



Daily Life

Where children in care live (placements)



It is not bad being in care and I feel safe, and I like it.

8-10yrs

Feeling safe

Children's right to life and protection from harm is set out in Article 6 and Article 19 of the UNCRC.⁶² As part of the ONS review of the national set of children's well-being indicators, they explored with children what contributes to a happy life. The children participating reported that feeling safe at home, in their neighbourhoods, at school and online were all important for their happiness⁶³.

Q: In our survey, children and young people were asked if they felt safe where they lived. The youngest children (4-7yrs) were given two options: 'mostly yes' and 'mostly no' whereas children aged 8-10yrs and young people (11-18yrs) could respond 'Always', 'Sometimes', 'Hardly ever' or 'Never'.

Most children and young people did feel safe in their placements and a larger percentage felt safe where they lived compared with their peers in the general population.

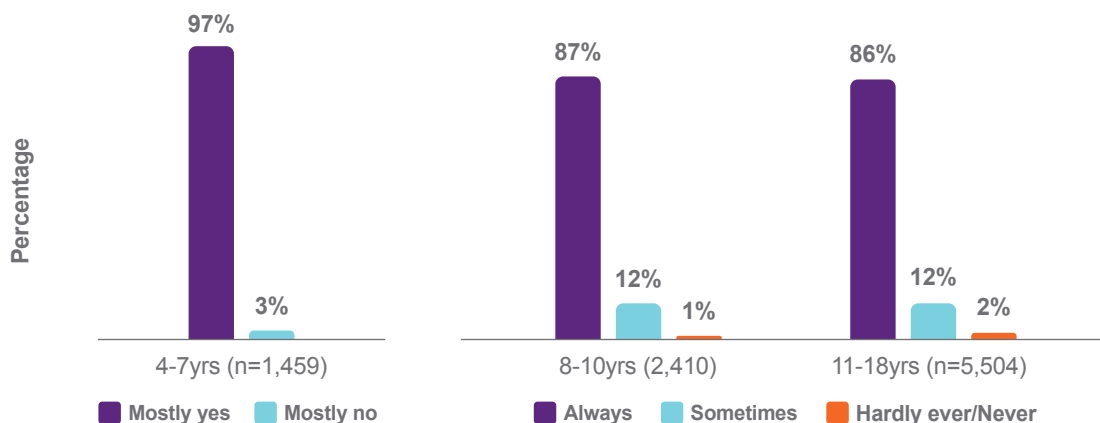


⁶² UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) Adopted by General Assembly Resolution 44/25 of 20 November 1989. Accessed at <https://www.unicef.org.uk/what-we-do/un-convention-child-rights/>

⁶³ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/articles/childrenswellbeingindicatorreviewuk2020/2020-09-02>

The Children's Worlds Survey (Rees and Bradshaw 2020)⁶⁴ reported that 82% of children aged 10-11yrs in England felt 'totally safe' at home compared with 86% of children of the same age in our survey.

Figure 23: Feeling safe in placements



Examining the survey responses in more detail the type of placement was associated with responses on feeling safe:

1 in 20 children and young people in residential care 'never' felt safe where they lived compared with less than 1 in 100 in foster or kinship care feeling unsafe.

- ▶ 5% of children (8-10yrs) and 5% of young people (11-18yrs) in residential care 'never' felt safe where they lived in comparison with less than 1% of those in kinship or foster care. Six per cent of the young people who were living 'somewhere else' also 'never' felt safe. This mirrors the findings of Ofsted's social care questionnaires where a higher percentage of children in residential settings reported not always feeling safe compared with children in foster care.⁶⁵

Children wrote about some of their fears and about feeling safe:

When I'm going to bed and it's really dark, I feel like someone's going to smash the door and come and get me. I don't feel safe at night. I dream about a really bad thing with no body - just a face, and it scares me. 4-7yrs

I just keep being moved around. I have moved I think 7 times in the last 6 months. This makes me confused and scared. It has been dark and scary when I move, and I am told where, as we drive. I never meet the people beforehand and my things take time to catch up with me. 8-10yrs

I actually feel so safe now and that means I don't get hit by mum or dad and don't have to hear them swear and hear them arguing. My foster parents are so kind, loving, and so funny! 8-10yrs

I would like to get a better relationship with my carer so I feel safer where I live. I would like someone who can understand my thoughts and feelings. I would prefer to live closer to my school, my friends and my family because I feel safer. 8-10yrs

⁶⁴ Rees G and Bradshaw J (2020) *Children's Worlds National Report England*. <https://iscweb.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/England-National-Report-Wave-3.pdf>

⁶⁵ Ofsted (2021) *Children's Social Care Questionnaires 2021* <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/childrens-social-care-questionnaires-2021-what-children-and-young-people-told-ofsted/childrens-social-care-questionnaires-2021>



Feeling settled

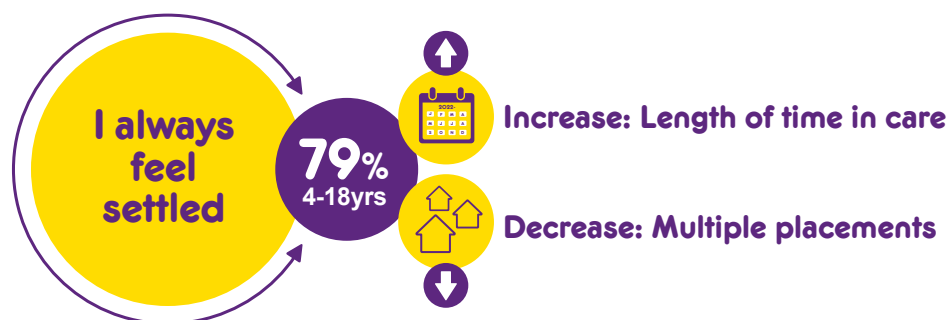
Being placed in a stable foster placement with people who care about me is what makes me feel, happy and settled and helps me to do well.

8-10yrs

Children in care have to deal with a great amount of change, not only as they come into care, but often whilst in care with changes in where they live, their schools and their social workers. Children need to feel settled to develop a sense of belonging and feel secure. However, statistics show that a quarter of children in care have experienced two or more placement moves within two years.⁶⁶

Q: Children and young people were asked if they felt settled where they lived. The youngest children (4-7yrs) had two response options: 'mostly yes' and 'mostly no', while children aged 8-10yrs and those aged 11-18yrs had the options of 'always', 'sometimes', 'hardly ever' and 'never'.

4 out of every 5 looked after children aged between 4 and 18yrs 'always' felt settled



⁶⁶ Children's Commissioner (2020) *Stability Index 2020*. Accessed at: <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/cco-stability-index-2020.pdf>

⁶⁷ Somers' *D* positive correlation between feeling settled 'all/most of the time' and the length of time in care increasing $d=.114$ $p<.001$ and a negative correlation between feeling settled 'always' and having had four or more placements $d=.074$ $p<.001$

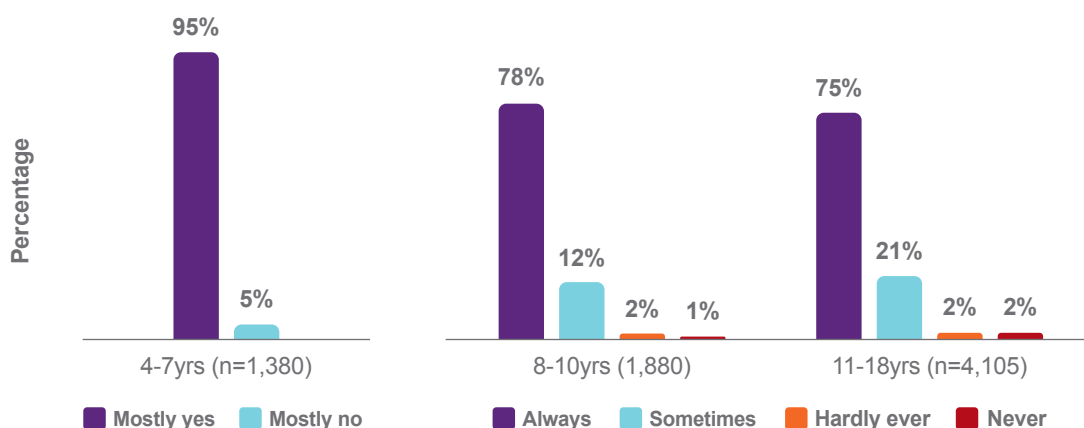
⁶⁸ Somers' *D* $=.675$ $p<.001$

The majority did feel settled (Figure 24). Associated with feeling settled for those aged 11-18yrs was:

- ▶ ‘Always’ feeling settled increased with the length of time in care and decreased if the young person had experienced multiple placements.⁶⁷
- ▶ There was also a positive correlation between feeling settled ‘always’ and young people reporting they ‘always’ felt safe where they lived: 88% of those who ‘never’ felt settled also reported feeling ‘hardly ever’ or ‘never’ safe.⁶⁸

9 out of 10 of those who ‘never’ felt settled, also didn’t feel safe in their placements.

Figure 24: Feeling settled



Children wrote about being unsettled because of their fears of having to move again, of important possessions that had been left behind and of missing their previous carers, their families and pets.

I would like my old squeaky hippo, which I had when I was 5. It is at home with my mum, and I haven’t seen it. 4-7yrs

Never have to move again as I am very happy where I am. 4-7yrs

I want to be able to stay with my current foster carer, but my social worker says I have to move. 8-10yrs

A few young people wrote about not wanting to stay with their present carers and asked for a move. For example, writing that they wanted:

To change foster carers. Sometimes I don’t feel like part of the family and feel like I don’t belong with them. 11-18yrs



Liking bedrooms



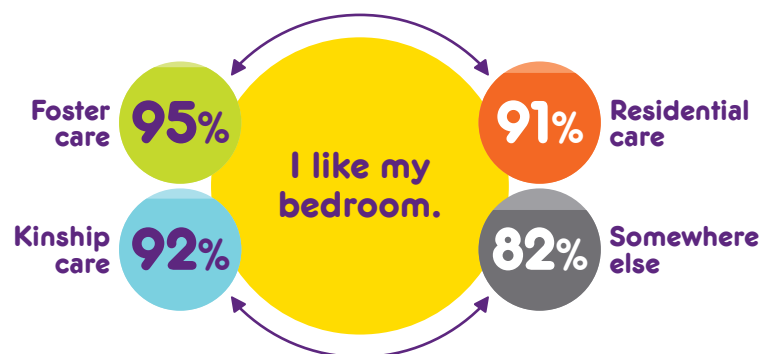
Having a bedroom that children and young people like is important. It provides a safe space to sleep and a place to keep personal possessions, offers some privacy in busy foster homes or residential units, and children and young people should be able to stamp their own identities and style on their room through posters, toys etc.

More children and young people in kinship care commented about having to share a bedroom compared with those in other placements. Those in foster/residential care also wanted more space or to be allowed a phone or TV in their bedrooms.

I would like to have my own bedroom and wardrobe because my clothes get thrown out and my sister messes up the room. 8-10yrs

I'd like a bigger house as I don't have a bedroom and I have to share with my nephews who are 8 and 5 so it is very overcrowded. 11-18yrs

People in care life should be better with TVs allowed in bedrooms for 15s and above. 11-18yrs



94% of children in care liked their bedrooms.

- ▶ Most of those who responded did like their bedrooms: there was a small decrease in satisfaction the older the child.
- ▶ There was no statistical difference by children's sex in the 4-7yrs or 8-10yrs age groups, but girls disliked their bedroom more frequently than boys in the 11-18yrs age group.⁶⁹

Those in residential care or living 'somewhere else' more frequently reported disliking their bedrooms.

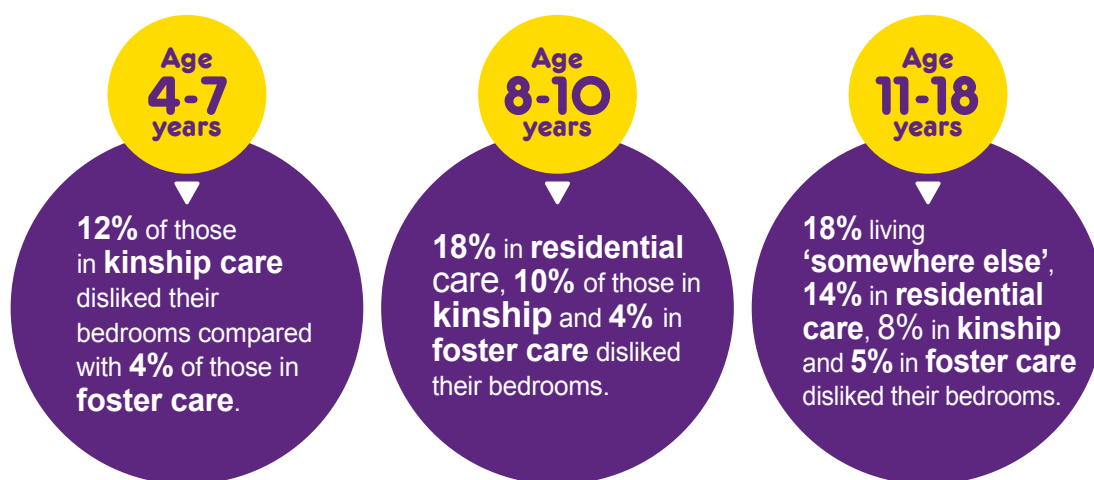
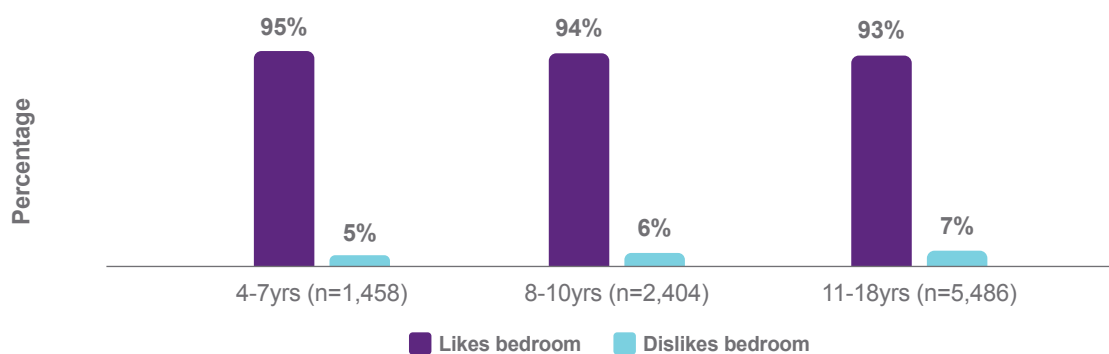


Figure 25: Liking bedrooms



Children also wrote about the colour, toys, and comfort of their bedrooms.

It is fun to live in my house and I've got a fluffy cosy bed. 4-7yrs
I have a TV in my bedroom, so I have my own personal space. 11-18yrs

However, whilst most complaints were about lack of space one young child wrote,

My room is too big and that's why I don't like it. 4-7yrs

⁶⁹ $\chi^2 = 4.806$ [n=5,366] df1, p<.03



Having fun and taking part in activities outside school

I have been supported and encouraged to get involved in sports (boxing and football) and this has been really good because it has helped my self-esteem particularly as I don't like school.

11-18yrs

All the children and young people were asked about the opportunities they had outside of school.

Our literature review of children and young people's views found that young people in care felt that having encouragement, opportunities, and resources to have hobbies and do fun and exciting things was important, as it made them feel like they had the same chances as other children. When developing the survey a few children said they were not able to have fun, as their weekend activities were determined by having to follow their carer's interests or their pocket money was insufficient to do similar things to their friends.⁷⁰

In the general population, children aged 7yrs were asked in the Millennium Cohort Study if they had fun with their families at the weekend with response options of, 'all of the time', 'some of the time' and 'never'.⁷¹ Just 2% of children (age 7yrs) responded 'never'. Young children (4-7yrs) in care reported a similar negative (3%) percentage.

Most children had fun at the weekends – only 3% of primary school children in care did not.

The vast majority did have fun: only 3% of children aged 4-7yrs and 3% of 8-10yrs did not have fun (Table 8 and Table 9).

Table 8: Having fun at the weekend age 4-7yrs

Age	Mostly yes n (%)	Mostly no n (%)	Total n
4-7 yrs	1,414 (97%)	38 (3%)	1,452

⁷⁰ Wood, M. & Selwyn, J. (2017). Looked after children and young people's views on what matters to their subjective well-being. *Adoption and Fostering*, 41(1), 20-34. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0308575916686034>

⁷¹ University of London, Institute of Education, Centre for Longitudinal Studies. (2021). Millennium Cohort Study: Fourth Survey, 2008. [data collection]. 8th Edition. UK Data Service. SN: 6411, <http://doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-6411-8>

Table 9: Having fun at the weekend age 8-10yrs

Age	All/most of the time n (%)	Sometimes n (%)	Hardly ever n (%)	Never n (%)	Total n
8-10 yrs	1,761 (74%)	548 (23%)	47 (2%)	8 (1%)	2,374

Children and young people wrote about what they liked doing and what they would like to do more of:

I just love clubs. 4-7yrs

I would like to play football with a male or to join a football team. 8-10yrs

It can be fun sometimes to be in care, you get to go out places where you've never been before, and you get to do new exciting things. 8-10yrs



Young people aged 11-18yrs were asked, 'Outside of school or college, do you get the chance to spend time on your own hobbies or activities?'

Whilst over 9 out of 10 teenagers did take part in their own hobbies or activities, 9% 'hardly ever/never' did.

Table 10: Taking part in activities or hobbies outside of school or college 11-18yrs

Age	All/most of the time n (%)	Sometimes n (%)	Hardly ever n (%)	Never n (%)	Total n
11-18 yrs	3,161 (59%)	1,718 (32%)	316 (6%)	179 (3%)	5,374

- ▶ For both sexes and all age groups, not having fun at the weekends/spending time on hobbies was associated with not having a good friend.⁷²
- ▶ Children (8-10yrs) and young people (11-18yrs) who were living in residential care or those living somewhere else more frequently reported that they 'hardly ever' or 'never' had fun/ spent time on activities or hobbies compared with those in foster or kinship care.⁷³

Children reported that carers had a key role in enabling activities/having fun.

Living with Nana and granddad is fun. She normally takes us out to see fun things like going to the cinema. 4-7yrs

It's good at their house [foster care] because they are nice to me. They take me out everywhere like swimming. 8-10yrs

I like drawing and baking cakes with my carer. 11-18yrs

I have been able to see what normal children have in their lives. I like the food and the warm bed and my clean clothes. I really love our dog and walking him. I had a great paintballing party for my birthday with my school friends. I like all the after school and weekend activities. 11-18yrs

⁷² Age 4-7yrs $\chi^2= 63.951$, [n=1,426]df1, p< .001. age 8-10yrs $\chi^2= 81.069$ [n=2,344]df3, p< .001. age 11-18yrs $\chi^2= 121.444$ [n=5,315]df3, p< .001

⁷³ 5% of children (8-10yrs), 13% of young people in residential care, and 22% of those living 'somewhere else' did not have fun/take part in activities compared with 10% in kinship care and 7% in foster care.

A few children and young people felt they were not given opportunities and complained, for example, writing:

I would like my foster carers to take me out on trips. I've never been out to anything with them, and I've lived there for a long time. 11-18yrs

I would like to go to the gym, swimming, and boxing but they keep telling me to wait and I have waited 5 months now. 11-18yrs



Being outdoors in nature

I enjoy the beach and can't wait to go with my carers.

8-10yrs

There are several reasons why being outdoors in nature is good for mental health and well-being. There is a theory of biophilia that all human beings have an instinctive connection to nature that derives from our biological evolution.⁷⁴ Evidence from research⁷⁵ shows that being exposed to green natural environments improves well-being through a reduction in stress, a rise in positive emotions and better self-regulation. Being outside in nature can also encourage other types of positive behaviours such as taking exercise or social interaction and provide the opportunity to be away from other stressors such as noise.

⁷⁴ Wilson E (1984) *Biophilia* Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press

⁷⁵ Mygind L, Kurtzhals M, Nowell C, Melby PS, Stevenson MP, Nieuwenhuijsen M, et al. (2021) Landscapes of becoming social: A systematic review of evidence for associations and pathways between interactions with nature and socioemotional development in children. *Environ Int.* Jan; 146. Vanaken GJ, Danckaerts M. (2018) Impact of Green Space Exposure on Children's and Adolescents' Mental Health: A Systematic Review. *Int J Environ Res Public Health.* 27;15 (12): 2668. PMID: 30486416

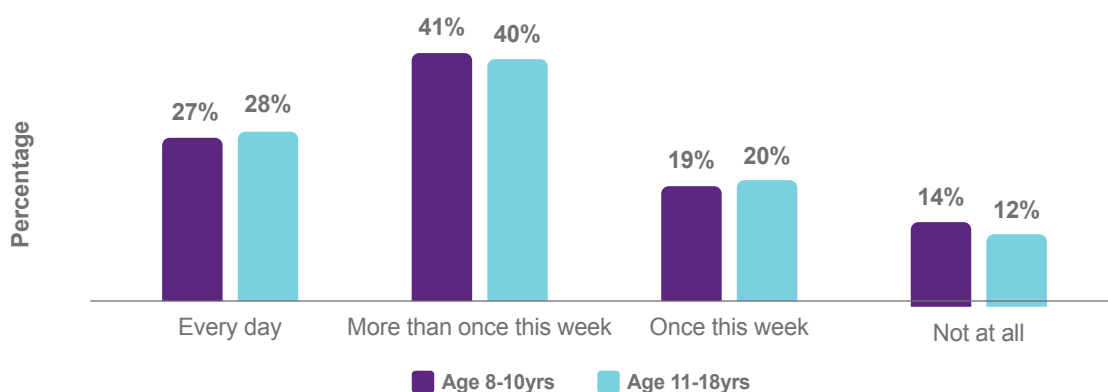


In the *Your Life, Your Care* survey we asked children (8-10yrs) and young people (11-18yrs) 'In the past week, how often have you spent time outdoors (e.g., going to the beach, woods, fields or the park)?'. Answer options were 'every day', 'more than once this week', 'once this week' and 'not at all'.

Over two-thirds of children in care had spent time outdoors in the previous week but more than one in ten had not had that opportunity.

The responses might have been affected by the pandemic, but most surveys had been completed before national lockdowns: just 10% had been completed in the few weeks after the first lockdown in March 2020 (Figure 26). There was no statistical difference in spending time outdoors by type of placement, the sex, or the ethnicity of the young person.

Figure 26: Spending time outdoors pre-pandemic



Base 2,210

There is no exact national comparison with peers in the general population. The People and Nature Survey found in a small survey of adults with children, that 82% of children spent time in green or natural spaces once a week or more (16% had daily access) and 7% 'less than once a month' or 'never'.⁷⁶

Most of the comments from children and young people in the *Your Life, Your Care* survey were about how much they enjoyed going outdoors:

[I would like to be] going to the beach and go to woodland. 8-10yrs

⁷⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/the-people-and-nature-survey-for-england-monthly-interim-indicators-for-july-2020-experimental-statistics/the-people-and-nature-survey-for-england-monthly-interim-indicators-for-july-2020-experimental-statistics#childrens-time-in-nature>



Opportunities to be trusted

[What would make care better?]
Being able to go out with my friends and be trusted with my own money and my phone.

11-18yrs

Children in the focus groups that informed the survey felt they were not always trusted or given responsibilities. The younger children particularly highlighted how they were not given opportunities to help out in school. In the surveys, children and young people wrote about wanting to be trusted and being given a second chance if they made a mistake.

Q: Children (8-10yrs) were asked if they were given opportunities in school to help the teacher.

83% of children felt they were given opportunities to help the teacher.

I want to be in the Rights Respecting Steering Group next year. 8-10yrs

- ▶ Children who felt they were not given opportunities in school to be trusted more frequently reported they disliked school.⁷⁷

Q: Young people (11-18yrs) were asked if they were given opportunities to be trusted.

Most young people (91%) felt they had opportunities to be trusted.

⁷⁷ $\chi^2=134.234$ [n=2,231], df3, p<.001

The majority (91%) of young people (11-18yrs) felt they were given opportunities to be trusted, In response to the question, 'What would make care better?' young people wrote about being given more opportunities to be trusted.

I would like my foster carers [to] be aware of social media and not think that it is scary or dangerous. I would like the foster carer to trust me more with my phone and social media. 11-18yrs

I feel like being placed here I have had to up my guard more. I wasn't trusted at the start. It's gotten better but it still gets on my nerves that if I have a couple of snacks in my bag from when I have been at college that they are taken away and binned. This frustrates me as they don't have many snacks in the house. 11-18yrs

I want to be trusted but I know I have to work at this. 11-18yrs

My foster carers would stop searching by room, take locks off doors and stop blaming me for everything I want some trust. 11-18yrs



Practising life skills

[I'd like to] be treated more like an adult so that I can prepare myself for later on when I move out and get a place to myself.

11-18yrs

In our analysis of the views of care leavers on their well-being, we found a steep decline in well-being after young people left care. Young people report an abrupt end to much of the support available to them as looked after children once they turn 18.⁷⁸ This change in support makes preparation for independence all the more important. Yet many studies have found that there is great variation in the level of support young people receive before leaving care and many feel unprepared.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Briheim-Crookall, L., Michelmore, O., Baker, C., Oni, O., Taylor, S & Selwyn J. (2020) *What Makes Life Good, Care leavers' Views on their Well-being* <https://coramvoice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/1883-CV-What-Makes-Life-Good-Report-final.pdf>

⁷⁹ Baker, C. (2017) *Care leavers' views on their transition to adulthood: A rapid review of the evidence* <https://coramvoice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Care-Leaver-Rapid-Review-24.10.17-final-proof-2.pdf>

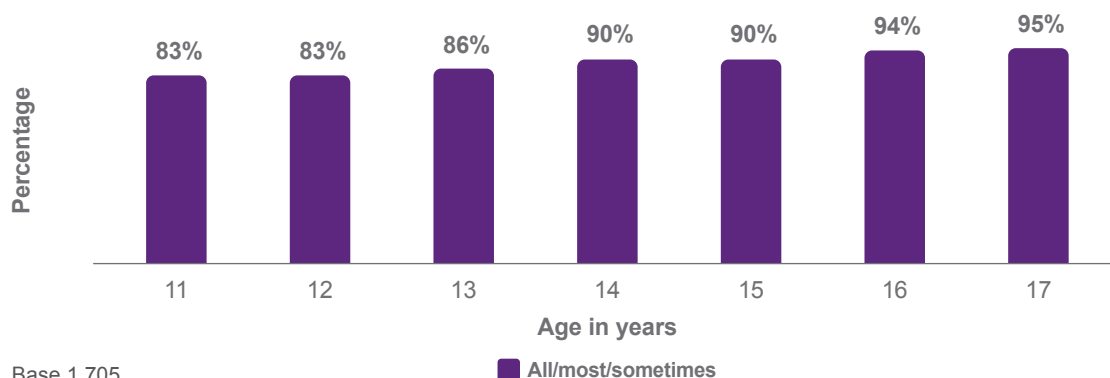


Young people in the 11-18yrs group were asked, 'How often do you get to practise life skills such as cooking healthy food, washing clothes, or going to the bank?'

9 out of 10 young people felt they had opportunities to practise life skills.

- ▶ The majority (89%) felt they were given opportunities 'all/most of the time' or 'sometimes.'
- ▶ As would be expected, the percentage who felt that they were given opportunities increased with the age of the young person (Figure 27)

Figure 27: Opportunities to practise life skills 'all/most of the time' or 'sometimes' by age



- ▶ There were no statistically significant differences in the opportunity to practise life skills by the young person's sex or ethnicity.
- ▶ Young people living 'somewhere else' (94%) or in residential care (93%) more frequently reported learning life skills compared with those in foster (88%) or kinship care (87%).⁸⁰



Young people wrote about wanting to cook and manage their own money.

From the age of 17, I think young people should be given the money for their travel, pocket money, etc into their own accounts to start acting more independently. 11-18yrs

If they let me do cooking at the foster care home. 11-18yrs

I'd like a little bit more pocket money to improve my savings. 11-18yrs

⁸⁰ $\chi^2=23.286$ [n=5,335] df3, p<.001

School, college and skills



Nobody listens to me at home. School is the only one that listens to me every day.

8-10yrs

School and college

Liking school has been identified as a protective factor against bullying, risk-taking and substance misuse. Students who dislike school or who do not feel connected to it are more likely to fail academically, leave education early, and have mental health problems.⁸¹ In the general population, the Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children (HBSC) survey asks children aged 11-15yrs, 'How do you feel about school at present?' The response options are, 'like it a lot', 'like it a bit', 'don't like it very much', and 'don't like it at all'. Overall, 23% of young people in the general population reported that they liked school 'a lot' and 47% said that they liked school 'a bit'. Liking school decreased with age for both boys and girls. School also provides opportunities to develop relationships and learn how to communicate and interact with others. Importantly, "school can provide structure and stability in otherwise troubled life and can provide a forum for developing positive self-esteem and confidence either through less formal non-academic achievements, such as sport, music or getting a part in the school play."⁸²



In our *Your Life, Your Care* survey children aged 4-7yrs are asked, 'Do you like school?' The response options are, 'mostly yes' or 'mostly no'. Children aged 8-10yrs and young people (11-18yrs) are asked 'How much do you like school/ college?' with the response options, 'a lot', 'a bit', 'not very much' and 'not at all'.

⁸¹ Inchley, J. et al (2020) Spotlight on adolescent health and well-being: findings from the 2017/2018 Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) survey in Europe and Canada, World Health Organisation. <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/332104>

⁸² Dixon, et al. (2006) *Young People Leaving Care: A Study of Costs and Outcomes*. <https://www.york.ac.uk/inst/spru/research/pdf/leaving.pdf>

Liking school decreased with age.

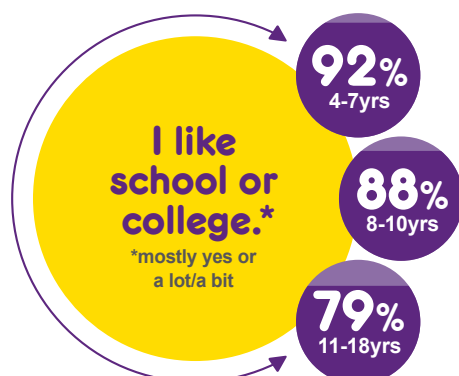
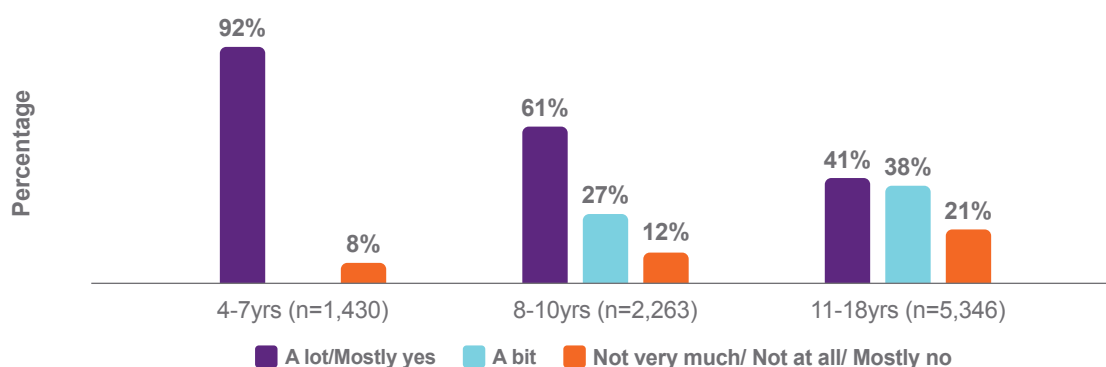


Figure 28: Liking school



A larger proportion of children in care liked school compared with their peers in the general population.



- ▶ Selecting those aged 11-15yrs (to match the HBSC age cohort) 81% of young people in care liked school 'a lot/a bit' compared with 70% of their peers in the general population.
- ▶ For all age groups disliking school was associated with not having a good friend.
- ▶ Feeling unsafe and unsettled in placements was associated with disliking school for children aged 4-7yrs.
- ▶ Boys aged 4-7yrs and 8-10yrs more frequently disliked school than girls but there were no sex differences in liking school in the older age group
- ▶ Being in residential care was associated with disliking school for those aged 11-18yrs: 30% in residential care disliked school compared with 23% in kinship and 20% of those in foster care.

⁸³ Brooks, F. et. al (2020), *Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC): World Health Organization Collaborative Cross National Study: Findings from the 2018 HBSC study for England*. vol. MCC0544/DS/01-20, University of Hertfordshire, Hatfield. <http://hbscengland.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/HBSC-England-National-Report-2020.pdf>

Disliking school was associated with

- ▶ **Age:** increased with age.
- ▶ **Good friends:** Not having a good friend was associated with disliking school in every age group.
- ▶ **Sex:** Being a boy was associated with disliking school for children aged 4-10yrs.
- ▶ **Feeling safe & settled:** Not feeling safe or settled in placement was associated with disliking school for children aged 4-7yrs
- ▶ **Placement type:** A higher percentage of young people 11-18yrs in residential care disliked school compared with those in kinship or foster care.
- ▶ **Bullying & stigma:** There was a statistical association between fear of going to school because of bullying, feeling embarrassed by adult actions and disliking school for those aged 11-18yrs.

Children and young people wrote about their experiences at school: the support they got and would like to have and their dislike of meetings disrupting their education.

I wish I had more support in class, I get left to work on my own and I have to do the work all by myself and I get it wrong. 8-10yrs

I like my home and school. Everyone helps me a lot. 8-10yrs

I get treated differently in school because I am in care. 8-10yrs

When I have my PEP [Personal Education Plan] meetings, I don't want to worry about them, but I don't want to miss my classes. But I do want feedback from what everyone has said about me. 11-18yrs

Children also wrote about the importance of the location of their school. There were comments about wanting to stay in the same school but also comments about the effect on children who were travelling a long way from placement to school. They found the journey tiring and as discussed earlier, there were difficulties keeping friends when living so far away.

Sometimes I get sad at school because I am tired. My school is far away. 4-7yrs

I really like that I have been able to stay in the same school with my friends. I like the taxi I go in. 4-7yrs

I would like to be in a foster home nearer school as it takes an hour in the taxi to get to school. 8-10yrs

Do I really have to move school because I want to stay in this school because I feel safe? 8-10yrs



Support for education

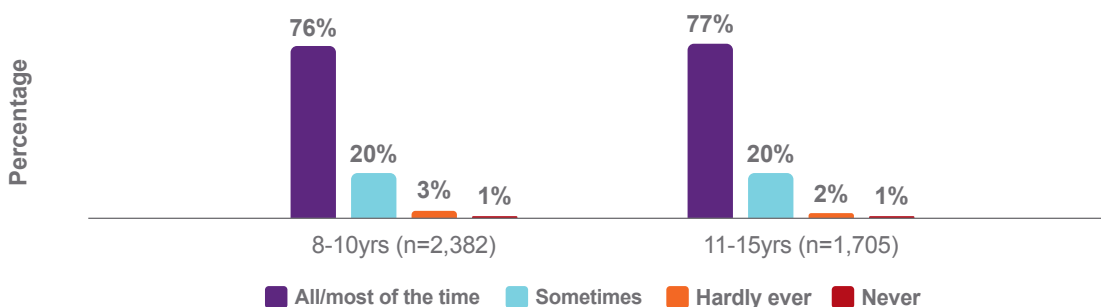


Adults taking an interest in children’s education has been shown to influence children’s educational outcomes. Carers’ encouragement, high aspirations and expectations have all been shown to have an impact on how well children in care do in school.⁸⁴ Since the surveys began, it has been a consistent finding that the vast majority of looked after children and young people feel that their carers are interested in what they are doing in school and are supportive.

Q: Children in the 8-10yrs and 11-18yrs surveys were asked if the adults they lived with showed an interest in what they were doing in school or college.

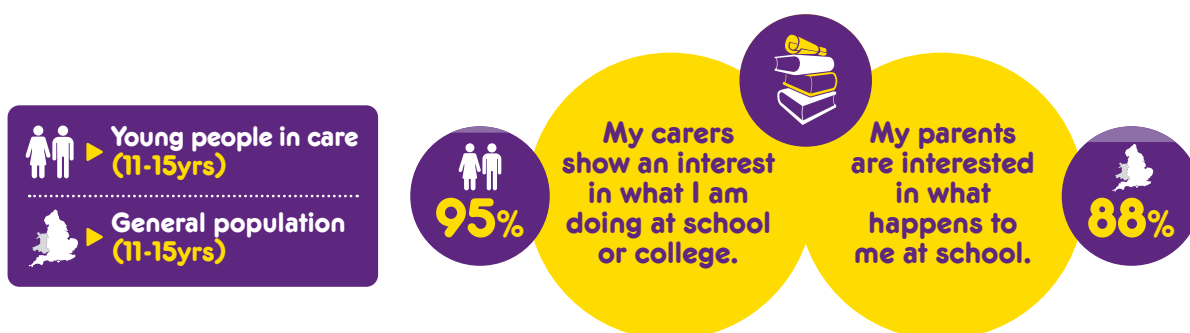
19 out of 20 children and young people felt that the adults they lived with were interested in their education; a higher proportion than reported by peers in the general population.

Figure 29: Carers’ interest in children and young people’s education



⁸⁴ Berridge, D., Luke, N., Sebba, J., Strand, S., Cartwright, M., Staples, E., McGrath-Lone, L., Ward, J. & O'Higgins A. (2020) *Children in need and children in care: educational attainment and progress*
<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/media-library/sites/policybristol/briefings-and-reports-pdfs/Final%20Report%20Nuffield.pdf>

- ▶ The positive responses from young people were more frequent than their peers in the general population. The HBSC survey⁸⁵ found that 88% of children (11-15yrs) felt that their parents were interested in what happened at school compared with 97% of young people (11-15yrs) in care.
- ▶ 95% of all young people (11-18yrs) felt their carers were interested in their learning
- ▶ Unlike many other indicators in this and national surveys that show that older young people are less positive in their responses compared with younger children, on this important indicator there was no age difference.



Young people in residential care less frequently reported that their carers were interested in what they did at school compared with young people in foster and kinship care.

- ▶ As with many of the other indicators in our survey, those in residential care responded less favourably: 10% of young people (11-18yrs) in residential care felt their carers were interested 'hardly ever' or 'never' compared with 2% of those in kinship care or 1% of those in foster care.

⁸⁵ Brooks, F. et. al (2020), Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC): World Health Organization Collaborative Cross National Study: Findings from the 2018 HBSC study for England. vol. MCC0544/DS/01-20, University of Hertfordshire, Hatfield. <http://hbscengland.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/HBSC-England-National-Report-2020.pdf>



Fear of bullying

Being in care is a struggle because you can get bullied or picked on for being special and this can bring my mood down and others too, which means this also impacts on their lives because they might be scared to go to school/college and be afraid that they will get singled out from all the others because they are in care and are different from everyone else.

11-18yrs

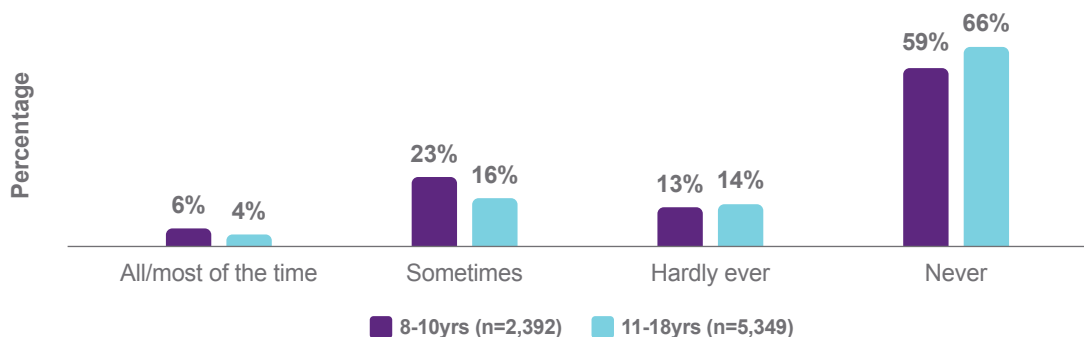
Research from 22 countries shows that being free from bullying is one of the most important factors in children's well-being⁸⁶ When developing the survey children in the focus groups stated that they had been bullied and believed that they were marked out as different because they were in care.⁸⁷



In our survey, children (8-10yrs) and young people (11-18yrs) were asked if they were afraid of going to school because of bullying.

The majority of children (72%) and young people (80%) were 'hardly ever' or 'never' afraid of bullying (Figure 30).

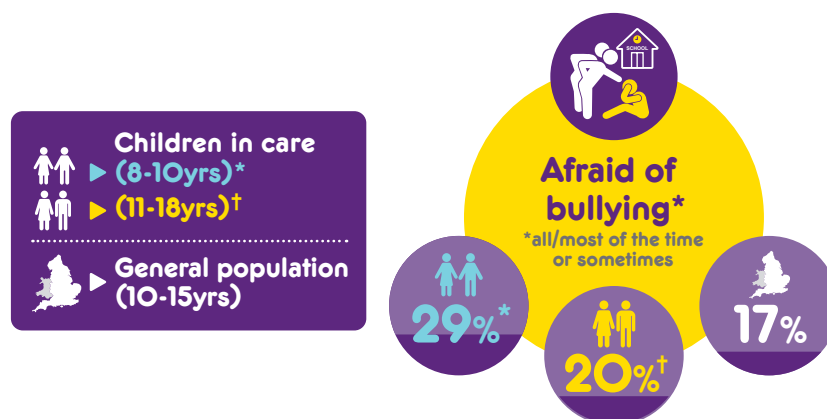
Figure 30: Fear of going to school because of bullying



⁸⁶ University of Bristol & Coram Voice (2015) *Children and Young People's Views on Being in Care A Literature Review*. <https://coramvoice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Childrens-views-lit-review-FINAL-2.pdf>

⁸⁷ Wood, M. & Selwyn, J. (2017) Looked after children and young people's views on what matters to their subjective well-being. *Adoption and Fostering*, 41(1), 20-34. <https://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:7d9d9db9-8eb5-4ca4-a3fc-698d3fb4db4>

A higher proportion of children in care reported fear of bullying compared with peers in the general population.



Although the question in our survey is not identical to the question on bullying in national surveys, a larger percentage of children (29%) and young people in care (20%) reported bullying compared with 17% of young people (10-15yrs) in England who had felt afraid or upset by bullying in the previous year.⁸⁸ However, estimates of bullying in the UK vary widely. In the 'What About YOUth' survey⁸⁹, 55% of young people aged 15yrs said they had experienced some form of bullying in the past couple of months. In contrast, in the Annual Bullying Survey 2018, 22% of young people (mostly aged between 12 and 15yrs) reported that they had experienced bullying in the last 12 months.⁹⁰ The difference may be in young people's understanding of the question, the response options offered and whether the surveys are completed in or out of school.

Children who did not have a good friend were also often afraid of going to school because of bullying.

- ▶ Nearly half (46%) of children (8-10yrs) and a third (33%) of young people (11-18yrs) who did not have a good friend also reported being afraid of going to school because of bullying 'all/most of the time' or 'sometimes'.

An analysis by the Department for Education of national bullying data reported that some groups were significantly more likely to experience bullying⁹¹. Those groups included younger children, White children and those who received extra help at school. These findings were replicated in the *Your Life, Your Care* surveys.

- ▶ A larger percentage of 8-10yrs children (29%) reported being afraid of bullying 'all/most of the time' or 'sometimes' compared with 20% of young people aged 11-18yrs.
- ▶ Just as in the general population a larger percentage (23%) of White young people (11-18yrs) in care reported bullying compared with Mixed (18%), Asian (16%), and Black (13%) young people.
- ▶ National statistics⁹² report that 56% of looked after children have a special educational need compared to 15% of all children in the school population and therefore a larger proportion of children in care will be receiving extra help. This may make them more likely to become victims of bullying.

⁸⁸ DfE (2018) *Bullying in England, April 2013 to March 2018 Analysis on 10 to 15 year olds from the Crime Survey for England & Wales*
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/919474/Bullying_in_England_2013-2018__1_.pdf

⁸⁹ <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/health-and-wellbeing-of-15-year-olds-in-england/main-findings---2014>

⁹⁰ <https://www.ditchthelabel.org/research-papers/the-annual-bullying-survey-2018/> Question "In the past 12 months, and based on your own definition, how frequently were you bullied?" 34% at least once a week and 51% at least once this month

⁹¹ DfE (2018) *Bullying in England April 2013 to March 2018: Analysis on 10-15 year olds from the Crime Survey for England and Wales*
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bullying-in-england-april-2013-to-march-2018>

⁹² DfE (2018) *Outcomes for Looked after Children*
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/695360/SFR20_2018_Text__1_.pdf

- ▶ Children commented that they were treated differently in school because of being in care and that too may draw unwelcome attention (see earlier section on Stigma, privacy, and discrimination and comments from children below).

Young people's comments on bullying focused on how being in care made them "different" and how being seen to be different could make them the target of bullies. They wrote in response to a question asking, 'What would care better?':

Not having worries and being scared to go to school. 8-10yrs

I get a lot of worries at school. I am not liked very much. 8-10yrs

My family did not love me. I used to get bullied as I didn't live with them. 11-18yrs

More than one in five (21%) of those who felt afraid of bullying 'All/most/sometimes' also reported feeling adults did things that made them feel embarrassed about being in care.⁹³

The young people wrote:

[I feel embarrassed] when teachers say anything about being in care when others can hear. 11-18yrs

When contact workers used to pick me up from school, they used to wear their badges. 11-18yrs

When I was younger, it was a lot more difficult. Adults always felt that they could see you when they wanted to - at school and at club - that was embarrassing. As I got older, I was able to say that actions like this were not ok, so to stop. 11-18yrs



Help to address bullying



Children (8-10yrs) and young people (11-18yrs) who reported that they were afraid of bullying were also asked if they got help from an adult.

- ▶ 83% of children (8-10yrs) and 79% who were afraid of bullying reported that they got help from an adult.
- ▶ Slightly more White and Asian young people (82%) reported getting support compared with 75% of Black and Mixed ethnicity young people.



⁹³ $\chi^2 = 89.013$ [n=5,285] df1, p<.001

Summary - Daily life



Where children in care live

- ▶ A larger proportion (88%) of looked after children 'always' felt safe where they lived in comparison with children (82%) in the general population.
- ▶ Those in residential care or living somewhere else more frequently reported feeling unsafe compared with those in foster or kinship care. About 5% of young people in residential care 'hardly ever' or 'never' felt safe.
- ▶ Feeling settled 'all or most of the time' increased with the length of time in care and decreased if the young person had had multiple placements.
- ▶ 88% of those who 'never' felt settled also reported 'hardly ever/never' feeling safe where they lived.
- ▶ Between 5% and 7% of children and young people disliked their bedrooms.
- ▶ Children in kinship care disliked their bedrooms more frequently than those in foster care. Comments suggested that the dislike was often because bedrooms were shared.
- ▶ Young people (11-18yrs), especially girls, in residential care or living somewhere else more frequently reported disliking their bedrooms than those in foster and kinship care.



Opportunities

- ▶ The majority (91%) of young people (11-18yrs) felt they were given opportunities to be trusted, although there were also comments on wanting to be trusted more, especially with social media.
- ▶ Children (8-10yrs) were asked if they were given opportunities in school to help the teacher: 83% of children responded positively. Not feeling trusted by teachers was associated with disliking school.
- ▶ Children aged 4-7yrs were asked whether they got to have fun at the weekends. The vast majority (97%) responded 'Mostly yes'.
- ▶ Those in residential care or living somewhere else more frequently reported that they 'hardly ever' or 'never' were able to have fun or take part in activities or hobbies compared with those in foster or kinship care.
- ▶ For both sexes and all age groups, there was a statistical association between not having a good friend and not having fun at the weekends/taking part in activities.

- ▶ More than one in ten children and young people had not had the opportunity to visit green spaces and the natural world in the previous week. Placement type, sex and ethnicity were not associated with spending time in green spaces.
- ▶ The majority (89%) of young people (11-18yrs) felt they were given opportunities 'all/most/sometimes' to practise life skills. Feeling that they were given opportunities increased with age. Young people in residential care more frequently reported learning life skills compared with those living in foster/kinship placements.



School and college

- ▶ 79% of looked after young people liked school a lot /a bit: a larger proportion than their peers in the general population. Liking school decreased with age.
- ▶ Not having a good friend was associated in every age group with disliking school
- ▶ Being a boy was associated with disliking school for children aged 4-10yrs.
- ▶ Not feeling safe or settled in placement was associated with disliking school for children aged 4-7yrs
- ▶ Placement type: 30% of young people (11-18yrs) in residential care disliked school compared with 23% in kinship and 20% of those in foster care.
- ▶ About 97% of children (8-10yrs) and young people (11-15yrs) felt that their carers were interested 'all/most/sometimes' in their education: a larger proportion than their peers (88%) in the general population. On this important indicator there was no decline in positive responses as young people got older.
- ▶ A larger percentage of looked after children (29%) and young people (20%) were afraid of bullying compared with 17% of young people (10-15yrs) in England.
- ▶ A DfE analysis of national bullying data found that younger children and White children were more likely to experience bullying. These findings were replicated in the *Your Life, Your Care* surveys. However, while 82% of White and Asian young people recorded that they were being supported to prevent bullying fewer (75%) Black and Mixed ethnicity young people felt supported.
- ▶ Unsurprisingly, children and young people who felt they did not have a good friend also reported being fearful of bullying. There was a statistical association between fear of bullying, feeling embarrassed by adult actions and disliking school.