



## 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 I 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.

## Survey age groups



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.





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## **Bright Spots Snapshot 2018**

### **OUR LIVES, OUR CARE**

**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](mailto:brightspots@coramvoice.org.uk)** or go to **[www.coramvoice.org.uk/brightspots](http://www.coramvoice.org.uk/brightspots)** to find out more

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## makes a difference nationally and locally

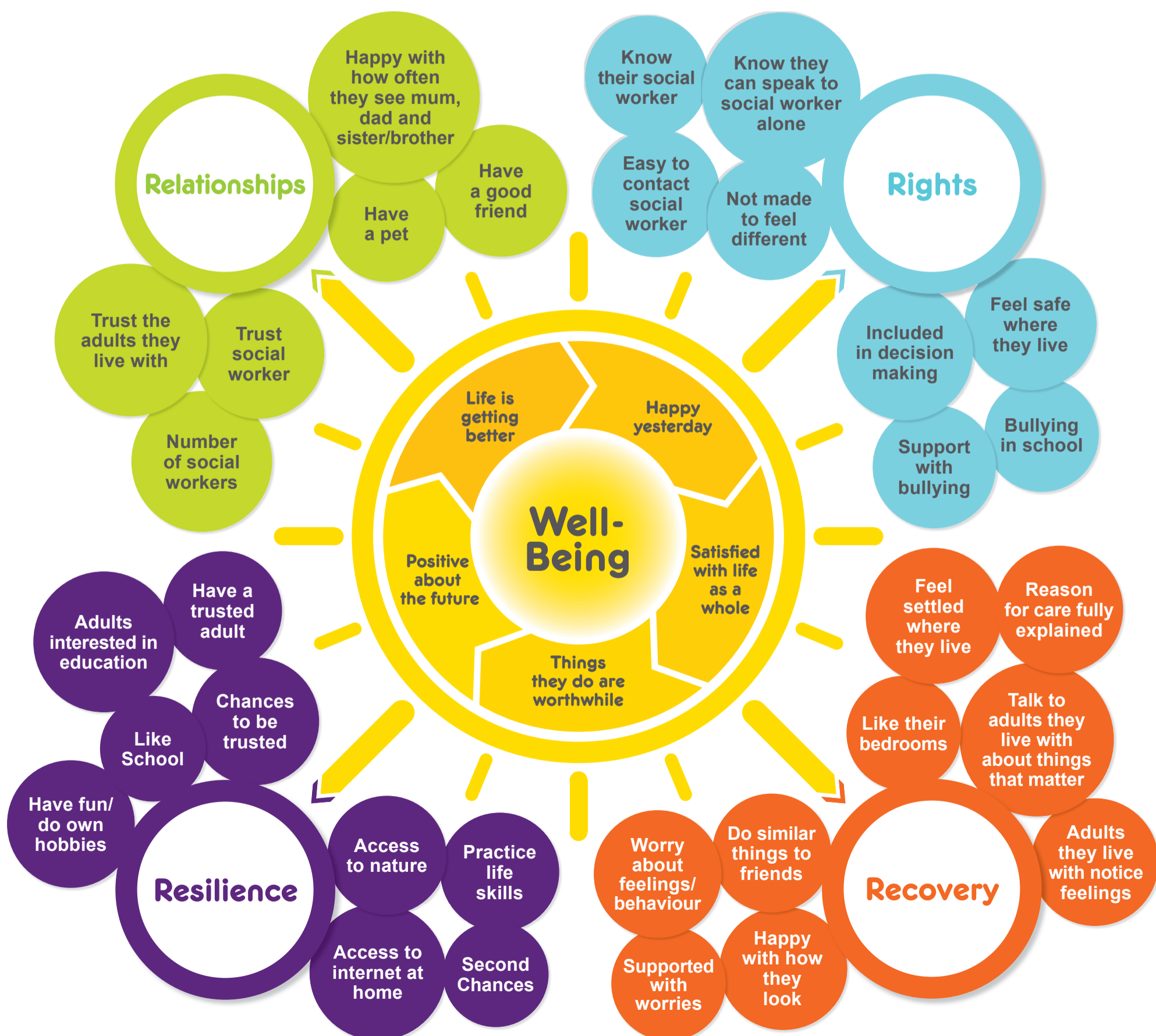
**Our vision** is that the *Your Life, Your Care* and *Your Life, Beyond Care* surveys become the national subjective well-being indicators for children in care and care leavers. If all local authorities did the surveys, both local and national decision-makers would better understand and be able to act on the experiences of children in care and care leavers.

By everyone using the Bright Spots measures across the country we can build a full national picture and benchmark how children and young people feel about their lives in different local authorities and in comparison to the general population, addressing the enduring variation in support young people continue to report.

**We urge the Government to continue to promote the Bright Spots surveys to all local authorities and encourage authorities themselves to get involved.**

Get in touch with **Coram Voice** on [brightspots@coramvoice.org.uk](mailto:brightspots@coramvoice.org.uk) or go to [www.coramvoice.org.uk/brightspots](http://www.coramvoice.org.uk/brightspots) to find out more.

## Bright Spots Well-Being Indicators: Your Life, Your Care







Looked after children's views on their well-being in 2018

**Workers**

**1 in 5** of the youngest children (4-7yrs) didn't know who their social worker was.

**9 in 10** "I trust\* my worker" (4-18yrs)  
\*All of the time or sometimes

"I feel that I am really getting on with my current social worker and that I know that I can trust her and that she understands my views and feelings and that I can tell her everything." (11-18yrs)

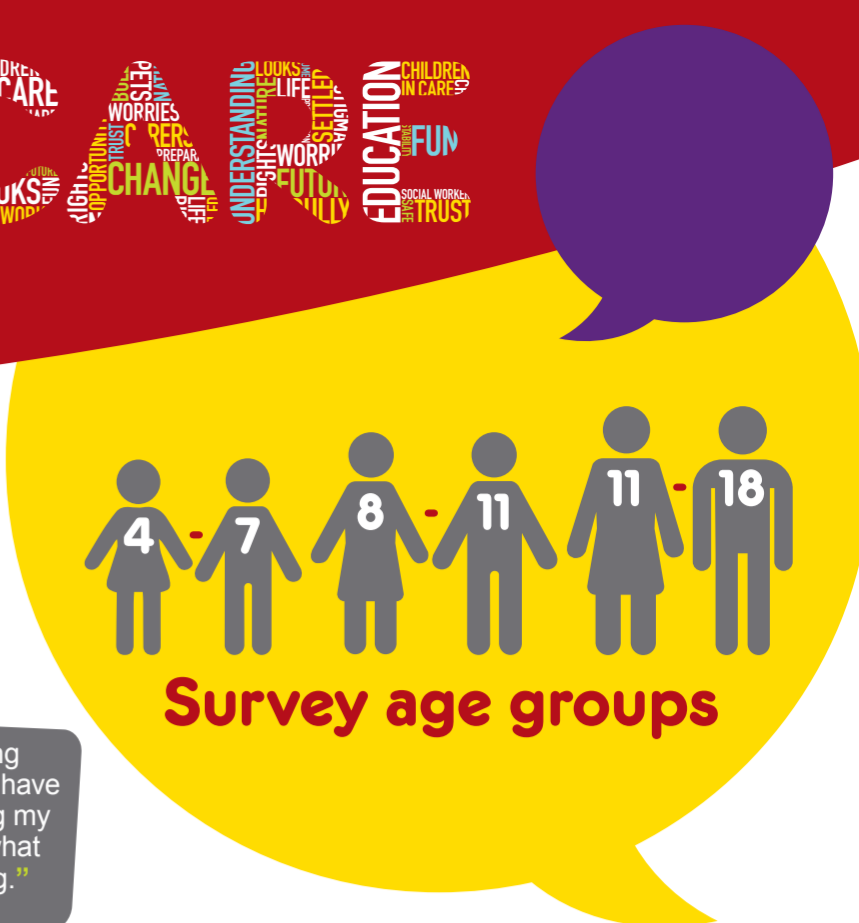
**3+** **27%** of young people (11-18yrs) had 3 or more social workers in the past year.

"It would be better if I could stick with one Social Worker, they change a lot." (8-11yrs)



**86%** "I feel included\* in decisions social workers make about my life." (8-18yrs)  
\*All of the time or sometimes

"My independent reviewing officer empowered me to have a say through co-chairing my meetings and knowing what changes were happening." (11-18yrs)



**Relationships**

**16%** (8-11yrs) "I am unable to see either parent."

**27%** (11-18yrs) "I have a really good friend."

**9 in 10** (4-18yrs) "I have a really good friend."

**26%** "I SEE" MUM

**19%** "I SEE" DAD

**27%** "I SEE" SISTER

**TOO LITTLE** (8-11yrs)

"I feel like it's the best day ever when I see my mother, because I love seeing her. I'm very sad about not seeing my dad as I really miss him - he was very nice." (11-18yrs)

**96%** (4-18yrs) "I trust the adults that I live with." \*All of the time or sometimes

"I can trust my foster carers now and they support me in all the decisions I make. I feel that I have truly found a one in a million placement." (11-18yrs)

**91%** "I have someone I can trust, who helps me and sticks by me no matter what."

**Education**

**90%** (4-7yrs) "I like\* school or college." \*A lot or a bit

**85%** (8-11yrs)

**78%** (11-18yrs)

"The people I live with take an interest in what I do at school/college."

**90%** Children in Care (8-11yrs)

**90%** General Population (11-15yrs)

"My carer is nice [and] helps me a lot especially when it comes to [home] work." (8-11yrs)

**30%** (8-11yrs) "I have felt afraid to go to school because of bullying."

**22%** (11-18yrs)

**83%** (8-11yrs) "If I feel bullied, I get support from someone."

"I used to get bullied because I didn't live with my parents and no one helped me but then it got better so I think it would be good if young people like me could spread their story everywhere." (4-7yrs)

**Feelings**

**59%** (8-11yrs) "I worry\* about my feelings and behaviour." \*All of the time or sometimes

**84%** (11-18yrs) "I get to do similar things to friends."

"I want out of care, it's terrible, because I am not allowed to have sleepovers, or if am, it takes too long to arrange and I nearly miss out on trips waiting for consent." (11-18yrs)

**12%** (11-18yrs) "Adults do things to make me feel embarrassed about being in care."

**Home**

**88%** Children in Care (8-18yrs)

**75%** General Population<sup>2</sup> (8-13yrs)

"I always feel safe where I live."

**94%** "I like my bedroom." (4-18yrs)

"Being in care makes my life better by having a safe house and bedroom." (8-11yrs)

**91%** Children in Care (11-18yrs)

**100%** General Population<sup>3</sup> Households with children

"I have access to the internet at home."

"As I am 15, I should have a chance of having social media because - ALL of my friends have it and I don't like being left out, so really being in care is tough." (11-18yrs)

**Well-Being**

**1 in 10** "I felt sad yesterday." (4-11yrs)

"I don't like being in care. I want to go back to my mummy. I was happy with mummy." (4-7yrs)

**15%** of 11-18 year olds have low well-being.

**82%** "Life is getting better." (8-18yrs)

"I love being in care because the people I live with are very nice and love me very much." (8-11yrs)

**Compared to the general population\* a similar proportion of children in care have very high well-being but more have low well-being.**

**11-18 year old children in care** vs **11-17 year olds in general population<sup>4</sup>**

**Life Satisfaction:** 34% Very High Scores vs 36% Very High Scores; 15% Low Scores vs 5% Low Scores

**Happiness:** 37% Very High Scores vs 33% Very High Scores; 19% Low Scores vs 7% Low Scores

**Things I do in life are worthwhile:** 37% Very High Scores vs 35% Very High Scores; 12% Low Scores vs 6% Low Scores

**Positivity about the future:** 36% Very High Scores vs 26% Very High Scores; 11% Low Scores vs 7% Low Scores

**Our findings show some young people in care are struggling in many areas of their lives whilst others are doing very well.**

"Going into care has really helped me as I got a fresh start in life to do good things in life so I appreciate it" (11-18yrs)

"Hate it, I don't care how much effort they put in, they don't really care about the kids. I feel like it's all about money... if I was going to review it I would give it 1 star." (11-18yrs)

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<sup>1</sup> WHO, (2015), *Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children Survey*.  
<sup>2</sup> Rees, G., Main, G., & Bradshaw, J. (2014), *Children's Worlds National Report England*.  
<sup>3</sup> ONS Statistical bulletin, (2017), *Internet access - households and individuals*.  
<sup>4</sup> The Children's Society, (2018), *The Good Childhood Report*. Data provided for this comparison by Dr. Alexandra Turner and Larissa Pople.