

Children's care monitor 2010

Children on the state of social care in England

Reported by the Children's Rights Director for England



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Introduction

Roger Morgan, Children's Rights Director for England



The law sets out my duties as Children's Rights Director for England. With my team, one of my main duties is to ask children and young people for their views about how both children and young people are looked after in England. My duties cover children and young people living in children's homes, in family centres, in foster care, or who have been placed for adoption, together with care leavers and children or young people getting any sort of help from council social care services, as well as children and young people living away from home in all types of boarding schools, residential special schools or further education colleges.

As well as asking children for their views and publishing what they tell us, with my team I also give advice on children's rights and welfare to the government and to Ofsted, the people who inspect social care services and schools. We also help individual children by taking up their cases when they are concerned about their rights or welfare. I also have a duty to raise any issues I think are important about the rights and welfare of children or young people living away from home or getting children's social care support.

Children have told us there are some things that are so important to them that we should check them with children every year. So in 2008 we started publishing a Children's care monitor each year, reporting what children and young people told us about six things which are important to their lives: keeping safe, bullying, having a say in what happens, making complaints and suggestions, education, and care planning for people being looked after in care. This is our third Children's care monitor, reporting what children and young people told us about these things in 2010.

The 2010 Children's care monitor was carried out through a web survey. We made sure that only those we had invited to take part filled the survey in by sending passwords to the councils and services we had invited, for the children and young people to use. All the councils and services which

had signed up two years ago to take part in our monitoring surveys for three years were invited to take part in 2010.

On many subjects, what children said in our 2010 sample is close to what children told us in 2008 and again in 2009. Some small differences from one year to the next could well have happened just by chance. However, in this third Children's care monitor, we have looked back over what children have said over the last three years, and have written in this report about any large or steady changes that have taken place over those three years, showing where there are steady trends – good or bad – in what children in our surveys say about social care. We plan to keep on writing monitor reports each year, and we will publish our next report in the autumn of 2011.

As with all our reports, this one sets out what children themselves have told us, without leaving out things we might disagree with or adding our own comments. It is purely a report of children's views. Where we have given a quotation from a child or young person, this is because the quotation neatly makes a point that many others also made to us. We try to write our reports so that they can just as easily be read by children as by professionals and government ministers. This report, like all our reports, is being sent to government ministers and officials, other key people in Parliament, every council children's services department in England, and the people in Ofsted who inspect services for children.

What children have told us for our reports has led to important changes to decisions about looking after children. Like all our other reports, this one is being published for everyone to read. You can find copies of all our reports on our children's website www.rights4me.org.

This report brings together the views of 1,172 children and young people. It is their assessment of how care is doing in 2010.

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



The children and young people who took part

This report gives the views of 1,155 children and young people who filled in our monitoring survey online in 2010, plus 17 disabled children and young people who answered some of the questions using Widget symbol language. Out of 1,155 children who took part in the 2010 care monitor survey, 1,097 told us their age. The youngest was four, and the oldest was a care leaver aged 24. The middle age out of everyone who took part in the survey was 15. Thirty-eight per cent were aged 13 or under, and 62% were aged 14 or over. Nine per cent of these were aged 18 or over. Out of the 1,100 children who told us whether they were boys or girls, 55% were boys and 45% were girls. There were no big differences¹ in these figures from the 2009 monitor.

The 1,155 children who took part in the survey were receiving services from 111 different social care services across England which in 2008 or 2009 had accepted our invitation to take part in the survey for the next three years. They included 48 local authorities, 15 independent fostering agencies, 11 independent children's homes, eight boarding schools, 12 residential special schools and 17 residential further education colleges.

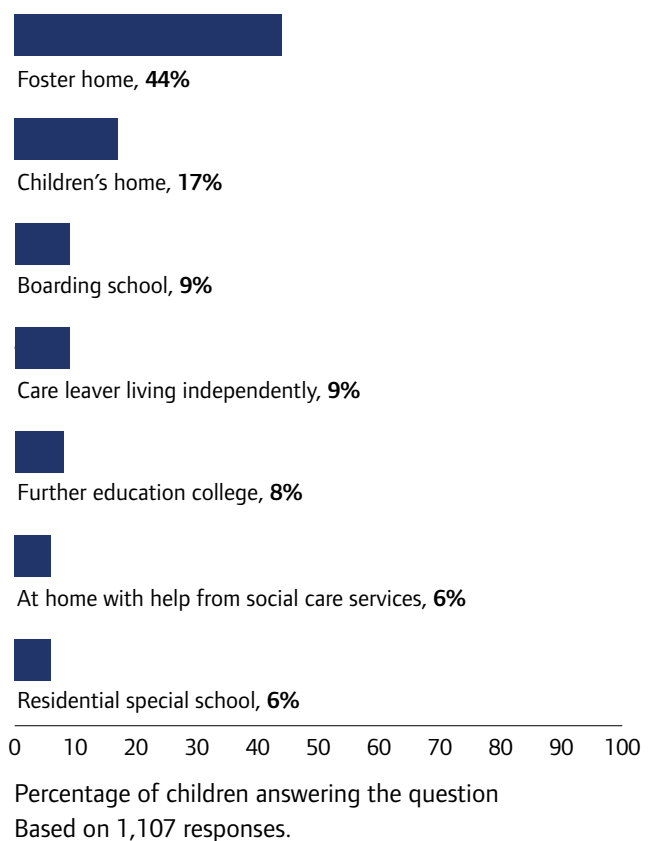
Not every child or young person answered every question. For each question, we have given the number who did, and where we give percentages, these are percentages of all the people who answered that question.

Of the 1,097 children who filled in the survey and who told us whether they were disabled, 146 (13%) said they were disabled. Out of these 146 children, 30 (23%) said their disability was a learning difficulty, 26 (20%) said they had attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), 17 (13%) said they had a physical disability, 15 (11%) said they had dyslexia and 13 (10%) told us they had autism or Asperger's syndrome. Other disabilities listed included hearing impairment, sight impairment, epilepsy and behaviour problems. To these numbers we must add the 17 disabled children and young people who filled in Widget symbol answers to questions for us.

Out of the 1,155 children in the survey, 1,103 answered a question about their ethnic background. Out of these, 81% said they were white, 6% that they were Asian, 6% that they were Black and 5% that they were from a mixed background. The other children ticked the answer 'other' for this question. Forty-six children and young people, 4% of the 1,073 who answered this question for us, told us that they were asylum seekers in this country.

Figure 1 shows the different settings that the children in our survey were living in. There were no big differences from the figures for 2009.

Figure 1: Where the children lived



¹ Everywhere in this report, we have counted a 'big difference' as a difference of 10 percentage points or more.

The children and young people who took part continued



For this report, we have checked whether different groups of children gave very different answers to the questions. We checked for any big differences in answers between boys and girls, and between those aged under 14 and those aged 14 plus. We also checked whether those who said they had a disability gave very different answers from the children generally.

We have looked at the findings we reported in our monitoring surveys for 2008 and 2009, and have said in this 2010 report where there appears to be a definite change over these three years' findings. Of course, it is important not to assume that very small differences between the years mean things are actually changing, because different children answered our survey each year and some differences from one survey to the next will have happened purely by chance.

Keeping safe

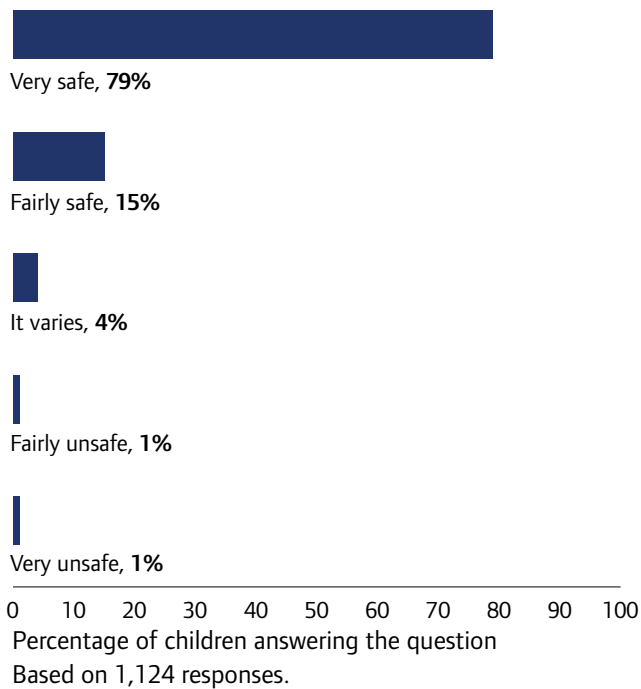
Where children feel safe and unsafe

We asked children to tell us how safe they felt in different places. Overall, as in the last two years, children 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.

The findings do not show any big change in how safe children and young people felt in different places between our 2008, 2009 and 2010 surveys. Figure 2 shows how safe the children in the 2010 survey told us they felt in the buildings where they live.

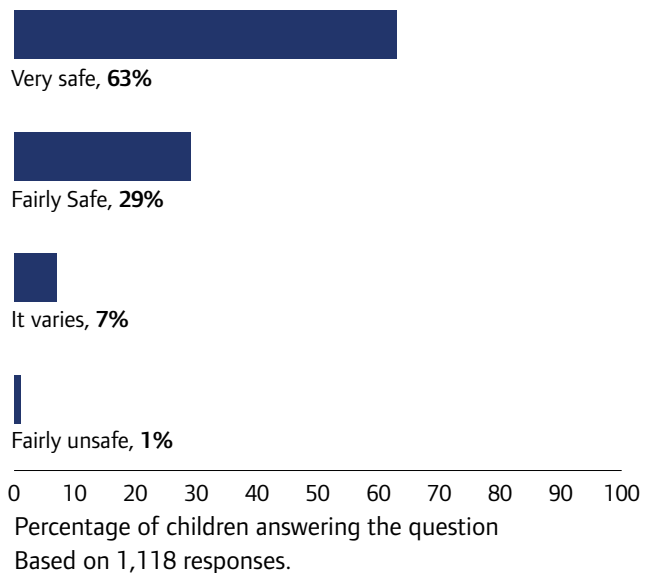
Figure 2: How safe do children feel in the building where they live?



As this figure shows, **94% of the children and young people surveyed in 2010 said they felt very safe or fairly safe in the buildings in which they lived.** The only big difference between different groups of children and young people was that care leavers living on their own were less likely than other children and young people to say they felt very safe or fairly safe in the building where they lived.

Figure 3 sets out the findings for how safe the children told us they felt at their school or college in 2010.

Figure 3: How safe do children feel at school or college?



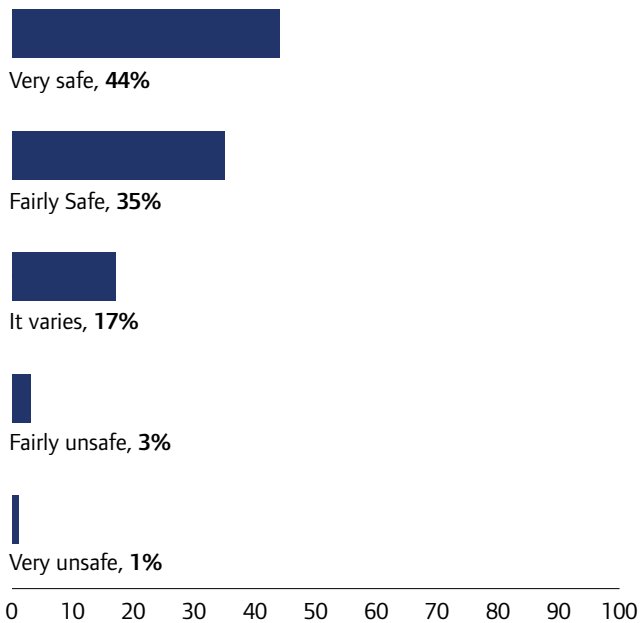
'Everything is fine the way it is here. Only a 10 metre high fence would make us safer'

Keeping safe continued

From Figure 3 we can see that in 2010, **92% of the children in our monitoring survey felt either very safe or fairly safe at school or college**. There were no big differences between groups of children on this.

Figure 4 sets out how safe the children told us they felt when out in the countryside.

Figure 4: How safe do children feel in the countryside?

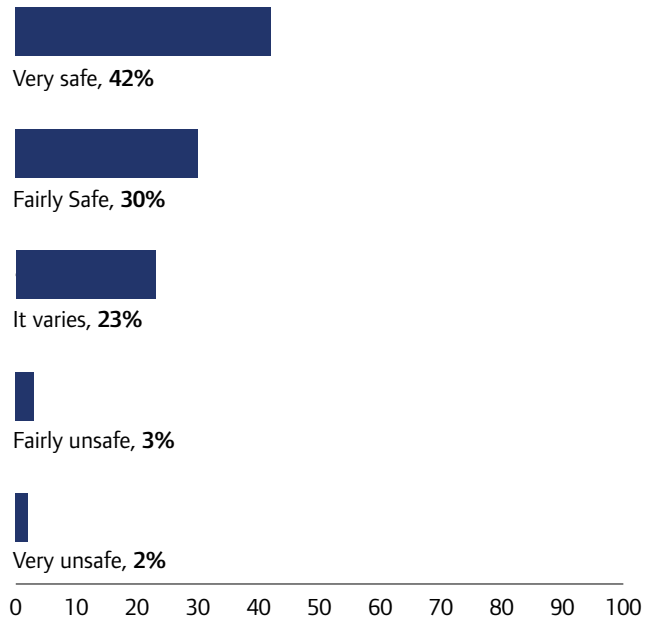


Percentage of children answering the question
Based on 1,115 responses.

In the 2010 survey, **79% felt very safe or fairly safe in the countryside**. There were no big differences between the different groups of children.

Finally, Figure 5 shows the findings for our question about how safe children felt in towns or cities.

Figure 5: How safe do children feel in towns or cities?



Percentage of children answering the question
Based on 1,123 responses.

Towns and cities are the places children told us they feel least safe in, with **72% saying they feel very safe or fairly safe in towns and cities in 2010**. One group of children, those living in residential special schools, were less likely than other children to tell us they felt very safe or fairly safe in towns and cities. Children living in residential special schools had also been much less likely to say they felt very safe or fairly safe in towns and cities in 2008, and again in 2009. There were no other big differences between the different groups of children in 2010. In both 2008 and 2009, disabled children had said they felt much less safe when out in a town or city than other children did, but there was no big difference for disabled children in 2010.

What makes children feel safe?

We asked what would make children and young people feel safer in general. We did not suggest any answers. **Eighteen per cent of the 810 who answered this question in 2010 said there was nothing that would make them feel safer.** This is exactly the same percentage as in 2009.

The most usual thing that children and young people said made them feel safer was being with adults they trust. Eleven per cent of the children and young people answering this question said this in 2010 – very close to the 12% who said the same in both 2008 and 2009. In 2010 there were no other answers that came from 10% or more of the children and young people, although the next most usual answer came close: **9% of children and young people said that having more police and security people around would make them feel safer.** This was the next most usual answer in 2008 and 2009 too.

There was a big difference between boys and girls in the answers to this question in 2010. **Boys were more likely than girls to say that there was nothing that would make them feel any safer; 23% of boys said this, compared with 13% of girls.** Boarders in boarding schools and care leavers living on their own were also less likely than other children and young people to say that nothing would make them feel safer.

‘I am safer being around people I know and trust and in a place that I am familiar with’

Dangers to children

We asked what children and young people saw as the biggest danger to people their age. Again, we did not suggest any answers. Children could tell us more than one danger, and we counted each one they listed. Here are the top dangers for children overall, from the 986 children who answered this question, with the percentages of children who told us about each one:

The top 10 dangers to children	% of the children giving this answer
Drugs	25%
Alcohol	17%
Strangers and kidnappers	12%
Knives	10%
Bullying	10%
Gangs	7%
Violence or being beaten up	6%
Smoking	5%
Road accidents	5%
Rapists	4%

Based on 986 responses. Each child could give more than one answer.

Although there are some differences in the order of the top 10 from year to year, the differences from one year to the next in how many children listed each danger were very small, and **there has been no big trend upwards or downwards for any particular danger over the last three years.**

Keeping safe continued



As we found in both 2008 and 2009, one big difference between groups of children was in how many told us that alcohol was a danger. As happened in 2009 and the year before, more girls than boys said that alcohol was a danger. In 2010, **23% of the girls answering this question listed alcohol as a danger, compared with 13% of the boys.** There was an age difference too; **10% of those aged under 14 listed alcohol as a danger, compared with 23% of those aged 14 and over.** Students living in residential further education colleges were more likely than those living in other places to put alcohol on their list of dangers.

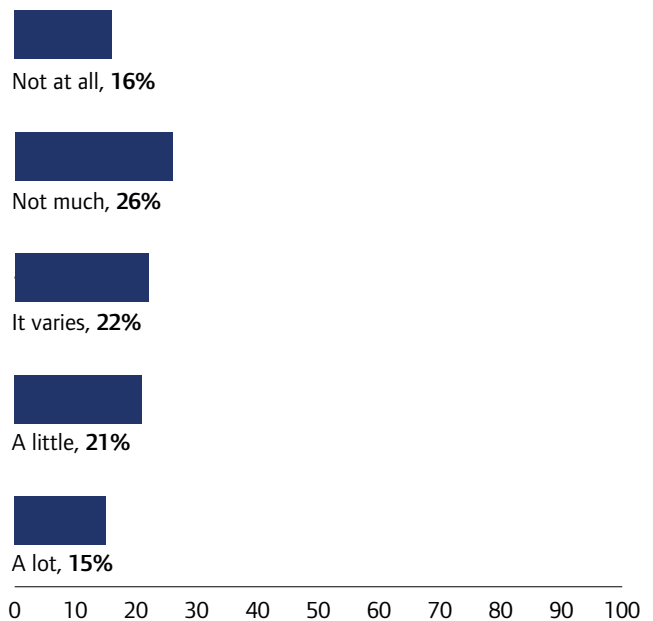
Children under 14 were more likely than those aged over 14 to list strangers and kidnappers, and bullying, as dangers. Those aged over 14 were more likely than younger children to list drugs and knives as dangers. The top three dangers listed by children under 14 were strangers and kidnappers (listed by 22% of younger children), bullying (listed by 15%) and drugs (listed by 12%). The top three dangers listed by children aged 14 and over were drugs (listed by 35% of older children and young people), alcohol (listed by 23%) and knives (listed by 14%).

Unlike our findings in 2009, there was not a big difference in how many children in residential special schools reported bullying as a danger, compared with children living in other places. There were, though, some big differences between children and young people living in different placements in how often drugs were listed as a danger. Care leavers were the most likely to list drugs as a danger to themselves, and 33% of children in children's homes listed drugs compared with 22% of those in foster care. There were no big differences between disabled children and the total number of children who answered the question in what they listed as dangers.

Worrying about safety

Children have told us that worrying about whether you are safe can be just as important as how safe you actually are. Figure 6 shows what the children told us in 2010 about how much they worry about their safety.

Figure 6: How much children worry about their safety



Percentage of children answering the question
Based on 1,120 responses.

As in 2008 and 2009, children varied a lot in how much they worried about their own safety. **The percentage who said they worried a little or a lot about their safety was 36% in 2010, down from 43% in 2009.**

There were no big differences between boys and girls, disabled children and children generally, or over- and under-14s, in how much children worried about their safety.

There were some big differences between children living in different sorts of placement in how much they said they worried about their safety. **In 2010, more children living in boarding or residential special schools reported worrying about their safety than children living in children’s homes or students living in further education colleges.** Thirty per cent of children in children’s homes reported worrying a little or a lot about their safety (this is down from 44% in 2009). A similar proportion of students living in further education colleges said they worried a little or a lot. For boarding schools, the figure was 43% (up from 35% in 2009) and for residential special schools, 29 of the 69 children who answered this question in 2010 told us they worried a little or a lot about their safety. The percentage of those in foster care who said they worried a little or a lot about their safety in 2010 was 34%, down from 41% in 2009.

Although the numbers were small, **asylum-seeking children and young people were the ones who worried most about their safety.** Just over half the 45 asylum seekers who answered this question told us they worried a little or a lot about their safety.

Asking for help

From many discussions with children over the years, we know that it is important to have someone you trust to go to if you don’t feel safe. In the monitoring survey, we asked children who they would go to. Here are the top 10 answers, each of which came from at least one in five of the children who answered this question.

Who children would go to for help if they felt unsafe	% of the children giving this answer
Friend	58%
Police	57%
Parent	51%
Teacher	50%
Social worker	46%
Foster carer	46%
Brother or sister	39%
Someone else in the family	38%
Staff who look after me where I live	34%
The person in charge of where I am	26%

Based on responses from 1,118 children. Each child could give more than one answer.

‘I don’t think there is anything that would make me feel safer. You always have to be street-wise when you are out’

Keeping safe continued

Clearly, as in previous years, **a friend is overall the most likely person for a child or young person to go to if they feel unsafe.** Police score highly, ahead of a parent, teachers or social workers. Although there are some changes in the exact order of people to go to, there are no big changes in who children would go to since 2008 and 2009.

There were 48 children in the 2010 monitor survey who told us that there was nobody they felt they could go to if they felt unsafe. This is 4% of all the children who answered this question – exactly the same percentage as in both 2008 and 2009.

There were some big differences between boys and girls in who they would go to if they felt unsafe. **Girls were more likely than boys to go to a friend or (if fostered) their foster carer, while boys were more likely to go to a parent, staff who look after them, or the person in charge of where they are.** Sixty-six per cent of girls said they would go to a friend, compared with 52% of boys. There were no big differences in the proportions of disabled children or asylum-seeking children who would go to a friend, compared with children and young people generally. The children who completed our survey using Widget symbols told us they were most likely to go to a teacher or their parent, next most likely to go to another family member, and next to go to a friend.

‘It would be better if we as kids could take more risks because we are wrapped in cotton wool and when we leave care we won’t know what to do’

There were also some age differences. **Children under 14 were more likely than older children and young people to go to a parent, foster carer, teacher, social worker or family member if they felt unsafe.**

Children living in different types of placement made some very different choices about who they would go to if they felt unsafe. Forty-eight per cent of children in children’s homes said they would go to a friend, compared with 58% of children generally, and in our survey students living in residential further education colleges were more likely than children or young people living anywhere else to go to a friend. Care leavers were least likely to go to a parent, and boarders in boarding schools were least likely to say they would go to the police. Those in children’s homes were least likely to go to a teacher, while those in boarding schools were the most likely to go to a teacher.

The top three people for children in children’s homes to go to were a telephone helpline (listed by 84% of children living in children’s homes), staff looking after them (listed by 76%), with police and social workers both at third place, listed by 51% of the children. Compared with 2009, fewer children in children’s homes told us they would go to a friend.

For children in foster care, the top three people were their foster carers (listed by 89% of the children), followed by their social workers (listed by 62%) and the police (at 60%). This is similar to the findings for 2009.

Children living at home with social care support told us they were most likely to go to a parent, followed by a teacher, followed by a friend. The number of children living at home with social care support who answered this question (67) is too small for us to compare percentages, but the 2010 order of people to go to is very different from the 2009 order. In 2010, social workers came higher up the list than they did in 2009, and friends had dropped from first to third place.

Accidents

The next table shows what the children in 2010 thought were the most likely sorts of accidents to happen to people of their age.

Most likely accidents to children	% of the children giving this answer
Road traffic accident	40%
Results of too much alcohol	14%
Injury while being beaten up or fighting	10%
Falling over	10%
Results of drugs	10%

Based on responses from 941 children. Each child could give more than one answer.

We had not given children suggested sorts of accidents to choose from, so these are entirely their own answers. The list, as in the last two years, is a mixture of accidents caused by other people, and things children might bring on themselves, like the results of drugs or having too much alcohol. **Road accidents are still by far the most likely sorts of accidents to happen to them, according to these children**, although there is a steady slight drop in the percentage of children who list road accidents. In 2008, 46% of the children we asked listed road accidents, in 2009 the figure was 45% and this is down to 40% in 2010.

As in 2008 and 2009, the results of too much alcohol came second on the children's list of most likely accidents in 2010. The 2010 figure of 14% is exactly the same as we found in 2009. The figures for getting injured by being beaten up or fighting, for falling, and for accidents happening because of drugs are all very similar to those we found in 2009.

One cause of accident no longer made the list of accidents sent in by at least one in 10 children in 2010. This was being stabbed or shot, which was listed by 11% of children in 2009, but by 7% in 2010.

There were some big differences between children aged under 14 and young people aged 14 plus in what they listed as the most likely cause of accidents to people their age. **Those aged over 14 were much more likely to list accidents resulting from too much alcohol and accidents resulting from drugs.** Twenty-one per cent of those over 14 listed accidents resulting from too much alcohol, compared with 3% of those aged under 14. Fifteen per cent of those aged over 14 listed accidents resulting from drugs, compared with 2% of those aged under 14. These figures were all very close indeed to those for 2009.

The big difference we found in 2009 between boys and girls in how many listed too much alcohol as a likely cause of accidents had gone down to a much smaller difference in 2010. In 2009, girls were much more likely than boys to list accidents resulting from too much alcohol. In 2010, the difference was less than half the difference we found in 2009, and was no longer big enough to qualify as a 'big difference'.

'The number-one killer for 15–20-year-olds for the last three years has been road accidents. I alone have been run over on three separate occasions but I'm a lucky one'

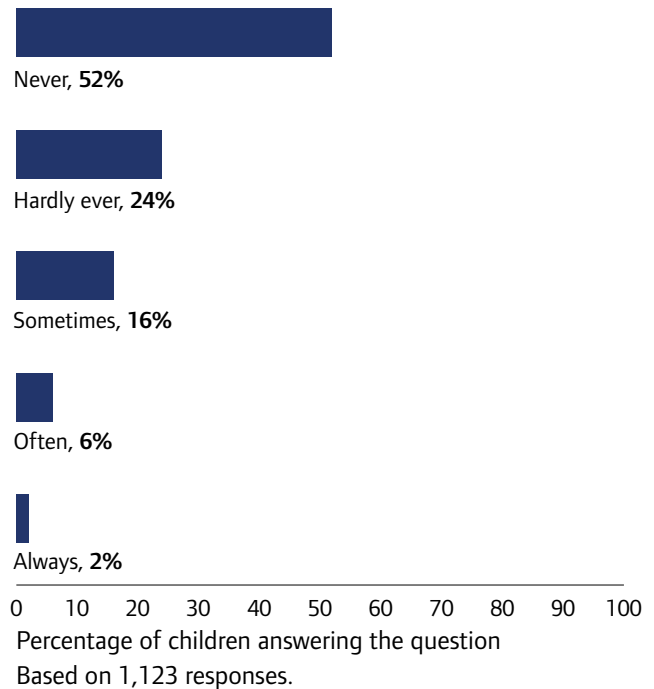
The only big difference in what people living in different types of placement listed as likely accidents in 2010 was that students living in residential further education colleges were more likely than other children and young people to list accidents resulting from too much alcohol. There were no other big differences between children in other sorts of placements, or between disabled children and others, in what they listed as the most likely accidents. Asylum-seeking children and young people were more likely to list being beaten up or injured in fights than other children were, but the numbers are too small to make this a firm finding.

How much bullying there is

Bullying is a major issue identified by children for us to monitor each year with them. We do not say what we think counts as bullying, but, as in other reports that deal with bullying, we leave it to children themselves to decide whether what is happening to them counts as bullying. We do, though, ask them to tell us exactly what happens.

Here are the figures for how often children told us they were being bullied in 2010.

Figure 7: How often children are bullied



In 2010, 8% of children said they were being bullied often or always, and 76% said they were hardly ever or never bullied. Fifty-two per cent said they are never bullied. The percentage who said they were often or always bullied in 2010 was very close to the figure of 9% we found in both 2008 and 2009.

'It ranges from knife crime to being hit by a car'

Bullying

There has been a steady reduction in how much bullying children have reported in our monitor survey over the past three years. In 2008, 35% of children told us they were bullied ‘sometimes’, ‘often’ or ‘always’. In 2009, this had gone down to 31% and it had gone down again to 24% in 2010. In 2008, 38% of children said they were never bullied. In 2009 this had gone up to 45%, and it went up again to 52% in 2010.

As in earlier years, those aged under 14 were more likely to report being bullied than those aged 14 plus. But the difference was no longer such a big one as in past years. In 2009, under-14s were much more likely to report being bullied than those aged 14 plus, but in 2010 the difference was smaller, with 70% of those aged under 14 saying they were never or hardly ever bullied, compared with 79% of those over 14.

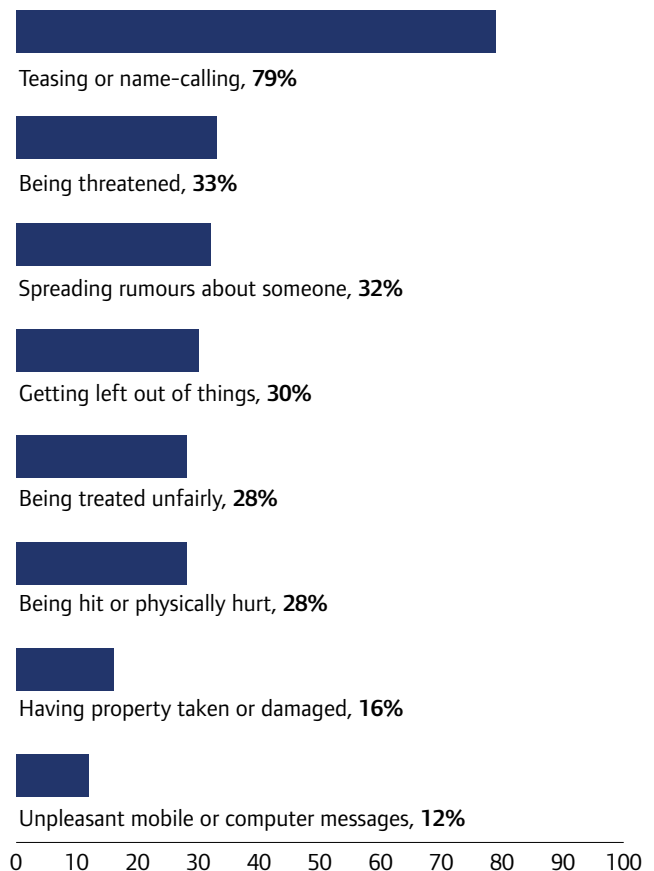
As in 2008 and 2009, disabled children in 2010 reported being more likely to be bullied than children generally. In 2010, 62% of disabled children told us they were never or hardly ever bullied, compared with 76% of children generally. **Asylum-seeking young people also reported being more likely to be bullied than children generally.**

In 2010, residential special schools were the type of placement with the most reported bullying, with students living in further education colleges reporting the least bullying. Half the children in residential special schools reported never or hardly ever being bullied, compared with 76% of children generally.

What bullying is

Because we let people decide for themselves whether what happened to them counted as bullying, we then asked what exactly happened when they were bullied. People could give more than one answer. Figure 8 gives all the types of bullying that were listed by at least one in 10 of the children who told us about bullying.

Figure 8: Types of bullying



Percentages of children answering the question. Based on responses from 512 children. Each child could give more than one answer.

Bullying continued

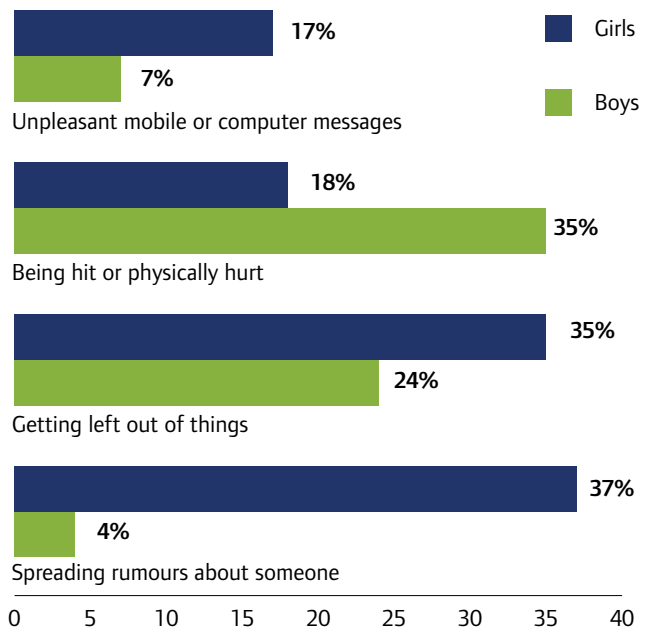
There has been a steady reduction over the three years we have been monitoring bullying in how much reported bullying is by being hit or physically hurt.

In 2008, 39% of bullying was physical. In 2009 this had dropped to 31%. In 2010, it has dropped again to 28%. This is the one big change over the last three years of our monitoring.

As in previous years, the most usual type of bullying is verbal teasing or name-calling. In 2010, 79% of all bullying was of this sort (in 2009 the figure was 81%, and in 2008 it was 78%).

Using our usual rule that a difference of 10 percentage points counts as a big difference, there were some big differences between boys and girls in the sorts of bullying they reported. **Boys were more likely to report being hit or physically hurt, and girls were more likely to report rumours being spread, getting left out of things, and unpleasant mobile or computer messages being sent.** Figure 9 shows these main differences.

Figure 9: Main differences in types of bullying reported by boys and girls



Percentages of children answering the question.

Based on responses from 502 children. Each child could give more than one answer.

There were also some differences in the sorts of bullying most reported by children of different ages, though these were not as big as the differences between boys and girls. The only big difference was that **those aged 14 plus were much more likely to report being threatened than those aged under 14.** Being threatened was reported by 36% of those aged 14 plus, compared with 29% of those aged under 14. Of the smaller differences between the two age groups, those aged under 14 were slightly more likely to report being teased or called names, being hit or physically hurt, and getting left out of things.

Disabled children generally reported much the same sorts of bullying as other children did, though **in 2010 disabled children reported less bullying by being left out of things than children did generally.**

‘they take the mick out of me because of my reading and writing’

As in earlier years, where you lived made a big difference to the way you were likely to be bullied.

- Children in children's homes were more likely than others to report being threatened or having their property taken or damaged.
- Care leavers were more likely to report being sent unpleasant messages on phones or computers, but were less likely to report being teased or called names, being hit or physically hurt, or getting left out of things.
- Boarders in boarding schools were more likely to report being treated unfairly, but less likely to report being threatened or being bullied by being sent unpleasant mobile or computer messages.
- Residential students in further education colleges were more likely to report being treated unfairly, but less likely to report being hit or physically hurt, being threatened or having property taken or damaged.
- Pupils in residential special schools were more likely to report being threatened.
- Children with social care support but living at home with parents or relatives were less likely than children generally to report being hit or physically hurt, or having property taken or damaged.

'Bullying can cause people to do drastic things'

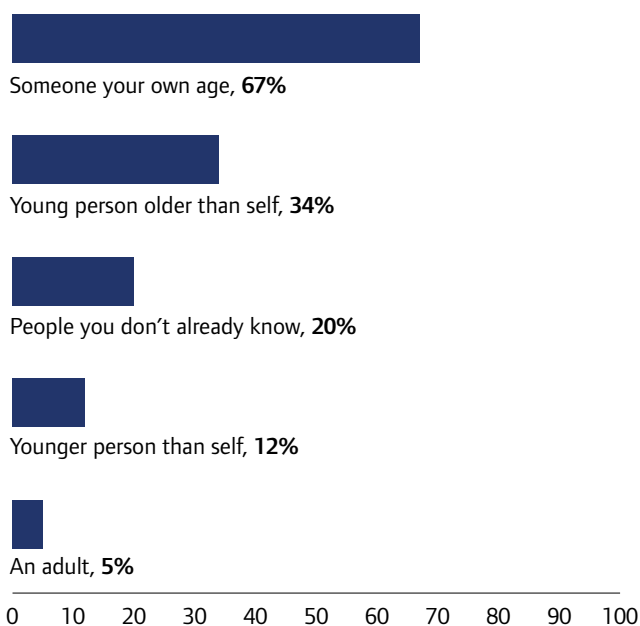
Asylum seekers in 2010 were more likely than other young people to report being threatened, but less likely than others to report being teased or called names, or being hit or physically hurt.

Looking at our findings for 2009 and 2008, most of these differences change from one year to the next, so there is no clear pattern of different sorts of bullying always happening for children living in different sorts of places.

Who does the bullying

Figure 10 shows the people that children who answered the question told us usually bullied them.

Figure 10: Who the bullies are



Percentages of children answering the question. Based on answers from 515 children. Each child could give more than one answer.

Bullying continued

Over two thirds of the children who were being bullied (67%) were usually bullied by someone of much their own age. This is what we found in both 2008 and 2009.

There were two big differences between boys and girls in who they said was most likely to bully them. **Girls were more likely to report being bullied by someone their own age, and boys were much more likely to report being bullied by someone older than themselves.** Seventy-three per cent of girls who were being bullied said this was usually by someone around their own age, compared with 63% of boys who said this. Forty-one per cent of the boys who were being bullied said this was usually by someone older than they were, compared with only 25% of girls who said this. We did not find these big differences in 2009 (though back in 2008 boys had also said they were much more likely to be bullied by someone older than themselves).

Children aged under 14 and those aged 14 plus were both most likely to be bullied by someone in their own age group, **but under-14s were much more likely to be bullied by someone older than they were. Over-14s were much more likely than younger children to be bullied by someone they didn't already know.**

As in the 2009 monitor survey, there were some big differences between different groups of children and young people about who they told us was most likely to bully them.

- Children in children's homes were less likely than others to be bullied by someone their own age (we found this in 2009 too).
- Care leavers were more likely than others to be bullied by adults and (as we found in 2009) by people they didn't already know, but (as we also found in 2009) less likely to be bullied by someone in their own age group.
- Boarders in boarding schools were less likely than others to be bullied by people they didn't already know.
- Pupils in residential special schools were more likely than others to be bullied by someone younger than themselves.

■ Asylum-seeking young people were less likely than others to be bullied by someone their own age or by young people older than themselves, but more likely to be bullied by people they didn't already know and by people younger than themselves.

■ Disabled children were more likely than others to be bullied by someone younger than themselves. We found the same in both 2008 and 2009.

Being bullied for being in care

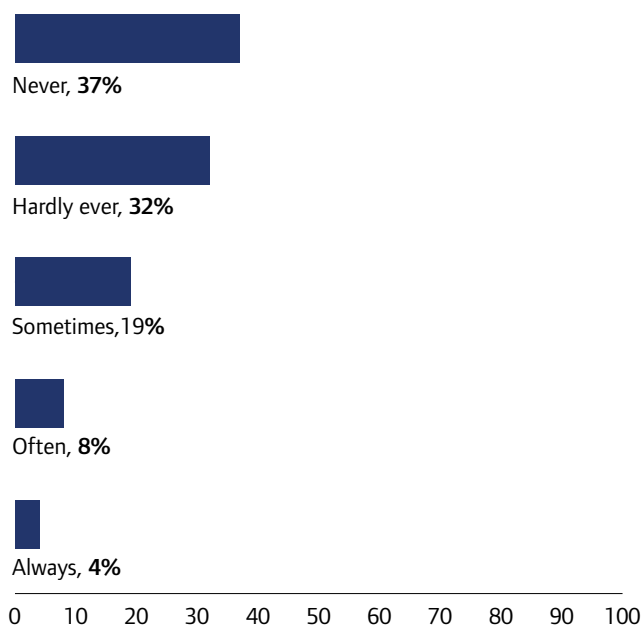
From our two annual monitor surveys so far, and from our other consultations, we know that children in care can often be bullied just for being in care. In 2010, 782 children in care answered a question about this in our survey. There has been a slight drop in how often children tell us they are bullied just for being in care. In 2008, 21% of children told us they were being bullied for being in care. In 2009 20% of the children in the survey told us this. In 2010, this had dropped to 16% of the children in care in our survey telling us they were being bullied for being in care. So **in 2010, one in eight children in care reported being bullied for being in care, fewer than the one in five who reported this in 2009.**

'the biggest danger to children my age is getting bullied at school'

Worrying about bullying

From our earlier monitor surveys we know that many children worry about getting bullied, and that children can worry about this even if they are not actually being bullied. Figure 11 shows how much children told us they worry about bullying in 2010.

Figure 11: How often children worry about being bullied



Percentage of children answering the question
Based on answers from 1,087 children.

Twelve per cent of the children in our 2010 survey were often or always worried about being bullied, while 69% never or hardly ever worried about it.

The numbers reporting worrying about bullying have gone down slightly over the past three years. In 2008 and 2009, 15% of the children in our monitor survey told us they often or always worried about being bullied, compared with 12% in 2010. The percentage of children saying they never or hardly ever worried about being bullied has gone up from 63% in 2008 to 66% in 2009 and 69% in 2010.

There is slightly more worrying about bullying than actual bullying. In 2010, 8% of the children reported being often or always bullied, but 12% said they often or always worry about being bullied. However, the amount of reported worrying about bullying over and above actual bullying is going down a little each year.

In the 2010 survey there was no big difference between boys and girls in how much they worried about bullying. There was no big difference between children under 14 and young people over 14. We did not find that younger children worried much more than older young people about being bullied, which we had found in 2009.

As well as reporting more actual bullying, **disabled children were much more worried about being bullied than other children were.** In the 2010 monitor survey, 52% of disabled children said they never or hardly ever worried about being bullied, compared with 69% of children generally. **One in five (20%) of disabled children told us they worried often or always about being bullied.** However, over the three years we have been doing our monitor surveys, the percentage of disabled children who tell us they worry about being bullied has fallen slightly. The percentage of disabled children who often or always worry about being bullied was 27% in 2008, 22% in 2009 and 20% in 2010. The percentage of disabled children who told us they never or hardly ever worried about being bullied was 40% in 2008, 50% in 2009 and 52% in 2010.

‘Being threatened because I’m in care’



More asylum-seeking children than children and young people generally in our survey reported having at least some worries about being bullied.

Children living in residential special schools reported more worrying about being bullied than children generally. Just over half the children in residential special schools in our survey told us that they never or hardly ever worried about bullying (compared with 69% of the children generally), and one in five of the children in residential special schools told us they worried often or always about being bullied.

Students in residential further education colleges were less likely than children and young people in our survey generally to worry about being bullied. Eighty-one per cent of these students said they never or hardly ever worried about being bullied, compared with 69% of the children and young people generally.

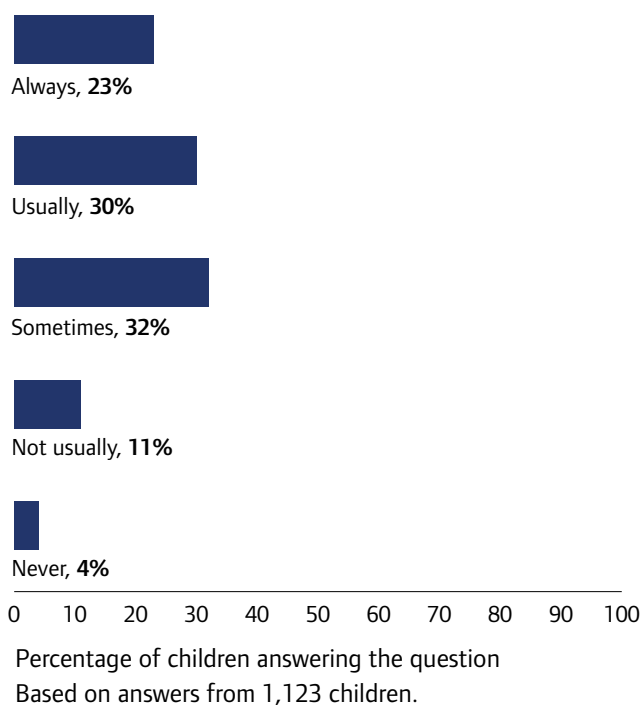
Having a say in what happens

How much children are asked for their opinions

There are many laws, government standards and guidelines saying that it is important that children, especially children in care or living away from home, are asked for their views, and that their views and feelings are taken into account in decisions about their lives. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (a treaty the UK has signed up to) says that children must be given a say in things that matter to them.

This section of the monitor checks how far children say they are asked for their views, and how much difference they think their views and feelings make. Figure 12 shows how often children told us they are asked for their opinions about things that matter to them.

Figure 12: How often children are asked for their opinions on things that matter



Over half the children (53%) said their opinions were usually or always asked on things that mattered to them. Fifteen per cent said their opinions were not usually, or never, asked. These figures are close to those we found in 2008 and 2009, and there is no steady change upwards or downwards over the last three years.

There were no big differences between boys and girls, between children under or over 14, between disabled children and children generally, or between asylum-seeking young people and children generally, in the percentages who said their opinions were usually or always asked. **Two groups of young people were less likely than others to tell us in 2010 that their opinions were often or always asked. These were care leavers, and residential students in further education colleges.**

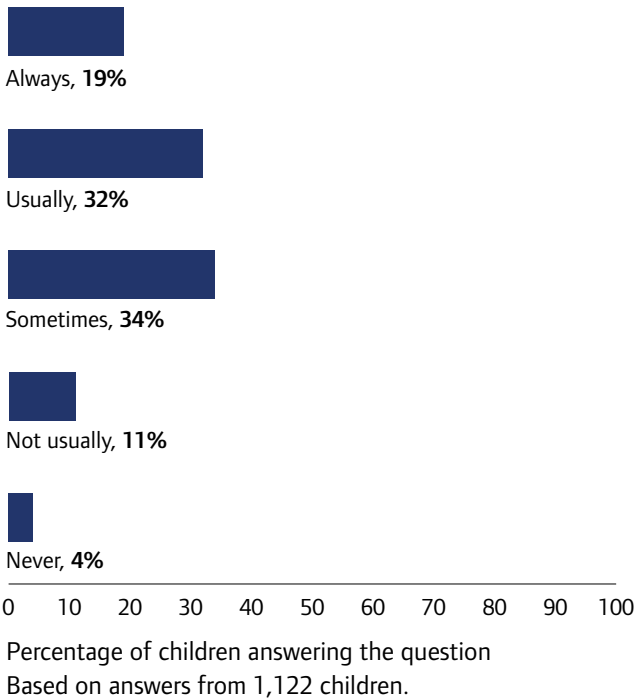
How much difference children's opinions make

Of course, being asked for your opinion is one thing, but your opinions making a difference to decisions about you is quite another. Children have told us in many other consultations that professionals are quite good nowadays at asking children for their views, but that these views don't so often make a big difference to decisions being made about their lives.

Having a say in what happens continued

Figure 13 shows how much difference children said their opinions, once asked for, made to decisions about their lives.

Figure 13: How often children’s opinions make a difference to decisions about their lives



Overall, about half the children (51%) said their opinions usually or always made a difference to decisions about their lives, while 15% said their decisions didn’t usually or ever make a difference. These figures are close to those we found in our 2008 and 2009 monitor surveys.

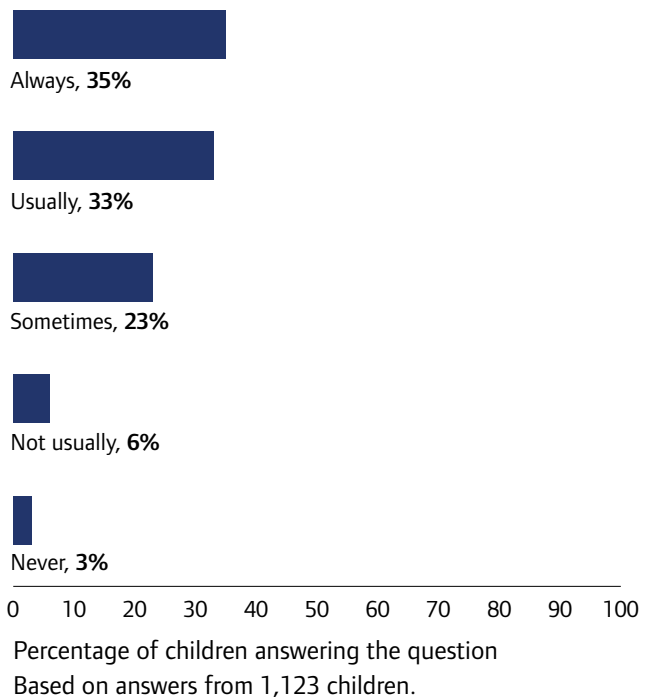
There were no big differences between boys and girls, between over-14s and under-14s, between disabled children and other children or between asylum-seeking young people and others in how much difference they told us their opinions made.

For two groups of young people, there was a big difference between how likely they were to be asked their opinions, and how likely their opinions were to make a difference to decisions about their lives. **Students in residential further education colleges found that their opinions were less likely to be asked but more likely to make a difference. Asylum-seeking young people found that their opinions were more likely to be asked but were less likely to make a difference to decisions about their lives.**

Being told about changes in your life

In many of our consultations, children tell us that being told what is happening to you, and why, can be as important as having a say in what is happening. In each year’s monitor survey, we ask how often children are told about major changes that are going to happen in their lives. Figure 14 shows what children told us in 2010.

Figure 14: How often do adults tell children about major changes that are going to happen in their lives?



Just over two thirds of children (68%) told us that they are usually or always told what is going on when major changes are going to happen in their lives. Nine per cent said they are not usually, or never, told. There has been little change in these figures over the past three years.

There was no big difference between boys and girls in how many told us they were usually or always told what was going to happen, though boys were slightly more likely to be told than girls were. There were no big differences between disabled children and other children, or between asylum-seeking young people and others, in how many told us they were usually or always told what was going to happen. Almost all the children who filled in our survey in Widget symbols said they were told about changes that were going to happen in their lives.

As we found in 2009, **younger children were much more likely to be told what was going to happen than older young people were. Seventy-nine per cent of those aged 14 plus said they were usually or always told when major changes were going to happen in their lives, compared with 64% of children under 14.**

There were no big differences between those living in different sorts of placement in how often children reported being told what was going to happen. However, as in 2009, we found that **care leavers were much less likely than other children and young people to say they were usually or always told when major changes were going to happen in their lives.**

Decisions children think they should have more say about

A new question we asked in our 2010 monitor was about what decisions children and young people thought they should have more say about than they usually do. We did not give any suggestions, so the answers came entirely from the children and young people themselves. Here are the three answers that came from more than one in 10 of the children who answered this question.

What children should have more say about than they do now	% of the children giving this answer
Decisions about my future	19%
Deciding on the placement for me to live in	14%
Decisions about contact with my family	11%

Based on responses from 734 children. Each child could give more than one answer.

Clearly **the top three decisions where children believe they should have more say than they do now are care decisions: about the future, about placements to live in and about family contacts when living away from the family.** The next answer on the list, which did not quite make the top three answers, was having more say in decisions about education. This came from 8% of the children answering this question. Seventeen per cent of the children told us that they did not think they should have more say about any particular decision.

‘What’s going to happen to me, where I will be living, how this will affect me? I should have more say about my future’



There were no big differences between boys and girls in answers to this question, or between disabled children and children generally, but there was one big age difference. **Young people over 14 were much more likely than those under 14 to want more say in decisions about their future. Twenty-three per cent of the over-14s thought they should have more say in decisions about their future,** compared with 13% of those aged under 14.

There were no big differences in answers to this question between children in care living in children's homes and children living in foster homes. Care leavers were more concerned to have a bigger say in decisions about where they were going to live. Students in residential further education colleges were more likely to want a bigger say in decisions about their education, and about curfews and bedtimes in college accommodation.

We had answers to this question from 74 asylum-seeking young people. **The most usual answer from asylum seekers was to want a greater say in decisions about their education, and wanting a greater say about immigration decisions affecting them also came into their top four answers.**

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 getting, they have the right to make a complaint. They also have the right to make a suggestion that might help to improve the services they are getting, whether or not something has gone wrong for them. 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 set up by law for children to use. As well as having these to use, children and young people have often told us that they want to be able to raise worries and concerns, and have these sorted out for them, before having to think about having to use these formal procedures.

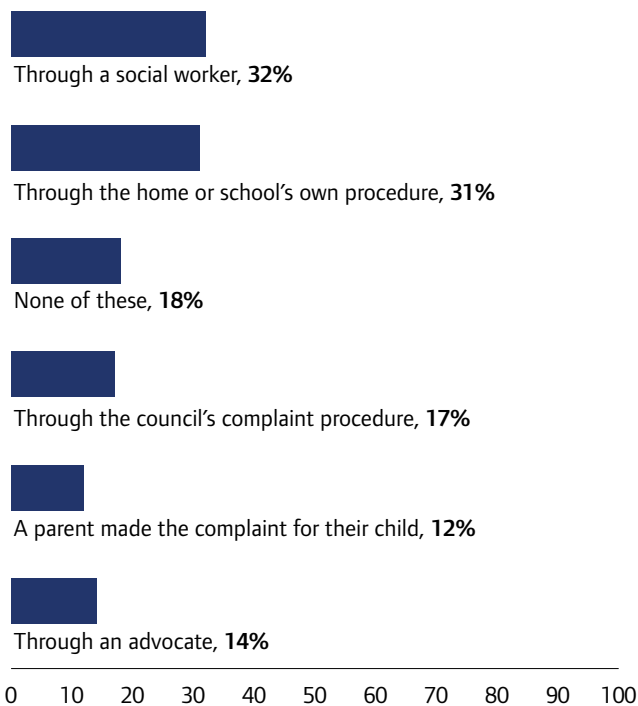
Making a complaint

We had 1,126 answers to our question about whether children had ever made a complaint. A quarter of the children (25%) told us they had made a complaint at some time. **Over the past three years, there has been a big fall in the number of children telling us they have made a complaint at some time. In 2008, 43% of the children answering the same question told us they had made a complaint, in 2009 this had fallen to 37%, and in 2010 it is down again to 25%.**

In 2010, **young people over 14 were more likely to have made a complaint than children under 14.** Twenty-nine per cent of over-14s told us they had made a complaint, compared with 18% of those aged under 14. Care leavers were much more likely to have made a complaint, and children living at home with social care support were much less likely to have made a complaint than others.

Figure 15 shows how those who had made a complaint told us they had done this.

Figure 15: How children had made complaints



Percentages of children answering this question. Based on answers from 271 children. Each child could give more than one answer.

'I was too scared to tell boarding house parents so I told my parents but told them not to say it'

Making complaints and suggestions continued

The two most usual ways of making a complaint were through a social worker or by using the procedure of the home or school where the child was living. These were almost equally likely to be chosen, and one or the other was used by almost two thirds of the children who told us they had made a complaint. **Only one in six children (17%) who said they had made a complaint had used their council's complaints procedure to make it.** These figures were similar to those we found in 2009.

There were some big differences in how much different groups of children had used different ways of making a complaint. Boys were more likely than girls to tell us they had used the complaints procedure of their own home or school. We did not find this big difference in 2009. However, as we found in 2009, **those over 14 had made much more use of their council's complaints procedure than those aged under 14. In 2010, 23% of over-14s told us they had used their council's complaints procedure, compared with only 3% of under-14s.**

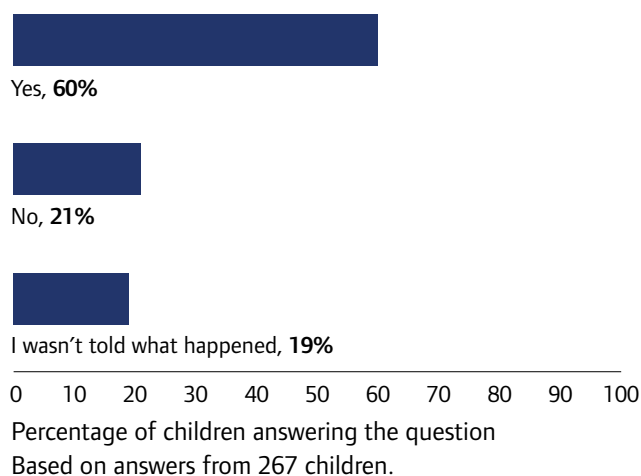
As we found in 2009, **those living in foster care were much more likely than others to make any complaint they made through their social worker, and children living in children's homes or residential special schools were more likely than others to use the procedure of their own home or school.** In 2010, not one pupil living in a residential special school told us they had made a complaint through their social worker.

'I told my keyworker and he passed on the complaint and the issue was solved'

Residential students in further education colleges were more likely to have used their own college complaints procedure than other ways of making a complaint, and care leavers were more likely to have made their complaint through their council's complaints procedure or through an advocate than in other ways. Boarders in boarding schools were more likely to have made any complaint they had made either through their parents, or using the school's own procedure than in other ways. Disabled children were more likely to make any complaints they made through the procedure of the home or school they lived in than in other ways. The most usual way for asylum-seeking young people to make a complaint was through a social worker.

We asked children who had made a complaint how well their last complaint had turned out. We asked them whether they thought it had been sorted out fairly, not whether it had been upheld. We also wanted to find out whether children knew, or hadn't been told, what had happened to their complaint. Figure 16 shows the answers.

Figure 16: Was your last complaint sorted out fairly?

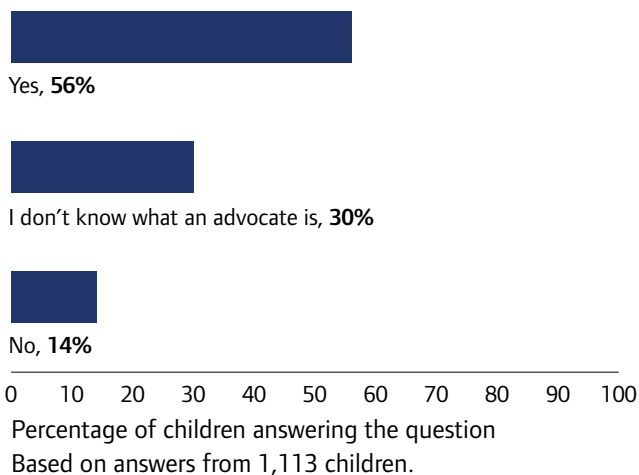


Six out of ten (60%) children thought that their last complaint had been sorted out fairly. This is slightly down from the figure of 65% who said this in both 2008 and 2009. **Nineteen per cent of the children told us they didn't know what had happened to the last complaint they had made. Girls were much more likely than boys to say they didn't know what had happened to the last complaint they had made.** Twenty-four per cent of girls answering our question told us that, compared with 14% of boys. There were no big differences between over- and under-14s in how they said their last complaint had been sorted out.

Children in foster care and in boarding schools were more likely than others to tell us that their last complaint had been sorted out fairly. Care leavers, asylum seekers and children living at home with support were less likely than others to say that their last complaint had been sorted out fairly. Boarders in boarding schools were more likely than others to say that they didn't know what had happened to the last complaint they had made. Although their numbers were small, every one of the asylum-seeking young people who answered this question told us that they had been told what had happened to their last complaint. About two thirds of the children who filled in our Widget symbol survey said their last complaint had been sorted out fairly.

Many children and young people have told us that having an advocate can be very important when making a complaint, and children in care have a legal right to have an advocate to help them whenever they use their council's complaints procedure. We asked children and young people whether they knew how to get hold of an advocate if they needed one to help them to make a complaint. Figure 17 sets out their answers.

Figure 17: How many children know how to get an advocate



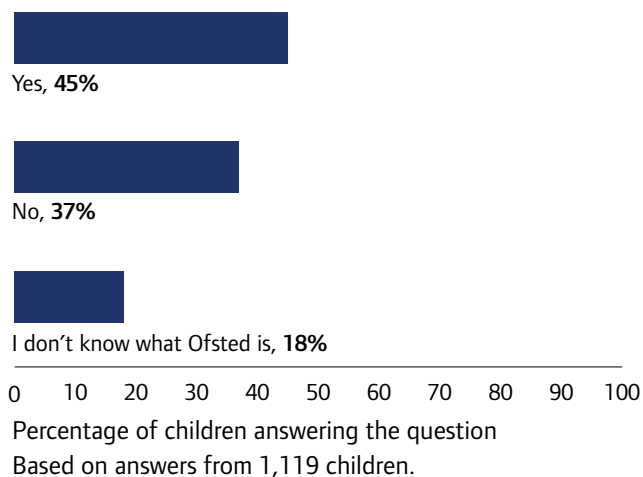
From Figure 17, **over half the children and young people answering this question knew how to get an advocate to help in making a formal complaint, but just under a third didn't know what an advocate was.** These figures are close to our findings in 2009. Young people over 14 were much more likely than younger children to know what an advocate is, and to know how to get hold of one. **Children living in children's homes were much more likely to know what an advocate is and how to get hold of one than children in foster care.** Care leavers were also more likely than others to know what an advocate is and how to get one.

Contacting Ofsted

Figure 18 shows how many children told us they knew how to contact Ofsted to tell them about something they think an inspector needs to check up on. (Ofsted is the organisation that inspects how well children are looked after in care or when they are living away from home.) The legal regulations or national minimum standards for children's homes, foster care, boarding schools, residential special schools and residential further education colleges say that children must be told how they can contact Ofsted if they need to.

Making complaints and suggestions continued

Figure 18: How many children know how to contact Ofsted



In 2010, just under half the children (45%) knew how to contact Ofsted, but 18% didn't know what Ofsted is. Over the last three years, the number of children who know what Ofsted is and the number who know how to contact Ofsted have been going up. In 2008, 28% of children in our monitor survey told us they didn't know what Ofsted is, in 2009 this had gone down to 22%, and in 2010 it has gone down again to 18%. In 2008, 35% of children in the survey told us that they knew how to contact Ofsted, in 2009 this had gone up to 37%, and in 2010 it went up again to 45%.

As we have found in the last two years' monitor surveys, **children aged under 14 were much less likely to know what Ofsted is than children aged 14 plus.** In 2010, 12% of those aged over 14 said they didn't know what Ofsted is, compared with 28% of those aged under 14.



As in 2009, children in care but placed at home with their families were less likely than other children to know what Ofsted is. Asylum-seeking young people were less likely than children generally to know what Ofsted is or how to contact Ofsted. Students living in residential further education colleges were more likely than children generally to know what Ofsted is and to know how to contact Ofsted.

Making a suggestion

As well as having the right to make a complaint, children in care or getting help from children's social care services have the right to make a suggestion about how their services could be improved. Boarding schools and colleges often have ways for boarders and residential students to make positive suggestions too.

We asked children whether they had ever made a suggestion to improve how children and young people are cared for. In 2010, **61% of the 1,116 children who answered this monitor question said they had made a suggestion to improve how children are looked after,** and the other 39% said they hadn't. These figures are much the same as those we found in 2008 and 2009.

Those aged over 14 were much more likely to have made a suggestion to improve services than those under 14. Children living in children’s homes or in residential special schools were much more likely to have made a suggestion than children in foster care. Over half the children in children’s homes (52%), and exactly the same percentage living in residential special schools, told us they had made a suggestion for improvement, compared with 32% of foster children. Care leavers were more likely than children and young people generally to have made suggestions, and both students living in residential further education colleges and children living at home with support were less likely than children generally in our survey to have made a suggestion to improve something.

Figure 19 shows whether the children who had made a suggestion to improve something thought their suggestion had been dealt with properly, and whether they knew what had happened to their suggestion.

Figure 19: Were suggestions dealt with properly?

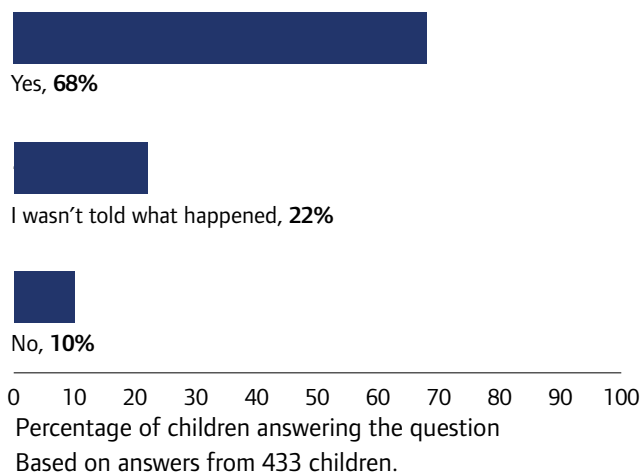


Figure 19 shows that just over two thirds of the children (68%) who had made suggestions to improve something about their services thought their suggestion had been dealt with properly. Twenty-two per cent said they weren't told what had happened to their suggestion. These figures are similar to those for the past two years.

From what children told us in the 2010 monitor, **children in care or living away from home are much more likely to make suggestions to improve their services than to make complaints about their services, and there were no big differences between suggestions and complaints in how well they were dealt with or how likely children were to be told what had happened as a result.**

'I followed the children's rights leaflet'

Education

Even though this is a care monitor and not an education monitor, children have often told us in other consultations how important their education is to them. Those who are in care have told us how changes in their care, such as changing their living placement, can have a big effect on their education.

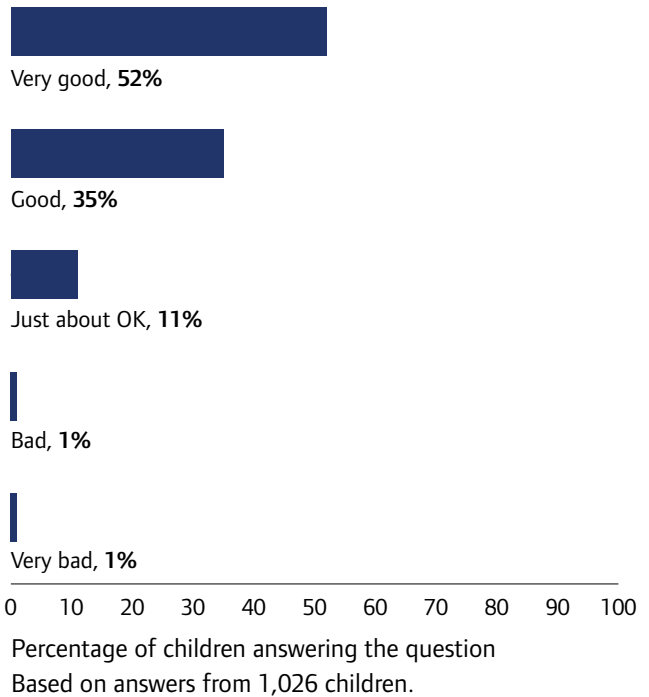
Out of all the children and young people answering the monitor survey, 1,048 were in some sort of education. This was 93% of the 1,132 who answered this question. **Children living in foster care were much more likely to be in education than those living in children's homes. Ninety-six per cent of foster children answering our survey told us they were in education, compared with 84% of children living in children's homes. We found this difference in 2009, but in 2010 the percentages of children who told us they were in education had gone up, from 85% in 2009 to 96% in 2010 for foster children, and from 77% in 2009 to 84% in 2010 for children living in children's homes.**

'I am determined to do well in my education as it will give me a brighter future'

How children rate their education

Figure 20 shows how the children rated their education in 2010.

Figure 20: How children rate their education



Overall, 87% of the children rated their education as good or very good, and only 2% as bad or very bad.

There were no big differences between girls and boys, or between over- and under-14s, or between disabled children and others, in how well they rated their education. Asylum-seeking young people rated their education similarly to other children and young people. The percentage of children rating their education as good or very good has risen slightly over the past three years, from 83% in 2008 to 84% in 2009 and 87% in 2010.

Out of 805 children and young people in care, care leavers, or living in residential special schools, 86% rated their education as good or very good. Children living in foster care were much more likely than those living in children’s homes to rate their education highly. Children living in children’s homes gave their education the lowest rating in the 2010 monitor, with 78% rating their education as good or very good. Out of those in foster care, 89% rated their education as good or very good.

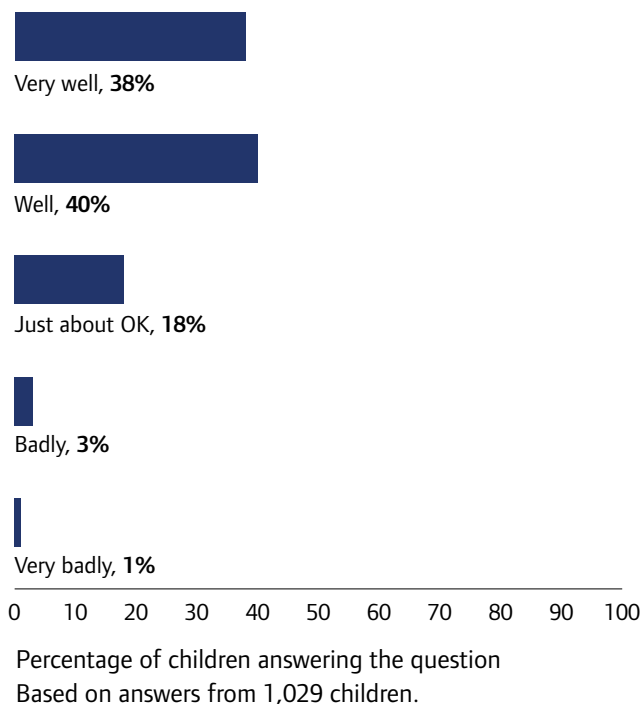
Boarders in boarding schools rated their education highest of all the different settings children were living in, with 92% of boarders rating their education as good or very good. Residential students in further education colleges rated their education next highest.

How well children are doing in education

When people write about how well children are doing in their education, they usually rate this according to things like examination results. In our monitor reports, we ask the children themselves how they think they are doing in their education at school or college.

Figure 21 shows how the children in our 2010 monitor thought they were doing in their education.

Figure 21: How well children say they are doing in education



Overall, **78% of the children and young people in education told us they were doing well or very well in their education in 2010. Only 4% said they were doing badly or very badly.** These figures do not show any big changes over the past three years. The percentage of children in care settings who thought they were doing well or very well in their education was much the same as for the children in the 2010 survey generally.

Boarders in boarding schools thought they were doing best in their education, with 87% of boarders telling us they thought they were doing well or very well.

Children living in children’s homes thought they were doing the worst in their education, with 72% telling us they thought they were doing well or very well. Children in residential special schools thought they were doing much the same in their education as children in other care settings.

There were no big differences between girls and boys, or between children over and under 14, or between disabled children or asylum-seeking young people and others.

The table below sets out the reasons given by children for doing well in their education. We did not suggest any reasons, so these all came directly from the children themselves. We have listed all the reasons that came from more than one in 10 of the children who answered this question.

Reasons children gave for doing well in education	% of the children giving this answer
Keeping up with work	26%
Working hard	21%
Good teaching	13%
Enjoying learning	11%

We also asked the children who thought they were doing badly or very badly at school or college to tell us what they thought were the reasons for this. Here are the three top answers, which came from at least one in 10 of the children who answered this question. Again, we did not suggest any answers ourselves, so these are the children's own reasons.

Reasons children gave for doing badly in education	% of the children giving this answer
Being easily distracted or misbehaving	37%
Not being interested in learning	13%
Poor attendance	10%

According to what the children told us, **doing well or very well in education comes from a combination of the child working hard, good teaching and enjoying learning, while doing badly or very badly comes mainly from getting easily distracted and then misbehaving, but also not being interested in learning and not attending school or college regularly enough.**

The 190 children who told us they were doing 'just about OK' in their education also told us why they thought they weren't doing better than this. Again, the most common reason given was being easily distracted and then misbehaving. Two other reasons came from at least one in 10 of these children. One was that they needed to work harder at school or college, but the other was that **children 'only doing OK' in education thought they needed extra help, especially in subjects they were beginning to struggle with.**



Being in care

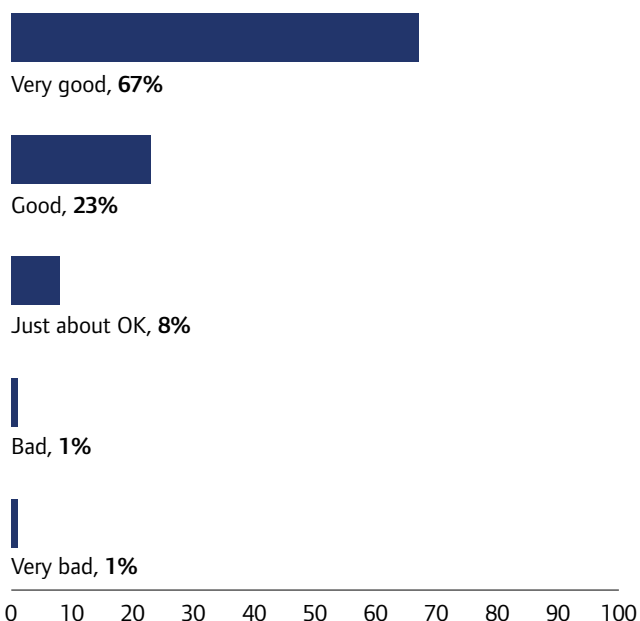
The final two sections of this report are about children either in care or leaving care, rather than all the children included in my work as Children's Rights Director for England.

Altogether, 794 children and young people who completed our 2010 monitor survey were from care. Of those, 51% were boys and 49% girls, 43% were aged under 14 and 57% were 14 plus, and 1% said they were disabled. Sixty-two per cent lived in foster homes, 24% in children's homes, and 5% were placed at home with their families. The rest were either care leavers, or were living in residential special schools or boarding schools. Sixteen children in care who took part in the survey were living in boarding schools.

Quality of care

In each year's monitor survey, we ask children to rate the quality of their own care for us. Figure 22 shows the overall ratings for 2010.

Figure 22: How children rate their care



Percentage of children answering the question
Based on answers from 774 children.

In 2010, 90% of the children in care in our survey rated their care as good or very good overall. This is exactly the same percentage as in 2009. The percentage of children rating their care as bad or very bad in 2010 was 2%, again this is exactly the same as in 2009.

As we found in both 2008 and 2009, there were no big differences between girls and boys, children aged under or over 14, or disabled children and other children, in how well they rated their care. There was no big difference between asylum-seeking young people and others in how they rated their care.

Children living in foster care rated their care much more highly than those living in children's homes. Ninety-five per cent of foster children rated their care as good or very good, compared with 82% in children's homes. These are exactly the same percentages as in 2009.

Having a social worker

In many of our other consultations, children in care have told us that their social workers are very important to their lives. Every child in care should have a social worker or another caseworker (like a leaving care worker). We checked this in our survey. **In 2010, 92% of the children in care told us they had a social worker, and another 3% had another sort of caseworker. That left 4% who told us they didn't have a social worker or other caseworker at the moment.** These figures have stayed much the same over the past three years.

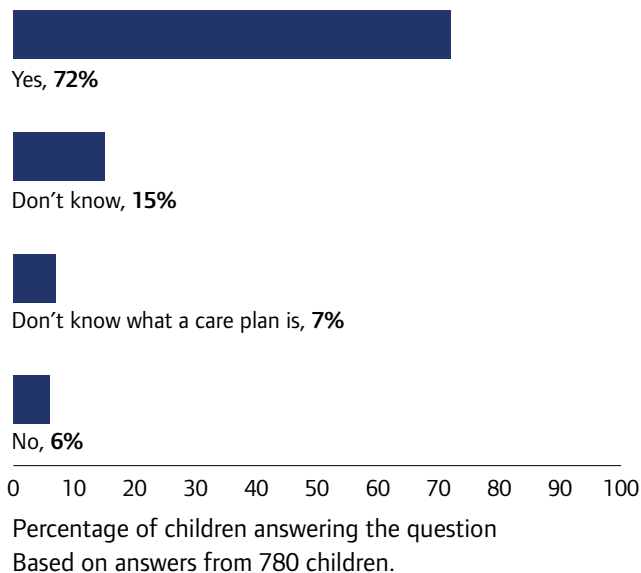
Care plans

Every child in care should have a care plan which sets out how they are to be cared for and the plans for their future care. Children should have a say in what goes into their care plan, it should be regularly reviewed and kept up to date, and the plan should be carried out.

Being in care continued

Figure 23 shows whether the children in our 2010 monitor survey thought they did or didn't have a care plan.

Figure 23: Do children in care think they have a care plan?



In 2010, just under three quarters (72%) of the children in our survey told us they knew what a care plan is, and knew that they had one. This percentage has stayed much the same over the past three years. Quite apart from children who knew what a care plan is but didn't think they had one themselves, there were still **15% of the children in 2010 who told us they didn't know what a care plan is.** This is exactly the same figure we found in the 2009 monitor survey.

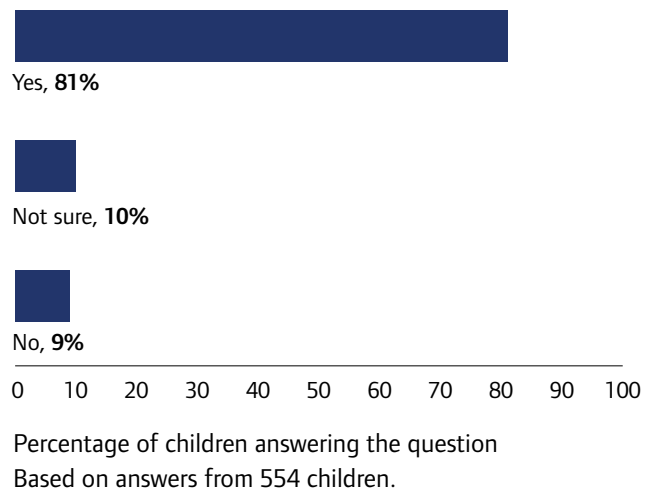
As we had found in 2009, **children in children's homes were far more likely than children in foster care to know they had care plans.** In 2010, 86% of children in children's homes knew they had care plans, compared with 70% of foster children.

There was no big difference between children over and under 14 in whether they knew they had a care plan. In 2009, children under 14 had been much less likely to know this, but in 2010 many more under 14s told us they knew they had a care plan and the big age difference had disappeared.

Knowing what your care plan says

As we had found in the last two years of the Children's care monitor, children could know they had a care plan, but not know what was in it. The figures for this in 2010 are set out in Figure 24.

Figure 24: Do children know what their care plan says?



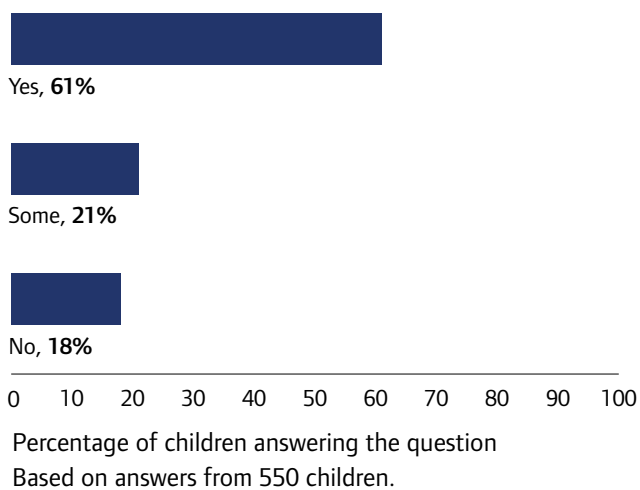
In 2010, 81% of children who knew they had a care plan also knew what was in it. Of the others, 9% told us they definitely didn't know what was in their plan, and 10% weren't sure about what was in it. Over the past three years of the monitor, there has been a trend towards more children knowing what is in their care plans. In 2008, 73% knew what was in their plan, in 2009 76% said they knew, and in 2010 the figure is up again to 81%. There were no big differences between groups of children in whether they told us they knew what their care plans said.

Having a say in your care plan

Children have told us in many past consultations how important it is that they have a real say in the big decisions about their lives and their future. Their care plans contain those decisions, and the law requires that children have a say in their care plans, depending on their age and understanding.

Figure 25 shows how many children, out of those who knew they had a care plan, told us in 2010 that they had a say in what it said was planned for their future.

Figure 25: Do children have a say in their care plan?



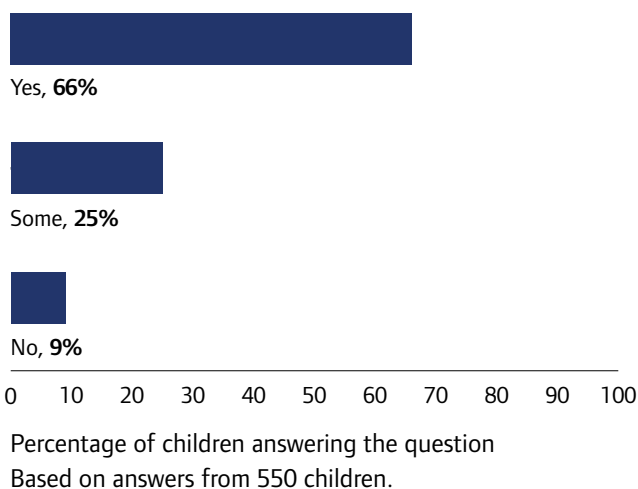
In 2010, 61% told us they had a say in their care plan, and another 21% that they had some say. The percentage telling us they definitely had a say in their own care plan went up from 52% in 2008 to 65% in 2009, but in 2010 had fallen back again slightly to 61%. **The percentage of children telling us they had no say in their care plan was 18% in 2010,** much the same figure as in the past two years.

In 2010, although children in foster care were less likely to know about their care plans than children in children's homes, foster children were more likely than children in care generally to tell us they had a say in those plans they did know about.

Agreeing with your care plan

We know from the answers to other questions in our annual monitor survey that children may be asked for their views, but sometimes their views may not make much difference. So each year we ask children who know what is in their care plan whether they agree with what it says should happen. Their answers are in Figure 26.

Figure 26: Do children agree with their care plan?



Exactly two thirds (66%) of the children who knew what their care plan said told us in 2010 that they agreed with it. Another quarter (25%) agreed with some of it. Just under one in 10 (9%) did not agree with their care plan at all. These figures are close to those for 2009.

There were no big differences between girls and boys, those aged under 14 and over 14, or children in foster care and those living in children's homes, in the percentages who said they agreed with their care plan. Disabled children were slightly more likely to agree with their care plan than children generally, though not by enough to make it a big difference. Asylum-seeking young people, although they were less likely than others to have a care plan, were slightly more likely than other young people to agree with it if they did have one.

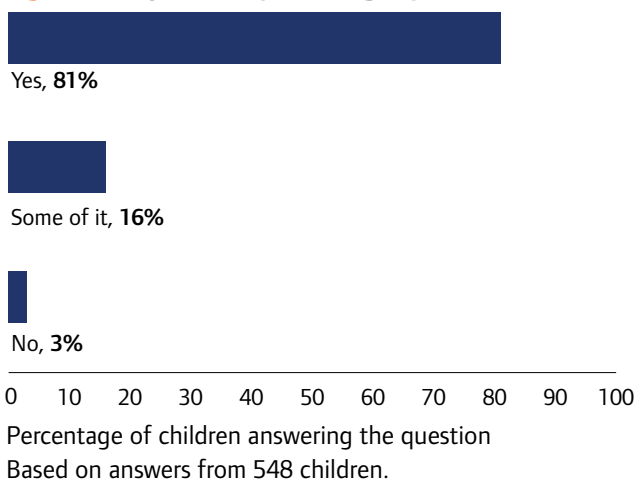
Being in care continued



Keeping to care plans

Sometimes children in care contact the Office of the Children's Rights Director for help and advice when a major change in their lives is made which was not in their care plan. We use the annual care monitor survey to check how well children's care plans are being kept to, according to the children who know what their care plans say. Figure 27 gives the answers for 2010.

Figure 27: Is your care plan being kept to?



From Figure 27, **81% of children in care in 2010 told us that their care plan was being fully kept to, and another 16% that some, but not all, of it was being kept to. Only 3% said that their care plan was not being kept to at all.** These figures have not changed much over the three years of our monitor survey so far. In 2009, 82% of children told us their care plan was being fully kept to, 13% that some of it was being kept to and 5% that none of it was being kept to.

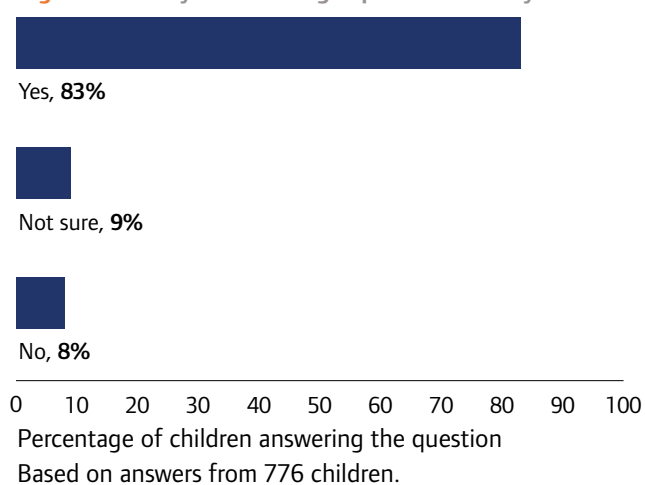
There were no big differences between different groups of children (girls and boys, over- and under-14s, children in foster care and in children's homes, disabled children and asylum-seeking young people) in how well they said their care plans were being kept to.

Being in the right placement

Getting the right placement for a child in care to live in is one of the biggest and most important decisions that can be made in their lives. We use our annual care monitor survey to check whether, across the country, children believe that they have been put in the right placement for them.

Figure 28 sets out the findings on placements for 2010.

Figure 28: Are you in the right placement for you?



In 2010, just over eight out of 10 children in care (83%) in our survey told us that they were in the right placement for them, and one in 12 (8%) that they were not in the right placement for them. These are close to the figures of 81% and 10% in 2009, and the figures of 84% and 8% we had found in 2008. From these figures, there is no clear change over the last three years in the children's assessment of how well social care services are doing at getting the right placements for children in care. In 2009 we had found that young people aged over 14 were much less likely than younger children to say they were in the right placement, but in 2010 there was no big difference between the age groups.

As we found in both 2008 and 2009, **children in foster homes were much more likely than children in children's homes to say that they were in the right placement for them. In 2010, 89% of children in foster homes thought they were in the right placement for them, compared with 66% of children in children's homes.** The percentage of children living in children's homes who say they are in the right placement varies from year to year. In 2008, it was 63%, in 2009 it fell to 57%, and in 2010 it is up to 66%. Asylum-seeking young people were less likely in 2010 than children and young people generally to think they were in the right placement for them.

We asked children and young people to tell us the reasons they thought they were in the right, or the wrong, placement for them. We did not suggest any answers, and they could give more than one answer each.

Here are all the reasons given by at least one in 10 of the 527 children who gave us their reasons for saying they were in the right placement for them.

'Let's just say it's sometimes OK and sometimes bad'

Being in care continued

Reasons children generally gave for saying they were in the right placement	% of the children giving this answer
I am happy/settled	33%
Carers are kind/supportive	21%
I am well looked after/safe	17%

In this table, it was mainly children in foster care who said that their carers were kind and supportive. Here are all the reasons given by at least one in 10 foster children for saying that their foster placement was the right placement for them.

Reasons given by foster children for saying they were in the right placement	% of the children giving this answer
I am happy/settled	30%
Carers are kind/supportive	27%
I am well looked after/safe	17%

In the next table are the reasons given by at least one in 10 children in children's homes for saying that their children's home was the right placement for them.

Reasons given by children in children's homes for saying they were in the right placement	% of the children giving this answer
I am happy/settled	45%
I am well looked after/safe	16%
I am getting the help I need	10%

From these three tables, we can see that **being happy and settled is the top reason for children in the 2010 survey believing that they are in the right placement for them, with being happy and settled given as a reason far more often by children in children's homes than by children in foster care. Children in foster care gave helpful**

and supportive carers as a reason far more often than children in children's homes did. Nine per cent of children in children's homes gave helpful staff as a reason for saying their placement was right for them, compared with 27% of foster children giving helpful carers as a reason.

We also asked children who said they thought their placement was not the right one for them why they thought this was. The numbers of answers are too small to give percentages, but **the four most common reasons children and young people gave for saying their placement was not the right one were: they would rather be back with their own family; not getting on with other people (staff, carers or other children) in the placement; being in a children's home but wanting to be in foster care; and wanting to be living independently in their own place.**

Changing placements

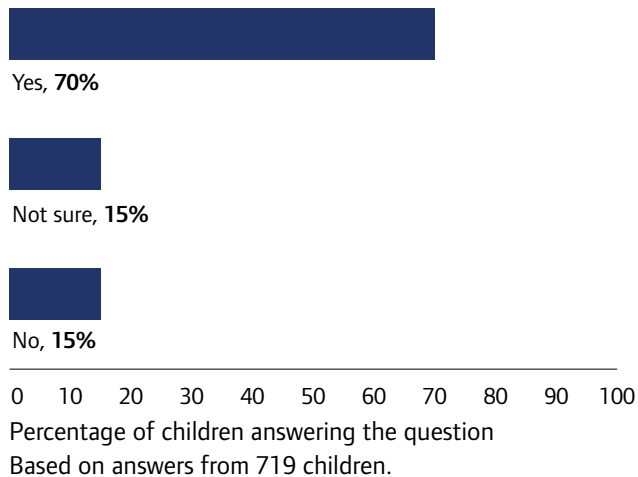
The children who took part in our 2010 monitor had most often had just one change of placement in their life in care so far. But because some children had had a lot of changes, the average number of placements so far was four. These figures were the same as in 2009.

Many people see changes in living placements as something to be avoided if possible, and say that staying in the same placement should be the aim. However, in our past consultations, children have often told us that sometimes a change of placement can be the right thing to happen, and can be a change for the better. On the other hand, some of the children we help through our individual children's casework tell us that they are told they are being moved to a new placement when they do not think this is the best thing for them. This is sometimes because of the cost of their placement, or because their placement was not planned to be for a long time even though it has worked out well for them.

So in our monitor survey each year we check whether each child thought their last move to a new placement was, or was not, in their best interests. As money becomes tighter for everyone, we will also check to see whether children's assessment of whether placement changes are or are not in their best interests is changing over time.

Figure 29 shows what children told us in 2010.

Figure 29: Was your last placement change in your best interests?



In 2010, 70% of the children in care in the annual care monitor survey assessed their last placement change as in their best interests. Fifteen per cent assessed their last change as not in their best interests. There has been very little change in these assessments over the past three years. From 2008 to 2010, the number of children rating their last placement change as being in their best interests has not changed more than two percentage points. In 2008, the figures were 69% saying their last placement change was in their best interests and 15% saying it was not. In 2009, the figures were 68% and 16%.

There were no big differences between girls and boys, between those aged over or under 14, or between disabled children and other children, in whether children and young people rated their last placement change as being in their best interests. **Children now in foster care were much more likely in 2010 to rate their move into their present foster home as being in their best interests than children in children’s homes were to rate their move into their present children’s home as in their best interests.** Nearly three quarters (74%) of foster children thought their last move had been in their best interests, compared with 63% of children in children’s homes.



We asked children to tell us what they understood had been the reason for their last placement move. We did not suggest any reasons, so what we are reporting here is entirely what the children themselves told us. Out of the 576 children in care who answered this question, **9% said they didn’t know why they had moved last time they changed placement.** Here were the three most common reasons for moving placements, according to children themselves.

Reasons given by children for their last change of placement	% of the children giving this answer
Unhappy/did not settle	14%
My behaviour	12%
To go to a more permanent placement	11%

Being in care continued

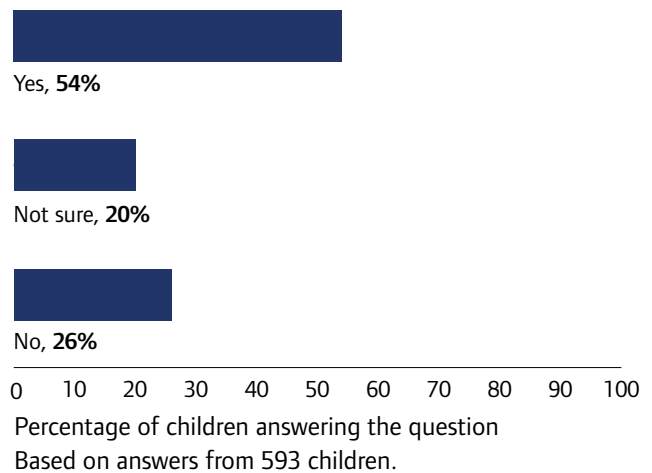
Just as being happy and settled in a placement was the top reason children gave when they felt they were in the right placement for them, being unhappy and not settling in a placement was the top reason for having to change placements. From their answers to this question, it was clear that for many children, being happy or not happy in a placement depended on whether or not you got on well with both your carers and other children or young people in the placement. In giving their own behaviour as a reason for having to move placements, children gave as examples their carers not being able to cope with their behaviour, having anger problems, and running away from the placement.

Changing schools when changing placements

When children in care move to live in a new placement, they often have to change to a new school as well. In 2010, the majority of children in care in our monitor survey had changed schools once because of a change of living placement. The average number of changes was two, because some children had very many changes of school. These figures were the same as in 2009.

It is often said that having to change school is a bad thing for children in care. But children have told us in the past that a change of school has been a good thing for them. It all depends on whether the new school is a better one for their education, or whether they settle better there than at their old school. In our monitor survey each year, we ask children whether the last time they had to change school because they moved to a new placement, they thought the change of school was in their best interests. Figure 30 gives their answers for 2010.

Figure 30: Last time you had to change schools because you moved to a new placement, was the change of school in your best interests?



'My other placement closed down so I had to move'

Just over half (54%) of the children in the 2010 monitor thought that the last time they changed school when they changed placements, the change of school was in their best interests. Only just over a quarter (26%) thought the change of school was definitely not in their best interests. The rest were not sure. The figure of 54% was exactly the same as in 2009, when 24% of the children in the survey had said their last change of school was definitely not in their best interests.

As we have found in each of the three years we have carried out the care monitor survey so far, **according to children themselves, changing school when changing placement is much more likely than not to be in the child's best interests.**

In 2010, we found no big differences between boys and girls, children aged under 14 and those aged over 14, or children with a disability and other children, in whether they thought their last change of school when changing placement was in their best interests. **We did find that children in children's homes were much less likely than foster children to think that their last change of school when changing placement was in their best interests.** Forty-seven per cent of children in children's homes thought their last change of school when changing placement was in their best interests, compared with 58% of foster children.

We asked children to tell us why they thought their last change of school when changing placement was in their best interests. As usual with this sort of question, we did not give any suggested answers, so all the reasons came straight from the children themselves. Two top reasons stood out from all the others. **The two most usual reasons given by children who thought their last change of school when changing placements was in their best interests were that the new school was nearer to where the child now lived (this came from 39% of the children), and that the new school met the child's educational needs better (this came from 17% of the children).**

We also asked children for their reasons when they thought their last change of school when changing placement had definitely not been in their best interests. Again, we did not suggest any answers. **The top three reasons given where children thought the change of school had not been in their best interests were that they were happy and settled at their old school, that they didn't want to leave their friends, and that they didn't like the new school.**



Designated teachers

Schools are now expected to have a member of staff especially there to help and support children in care in the school. These are usually called 'designated teachers'. Colleges may also have a member of staff with the specific job of helping young people in care while they are at the college.

In the 2010 monitor survey we started checking how many children in care know that there is a member of staff at their school to help children in care. Out of 723 children in care in school or college who answered our question on this, almost two thirds (65%) said they did have a member of staff at school or college who was there specifically to help children in care. **Out of the under-14 age group who were at school rather than college, 70% said they had a member of staff to help children in care.**

Being in care continued

Boys were much more likely than girls to tell us there was a special member of staff to help children in care at their school or college. Overall, 72% of boys said there was one at their school or college, compared with 57% of girls.

Disabled children were much more likely than other children to tell us they had a special member of staff to help children in care at their school or college.

Children in children's homes were slightly more likely than foster children to say there was a special member of staff at their school or college to help children in care.

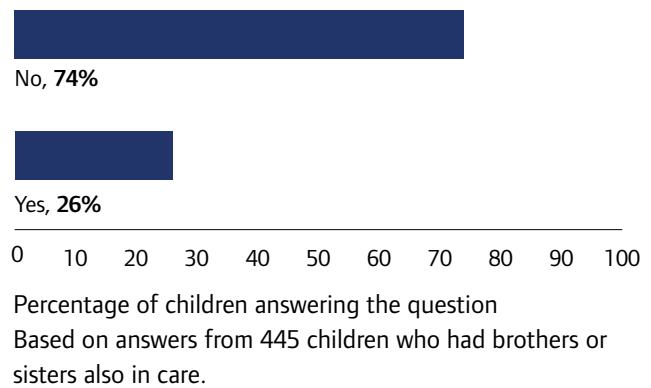
Separation of siblings in care

In our consultations, children in care have told us that siblings (brothers and sisters) are often separated and placed in different placements in care. Many have told us that this is a major issue for children in care, and that siblings should be placed together unless there is a good reason for them to be separated in their best interests. This is something we check each year in the care monitor.

Out of 768 children and young people in care who answered the question in the 2010 survey, 58% had at least one brother or sister who was also in care. Figure 31 shows the proportion of children who told us they were living in the same placement as any brothers or sisters in care.

'Too much having new school and new home'

Figure 31: Do children with brothers and sisters in care live in the same placement together?



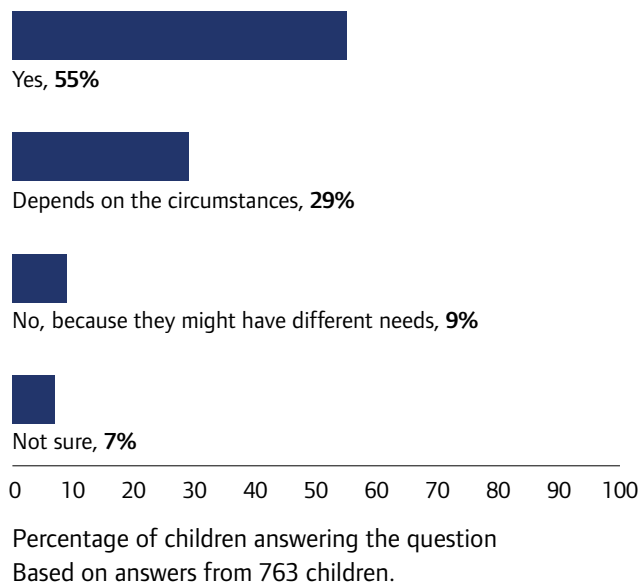
In 2010, nearly three quarters (74%) of the children in care who had one or more siblings also in care were separated from brothers or sisters by being placed to live in different placements. In 2009, the figure was 76%.

There were no big differences in 2010 between boys and girls, between over- and under-14s, between disabled children and other children, or between asylum-seeking young people and other children and young people, in how likely siblings were to have been separated in care.

The one big difference we did find, as we found in 2009, was that **children living in children's homes were much more likely than children in foster homes to have been separated from siblings in care. Ninety-four per cent of children in children's homes had been separated from siblings in care,** compared with 71% of those in foster care.

We asked children whether they thought siblings should always be placed together. Figure 32 gives their answers.

Figure 32: Should siblings in care always be placed together?



Over half the children (55%) thought that siblings in care should always be placed together in the same placement. Thirty-eight per cent thought that there could be situations where it was right to separate siblings in care into different placements. It depends on the circumstances, and sometimes siblings can have different needs that mean they need different sorts of placement. There were no big differences in views on this between girls and boys, over- and under-14s, disabled children and others, or asylum-seeking young people and others. Even though children in children's homes were more likely to be separated from their siblings in care, there was no big difference in view between foster children and children in children's homes on whether siblings should always be placed together.

Children who had been placed together with their siblings were most likely to say that being placed together was the right thing for them. **Eighty-nine per cent of the 114 children who had been placed together with their siblings thought that this was the right thing for them.** Only seven children (6%) thought that being placed with their siblings had been wrong for them. These figures are similar to those for 2009.

Children who had been separated from siblings in care by being placed in different placements had very different views about being separated. **Forty-one per cent of the children who had been separated from their siblings in care thought it had been wrong to separate them, but well over a third (37%) thought it had been right that they were separated. One in five (21%) were not sure whether or not it had been right to separate them in different placements.** Again, these figures are similar to what we found in 2009.

Children in children's homes who had been separated from their siblings were much more likely than foster children who had been separated to say that it was wrong to have separated them. Over half the children in children's homes who had been separated from siblings in care thought it had been wrong to separate them, compared with 39% of foster children who had been separated from siblings. This is a particularly important difference because we have already found that children in children's homes are much more likely than foster children to have been separated from their siblings.

'Both schools offered and taught me different things'

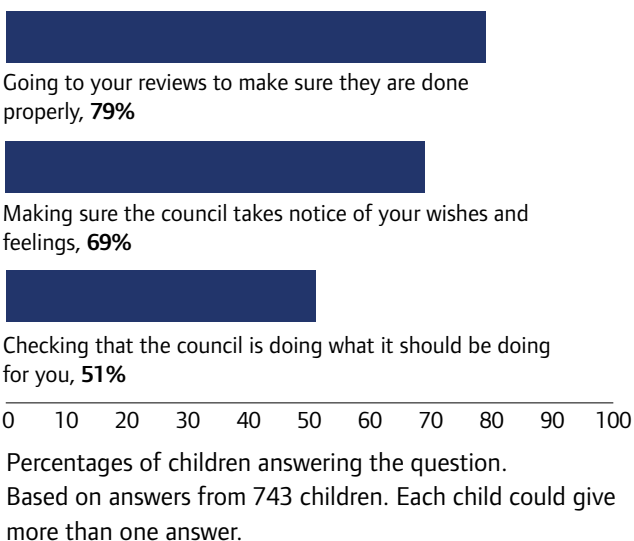
Being in care continued

Independent reviewing officers

Every child in care should have an independent reviewing officer (IRO). Among other things, their job is to make sure the council is doing what it should be doing for the child, to go to all the child's care reviews to make sure these are done properly, and to make sure the council takes proper notice of the child's wishes and feelings when it makes decisions and plans for the child.

Figure 33 shows the percentages of children in 2010 who told us they knew they had someone from the council (other than their social worker) doing each of these main things for them.

Figure 33: Percentages of children who know they have someone other than their social worker to carry out these tasks

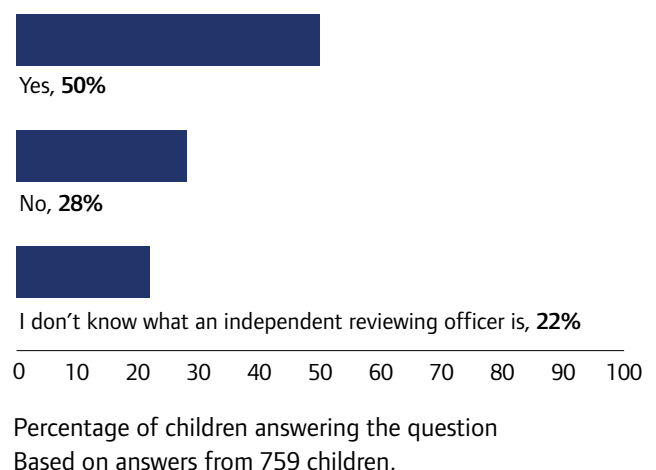


All the tasks in Figure 33 are things that independent reviewing officers should be doing for all children on their caseloads. **Children in care themselves were most clear about someone other than their social worker going to their reviews and checking that these were done properly, though one in five (21%) didn't know they had someone doing this job for them. Thirty-one per cent didn't know anything about having someone specifically to check that their council was taking proper notice of their wishes and feelings, which is a main job of all independent reviewing officers. Only half (51%) told us they had someone apart from their social worker who they knew was making sure the council was doing what it should be doing for them.**

There was no big change in these figures since 2009. None of these 2010 percentages was more than one percentage point different to those for 2009.

We asked children whether they knew how to get in touch with their independent reviewing officer if they wanted to. The answers for 2010 are set out in Figure 34.

Figure 34: Do children know how to get in touch with their independent reviewing officer?



In 2010, exactly half the children in care taking part in the care monitor knew how to get in touch with their independent reviewing officer. Just over one in five, 22%, did not know what an independent reviewing officer is. There has been no significant change in these figures since 2009, when 48% knew how to contact their independent reviewing officer, but 23% did not know what one is.

As we found in 2009, children in children’s homes were much more likely than foster children to know how to get in touch with their independent reviewing officer.

Sixty-three per cent of those in children’s homes knew how to get in touch, compared with 46% in foster homes. There were no big differences between girls and boys, disabled children and others, or those aged over or under 14, in knowing how to get in touch with their independent reviewing officer.

In 2010 we asked for the first time what support children had been given by their independent reviewing officer. We did not suggest any answers. We had answers from 307 children. Here are all the answers which came from at least one in 10 of these children.

Support children had received from their independent reviewing officers	% of the children giving this answer
Listening to the child’s views and wishes	26%
Making sure the child gets their point of view across in reviews	26%
To go to a more permanent placement	11%
Making sure the child is being looked after properly	10%
Being there with support when the child needs it	10%

The 39% of children in care who told us about the support they got from their independent reviewing officers told us they had been given just the sort of support that independent reviewing officers are there to give. Important kinds of support were making sure the child’s views are listened to and put across in care reviews, and making sure that the child is being looked after as they should be. Sixteen per cent of the children who said they had been supported by their independent reviewing officer told us they didn’t know what exactly their independent reviewing officer had done for them.

Bullying and discrimination against people in care

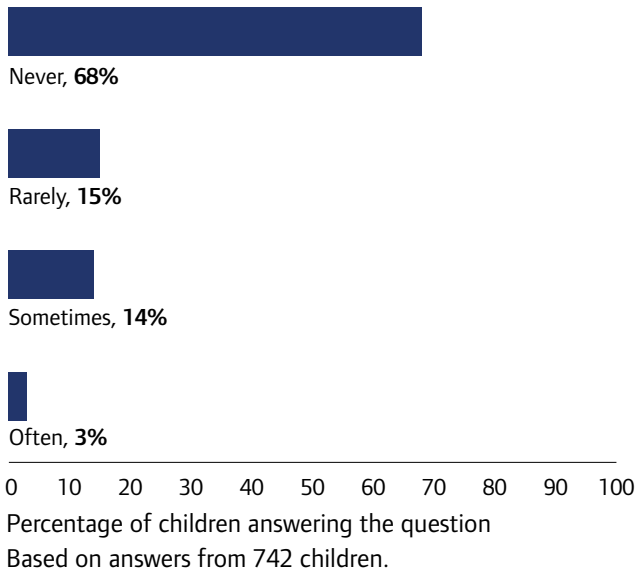
As we did in the last monitor survey, we asked children in care whether they believed that they were being bullied because they were in care.

In 2010, 16% of children in care taking part in the survey said they were being bullied because they were in care. This was slightly down from 20% in 2009. There were no big differences in this between girls and boys, those under or over 14, or between disabled children and others. **Similar percentages of foster children and children in children’s homes said they were being bullied for being in care.** Fifteen per cent of foster children and 17% of children living in children’s homes said they were being bullied for being in care.

For the first time, in 2010 we asked children in care whether or not they felt they were discriminated against for being in care. Their answers are in Figure 35.

Being in care continued

Figure 35: Are children in care discriminated against for being in care?



From these answers, **over two thirds (68%) of children in care answering this question do not think they suffer any discrimination for being in care.** Fifteen per cent believe that they are only rarely discriminated against for being in care. But **17%, around one in six, say they are sometimes or often discriminated against because they are in care.**

‘Listens to my opinions and goes to meetings making sure care staff are doing their job’

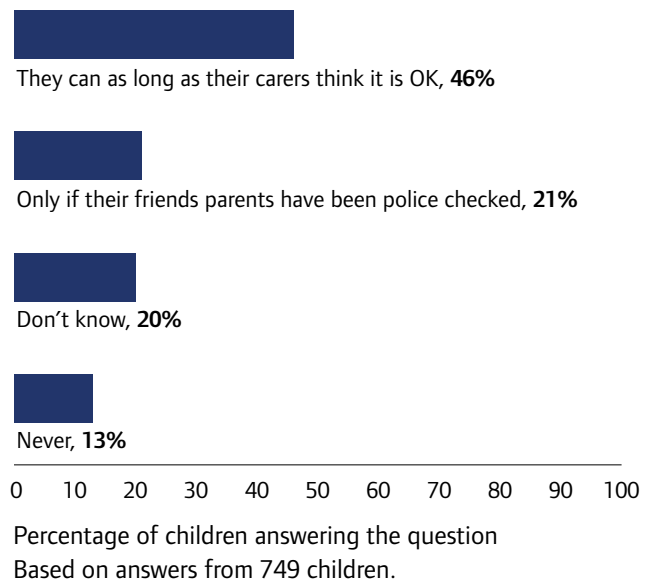
There were no big differences between boys and girls, over- and under-14s, or children in children’s homes or foster homes, in answers to this question. Disabled children were less likely than others to feel discriminated against solely for being in care.

Overnight stays with friends

In very many of our consultations, children in care tell us that they are not allowed to stay overnight with friends unless their friends’ parents have been police checked first. There is no government rule that says that friends’ parents have to be police checked before children in care can come to stay overnight. Government Ministers have issued guidance saying there is no such rule, and that unless there is some special reason in their care plans, children in care should be allowed to stay overnight with friends without any police checks being needed, if their carers or staff think it is OK, in exactly the same way as other children of their age.

Because this is a problem that is still being raised by children in our consultations, we have started to check on this in the care monitor survey. The situation in 2010, according to the children taking part in the survey, is set out in Figure 36.

Figure 36: Are children in care allowed to stay overnight with friends?





According to the 2010 survey, **46% of children in care are allowed to stay overnight with friends as long as their carers think that it is OK, and 21% are only allowed to stay overnight if their friends' parents have been police checked.** We will be watching for any changes in these figures in next year's survey.

There were no big differences in these figures between boys and girls, or for children aged over 14, compared with those aged under 14. **In fact, very slightly more young people aged over 14 (23%) reported that their friends' parents had to be police checked before they could stay overnight than children aged under 14, where 19% reported this.**

Exactly the same percentage of children in children's homes and in foster care said their friends' parents had to be police checked before they were allowed to stay overnight. One big difference, though, was that **children in children's homes were much more likely than foster children to say that they were never allowed to stay overnight with friends.** Twenty-eight per cent of children in children's homes said this, compared with only 8% of foster children.

Children in Care Councils

Children in Care Councils have now been set up in almost all councils in England to represent the views of children in care in their areas. Because these are an important way for children in care to have a say, we have started to include some questions on Children in Care Councils in the care monitor survey, starting in 2010.

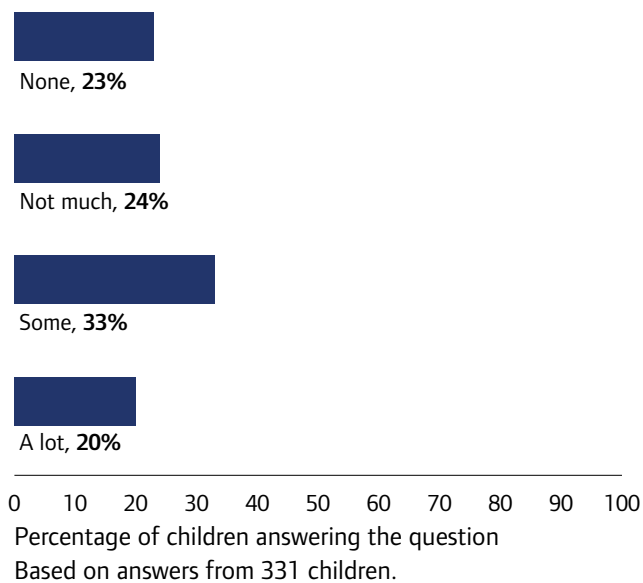
'I made my complaint through the Children in Care Council'

Being in care continued

We asked children whether or not they were on a Children in Care Council, and whether or not they knew there was one in their area. **In 2010, nearly half (49%) of the 744 children in care who answered this question didn't know there was a Children in Care Council in their area.** We will be checking to see if this figure falls next year, and therefore whether Children in Care Councils are becoming better known to children in care as they continue their work.

We also asked children who knew about it whether they thought their Children in Care Council's opinions made a difference to what happens for children in care in their areas. Their answers are in Figure 37.

Figure 37: How much difference does the Children in Care Council make to what happens for children in care?



Overall, in 2010 just over half the children (54%) who knew about Children in Care Councils thought the opinions of their local one made some or a lot of difference to what happened for children in care in their area. Just under a quarter (23%) who knew about their Children in Care Council thought it made no difference.

Children who were actually on their local Children in Care Council, and those who weren't, had very different views on this question. **Sixty-three per cent of those who were on their local Children in Care Council thought its opinions made some or a lot of difference for children in care. Forty-eight per cent of those who were not on their local Children in Care Council thought its opinions made some or a lot of difference.** Interestingly, the percentage of children who were on their Children in Care Council but thought it made no difference at all was quite close to the percentage of children who weren't on their Children in Care Council who thought this. Twenty-one per cent of children who were on Children in Care Councils thought their councils made no difference for children in care, compared with 24% of children who were not members of a Children in Care Council.

'My IRO helps me a lot by making me take part in most decisions they make'



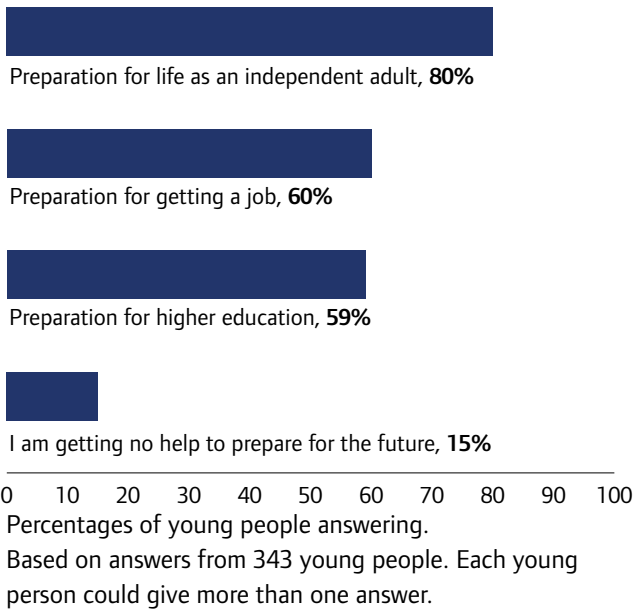
Leaving care

The last section of the Children’s care monitor is also about children and young people in care, this time about leaving care.

Preparing to leave care

Figure 38 shows how many children told us they were being helped in various ways to prepare for their future. For this question, we gave a list of suggested answers which was the same as in 2009, so that we could compare the answers in 2010 with what young people said the year before. The question was answered in 2010 by 343 young people who told us they would soon be leaving care.

Figure 38: Percentage of those soon to leave care who are getting each kind of support



The most usual help for the future was general help to prepare for independence as an adult, followed by help to prepare for getting a job and help to prepare for higher education. Fifteen per cent of those about to leave care told us they were not getting any help they needed to prepare for their future life after care.

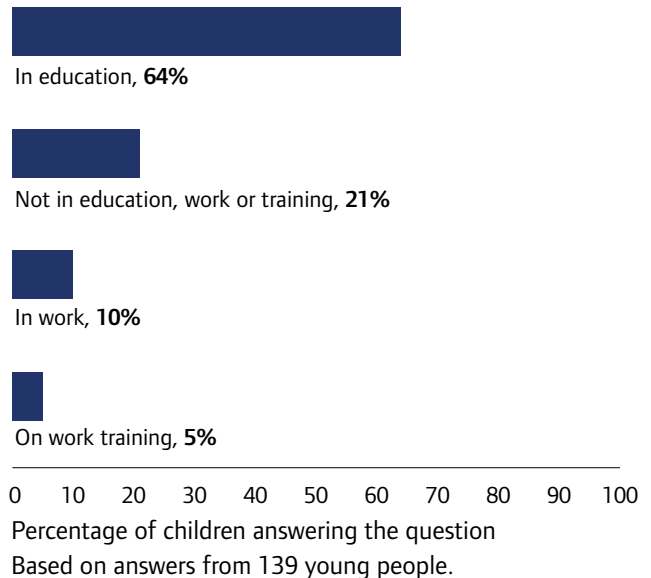
Compared with the year before, the percentage saying they were being helped to prepare for higher education had fallen slightly, from 65% in 2009 to 59% in 2010, and the percentage who said they were not getting any help they needed to prepare for the future had risen very slightly from 13% in 2009 to 15% in 2010. The percentage saying they were getting general help to prepare for independence as an adult had gone up very slightly from 78% in 2009 to 80% in 2010. These are very small changes though, and may just be random changes from one survey to the next.

There were no big differences in how they were being helped to prepare for the future between girls and boys or between children in children’s homes and children in foster homes. **One in five (20%) of the children aged under 14 who answered this question told us that they were being helped to prepare for their future after leaving care.**

Education and work

A total of 149 young people who had left care took part in the 2010 care monitor survey. Out of these, 139 told us what they were now doing. This is shown in Figure 39.

Figure 39: What care leavers are doing



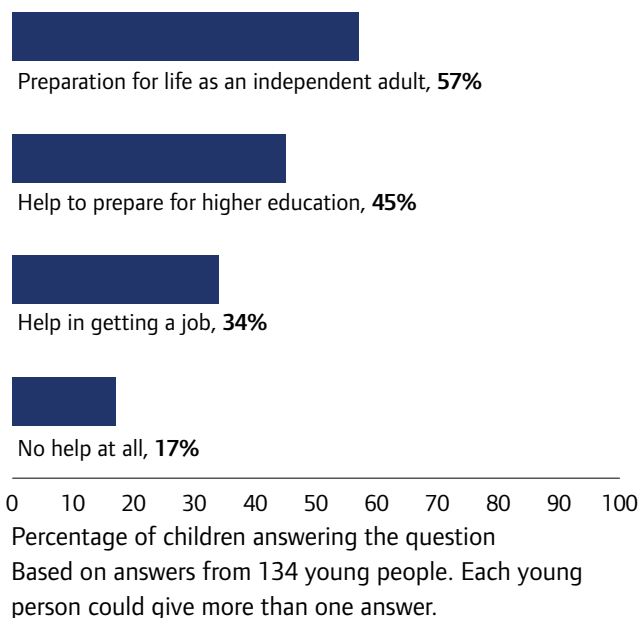
Of the care leavers taking part in the 2010 care monitor survey, nearly two thirds (64%) were in some sort of education, one in 10 were in work, one in 20 were in some form of work training, and just over one in five (21%) were not in education, employment or training. Compared with 2009, there had been a big increase in the percentage of care leavers in education (from 47% in 2009 to 64% in 2010), and a big drop in the percentage not in education, employment or training (from 36% in 2009 to 21% in 2010). With a relatively small number of care leavers taking part in the survey each year, these changes cannot yet be called a definite trend. We will need to see what happens to them in 2011.

Support for care leavers

In 2010, 58% of care leavers in the monitor survey told us they had a social worker, and another 23% that they had another sort of caseworker, making a total of **81% of these care leavers who had either a social worker or other caseworker. This is exactly the same percentage as in 2009.**

We had already asked children preparing for leaving care what sort of help they were getting to prepare them for their future after leaving care. We now asked young people who had left care what help and support they were getting for the future. Figure 40 gives their answers.

Figure 40: What help care leavers are getting for their future



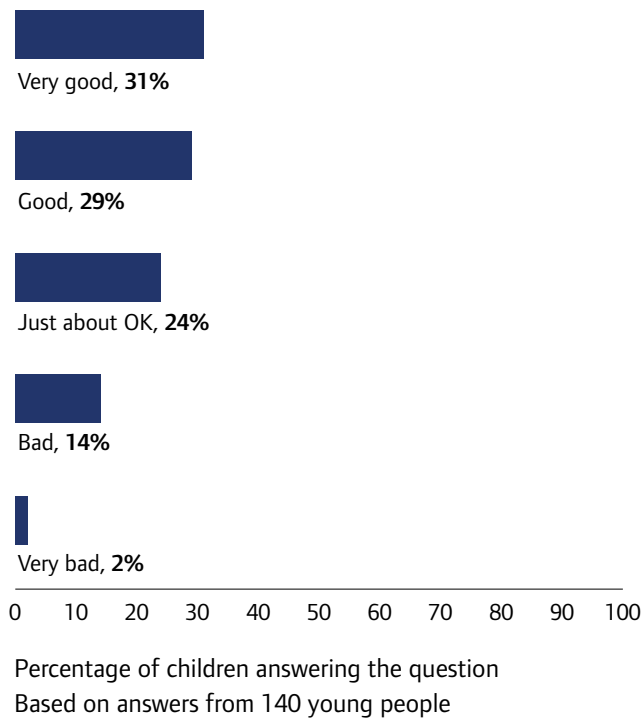
Eighty-three per cent of the young people who had already left care told us that they were getting definite help as care leavers for their future lives. This was most usually general help in preparing for life as independent adults, followed by help in preparing to enter higher education and help in getting a job. **This percentage was exactly the same as we found in the 2009 care monitor survey.** Seventeen per cent said in 2010 that they were getting no help at all.

Over the last three years, there has been a drop in the percentage of care leavers getting help to get a job (this was 44% in 2008, 36% in 2009 and 34% in 2010), **and a slight increase in the percentage of care leavers getting help to go into higher education** (this was 38% in 2008, 40% in 2009 and 45% in 2010).

Leaving care continued

Figure 41 shows how care leavers in the 2010 care monitor survey rated the support they were getting.

Figure 41: How care leavers rate the support they are getting



Overall, 60% of care leavers in the 2010 care monitor rated the support they were getting as good or very good, and 16% as bad or very bad. The percentage rating their support as good or very good was lower than in the last two years, but there is no clear trend one way or the other. The figures just vary from year to year. **There is, however, a slight increase in the percentage who rate their support as bad or very bad.** In 2008, this percentage was 9%, in 2009 it was 10%, and in 2010 it was 16%.

Accommodation

We know from our past consultations with care leavers that accommodation is an important issue for many. In each year's care monitor survey we check where care leavers are living, how they rate their accommodation, and whether they think the place they are living is right for them. In the 2010 monitor survey, 133 care leavers told us where they were living. The most usual places were:

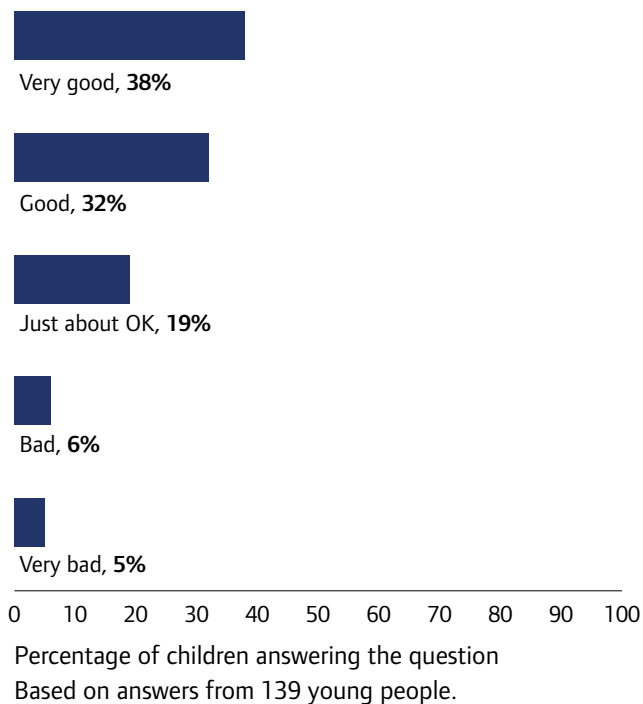
- **alone in their own flat (27% of care leavers)**
- **supported lodgings (16% of care leavers)**
- **with their parents (10% of care leavers).**

There were no other places where as many as one in 10 of the care leavers were living. In 2010, slightly more care leavers than in 2009 had gone back to live with their own parents after leaving care, and slightly fewer were living in their own flats, either alone or sharing with other young people. In 2009, 6% of the care leavers taking part in the care monitor survey were back living with their parents. This had gone up to 10% in 2010. The percentage of care leavers living alone in their own flats had gone down from 32% in 2009 to 27% in 2010. The percentage living in a shared flat had gone down from 11% in 2009 to 9% in 2010. These changes are small, and could just be random changes from one year to the next. We will check in 2011 to see if there are any longer-term trends.

'I'm at home with my mum and dad and family where I belong'

Figure 42 shows how care leavers rated their accommodation in the 2010 care monitor.

Figure 42: The quality of care leavers' accommodation



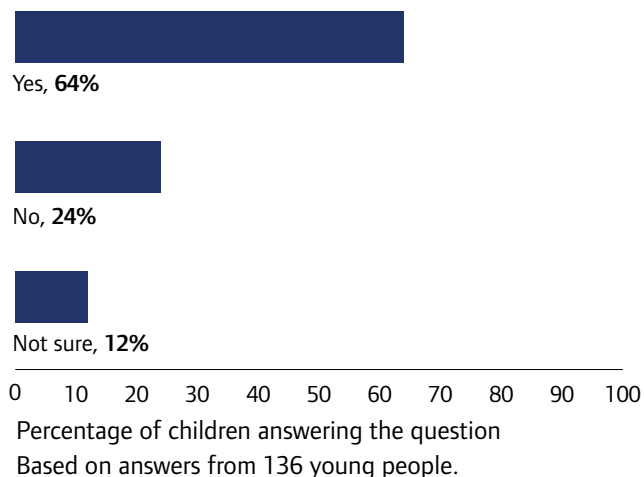
Overall, in 2010 70% of care leavers rated their accommodation as either good or very good, and 11% as bad or very bad. The 2009 figures were 73% and 10%.

When they had answered our question about feeling safe or unsafe in the building where they were living, the 99 care leavers who had answered that question had felt less safe there than children and young people did generally.

Eighty-five per cent of care leavers said they felt safe or very safe in the building where they lived, compared with 95% of the children and young people generally.

Figure 43 shows whether the care leavers thought they were living in the right accommodation for them. This is very different from whether the accommodation itself is good or bad.

Figure 43: Are care leavers living in the right place for them?



Just under two thirds of the care leavers (64%) thought they were in the right accommodation for them, and just under a quarter (24%) thought that they were living in accommodation that was wrong for them.

The 2009 figures were 58% and 23%, so there is a slight increase in the percentage telling us they are in the right accommodation. However, there is no clear trend over the three years since 2008, because the figures have gone both up and down over that time.

We asked the 88 care leavers who thought they were in the right accommodation what made it the right accommodation for them. We did not suggest any answers. Here are the main reasons they gave.

What made accommodation right for care leavers	Number (out of 88) who gave this answer
Feeling safe/happy/settled	18
Being back home with relatives	15
Getting help to live independently	12
Having independence	10

As with children in care, being happy and settled was a key reason for care leavers saying they were in the right accommodation. Leaving care to go back home was also an important reason, as were both being independent and having help to be independent.

Bullying

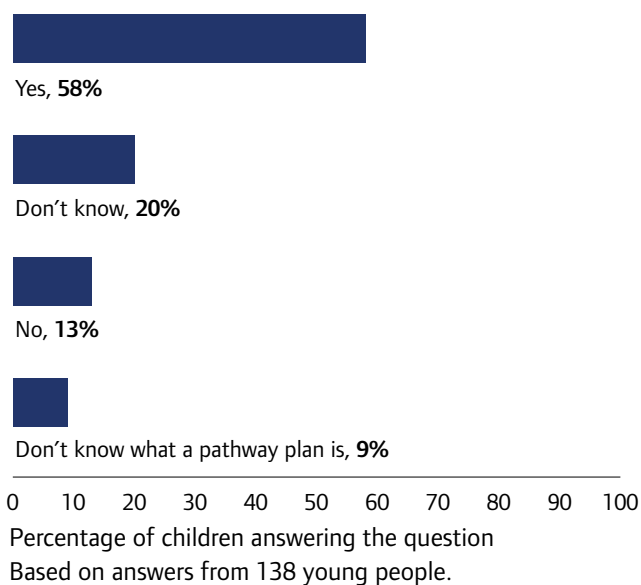
We know from past consultations that being from care, either in care or a care leaver, can lead to getting bullied. For 2010, we have already reported that 16% of children in care said they were being bullied just for being in care. We asked care leavers whether they are bullied just because they are from care. A total of 140 care leavers answered this question.

In 2010, 25% of care leavers told us they were being bullied because they had been in care. This is up on the 2009 figure of 19%.

Pathway plans

Plans for care leavers and their support are called 'pathway plans'. Just as we asked children in care about their care plans, we asked care leavers about their pathway plans. Figure 43 shows our findings for 2010.

Figure 44: Do care leavers have pathway plans?



Just under six out of 10 care leavers (58%) in the 2010 monitor told us they had a pathway plan. Nine per cent didn't know what a pathway plan was. One in five (20%) knew what a pathway plan was but didn't know whether or not they had one. Over one in 10 (13%) knew what a pathway plan was but told us they definitely didn't have one.

The percentage of care leavers who told us they definitely have a pathway plan fell from 67% in 2009 to 59% in 2010, and the percentage who knew what a pathway plan was but didn't know whether or not they had one themselves had gone up from 13% in 2009 to 20% in 2010. The number of care leavers who answered this question in 2008 was too small to be sure of the findings for that year. But looking at the answers from 2008 as well as for 2009 and 2010, the proportion of care leavers in the care monitor survey who said they do have a pathway plan has fallen over the past three years, and the proportion who said they don't know whether or not they have got one has also gone up over the past three years.

Out of the care leavers who told us they had pathway plans in 2010, 77% knew what was in their pathway plans. The percentage who knew what was in their pathway plans had fallen from 86% in 2009. Seventy-eight per cent told us that they had been given a say in what was in their pathway plans. Just over two thirds of the care leavers who knew about their pathway plans agreed with what was in them. There has been a fall in the proportion who agreed with their pathway plans over the past three years, but the number of care leavers answering these questions is too small to be sure of this trend.

In 2010, 71% of care leavers who knew about their pathway plans told us their plans were being kept to. Another 14% said that some, but not all, of their plans were being kept to. There has not been a trend upwards or downwards in these figures over the past three years.



Key changes over three years of monitoring

In this year's Children's care monitor, it is possible to identify some of the key changes that can be seen in children's responses to our monitoring surveys over the three years 2008 to 2011. These are listed below.

However, three major cautions must be stated. Firstly, as the children responding to each year's survey were not all the same children, some steady changes over the three years may have occurred by chance. Secondly, we have only listed the biggest and steadiest changes in the percentages here; there could be some other real changes happening that do not show up so clearly in the figures.

Thirdly, although this is a list of changes, things that children have told us are not changing from year to year are just as important as things that do seem to be changing. Most of our findings show that many aspects of care and education are staying very much the same.

Here are the key changes in what children have said in the survey since 2008.

- The percentage of children saying they worried a little or a lot about their safety was down slightly from 43% in 2009 to 36% in 2010.
- The percentage of children saying that road accidents are the most likely accidents to happen to children has fallen slightly over the past three years, from 46% in 2008 to 40% in 2010.
- The percentage of children reporting being sometimes, often or always bullied has fallen over the past three years, from 35% in 2008 to 24% in 2010.
- The percentage of reported bullying that involves being hit or physically hurt has fallen over the past three years, from 39% in 2008 to 28% in 2010.
- The percentage of children in care who reported being bullied for being in care was down slightly from 20% in 2009 to 16% in 2010.
- The percentage of children reporting that they had made a complaint has fallen over the past three years, from 43% in 2008 to 25% in 2010.
- The percentage of children who know what Ofsted is, and how to contact Ofsted, has gone up over the past three years, from 35% in 2008 to 45% in 2010.
- The percentage of care leavers in education has gone up from 47% in 2009 to 64% in 2010, and the percentage of care leavers not in education, training or employment has gone down from 36% in 2009 to 21% in 2010.
- The percentage of care leavers reporting getting help to get a job has fallen over the past three years from 44% in 2008 to 34% in 2010, while the percentage reporting getting help to go into higher education has risen slightly from 38% in 2008 to 45% in 2010.
- The percentage of care leavers rating their overall support as bad or very bad has risen slightly over the past three years, from 9% in 2008 to 16% in 2010.
- The percentage of care leavers who reported having a pathway plan fell slightly from 67% in 2009 to 59% in 2010.
- The percentage of care leavers reporting that they are being bullied for being from care rose slightly from 19% in 2009 to 25% in 2010.

Appendix

I am grateful as always to the children and staff of the establishments, local authorities and services who took part in the annual Children's care monitor survey. I look forward to working with many of them again in next year's survey.

The following establishments, services and local authorities took part in the 2010 monitor survey.

Boarding schools

Ampleforth College
Bromsgrove Preparatory School
Brymore Secondary Technical School
Canford School
Sherbourne International College
Kingswood
Saint Felix School
Sibford School

Children's homes

Appletree School
Auton House
Brookfield House
Burbank CH
Marymount
Peartree
Sea View
The Dingles
The Oaks
Whitty Tree House
Woodend

Independent fostering agencies

Foster Care Associates – South West
Foster Cares Ltd
Fostering Solutions Ltd
Fosterplus
Fosterplus Ltd
Hillcrest Fostercare
Jay Fostering Ltd
Nexus Fostering
Orange Grove Midlands Ltd
Park Foster Care Ltd
Phoenix Fostering
SWIS Foster Care Ltd
Team Fostering
The Adolescent & Children's Trust TACT
The Foster Care Co-operative Ltd

Further education colleges

Chichester College
City College
College of West Anglia
Eastleigh College House
Easton College
Grantham College
Hadlow College
John Leggott College
Northumberland College at Kirkley Hall
Peter Symonds College
Plumpton
RNIB
Shuttleworth College
South Tyneside College
Sparsholt
Walford & N Shropshire
Writtle College

Appendix continued

Local authorities

Barnsley
Bedfordshire
Blackburn with Darwen
Bournemouth
Bradford
Bristol
Buckinghamshire
Bury
Coventry
Darlington
Doncaster
East Riding of Yorkshire
Essex
Gateshead
Gloucestershire
Hertfordshire
Isle of Wight
Lancashire
Leicestershire
London Borough of Barking & Dagenham
London Borough of Greenwich
London Borough Hackney
London Borough of Hounslow
London Borough of Islington
London Borough of Lambeth
London Borough of Lewisham
London Borough of Redbridge
London Borough of Tower Hamlets
City of Westminster
Medway
Milton Keynes
North Lincolnshire
Northumberland
Nottinghamshire
Oldham
Oxfordshire
Salford
Sefton
Slough
South Tyneside
St Helen's
Staffordshire
Stockport

Suffolk
Torbay
Trafford
West Sussex
Wirral

Residential special schools

Appleford School
Falconer School
Furrowfield School
Lakeside School
Loxley Hall
Muntham House School
St Vincent's School for the blind
Valence School
Wendover School
Westlands School
William Henry Smith School
Woodlands Special School

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