Our Lives, Our Care: Looked after children’s views on their well-being in 2018

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Background

The **Bright Spots Programme** helps local authorities better understand the well-being of their children and young people in care (aged 4-18) and care leavers.

Currently official statistics provide only a partial picture of children in care and care leavers’ lives. Data focuses on areas such as where children live, how many moves they have and how they are doing in terms of education and employment. None of this information tells us about the experience of care from children’s own viewpoints: are they happy, safe and feel they are doing well?

The **Bright Spots programme**, developed by Coram Voice and the University of Bristol, directly addresses these gaps in our knowledge. With funding from the Hadley Trust and Coram we created a new set of well-being indicators to allow services to design their work around what children and young people say is important to them. The indicators are measured by the online surveys - **Your Life, Your Care (YLYC)** and **Your Life Beyond Care (YLBC)**.

The survey tools are strongly evidence based. They were developed with children and young people and have been carefully tested and piloted. The design process involved workshops with 170 looked after children and care leavers, literature reviews and cognitive interviews. We also included the perspectives of professionals and policy-makers.

Understanding and responding to children and young people’s voices and experiences are the foundation of high-quality services. But local authorities can struggle to engage a wide range of young people. Even where participation is strong, often only a minority of children and young people inform service development in their authority (e.g. through children in care councils or ambassador roles). Our YLYC and YLBC surveys offer local authorities the opportunity to hear from their young people on a larger and more systematic level than ever before.
To date, the surveys have been used in **28 English** and **6 Welsh** local authorities.

Whilst the findings of the surveys are important for each individual authority taking part, by aggregating the results across local authorities we deepen our national understanding of looked after children’s and care leaver’s well-being. We have already published two national reports of findings from 2015/16 and 2016/17. Both Our Lives, Our Care reports are available from [www.coramvoice.org.uk/brightspots](http://www.coramvoice.org.uk/brightspots). We are pleased to be able to update the findings from these reports with the latest data from 2017/18 in this snapshot.

This snapshot summarises the findings from the responses of

- **397** 4-7 year olds
- **656** 8-11 year olds in primary school
- **1631** 11-18 year olds in secondary school

who completed the surveys for children in care in 17 local authorities in England - an overall response rate of 35%.

Findings from the care leavers survey *Your Life Beyond Care* are published separately.
This snapshot gives a much needed insight into how children and young people in care really feel about their lives. It is based on the largest current survey of looked after children and pulls together what 2,684 children in care from 17 English local authorities told us through the Your Life, Your Care survey in 2017/18.

Findings for care leavers are published in ‘Bright Spots Snapshot 2018: Our Lives Beyond Care’.

Our surveys are the only ones to capture ‘subjective well-being’ - how children in care feel about their relationships, the support they receive and how things are going - based on research and what children said was important.

Do you know how your children in care are doing?

Taking part in the Bright Spots Programme is leading to change in local authorities, as they respond to what their children say. We have worked with over 30 local authorities so far.

Join us now to get a unique insight into how your children feel about their lives.

Get in touch with Coram Voice on brightspots@coramvoice.org.uk or go to www.coramvoice.org.uk/brightspots to find out more