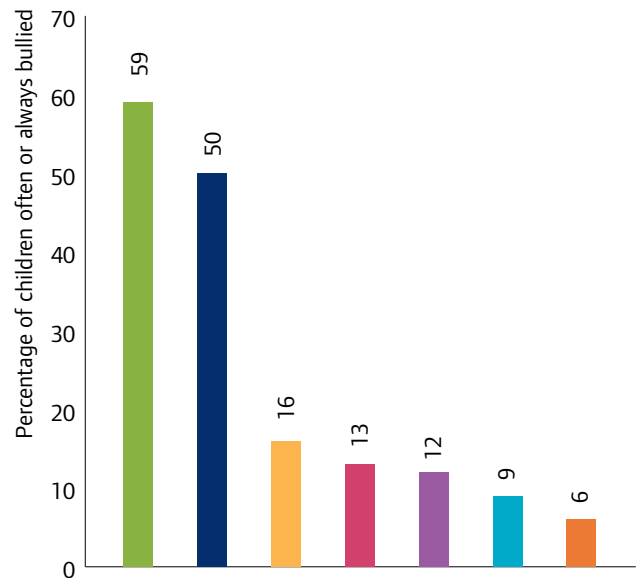
There was hardly any difference between boys and girls in how much they are being bullied. Older young people were more likely to say they were never being bullied. **Forty-two per cent of over 14s said they are never bullied, compared with 31% of under 14s.**

## Children with a disability were more likely to be bullied.

Twenty per cent of children with a disability were being bullied often or always, compared with 9% for all children, and 43% of children with a disability said they were never or hardly ever bullied, compared with 67% for everyone.

Bullying varied a lot between different sorts of placement. The next chart shows the percentage of children and young people in each type of placement who said they were being bullied often or always.

Being bullied



- Living at home
- Boarding school
- Residential special school
- Children's home
- Further education college
- Foster care
- Care leaver





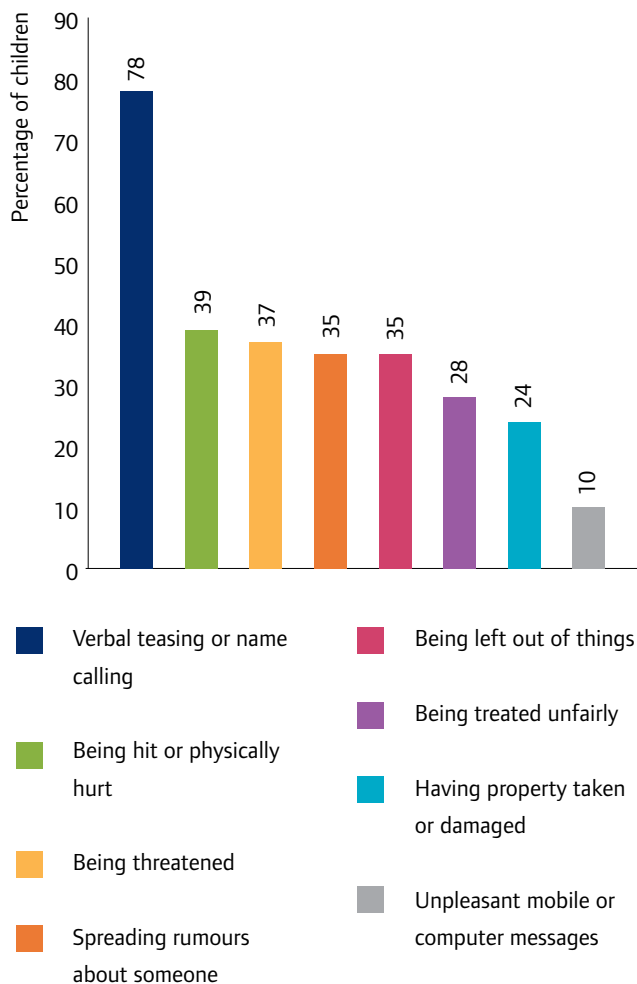
From this chart, it is clear that **there is most bullying in residential special schools, where over half the children report being bullied often or always, followed by half the children living at home reporting being bullied often or always. Care leavers and those in foster care report the least bullying.**

### What bullying is

Because we let people decide for themselves whether what happened to them counted as bullying or not, we then asked what exactly happened when they were being bullied. We did not make any suggestions, and people could give more than one answer.

The next chart gives the most common sorts of bullying the children told us about. Altogether, 520 children told us about their experience of being bullied for this question. The numbers on the chart tell us what percentage each sort of bullying is, out of all the bullying reported by the children.

## What bullying is



Verbal bullying was by far the most common, especially name calling. Just over three quarters (78%) of all reported bullying was verbal, followed by 39% being physical.

Using our rule that a difference of 10 percentage points or more counts as a big difference, there were some big differences in the sort of bullying reported by boys and girls. **Boys were more likely to be hit or physically hurt (48% of boys reported this happening to them, compared with 27% of girls). Girls were more likely to be left out of things by other people (42% of girls reported this happening to them, compared with 29% of boys).** There were no big differences between boys and girls in how much verbal teasing or name calling they reported.

**Children aged under 14 were more likely to report being teased or called names than young people aged 14 plus.**

**Children and young people with a disability reported very similar sorts of bullying to everyone else.**

Where you lived also made a difference to the ways you might get bullied. **Children in children's homes reported being more likely than most to be threatened or to have their property taken or damaged. Children in residential special schools reported being more likely than most to be hit or hurt, to be threatened, to be treated unfairly, and to have unpleasant mobile or computer messages sent to them.** Fifty six per cent of those in residential special schools reported being hit or hurt, compared with 39% for all children.

**Children in boarding schools reported being more likely than most to be treated unfairly, but less likely than most to be threatened or to get unpleasant phone or computer messages. Young people in further education colleges reported being more likely than most to have rumours spread about them, to be left out of things, to be treated unfairly, or to have unpleasant phone or computer messages sent about them. Children living at home reported being more likely than most to be threatened, but less likely to have rumours spread about them.**

*'being bullied because of my colour'*

*'Sometimes it could be just joking about'*

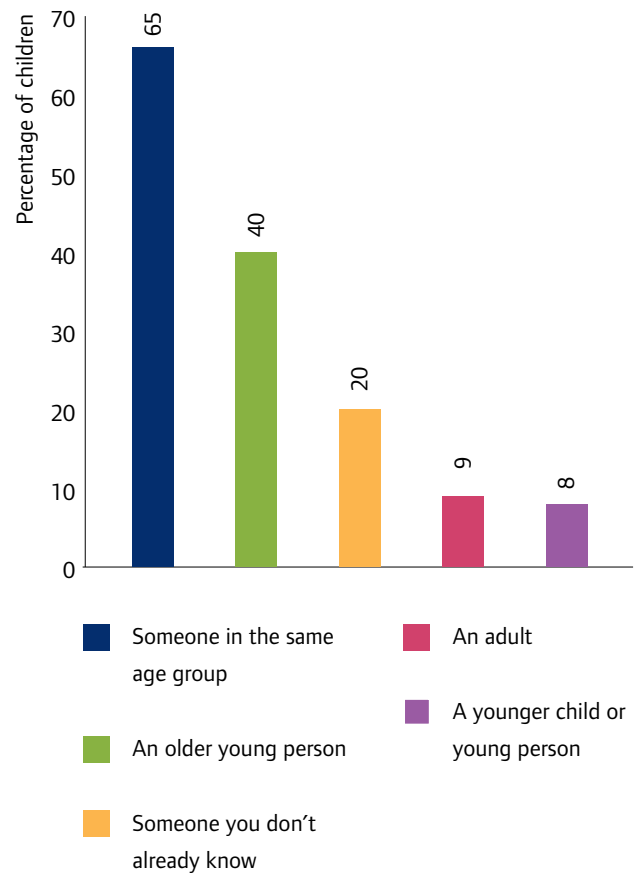
*'Peer pressure and people making me scared of them'*



## Who does the bullying

The next chart shows who children said they were usually bullied by. Altogether, 536 children told us about this. Again, the numbers on the chart tell us what percentage of all bullying is by each sort of person.

Who does the bullying?



**Nearly two thirds (65%) of all bullying is done by someone of much the same age as the child or young person who is being bullied.** Forty per cent is done by a young person older than the child being bullied. Although the percentage is not big, some children reported being bullied by adults – a total of 47 children told us they were being bullied by adults.

There was one big difference between boys and girls this time. **Boys were more likely than girls to be bullied by a child or young person older than themselves.** Forty-nine per cent of the bullies reported by boys were children or young people older than themselves, compared with 35% for girls.

As we might expect, **younger children were more likely to report being bullied by someone older than themselves.** Forty-nine per cent of the bullies reported by the under 14s were older than they were, compared with 34% for the over 14s.

**Children with a disability were more likely than everyone else to report being bullied by someone they don't already know.** Thirty per cent of children with a disability reported being bullied by someone they didn't know, compared with 20% of all children.

There were some big differences between who children in different sorts of placement said they were being bullied by. **Being bullied by someone older was more likely in residential special schools and boarding schools, and for children living at home with their families. Being bullied by someone in your own age group was less likely in residential special schools. Being bullied by an adult and being bullied by someone you don't know were both more likely in further education colleges and for care leavers.**

## Being bullied for being in care

From our discussions with children and young people in consultations before this one, we know that some children tell us they are bullied because they are in care, or come from a children's home or foster home.

Altogether, 618 children in care answered this question. **Just over one in five (21%) said they are bullied because they are in care.** We also had answers to this question from 26 care leavers and, of these, seven (27%) said they were being bullied because they used to be in care.

There was no difference at all between the under 14s and the over 14s in how likely they were to be bullied for being in care. Having a disability as well as being in care didn't make children more likely to be bullied for being in care. Children from children's homes were slightly more likely than children in foster care to be bullied for being in care, although the difference wasn't quite enough to count as a big difference. Twenty-eight per cent of children from children's homes reported being bullied for being in care, compared with 19% from foster homes.

*'Sometimes I have had nasty comments made like "yeah you can see why no one wants you and your in foster care"'*

*'Bullies are often being bullied themselves'*

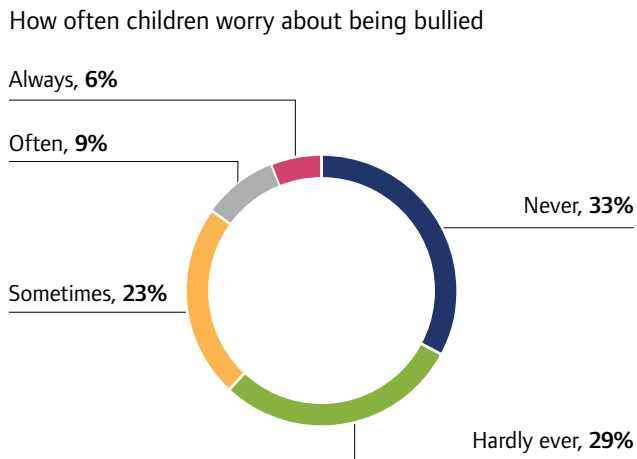
*'You only get bullied if you make yourself upset about it'*

*'I have bullied in the past, but then its whether u get bullied or u bully someone else. I have always taken the cowards way out but then when I went into secure and we had this bully day it made me realise the effect it has on other people'*

*["Secure" means a secure children's home where children are locked in for their own safety or the safety of other people.]*

## Worrying about bullying

The next chart shows how much children and young people say they worry about bullying.



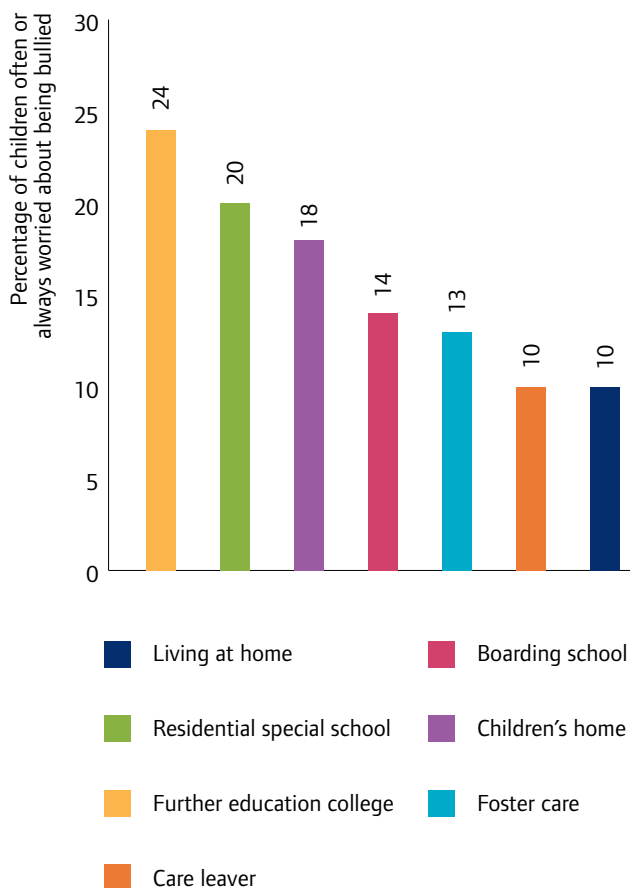
**Fifteen per cent of children are often or always worried about getting bullied, while 62% never or hardly ever worry about it.**

As we have seen, 9% of children told us they are actually being bullied often or always, and 65% said they are never or hardly ever bullied. As we would expect, the **people who worry more about bullying are the ones who are being bullied more**. Eighty per cent of children who are always being bullied worry often or always about it, compared with 71% of those who are often being bullied and 18% of those who are sometimes bullied. Only 8% of those who are hardly ever bullied said they worry often or always about it.

We already know that children with a disability are more likely than other people to be bullied, and we found that they also worry much more than others about being bullied. **Over a quarter (27%) of children with a disability worry often or always about being bullied, compared with 15% for all children. Forty per cent of children with a disability say they never or hardly ever worry about being bullied, compared with 62% for all children.**

The next chart shows the percentage of children and young people in different types of placement who told us they worry often or always about being bullied.

## Worrying about being bullied



**More people in further education colleges and residential special schools worry about being bullied, while the fewest worry among care leavers and children living at home.**

We worked out scores to compare being worried about being bullied with actual bullying. Each score is out of 200, and the higher the score, the more people are being bullied or are worrying about being bullied.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> We counted 2 each time someone said they 'always' worried, and 1 each time someone said they 'often' worried, then we took away 1 each time someone said they 'hardly ever' worried and took away 2 each time someone said they 'never' worried. Then we amended our scores to make them all out of 200.

The scores are on the next chart. The top row of numbers gives the scores for worrying about bullying, and the numbers in the middle are the scores for how much bullying actually happens. It is clear that, wherever they live, slightly more children worry about bullying than are actually being bullied. On average, the score for worrying about being bullied is 62, and the score for actually getting bullied is 55. The difference is not big, but it is one we will be checking in future years, to see how worrying about bullying might change compared with how bullying itself might change.

Children living in residential special schools are the most likely to be bullied, and worry a lot about bullying. Young people living in further education colleges or at home with council support are far more likely to worry about bullying than to get bullied. We know that children with a disability are more likely to get bullied than other people, and there were more children with a disability in residential special schools than in any other setting. Nearly half (48%) of the children in residential special schools told us that they had a disability.

Boarders in boarding schools are the least likely to worry about bullying that is unlikely to happen.

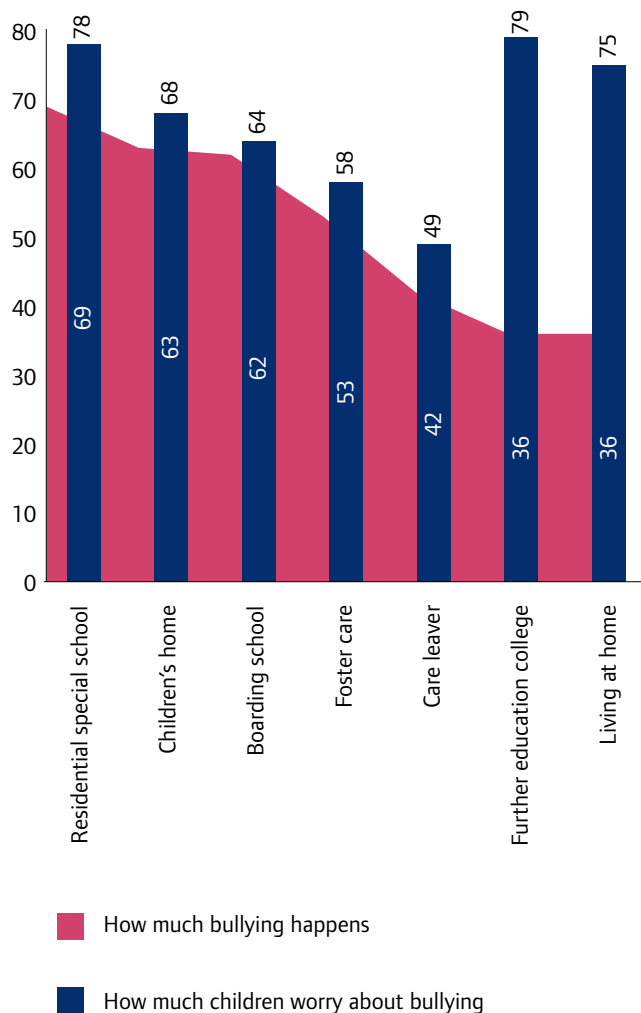
*'I always think that someone is going to bully me'*

*'I get bullied because of my Dad and what he did'*

*'I was bullied in the past quite badly but I think this was largely to do with my Cerebral Palsy'*

*'People try to provoke me because of my anger problems'*

Worrying about bullying compared with how much bullying happens





# Having a say in what happens

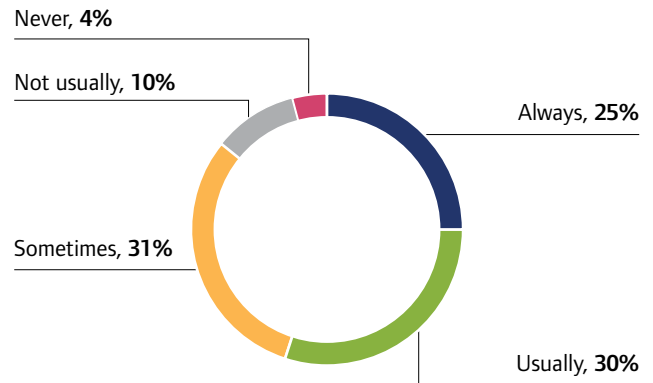
## How much children are asked for their opinions

There are many laws and guidelines nowadays that say it is important that children, especially children in care or living away from home, are asked for their views, and that their views are taken into account. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (a treaty this country has signed up to) says that children must be given a say in things that matter to them. This section of the *Children's Care Monitor* reports how much children told us they are asked for their opinions about things that matter to them, and how much their opinions count when decisions are made.

The laws and guidelines do say that how much children's views are taken into account depends on how much they can understand what the decision is about. We did not ignore any answers from children with any disabilities, or younger children, because we assumed that if they were able to understand enough to fill in these questions, they were also likely to be able to understand enough to have their views taken into account about decisions too.

The next chart shows how often children told us they get asked for their opinions about things that matter to them.

How often children are asked their opinions on things that matter



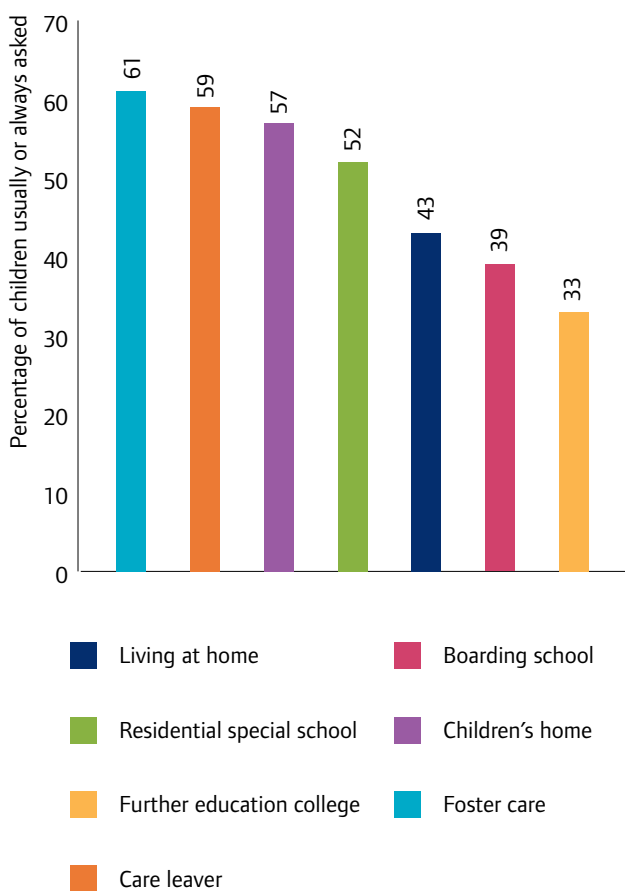
The majority of children and young people in our survey, **55%**, said their opinions were usually or always asked on things that mattered to them, while **14%** said they were not usually or never asked. Older young people were asked their opinions more than younger children. **Sixty-one per cent of those aged 14 plus were usually or always asked their opinions, compared with 51% of those under 14.** There was no big difference between boys and girls for how often they were asked their opinions. Children with disabilities were asked as much as other children.





Where they were living made a lot of difference to how much children were asked for their opinions. Children in foster care were asked most, and those living in further education colleges least. The next chart shows the percentages of children living in each sort of placement who said that they were usually or always asked their opinions about things that matter to them.

How many children are asked their opinions in different placements



*'I think we could be included a bit more in the decisions that are made about us'*

*'The staff talk to me about everything and listen to me'*

*'My social worker never lets me have my say which makes me run away just so I can be heard'*

*'My lack of understanding and limited communication skills make it difficult for me to have my say'*

*'I tend to not say what I feel so things aren't always what I want them to be'*

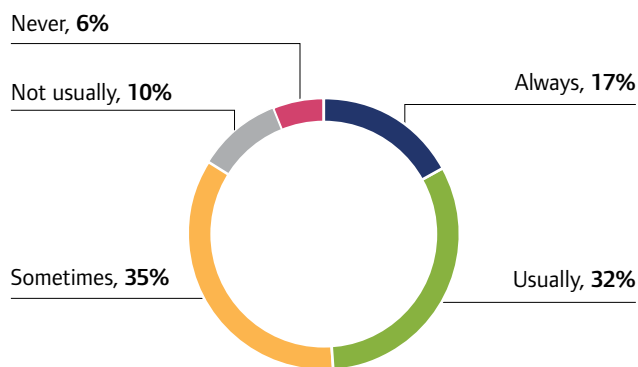
*'I wouldn't have had so many placements if someone would just listen to me'*

### How much difference children's opinions make

As well as being asked for their opinions, we want to monitor how much notice is taken of children's opinions when decisions are being made about their lives.

The next chart shows how often children said their opinions made a difference to decisions about their lives.

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

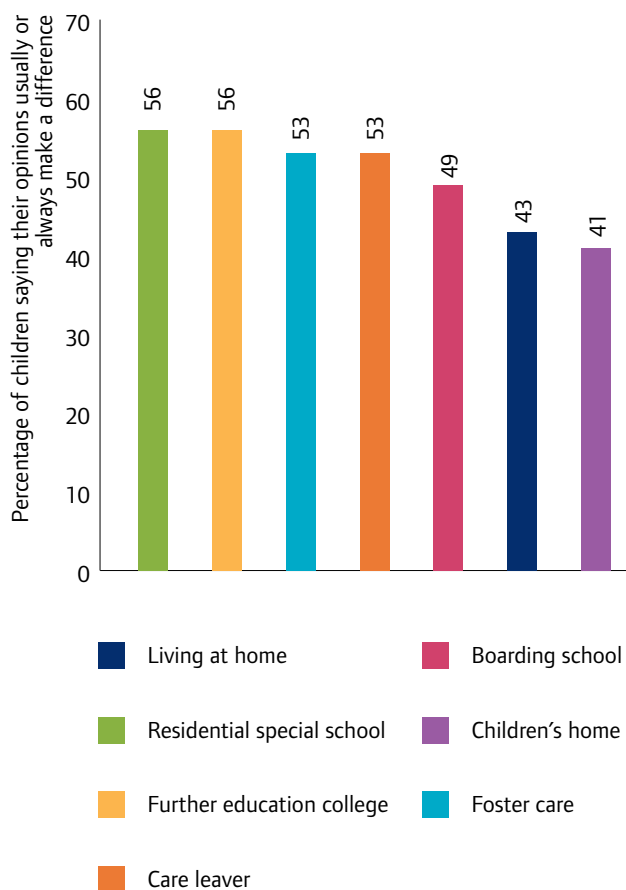


Overall, just under half (49%) the children and young people said their opinions usually or always made a difference to decisions about their lives, while 16% said their opinions didn't usually or ever make a difference to such decisions.

There were no big differences between boys and girls, or between children with disabilities and other children in how much difference their opinions made to decisions about their lives. Age did, however, make a difference. **Fifty-two per cent of those over 14 said their opinions made a difference to decisions about their lives, compared with 41% of under 14s.**

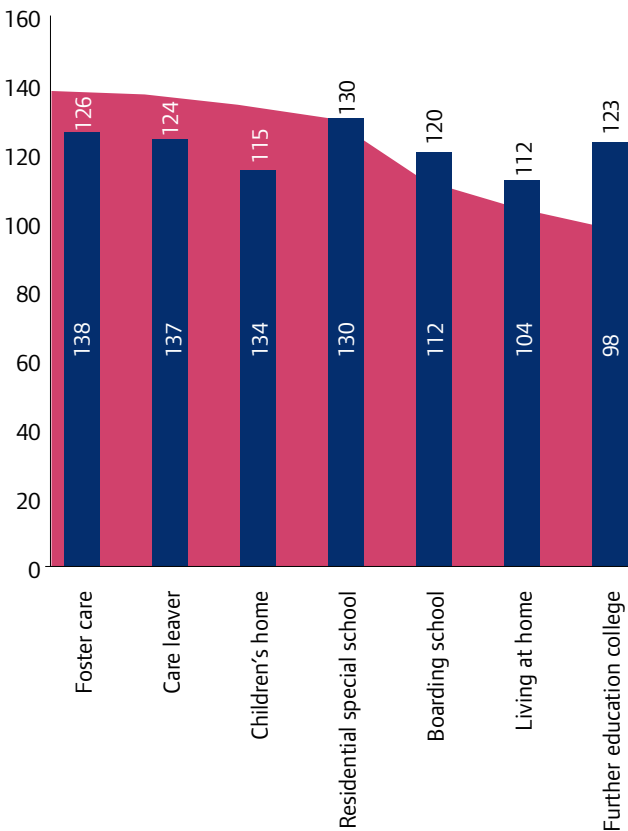
How often their opinions made a difference varied between different types of placement. The next chart shows the percentage of children in each type of placement whose opinions usually or always made a difference to decisions about their lives. **Over half of those in residential special schools, further education colleges and foster care, and over half of care leavers, said their opinions usually or always make a difference. The group whose opinions made least difference were those living in children's homes.**

How often children's opinions makes a difference



We worked out scores to compare how often children were asked for their opinions on things that mattered to them, and how often their opinions made a difference to decisions about their lives. We did this in the same way that we had worked out scores about bullying earlier on. Again, the scores are out of 200, and being asked a lot, or opinions making a lot of difference, got high scores. The results are in the next chart.

How often children are asked their opinions, compared with how much difference their opinions make



- Asking children's opinion
- Children's opinions making a difference

Our scoring of the answers showed big differences between children living in different types of placement. Some children were often asked about things, but what they said didn't quite so often make a difference. Other children were not so often asked about things, but when they did give an opinion, it was more likely to make a difference.

We know that **children in foster care and in children's homes, and care leavers are the most likely to be asked for their opinions. But what they said didn't quite so often make a difference to decisions about their lives.**

Things are **the other way around for children in boarding schools, in further education colleges, or living at home with council support. These children were not so often asked for their opinions, but when they did give an opinion it was more likely to make a difference to decisions about their lives.**

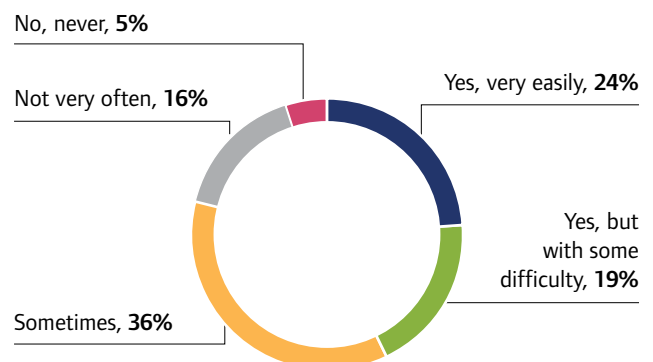
**Children in residential special schools were equally likely to be asked for their opinions and to find that they make a difference.**

The overall scores for all children were 132 for being asked for their opinions and 122 for their opinions making a difference. This gap between being asked and making a difference is not big, but it matters, and we will be checking in future years to see whether this gap is getting bigger or smaller.

### Getting decisions changed

The next chart shows how easy children and young people told us they found it to get a decision changed after someone else had made it for them. Our question was 'when someone makes decisions for you, are you able to change the decision if you want to?'

Can children change a decision someone else has made for them?



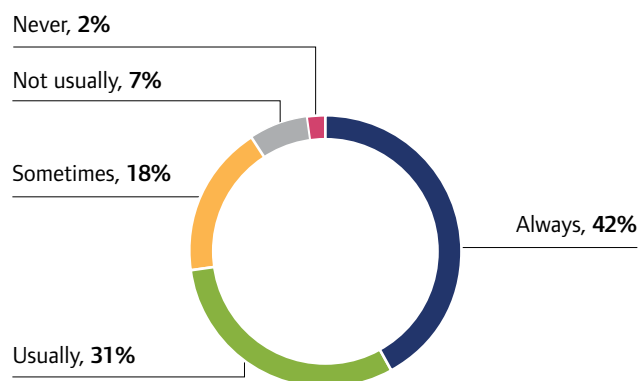
**It is quite hard for a child to get a decision changed once it has been made for them by someone else.** Nearly a quarter (24%) said they could do this very easily, but fewer than half (43%) told us they were able to do this more often than 'sometimes'.

There was no difference at all between boys and girls in how easy or difficult it was to get a decision changed once someone had made it for them. Children with a disability did not find it harder or easier than others to get a decision changed. The type of placement children were living in did not make a big difference either. Age made a difference though. **Just over half (51%) of those aged 14 plus said they could get a decision changed easily or with difficulty, compared with just under a third (32%) of those under 14.**

## Being told about changes in your life

The next chart shows how often children said adults tell them what is going on when changes are going to happen in their lives.

How often do adults tell children about major changes that are going to happen



**Nearly three quarters of the children (73%) told us they are usually or always told what is going on when major changes are about to happen in their lives.** This percentage was exactly the same for boys and girls, and there was no big difference between over 14s and under 14s. There was no big difference between children with a disability and other children.

There were no big differences between children living in different placements, with one exception. The exception was that young people living in further education colleges were less likely than other children and young people to be told about major changes that were going to happen in their lives. Only 60% of students living in colleges said they were usually or always told what was about to happen, compared with 73% for children and young people generally.

*'Social workers never explain changes they just expect you to follow them'*

*'Of course everyone would love to have their say, but some people just prefer their decisions to be made for them'*

*'My social worker usually tells me after the decision has been made'*

*'If people don't tell me things about my life changing then I would like to know'*

*'I am usually being able to have my say by one way or another'*

*'I think our complaints get read, but most people think we are just a bunch of kids that don't know anything, therefore we get ignored'*



# Making complaints and suggestions

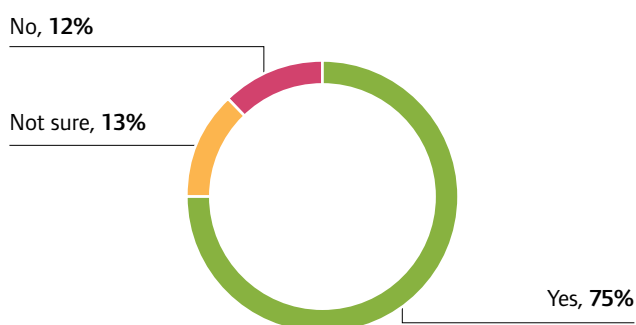
If children are not happy with the way they are being looked after, or with the social care help they are receiving, they have the right to make a complaint, or to make a suggestion that could help improve things. Children in care also have the right to have the help of an advocate (someone to speak on their behalf) in making a complaint or a suggestion.

There are official complaints and representations procedures which are set up by law. As well as these, and in many ways more important, children and young people have often told us that they want to be able to raise worries and concerns and have these sorted out, before having to think about using formal procedures.

## Making a complaint

The next chart shows the percentages of children who told us they knew how to make a complaint about how they are being cared for by their service. For some, they may have been thinking of official complaints procedures, but from the answers and comments we received, it is clear that many saw making a complaint as telling a carer, a member of staff, a teacher or a social worker about a problem to try to get it sorted out by them.

Do children know how to make a complaint?



**Three quarters of children and young people knew how to make a complaint about their care, with one in eight saying they did not know.** There were no big differences in the answers from boys and girls, or from those aged under or over 14, or between children with a disability and other children.

There were some big differences between those living in different types of placement. **Care leavers were more likely to know how to complain** than others were. Eighty-eight per cent of care leavers said they knew how to make a complaint. **Children living at home were least likely to know how to make a complaint.** Fifty-seven per cent of those living at home told us they knew how to make a complaint. **Boarders in boarding schools were also less likely than those living in other places to know how to make a complaint.** Sixty-one per cent of those in boarding schools told us they knew how to make a complaint.

**Under half the children (43%) told us they had in fact made a complaint.** Again, some may have used official complaints procedures, others may have taken up their concerns with carers or staff. There were no big differences in how many boys or girls, or over or under 14s had made a complaint. Children with a disability were no more nor less likely to make a complaint than other children.

**Out of 370 children who had made a complaint and who told us how it had turned out, just under two thirds (65%) said their complaint had been sorted out fairly. Eighteen per cent said it had not been sorted out fairly. Seventeen per cent said they had not been told what happened to their complaint.** There were no big differences in how likely boys and girls, over and under 14s or children with a disability were to say their complaint had been sorted out fairly.

**Children living at home with council support were least likely to say their complaint had been sorted out fairly, and most likely to say that they weren't told what had happened to their complaint. Care leavers came next in being less likely to say their complaint had been sorted out fairly and that they hadn't heard what had happened. Fewer boarders in boarding schools thought their complaint hadn't been sorted out fairly.** Just over half the boarders (53%) who had made a complaint told us they thought it hadn't been sorted out fairly.

The biggest difference of all was for children in residential special schools, who were very satisfied indeed with how their complaints were sorted out. **Nearly all children (96%) in residential special schools who told us they had made a complaint said it had been sorted out fairly, and not one said they hadn't been told what had happened about their complaint.**

*'It's pointless putting in complaints as nothing seems to be done and it usually gets passed on to the manager of my children's home and then have a keyworker session and then they say its dealt with when its not'*

*'Can make complaints to manager of children's home, she listens and will help, so does my keyworker'*

*'I don't really have to make complaints my social worker does it for me'*

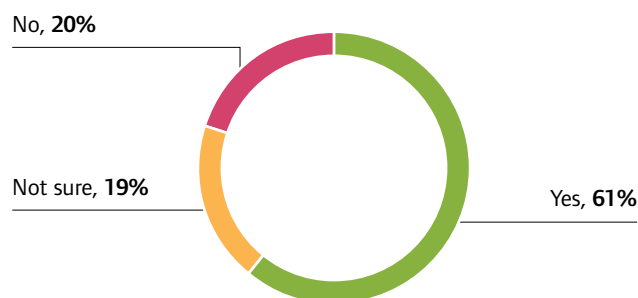
*'I tell my carer and she will help me'*

*'My foster mum has made complaints on my behalf when she thinks there is a problem'*

## Making a suggestion

The next chart shows how many children said they had been told how to make a suggestion to improve how they are being cared for, rather than a complaint. Again, from what they wrote, some children were thinking of official procedures to do this, but many saw this as making a suggestion to a carer or a member of staff.

Have children been told how to make a suggestion for improvement?



**Children were less likely to know how to make a suggestion to improve things than to know how to make a complaint about something that has gone wrong. Even so, the majority of children had been told how they can make suggestions to improve care. One in five children had not been told how they can suggest changes to improve how they are being cared for.**

Again, there were no big differences in the answers from boys and girls, or between those aged under or over 14, or between children with a disability and other children. There were some big differences between children and young people living in different types of placement. **Those from residential special schools and children's homes were more likely to be told how to make suggestions to improve their care.** Seventy-six per cent of children from residential special schools and 73% of children from children's homes had been told. Boarders in boarding schools were least likely to be told how to suggest changes to improve their care. Forty-seven per cent of boarders had been told, and a third (34%) told us they hadn't. Although children living at home were not much less likely than anyone else to say they had been told how to make suggestions, more children at home said they hadn't been told (rather than that they weren't sure). **A third (33%) of children living at home with support hadn't been told how to make suggestions to improve their care.**



Children generally were almost as likely to make suggestions as they were to make complaints. **Forty-one per cent of children had made a suggestion to improve care for children or young people, and 43% had made a complaint. Older children were more likely to make suggestions than younger ones.** Forty-seven per cent of those aged 14 plus had made a suggestion, compared with 34% of those under 14. Children with a disability were slightly more likely to make a suggestion than a complaint. Exactly half the children with a disability had made a suggestion, compared with 43% who had made a complaint. **Care leavers were most likely to make suggestions to improve care, followed by children in children's homes and those in residential special schools.** Seventy per cent of care leavers, 59% of those from children's homes and 58% of those from residential special schools had made suggestions. Boys and girls were as likely as each other to make suggestions to improve care.

Out of 342 children who told us they had made a suggestion to improve care, and who told us how their suggestion had turned out, **71% said their suggestion had been dealt with fairly. Sixteen per cent said they hadn't been told what had happened to their suggestion.** There were no big differences between boys and girls, between under and over 14s or for those with a disability in saying that their suggestions had been sorted out fairly.

This time, **boarders in boarding schools were less likely than others to say that their suggestions had been dealt with fairly.** Fifty-seven per cent of those from boarding schools said their suggestions had been dealt with fairly. Children living at home were more likely than others to say that their suggestions had been dealt with fairly. Eighty-three per cent of these children said this.

As with sorting out complaints, the biggest difference is again for children from residential special schools. **Every one of the 25 children in a residential special school who said they had made a suggestion told us it had been dealt with fairly.**

*'The staff listen to ideas from the lads to improve things'*

*'We have a suggestion box that staff look at'*

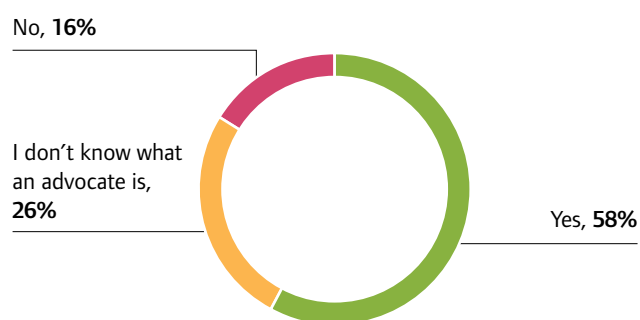
*'We should be told how to complain or congratulate a service'*



## Getting an advocate

Because children in care have a legal right to have the help of an advocate if they use an official procedure to make a complaint or a suggestion, we asked children if they knew how they could get an advocate. The next chart shows their answers. This time we have only shown the answers from children and young people in children's homes, foster care, residential special schools, living at home with council support and care leavers. This is to focus most on placements for children in care or placed by councils.

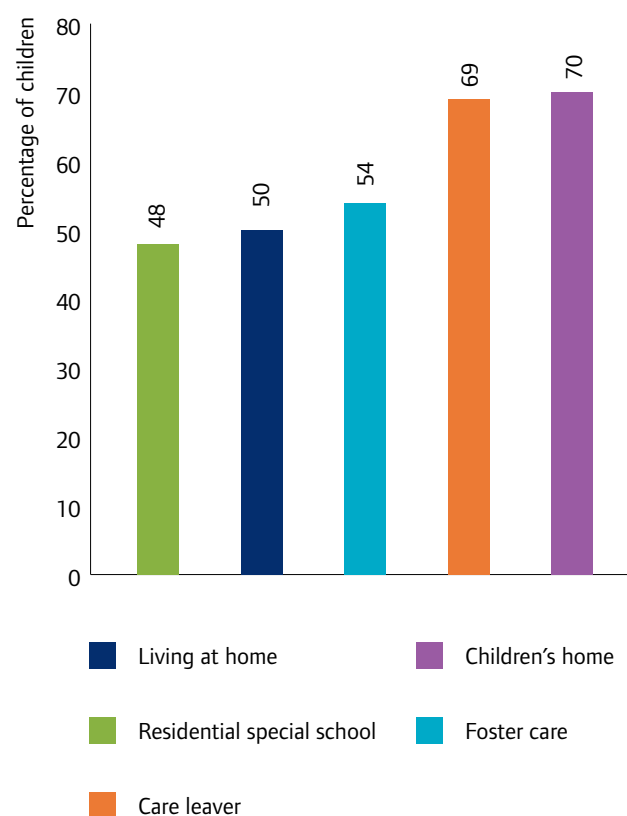
Do children know how to get an advocate?



**Children are less likely to know how to get an advocate than to know how to make a complaint.** Even though they have a right to one, only **58% of the children in the survey knew how to get an advocate if they needed one to help them make a complaint, and just over a quarter (26%) didn't know what an advocate is. Young people aged over 14 were more likely to know what an advocate is, and how to get one, than children under 14.** There were no big differences between boys and girls in knowing how to get an advocate.

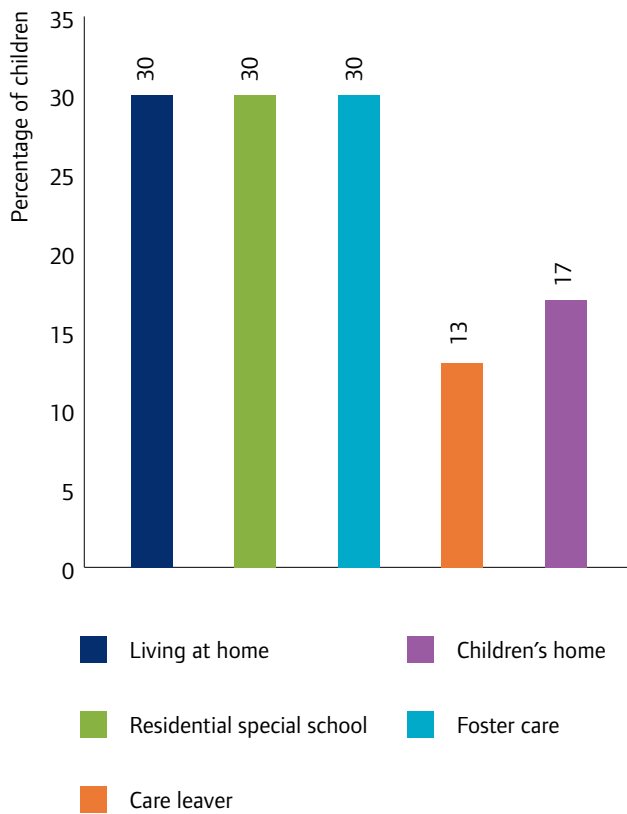
There were big differences in how many children in different care placements knew how to get an advocate if they needed one. This time, **children in residential special schools were the least likely to know how to get an advocate, and those in children's homes were the most likely to know how to get one.** These differences can be seen in the next chart.

Children who know how to get an advocate



There were also big differences between different types of placement in how many children didn't know what an advocate was. These differences are shown in the next chart. Similar percentages of boys and girls said they didn't know what an advocate was. **Children under 14 were more likely than those over 14 to say they didn't know what an advocate was.**

Children who do not know what an advocate is



**Children in children's homes were more likely than those in other sorts of placement to know what an advocate is.** Care leavers were also more likely to know, but then they are older and older young people tended to be more likely to know than younger ones.



*'I have got an advocate now cos someone got me one. She is helping me to complain but I don't know what will happen'*

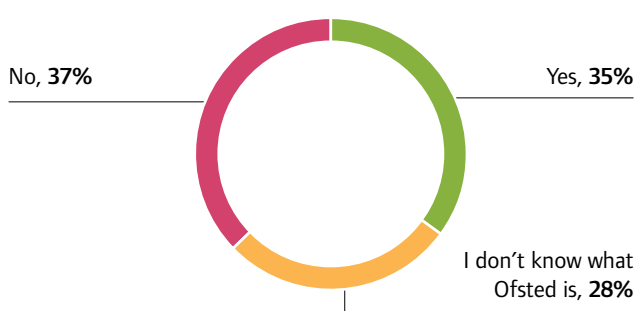
*'If I had a problem I would get my carer or teacher to help sort'*

*'There's times when it gets sorted quickly and sometimes it doesn't'*

## Contacting Ofsted

We asked children if they knew how to contact Ofsted to tell them about something they think an inspector needs to check up on. The regulations for some types of placement make it a legal requirement that children should be told how they can contact Ofsted if they need to. The chart gives the answers.

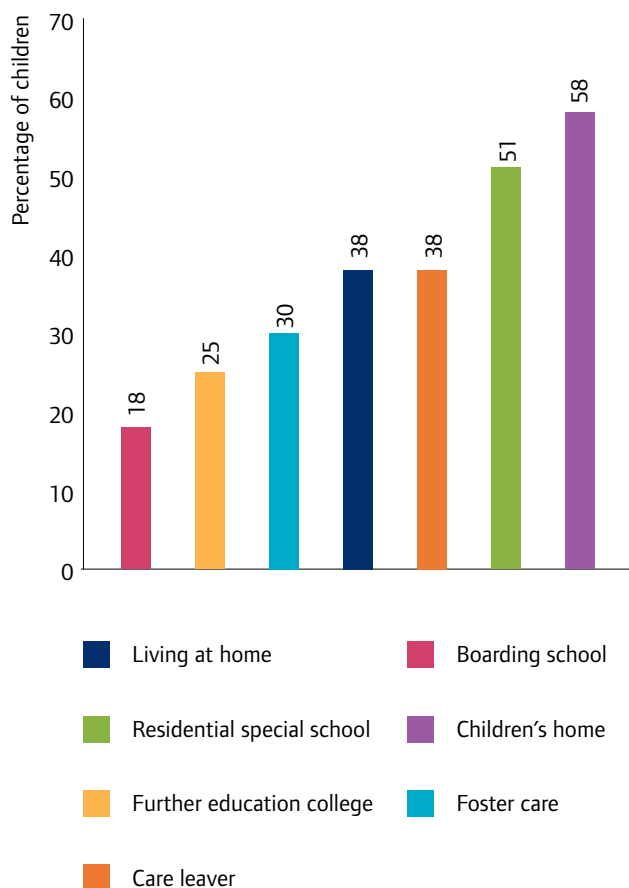
Do children know how to contact Ofsted?



**Over a third of children did know how to contact Ofsted, which was close to the number who didn't, and over a quarter (28%) didn't know what Ofsted is.<sup>4</sup>** Children under 14 were far less likely to know what Ofsted is than those over 14. **Just under half (47%) of under 14s didn't know what Ofsted is, compared with 18% of the over 14s.** Children with a disability were not very different from everyone else in how likely they were to say they didn't know what Ofsted is. Children in children's homes and residential schools were the most likely to know what Ofsted is, with those in boarding schools least likely to know.

The next chart shows the big differences between children from different types of placement in whether they both knew what Ofsted is, and how to contact Ofsted about something they thought an inspector needed to check up on.

How many children know how to contact Ofsted?



The number of children who knew how to contact Ofsted varied widely in different types of placement. **Over half the children in children's homes and residential special schools knew how to contact Ofsted if they needed to, and children in children's homes were over three times more likely than those in boarding schools to know how to contact Ofsted.** Children's homes and residential special schools are the placements where children are most likely to see an Ofsted inspector visiting, but Ofsted doesn't visit children living at home or care leavers, although for both of these 38% knew how to contact Ofsted.

<sup>4</sup> Since April 2007, Ofsted has been the organisation which inspects children's homes, foster care, boarding schools, residential special schools and further education colleges, as well as inspecting some other types of placement and checking how well councils provide their children's social care and education services. Ofsted also inspects education in schools and colleges, and services such as childminders and day care for very young children.



There were no big differences between boys and girls, for those with a disability or between the under and over 14s in whether children knew how to contact Ofsted. For those who didn't know, younger children were more likely to say this was because they didn't know what Ofsted is, and older ones were more likely to say that they knew what Ofsted is but not how to contact it.

*'I would like to contact Ofsted, so advice on how to do this would be grateful'*

*'Ofsted only seem to come at short notice and then we have a meeting/review about their visit, and then we don't hear anything from them'*

*'We speak to the inspectors and they listen'*

*'Whot is Ofsted?'*

# Education

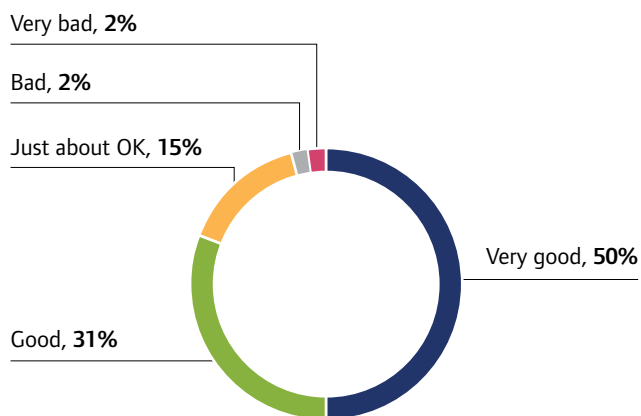
Although this is a care monitor, not an education monitor, children have often told us how important education is to them. Children in care have told us how changes in their care, such as changes in their living placement, can have a major effect on their education.

Almost all the children in care (93%) in our monitoring survey were in education of some sort. The small number who weren't were mainly care leavers or young people in children's homes or foster care who had left education. There were seven children in children's homes and another seven children in foster homes who were of school age but were not going to school or college.

## Quality of education

The chart shows how good children in care thought their education was at the time they filled in the survey.

How good is your education?



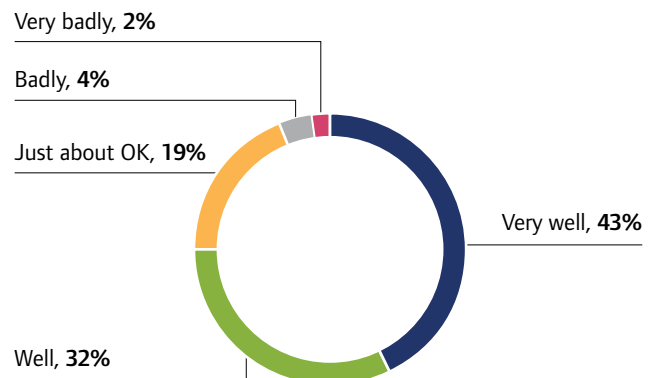
The great majority of children in care (81%) rated the education they were getting as good or very good. Only 4% rated it bad or very bad. Ratings by boys, girls, under 14s, over 14s and children with a disability were all much the same. **Children in residential special schools rated their education lowest**, with 69% saying it was good or very good. **Care leavers who had stayed on in education, rated their education highest.**

There was no big difference between children in care, and those not in care in boarding schools, residential special schools or residential further education colleges, in how good they thought their education was. Eighty-seven per cent of those not in care thought their education was good or very good, compared with 81% of those in care.

## How well children are doing

The next chart shows how well children and young people in care thought they were doing in their education.

How well are you doing in your education?



**Seventy-five per cent of the children and young people in care thought they were doing well or very well in their education** at the time we asked them, with 6% saying they thought they were doing badly or very badly. Again, the ratings by boys, girls, under 14s, over 14s and children with a disability were all much the same. The ratings from children living in different types of placement were also much the same. The one exception was that **care leavers who had stayed on in education rated how they were doing much higher than everyone else**, with 95% rating themselves as doing well or very well, and none as doing badly or very badly.

Again, there was no big difference between children in care and those not in care in how well they thought they were doing in education. Eighty-two per cent of those not in care thought they were doing well or very well, compared with 77% of those in care.

Children and young people gave three main reasons (without any suggestions from us) for doing well or very well in education. **The top reason for doing well, from 88 children, was that they worked hard at school or college. This was followed by enjoying their work, and having good teaching.**

*'Its peers that are making my education fail'*

*'I don't always have the same opportunities as others ... because I have a "reputation" for being difficult'*

*'I have come to realise that I can achieve most things'*

*'I want to change schools so I can have a better chance of moving on and get away from bad influences'*

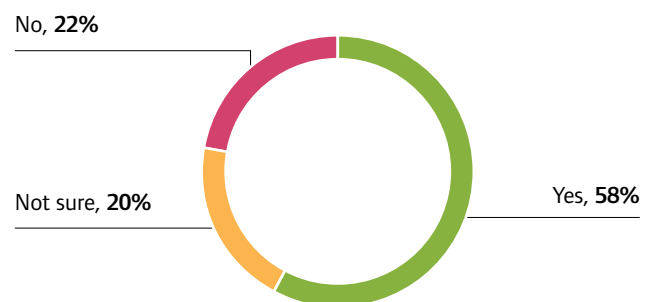
## Changing schools

It is often said that changes of living placement damage the education of children by making them change schools, and social care services try not to make children in care change schools too often. **A quarter (25%) of the children in children's homes and foster homes in our survey had never had to change schools because of a change in their living placement.** Nearly a third (31%) had changed schools once for this reason, 29% had changed schools three or more times. **The middle number of school changes for this reason for all these children was one.**

There were no big differences between boys and girls, or between children from children's homes and foster homes in the numbers of school changes in their lives. **Children with a disability tended to have more school changes; the middle number of school changes for them was two.**

We asked all children who had changed schools simply because they changed their living placement (not for other reasons like going from primary to secondary school) to tell us whether they thought the last change of school was in their own best interests. The answer is in the next chart.

Was your last school move on change of placement in your best interests?





*'I like my new school and I live nearer to my school now'*

*'I wanted to start a new school, with a new life and set of friends'*

*'I was being bullied in old school'*

*'I don't like the school because I was bullied on my first day'*

*'Now I am getting a better education and actually attending'*

Over half (58%) of all children who had to change schools because they moved to a new living placement considered the change of school to be in their best interests. Around one in five (22%) considered the change of school not to be in their best interests. There were no big differences between boys and girls, under or over 14s or for children with a disability. **Children in children's homes were more likely than children in foster care to say their last change of school was against their best interests.** Thirty per cent of children in children's homes said this, compared with 18% in foster care.

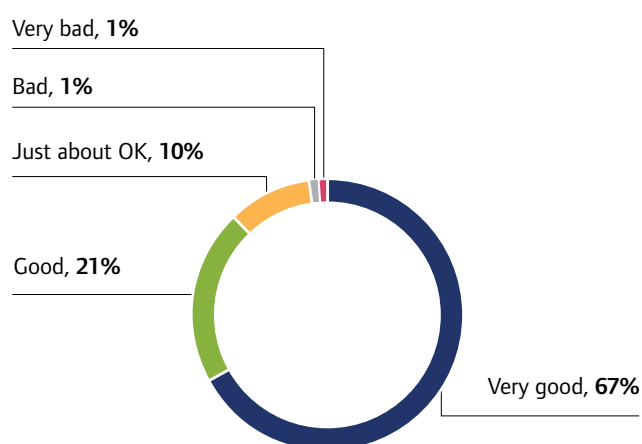
# Care and care planning

To children in care, how councils plan their care and make decisions about their lives are vitally important. Our last set of questions was for children in care rather than everyone in the survey. Altogether, 680 children and young people in care answered our survey. Just over two thirds (69%) of these were living in children's homes, and just over a fifth (22%) were living in foster homes. Some were living in other sorts of placements.

## Quality of care

The chart shows how good the children in care thought their care was at the time they filled in the survey.

How good is your care?



**About two thirds (67%) of children in care rated the care they were getting as very good, and nearly nine out of ten (88%) as either good or very good.** Only 2% rated their care as bad or very bad. Children in care rated their care rather higher than their education (67% rated their care as very good, while 50% rated their education as very good).

Boys and girls, over and under 14s, and children with disabilities all gave much the same ratings to the care they were getting. However, children in foster homes gave their care a much higher rating than children living in children's homes. **Over nine out of ten foster children (93%) rated their care as good or very good, while seven out of ten (70%) children in children's homes rated their care as good or very good. A quarter (25%) of children in children's homes rated their care as 'just about OK'.**

## Social workers

Social workers are important people for children in care. Every child in care should have a social worker allocated to them. When we checked this, 92% of the children and young people in care confirmed they had a social worker, and another 4% that they had another sort of caseworker to support them, so **96% had a social worker or other caseworker.** Children in foster care and in children's homes were equally likely to have a social worker or other caseworker, and so were children with a disability.

## Care plans

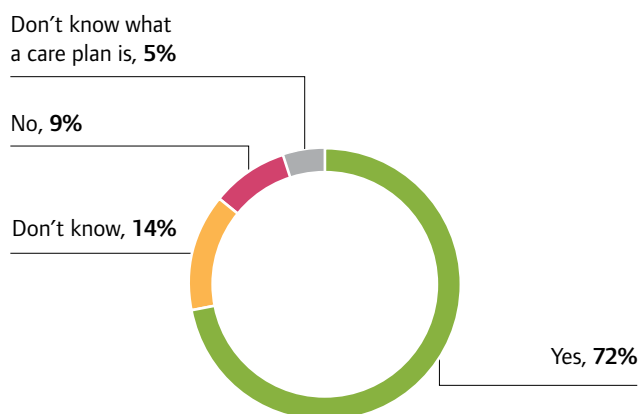
Each child in care should have a care plan which sets out how they are to be cared for and the future plans for their care. They should be involved in making the plan, and it should be kept to.





The chart shows how many children in care told us they had a care plan.

Do children have a care plan?

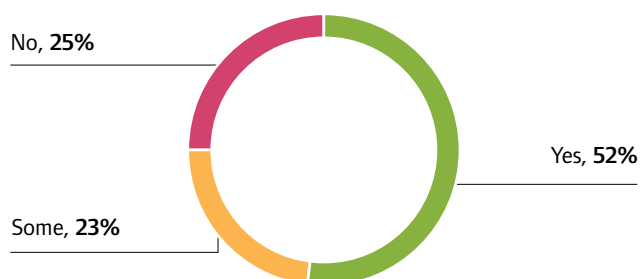


**Fewer than three quarters of children in care told us they had a care plan. One in seven didn't know, one in 20 said they didn't have one, and nearly one in ten (9%) said they didn't know what a care plan was.** The figures were similar for boys and girls, and for children with a disability. But older children were more likely to have a care plan they knew about than younger children. **Eighty per cent of those aged 14 plus said they had a care plan, compared with 69% of the under 14s.** This age difference is not likely to be because some of the younger children were not able to understand a care plan, because they were all able to understand and answer our question about care plans. **Children in foster care were less likely to say they had a care plan they knew about than children in children's homes.** Sixty-nine per cent of foster children said they had a care plan, but 88% of children in children's homes said they had one.

Not everyone who told us they knew they had a care plan actually knew what was in it. Out of the 500 children who told us they had a care plan, 487 answered our question about whether they knew what it said. **Just under three quarters (73%) of children and young people who knew they had a care plan knew what was in it.** Boys and girls, over 14s and under 14s and children in both children's homes and in foster care all said much the same on this question.

We also asked children who had told us they had a care plan whether they had a say in what went into it. Here are their answers.

Do children have a say in their care plan?

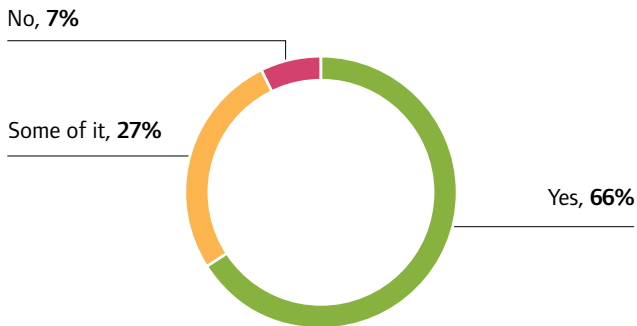


**A quarter of children in care said they had no say in their care plan, nearly a quarter had some say and only just over half said they definitely had a say.** Boys and girls, children in children's homes, children in foster homes and children with a disability all said much the same. **Younger children were more likely to tell us they had no say in what went in to their care plans.** Twenty-nine per cent of under 14s said they had no say, compared with 19% of over 14s.



We asked children in care who knew something about their care plans to tell us whether they agreed with their plans. Here are their answers.

Do children agree with their care plans?

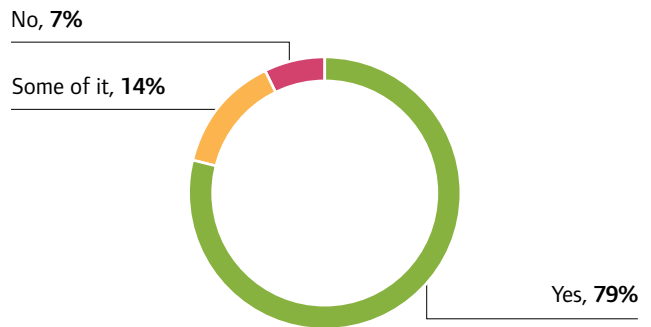


**Two thirds of children in care agree with their care plans.** Just over another quarter agree with some of their plan. That means that **93% agree with some or all of their plans, but 27% disagree with something in their plan.**

Boys and girls, younger and older children and children with a disability were all generally as likely as each other to agree with their care plans. **Children in foster homes were more likely to agree with their care plans than children in children's homes.** Sixty-eight per cent of fostered children agreed with their plans, compared with 58% of those living in children's homes.

Finally, we asked children who knew about their care plans whether their plan was being kept to in the way they were being cared for. The chart gives the answers.

Are care plans being kept to?

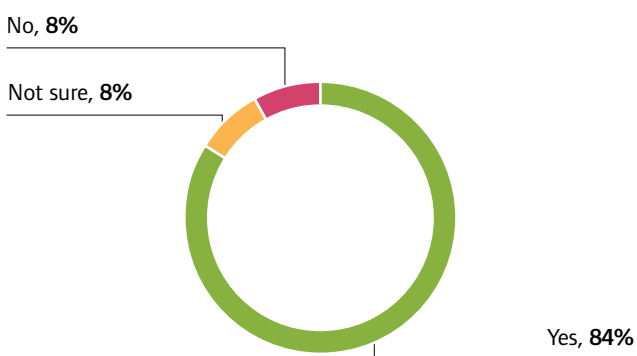


**Nearly eight out of ten children said their care plans are being kept to.** Another one in seven said that some of their care plan was being kept to. Altogether, **just over nine out of ten (93%) children in care said that some or all of their care plan was being kept to, but one in seven said that some part of it was not being kept to.** There were no big differences between boys and girls, children with or without a disability or between older and younger children. Only 70% of children in children's homes said their care plans were being kept to, compared with 83% in foster care.

## Are children in the right placement?

Four fifths of the children and young people in care had changed placement at least once since they had been in care. The middle number of different placements was three, and one in ten children had been in nine or more different placements. The next chart shows whether children thought their present placement was the right one for them.

Are children in the right placement?



**Over eight out of ten children told us they thought they were in the right placement for them, with 8% reporting that they thought they were in the wrong placement for them. Children in foster care were much more likely to say they were in the right placement.**

Ninety-one per cent of foster children said they were in the right placement, compared with 63% of those in children's homes. There were no big differences in the answers from boys and girls, over or under 14s or children with disabilities.

The main reasons children gave for saying their placement was the right one for them were that they were happy and settled, they felt safe and well looked after, and they had kind and supportive carers. The main reasons children gave for saying their placement was not the right one were that they wanted to be with their own families instead or that they didn't get on with someone at their present placement. Some children in children's homes said they would rather be in a foster home.

*'I feel really safe and it is just like my real home, I get cared for'*

*'I live with my sister and people who care about me'*

*'I'm happy and not been arrested for 10 months'*

*'Good staff, good food, good activities. I have been here for there years and it is good'*

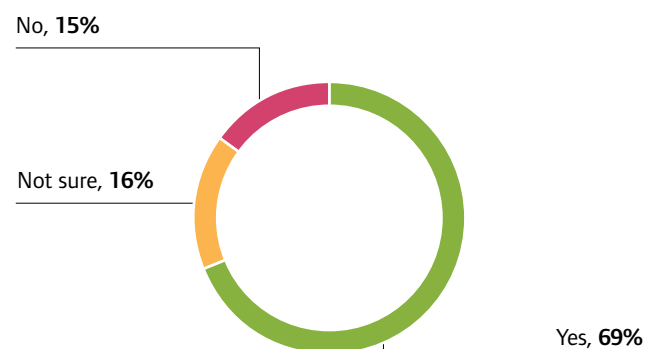
*'I will never move. I love it. It just feels right'*

*'I want to be in a foster home or with my mum'*

## Changing placements

Most people see changes in living placements as something to be avoided if possible, and one of the ways children's social care services are checked up on is by counting how many times children have to change placements. Rather than seeing all placement changes as good or bad, we asked the children themselves whether they thought their last move to a new placement had been in their best interests. Here is what they told us.

Was the placement change in the child's best interests?





**Over two thirds of children in care thought their last placement change had been in their best interests. Just over one in seven thought it had not been in their best interests, and a similar number were unsure.** There were no big differences between boys and girls, or children with disabilities. However, the **over 14s were more likely than the under 14s to say their last placement change had not been in their best interests, and more children in foster care than those in children's homes thought their last change had been in their best interests.** Twenty-one per cent of over 14s said their last change was not in their best interests, compared with 10% of under 14s, and 75% of those in foster care thought their last change was in their best interests compared with 59% in children's homes.

The main reasons children gave (without any suggestions from us) for saying their last change of placement was in their best interests were that **they felt happier, safer or looked after better in their new placement, that they didn't get on with someone or get enough support in their last placement, or that they liked their new carers better.** The main reason for children saying they thought their last placement move was not in their best interests was that it had been their first move into care, and they wished they could have stayed with their families.



*'I used to be a little shit and now I ain't. Sorted myself out!'*

*'They listened to my views'*

*'Now I am staying out of trouble and not getting off my head'*

*'I was unhappy at the placement and was getting bullied by foster carers kids'*

*'It turned my life upside down and I had to rebuild again'*

## Preparing for the future

Young people who were in care and about to leave school told us the main sorts of help they were getting to help them prepare for their future lives. **Almost half (49%) told us they were getting help to prepare for life as an independent adult. Almost as many, 46%, said they were being prepared to carry on their education after leaving school, and over a third (39%) said they were getting help towards getting a job.** There were no big differences between boys and girls, or for children with a disability.

There were some big differences between young people in children's homes and young people in foster care. **Young people in children's homes were more likely to say they were being prepared for life as an independent adult, and also more likely to say they were being helped to prepare for getting a job than those in foster care.** Seventy-three per cent of those from children's homes were being prepared for life as an independent adult, compared with 41% of those from foster homes, and 48% were being prepared to get a job, compared with 36% of those in foster homes.

*'I know all the legislations are changing for people or children in care now ... but when I was forced to leave care, I didn't get the best of plans'*

## After leaving care

We heard from 34 care leavers about the support they were getting now they had left care. **Twenty-three care leavers, which is just over two thirds of the group of 34, said they were getting good or very good support.** Three said they were getting bad or very bad support. Thirty of the care leavers (nearly nine out of ten) said they had the help of either a social worker or another sort of caseworker or personal adviser.

Twenty-seven of the 34 care leavers told us they had a pathway plan (for leaving care and afterwards), 21 said they had a say in what was in their pathway plan, and 21 said they agreed with what their pathway plan said. Sixteen said everything in their pathway plan was being kept to, and another seven said some, but not all, of it was being kept to.

Thirty-two of the care leavers told us about the place they were living in at the time we carried out our survey. **Twenty care leavers thought the place they were living in was the right place for them, which was almost two thirds, but ten, which was nearly a third, said that where they were living was not right for them.**

*'I am independent and like it'*

*'I found it for myself'*

*'It's stability. I'm getting education and safety but am still drinking and doing drugs'*

*'I live in a ground floor flat, the flat is surrounded by jobs. Inside there is mould all over the walls and my housing association won't do owt. We have had a body land in our garden, been broken into 3 times, always fighting outside'*

*'The area am living is very dangerous and I get scared when walking home'*

*'The people I used to knock around with are bad influences and I've just had a baby'*

## Some final words about being in care

*'The care I am in is great. I wouldn't be as well educated and mature if I was still with my mum'*

*'can't do anything without having to tell sum1'*

*'I love it because I wouldn't have met all the people I have met if I wasn't in care'*

*'Care is a tough place. I think young people should be given a lot of credit if they do well and survive'*

*'It is good living in care most of the time. But sometimes it is not so good'*

*'I don't like being in care. I just want to go home'*



# Appendix

We are grateful to the children and staff of the following establishments and services for taking part in the *Children's care monitor 2008* and look forward to working with them again in next year's *Monitor*.

## Independent childcare providers

### (Children's homes and independent fostering agencies)

- Appletree Treatment Centre
- Barnardos New Families project (LEASE Region)
- Brookfield House
- Calcot Services for Children
- Care UK Children's Services
- Companions
- Eagle House
- Five Rivers Family Placement service
- Foster Care Associates - South West
- Foster Cares Ltd
- Fostering Solutions Ltd
- Fosterplus Ltd
- Futures for Children
- Hillcrest Fostercare
- Nexus Fostering
- Northern Care
- Orange Grove Midlands Ltd
- Orange Grove North East Ltd
- Outlook Fostering Services Ltd
- Park Foster Care Ltd
- Perpetual Care
- Plus One Fostering Ltd
- Solutions Fostering Agency
- Supported Fostering Services
- SWIIS Foster Care Ltd
- Team Fostering
- The Adolescent & Children's Trust (TACT)
- The Foster Care Co-operative Ltd
- The Regard Partnership
- The Together Trust Fostering Service

## Local authorities

- Bedfordshire County Council
- Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council
- Bournemouth Borough Council
- Bristol City Council
- Buckinghamshire County Council
- Coventry City Council
- Cumbria County Council
- Darlington Borough Council
- Derby City Council
- Doncaster MBC
- East Riding of Yorkshire
- Essex County Council
- Gateshead MBC
- Hampshire County Council
- Hertfordshire Council
- Isle of Wight Council
- Lancashire County Council
- London Borough of Barking & Dagenham
- London Borough of Bexley
- London Borough of Enfield
- London Borough of Hackney
- London Borough of Islington
- London Borough of Lambeth
- London Borough of Lewisham

- Leicestershire County Council
- Medway Council
- Milton Keynes Council
- Norfolk County Council
- North Lincolnshire County Council
- Northumberland County Council
- Nottinghamshire County Council
- Oldham MBC
- Oxfordshire County Council
- Borough of Poole
- Rotherham Borough Council
- Salford City Council
- Sefton MBC
- Slough Borough Council
- Somerset County Council
- South Tyneside Council
- St Helen's Council
- Staffordshire County Council
- Suffolk County Council
- Torbay Council
- Trafford MBC
- Westminster City Council
- Wigan MBC
- Wirral MBC
- Worcestershire County Council
- Clayesmore Preparatory School
- Coral College
- International College, Sherbourne School
- The Oratory Preparatory School
- The Royal School, Hampstead
- Cloughwood School
- Lakeside School
- Meath School
- Muntham House School
- Valence School
- Westlands School
- William Henry Smith School
- College of West Anglia
- Derby College
- Farleigh Further Education College
- John Leggott College
- South Tyneside College
- Writtle College
- RNIB College Loughborough

## Schools and colleges

- Bromsgrove Preparatory School
- Brymore School
- Burgess Hill School for Girls
- Canford School

### **Staff of the Children's Rights Director**

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