

Your Life, Your Care survey – Sample definition

For the cohort year 2026-27

How to determine your sample of looked after children for this survey?

All looked after children aged from 4 years old up to but not including their 18th birthday should be included in your survey sample. See more details about this below.

Different age groups of 'Your Life, Your Care' survey

NB: the number of young people in the Bright Spots local authority survey will not match the total number of looked after children and young people in the DfE SSDA903 statistics as DfE include all age groups of children and Bright Spots excludes children aged 0 to 3.

The 3 surveys are broken down into the following three age groups:

- **Aged 4 to 7**
- **Aged 8 to 11 (primary school)**
- **Aged 11 up to age 17 (secondary school)**

NB: Children aged 18 are not included in this survey (their voices will be captured in the Your Life Beyond Care survey)

Children aged 11 – important information

Children aged 11 sit between two different school years depending on their date of birth. Use their date of birth to assign children to the correct survey sample as per below:

- Children born between 01/09/2015 - 31/08/2016 will be in year 6 (8-11 survey)
- Children born between 01/09/2014 - 31/08/2015 are in year 7 (11-17 survey)

Which children to include in the survey sample

- **All looked after children aged 4 to 17 looked after on a particular date.** You will need to pick a date for when to capture the list of all looked after children aged 4 to 17 in your local authority. You can decide when to create this list at the working group.

- **Children who have recently entered care.** You may want to set the date that you create the list of all looked after children 2 weeks prior to the survey start date (by doing this you will exclude those who have very recently entered care). However, you may decide to include all looked after children in the age range regardless of whether they recently entered care as you want to hear views from those who have only just started a period of being looked after.
- **Definition of 'looked after child'.** The 'Your Life, Your Care' survey follows the same criteria for inclusion of looked after child as [SSDA903 guidance](#) for the DfE 31st March statistics. Please note:
 - Children who receive respite care are not included (unless the number of days respite they receive exceeds the amount set in guidance and they are considered looked after)
 - Children who are adopted or placed for adoption are not included
 - Children who have left care because of a special guardianship order are not included.
- **Looked after children aged 16 or 17 who are still in care** are included in the 11-17 survey. These children are sometimes referred to as 'eligible' children. They may live in a range of accommodation e.g. foster care, semi-independent supported accommodation, supported lodgings etc. but if they are still looked after then they are included in the 'Your Life, Your Care' survey. If young people are aged 16 or 17 and have left care i.e. are 'relevant' children then they are included in the care leaver survey, 'Your Life Beyond Care'. All young people aged 18 or over ('former relevant') are included in the care leaver survey.
- **Looked after children in the full range of placement types including looked after children who live out of authority** - please include in the sample all children who are looked after by your local authority regardless of where their placement is or what type of placement they live in (i.e. include secure care).

Children/young people who are unable to complete the survey

As part of the working group discussion a decision will need to be made whether to exclude any individual children for whom the survey is not appropriate. This could be because they have a disability that would mean they did not have the capacity to understand the survey; or because the child in question has very recently come into care and wouldn't find the questions relevant, or other circumstances mean it is necessary to remove them from the list of looked after children. Many local authorities decide not to exclude any looked after children from the sample but the option to do so is possible.

We hope you are able to offer the opportunity to take part in the Bright Spots survey to as many of your looked after children as possible. Please make reasonable adjustments as to how you distribute the survey so that you can include the full range of children and young people including unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people and disabled young people – do discuss as a working group and talk to your Bright Spots lead about ideas for ensuring a wide range of young people are given the opportunity to take part.

Calculating your response rate

Once you have created the list of children who fit the criteria for the survey sample, then you need to provide Coram Voice with the numbers of children in each survey category. Coram Voice will use this information to calculate your response rate. Please break this number down by the total in each age group:

- 4-7yrs
- 8-11yrs (primary school)
- 11-17yrs (secondary school)

Distributing the survey

Once you have the number of looked after children and survey start date, the working group can start to distribute the survey and invite looked after children to take part and complete the online survey.

Care leaver survey

Please see separate guidance for determining the sample of care leavers.

If you have any questions on criteria for sample inclusion, please contact your Bright Spots lead or email: brightspots@coramvoice.org.uk