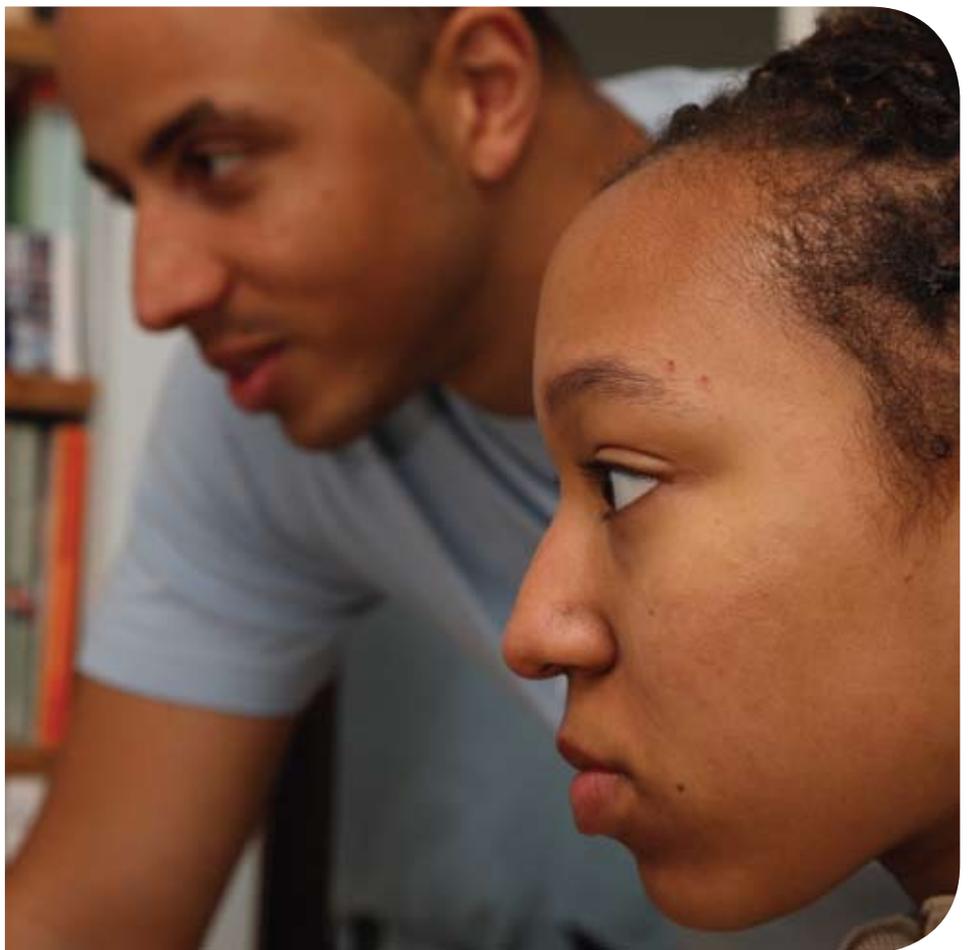


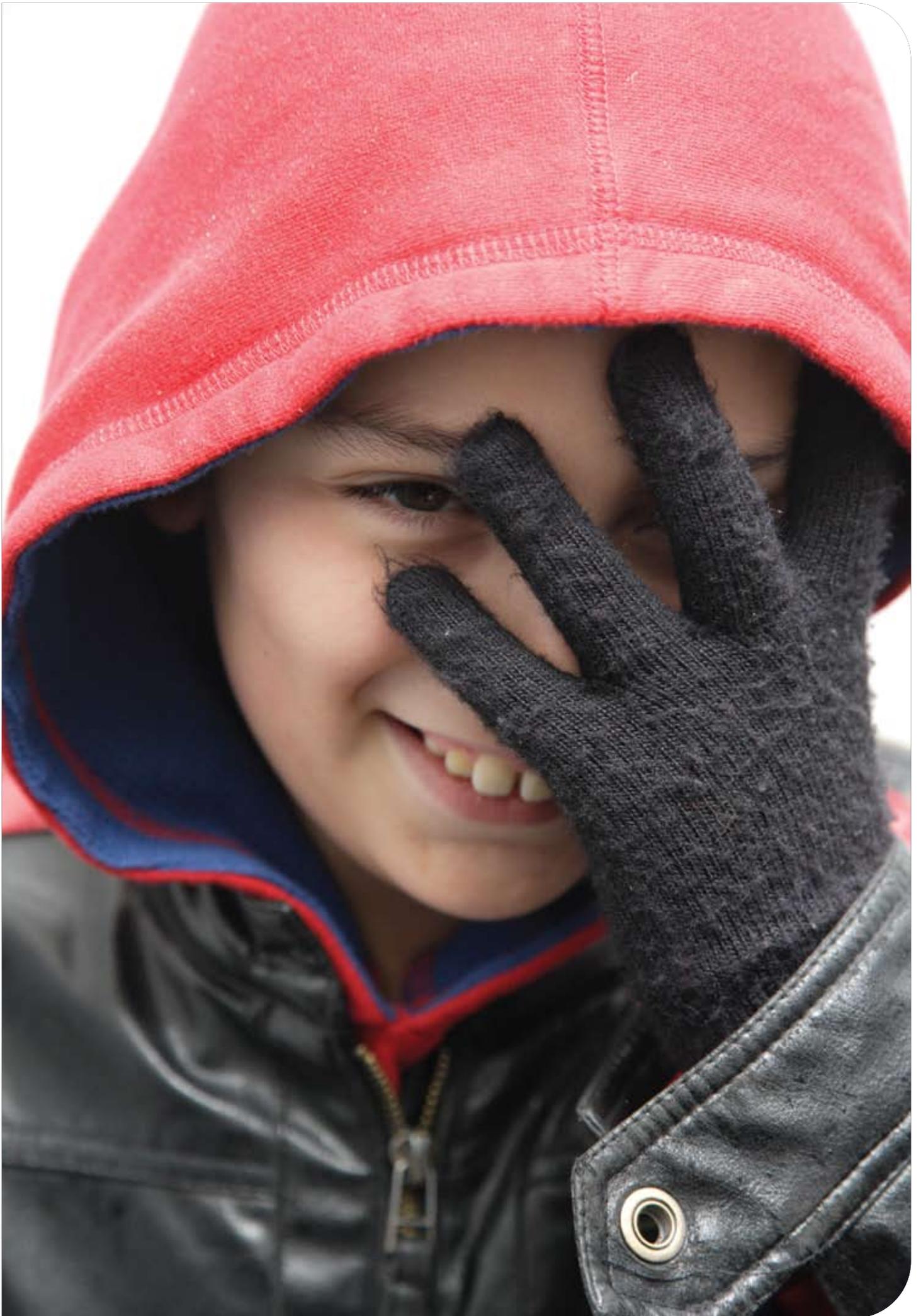
Children's care monitor 2009

Children on the state of social care in England
Reported by the Children's Rights Director for England



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About the Children's Rights Director



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 away from home in all types of boarding schools, residential special schools or further education colleges, 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 asking young people for their views and publishing what they tell us, with my team I also give advice on children's and young people's views and on children's rights and welfare to Her Majesty's Chief Inspector at Ofsted, and to the Government. I 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. With my team, I do this both for individual young people and for whole groups of young people.

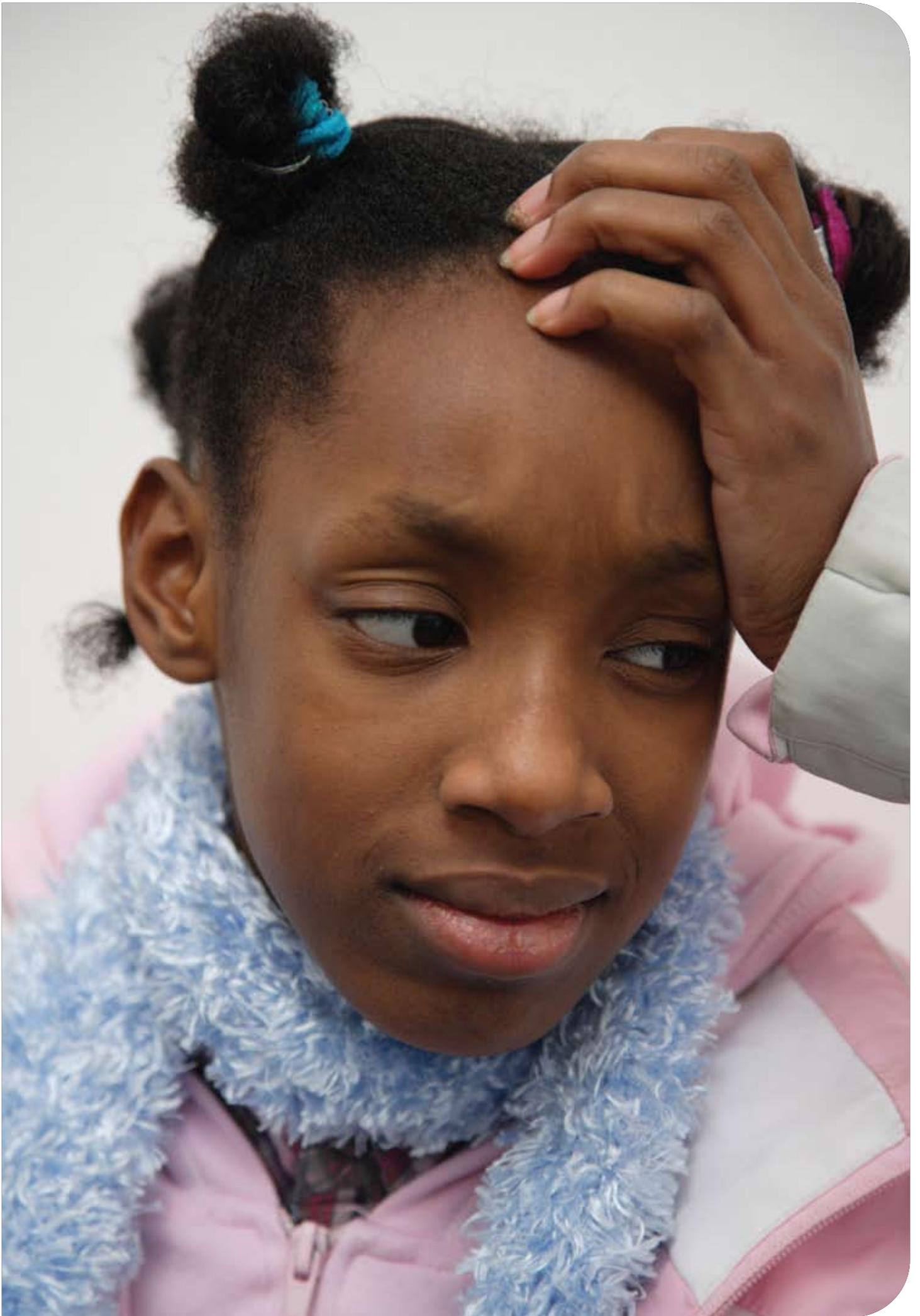
During our many consultations over recent years, children and young people have told us that there are some things that are so important to children that we should check them with children every year. So last year, 2008, we published our first *Children's care monitor*, reporting what children and young people told us about six things which are very important to their lives: keeping safe; bullying; having a say in what happens to them; making complaints and suggestions; education; and care planning for people being looked after in care. This is our second *Children's care monitor*, reporting what children and young people across England told us about these things in 2009.

In this report, we have compared what the children in our 2009 sample said with what children said a year ago. This year's figures are very close to last year's and some of the differences there are could well happen by chance. Next year's figures will tell us whether, over three years, there are any steady trends.

As with all our reports, we have set out what children themselves have told us, without leaving out things we might disagree with, or adding our own thoughts or comments. This report is purely made up of children's views. We try to write all our reports so that they can just as easily be read by children and young people as by professionals and government ministers. All our reports are sent to government ministers and officials, key people in Parliament, every council children's services department in England, and the people at Ofsted who do inspections of services for children. This year, the Government is carrying out its first 'Ministerial Stocktake' – a special review to check on how care is doing for children. This report will feed children's own views directly into that review.

What children and young people have said through our reports has led to important changes to decisions about looking after children. Like all our reports, this one is being published for everyone to read. You can find copies of all my reports on our website: www.rights4me.org.

This is the report of a national survey of children's own experiences, bringing together the views of 1,195 children and young people. It is those children's own assessment of how care is doing in 2009.



The children and young people who took part

Of the 1,195 children who took part in this year's care monitor, 1,124 told us their age. The youngest was aged five and the oldest was a care leaver aged 23. The middle age out of everyone who took part in the survey was 14, the same as last year. Thirty-eight per cent were aged 13 or under and 62% were aged 14 or over. Eight per cent were aged 18 or over. Fifty-two per cent were boys and 48% were girls.

The 1,195 children who took part in the 2009 survey were receiving services from 101 different children's social care services across England which in 2008 had accepted our invitation to take part in the survey for the next three years. They included 57 local authorities, 17 independent fostering agencies, six independent children's homes, 10 boarding schools, five residential special schools and six residential further education colleges.

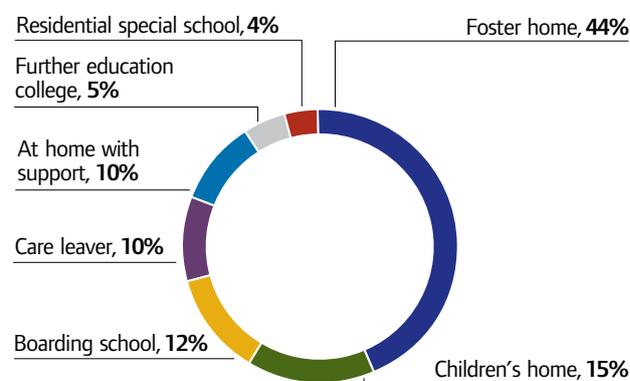
Not every child or young person answered every question. For each question, we have given the number of children who did, and the number who did not, answer. Where we have given the answers to a question in percentages, these are percentages of all the people who answered that question.

Out of 1,156 children who answered a question about whether they were disabled (39 children did not answer that question), 136 (12%) said they were disabled. Out of these 136 children, 39 (29%) said their disability was a learning difficulty, 14 (10%) said that they had a physical disability, 9 (7%) said that they had a sight impairment, 8 (6%) said that they had attention deficit hyperactive disorder and 7 (5%) said that they had autism or Asperger's syndrome. This was different from last year, when 25% of the 108 children who told us about their disabilities said they had attention deficit hyperactive disorder and 19% said they had a learning difficulty.

Out of the 1,195 children who took part in the survey, 1,158 answered a question about their ethnic background. Eighty-three per cent of the children who answered this question told us they were white, 6% that they were Asian, 5% that they were Black and 5% told us that they were from a mixed background. The other children ticked 'other' against the question listing possible backgrounds.

The chart shows where the children were living at the time they filled in the survey.

Figure 1: Where the children lived



Based on answers from 1,160 children (35 did not answer this question). In 2008, 906 children answered the same question and 15 did not.

'The biggest danger to people our age is the people our age'

The children and young people who took part continued



As the chart shows, eight out of 10 of the children who answered this question were living away from home, one in 10 was living independently in their own home (such as a flat or bedsitter) as a care leaver, and one in 10 was getting social care support either while living at home with their parents or with other relatives. The only big difference to note here between this year's survey and last year's is that the proportion of foster children was 44%, compared with 54% last year.¹

For this report, we have checked whether different groups of children gave very different answers to the questions. The different groups we looked at were boys and girls, those aged under 14, those aged 14 and over, and those who said they had a disability. We also checked whether people living in different places (such as children's homes or foster care) gave very different answers. Where we found a big difference, we have said so.

This report gives up to date findings for 2009, together with last year's findings. It is important not to assume that very small differences between years show a trend, as different children answered our survey each year and some differences between the two surveys will have occurred purely by chance.

'Always having an adult near me and around me that I know makes me feel safer'

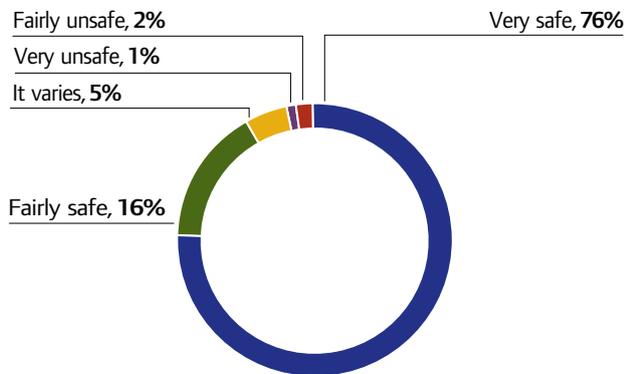
Keeping safe

Where children feel safe and unsafe

We asked children to tell us how safe they felt in different places. Overall, as last year:

- 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.

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

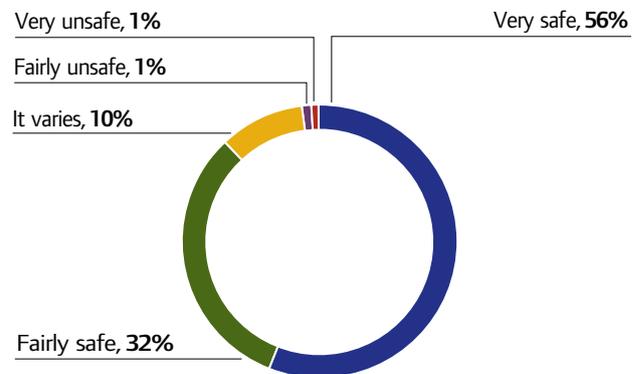


Based on answers from 1,169 children (26 did not answer this question). In 2008, 896 children answered the same question and 25 did not.

Over nine out of 10 children (92%) of those who answered this question this year felt fairly safe or very safe in the building where they live. This is exactly the same proportion as in 2008. Three per cent said they felt fairly or very unsafe there, almost the same as the 2% who said this last year. There were no big differences between boys and girls, those aged under or over 14, or for disabled children. We chose 14 to separate 'younger' and 'older' children because 14 was the middle age of the children and young people answering our survey.

As we found last year, **fewer care leavers than others felt safe in the building where they were living.** One hundred and thirteen care leavers answered this question in 2009, and three did not. Eighty per cent of those who answered felt fairly or very safe in the building where they lived, compared with 92% of other children and young people. In 2009, though, care leavers did feel safer in the building they were living in than in 2008, when only 73% of those answering had said they felt fairly safe or very safe there.

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

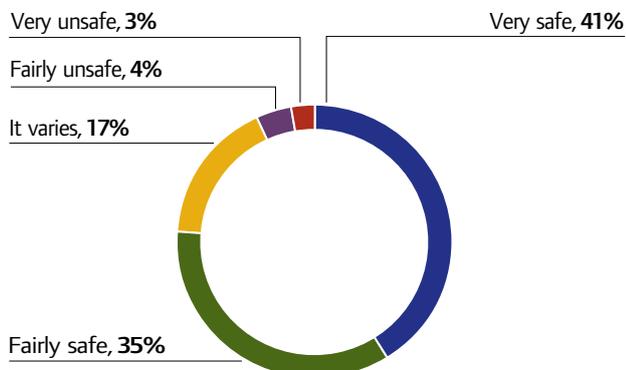


Based on answers from 1,150 children (45 did not answer this question). In 2008, 880 children answered the same question and 41 did not.

Nearly nine out of 10 (88%) of those answering this year felt fairly or very safe at school or college. This is the same proportion as last year. **Only 2% (exactly the same as those answering last year) said they felt fairly or very unsafe at school or college.** There were no big differences between boys and girls, between under or over 14s, for those who said they had a disability, or for those living in different settings. There were no big differences between people who lived at their school or college, or who went there each day from somewhere else.

Keeping safe continued

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

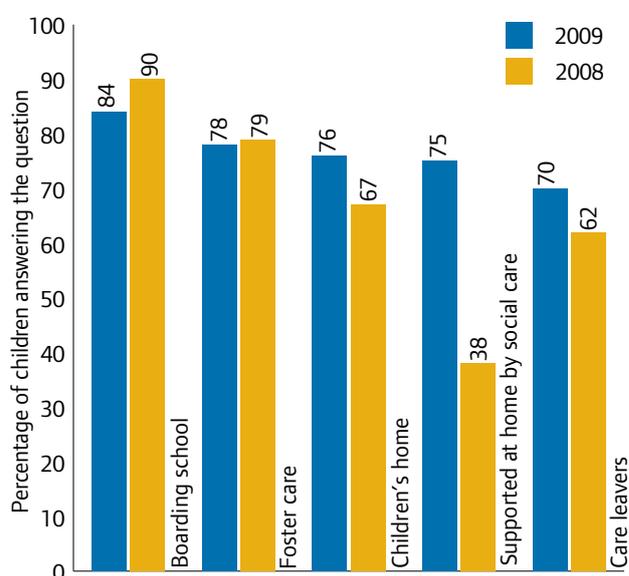


Based on answers from 1,147 children (48 did not answer this question). In 2008, 875 children answered the same question and 46 did not.

Three quarters (76%) of those answering this year felt fairly safe or very safe in the countryside, exactly the same as last year. This year, children in residential special schools, and disabled children, felt much less safe than other children in the countryside. Sixty-four per cent of children in residential special schools felt fairly or very safe in the countryside, and 62% of disabled children felt fairly or very safe there, compared with 76% of all children who answered the question. There were no big differences between boys and girls or between those aged under or over 14.

Feelings about safety in the countryside have changed from last year between different groups of children. Last year, there wasn't a big difference between disabled children and children generally in how safe they felt in the countryside, as there was this year. Figure 5 shows how there have been changes since last year in how safe children from different settings felt in the countryside.

Figure 5: The percentage of children from different settings who felt safe or very safe in the countryside this year, compared with last year



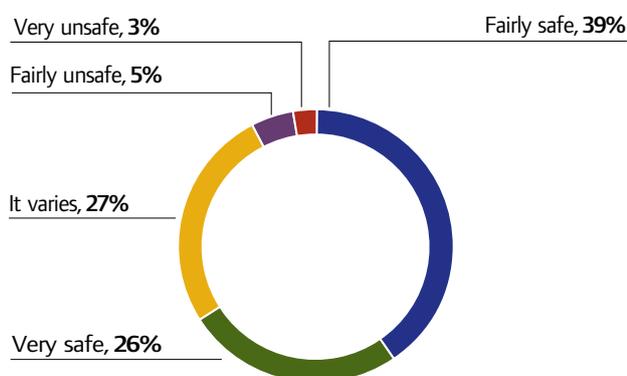
Based on answers from 1,124 children (71 did not answer this question). In 2008, 860 children answered the same question and 61 did not.

'People carrying knives for protection then getting angry and using them'

Compared with last year, the percentages of children answering this question from boarding schools who felt safe or very safe in the countryside had all fallen, though we cannot say that this is a lasting trend rather than the sort of changes that we might expect to happen by chance. The proportion of those living in residential special schools and residential further education colleges who felt safe in the countryside had also fallen, although the numbers of children in these settings in our survey were too small (fewer than 100) to put on the chart.

The percentages of children in children’s homes, and of care leavers and those living at home with social care support, who felt safe or very safe in the countryside, had risen. We cannot be too sure about these changes for care leavers and children living at home, though, because there were not so many care leavers or children living at home in our survey last year. Last year there were no big differences between children in residential special schools and other children in how safe they felt in the countryside, but this year there are.

Figure 6: How safe do children feel in towns or cities?



Based on answers from 1,168 children (27 did not answer this question). In 2008, 894 children answered the same question and 27 did not.

In 2009, a slightly smaller proportion of the children answering the question than last year said they felt fairly safe or very safe in the town or city. **This year, just under two thirds of children (65%) said they felt fairly or very safe in the town or city**, compared with 70% last year. The percentage who said they felt fairly or very unsafe there was the same, at 8%. A slightly higher proportion of children than last year said ‘it varies’ how safe they felt.

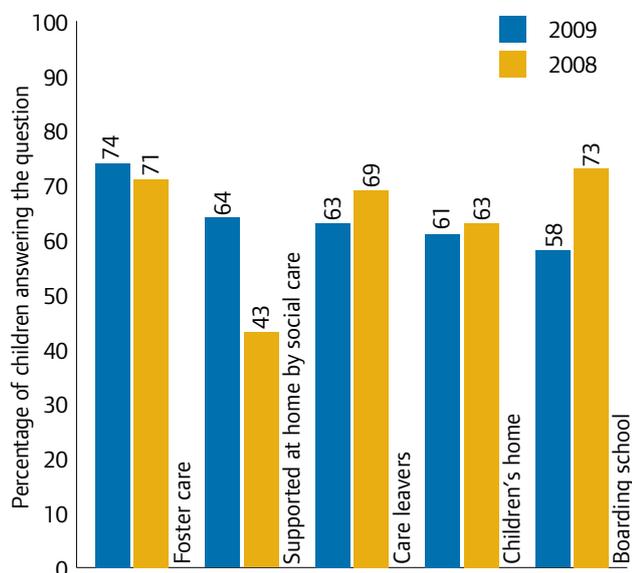
There were no big differences in how safe children felt in the town or city in 2009 between girls and boys, those aged under or over 14, or disabled children compared with children generally. One big difference was that **fewer children in residential special schools (56%) felt fairly or very safe in the town or city. This compared with 65% for all of those answering the question.** Last year too, we had found that fewer children in residential special schools felt safe in the town or city.

Just as we found in 2008, disabled children were much more likely than children generally to feel fairly or very unsafe in the town or city. In 2009, 18% of disabled children said they felt fairly or very unsafe there, compared with 8% of all those who answered the question. The percentage of disabled children who said they felt this was slightly less than it was last year, though, when 21% of disabled children had said they felt fairly or very unsafe in the town or city.

This year’s findings were different in some ways, though, from what we found last year. As Figure 7 shows, this year, more children living at home with social care support felt safe or very safe in the town or city, but there had been a drop in the percentages of boarders in boarding schools and care leavers who felt safe or very safe there. Although the numbers were too small to make it to the chart, the proportion of students in residential further education colleges who felt safe in the town or city had gone up, but the proportion of children in residential schools who felt safe there had gone down. Again, we cannot say all these are definite trends, as small changes like this could happen by chance.

Keeping safe continued

Figure 7: The percentage of children from different settings who felt safe or very safe in towns or cities this year, compared with last year



Based on answers from 1,144 children (51 did not answer this question). In 2008, 879 children answered the same question and 42 did not.

Helping children feel safer

We asked what would make children and young people feel safer in general. We did not suggest any answers.

Eighteen per cent said that there was nothing that would make them feel safer. This is slightly up on the 16% who said this last year. **The most usual thing that children and young people said made them feel safer was being with adults they trust. This came top last year too, and came from exactly the same percentage of people (12%) in both 2008 and 2009.** The only other thing that more than one in 10 children told us would make them feel safer was **having more police and security people around. Eleven per cent of children and young people said this in 2009,** up from 7% last year. Six per cent of children said that they would feel safer if there were more safety features on the streets, such as better street lighting and more CCTV cameras. Five per cent of the children told us they felt safer when they were with friends.

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 up to two dangers, and we counted each one they listed. Here are the top dangers for children overall, with the percentages of children who wrote each one:

Table 1: Dangers to children, compared with last year

	2009	2008
Drugs	21%	27%
Alcohol	14%	17%
Knives	11%	6%
Strangers and kidnappers	10%	17%
Bullying	8%	10%
Road accidents	6%	8%
Gangs	6%	5%
Violence	6%	7%
Rapists	5%	7%
Smoking	4%	5%
Guns	4%	4%

Based on 1,420 answers from 1,114 children in 2009 and 1,041 answers from 722 children in 2008. Eighty one children did not answer the question in 2009 and 199 did not answer the question in 2008.

This year's top danger list is similar to the list for 2008, but knives have moved up the list since last year. In 2008, 6% listed knives as the biggest danger. This went up to 11% this year. Gangs went up by just 1%, guns stayed the same, but all the others in the list went down this year compared with 2008. The percentage listing drugs was down from 27% last year to 21% this year, and alcohol was down from 17% last year to 14% this year.

As we found in 2008, one big difference between different groups of children was that girls were more likely than boys to list alcohol as a danger. **This year, 24% of girls answering this question listed alcohol as a danger, compared with 13% of boys.**



‘The modern society in which we live is a relatively scary place. However it may not be any more dangerous than it was say 50 years ago, just now every single thing that happens to anyone gets headline news. This has made us fear that we may not be safe’

Keeping safe continued

Children under 14 were more likely than those aged over 14 to list strangers and kidnappers, and road accidents, as dangers. Those aged over 14 were more likely to list drugs and alcohol. This was all the same as last year. There was one major change this year, though. In 2009, younger children were far more likely than older ones to list being bullied as a major danger for them. We did not find this in 2008.

The table gives this year's percentages to show these differences:

Table 2: Age differences in what children identified as the biggest dangers

	Under-14s	14s and over
Drugs	11%	31%
Alcohol	7%	21%
Strangers and kidnappers	18%	6%
Bullying	16%	5%

Based on 456 responses from 361 children under 14 and 991 responses from 608 children over 14 who answered this question. No dangers were identified by 226 children.

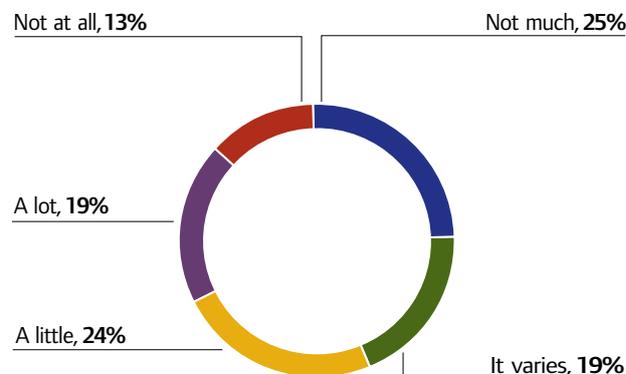
There was one other big difference between groups of children to report this year. This was also to do with bullying. **Children in residential special schools were more likely than children generally to put being bullied on their list of biggest dangers.**

There were again this year no big differences between disabled children and the total number of children who answered the question in the dangers they listed.

Worrying about safety

As children have told us that worrying about whether you are safe can be just as important as how safe you actually are, we asked how much children worry about their own safety. Here is what they told us:

Figure 8: How much children worry about their safety



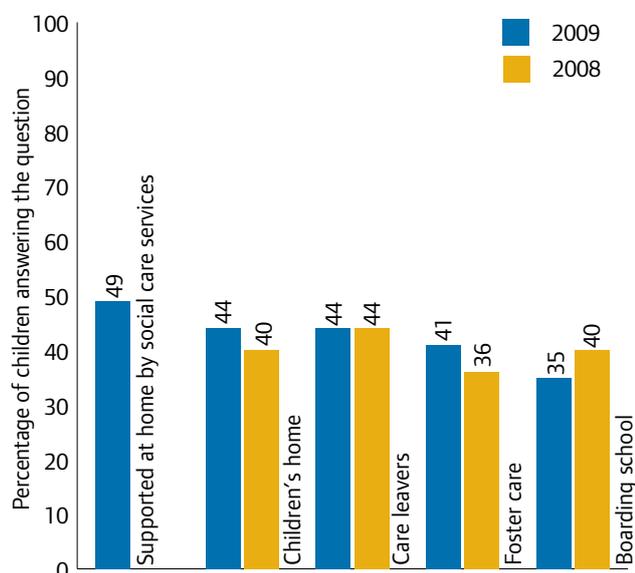
Based on answers from 1,170 children (25 did not answer this question). In 2008, 888 children answered the same question and 33 did not.

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 43% this year**, slightly up on 40% last year. **The percentage who worried not much, or not at all, was 38%**, down from 40% last year. There is, therefore, a slight increase in how much children told us they worried about their safety in 2009, compared with 2008.

This year, there were no big differences between boys and girls, disabled children and children generally, or children over or under 14, in how much they worried about their safety.

Figure 9 shows the percentages of children in different settings who told us they worried a little or a lot about their safety. We have only given this year's and last year's percentages for children in children's homes, care leavers, foster children and boarders in boarding schools, because the numbers answering the question in the other settings were too small (less than 100) to make a good comparison. We have only given this year's percentage for children supported at home by social care services, because we had too few answers last year to make a good comparison.

Figure 9: Percentage of children in different settings who worry a little or a lot about their safety



Figures for 2009 are based on responses from 113 children supported at home, 176 children in children's homes, 116 care leavers, 503 foster children and 137 boarders in boarding schools.

Although the numbers were too small to include percentages in the figure, out of 44 children in residential special schools who answered this question this year, 24 (over half) said they worried a little or a lot about their safety. From the information we have this year, **those in residential special schools and children and young people living at home with support worry the most about their own safety, while those living in boarding schools worry the least.**

As Figure 9 shows, these figures have changed for some settings since last year. The percentage of children in children's homes and those in foster care who said they worried a little or a lot about their safety had gone up slightly, and the percentage of boarders in boarding schools who said they worried a little or a lot went down slightly, but these are not big differences.

Asking for help

From many of our 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 answers this year, each of which came from at least one in 10 of the children who answered this question (each person could give more than one answer).

Table 3: Who children would go to for help if they felt unsafe, compared with last year

	2009	2008
A friend	62%	56%
Police	52%	51%
Foster carer	48%	51%
Teacher	48%	49%
Social worker	47%	46%
A parent	46%	52%
Someone else in the family	37%	42%
Brother or sister	36%	40%
Staff who look after me where I live	29%	29%
The person in charge of where I live	24%	26%
An older young person	15%	15%
Telephone helpline	12%	12%

Based on answers from 1,169 children (26 did not answer this question). In 2008, 908 children answered the same question and 13 did not.

Clearly, **a friend is overall the most likely person for a child or young person to go to if they feel unsafe.** Police are then slightly more likely to be contacted than teachers and social workers, with parents coming just below those staff. Telephone helplines do not come high up on the list of where children are likely to go if they feel unsafe. **Four per cent of children told us there is nobody they could go to if they felt unsafe.** Although the order of the list has changed slightly since last year, there are no big changes since the 2008 monitor.

Keeping safe continued

Boys chose more different types of people they would go to if they felt unsafe than girls did. Boys listed an average of seven different people, while girls listed an average of five people. Boys were more likely than girls to go to friends, police, teachers, parents, family members, brothers and sisters, and both the staff and the person in charge of where they lived.

Children aged under 14 listed slightly more different types of people they would go to if they felt unsafe, compared with those aged 14 plus. Under-14s listed an average of six different people, while those aged 14 plus listed an average of five people. Children aged under 14 were more likely than older young people to go to teachers, social workers, foster carers and members of their families other than parents, brothers or sisters. Young people aged 14 or over were more likely than younger children to go to friends. **The percentage of over-14s who would go to friends was 68%**, up from 60% last year.

The one big difference between disabled children and others was that **disabled children were more likely to go to the person in charge of where they lived.**

The top three people for those living in children's homes to go to were staff of the home, listed by 78%, followed by friends or social workers, both scoring equally at 64%. There was a big increase this year in the percentage of children in children's homes who would go to staff of the home if they felt unsafe, at 78% this year, up from 64% in 2008.

For children in foster care, the top three people were their foster carers at 86%, followed by their social workers at 66% and the police at 61%. The percentage who would go to their foster carer was close to the figure of 87% in 2008.

Children in care but living at home told us they were most likely to go to a friend (64%), followed by the police, at 63%, and then members of their family other than their parents or brothers or sisters, at 61%. Sixty per cent said they would go to their parents.

For care leavers, the top three people were friends, at 73%, followed by social workers or leaving care workers and then the police. **This year, care leavers were much more likely to list friends as the people they would go to if they felt unsafe;** this year's figure of 73% compared with 63% last year.

Parents came top of the list for children in residential special schools, at 72%. Next came friends and teachers, in equal second place.

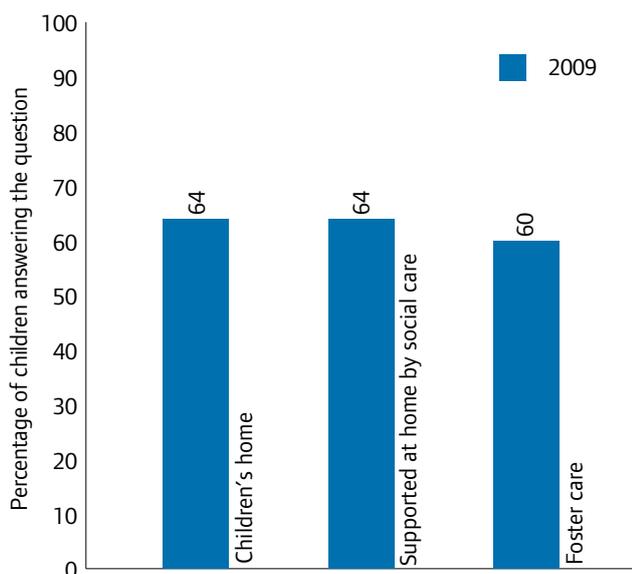
Boarders in boarding schools put their parents top of the list of who they would go to, at 81%, followed by friends and then teachers.

Students at residential further education colleges listed their friends top, at 78%, followed by parents, and college staff. Their top three were the same as last year.

'Since growing up without a mother or a father I have felt like I have to look after myself'

From both this year's and last year's monitor reports, we know that friends are listed high up on the list of people that children will go to if they feel unsafe, but we also know that the importance of friends as people to go to about feeling unsafe or in danger varies depending on where a child is living. Boarders in boarding schools and students in residential colleges are the most likely to go to their friends, and children in residential special schools are the least likely. Foster children were about as likely to go to friends as they had been last year. Figure 10 shows the percentages of children living in the main settings for children in care, who this year listed friends as people they would go to if they felt unsafe.

Figure 10: Percentages of children living in different settings who would go to friends for help if they felt unsafe



Based on information from 793 children who both answered this question and told us which setting they were living in (402 children did not give both sets of information).

Accidents

The next table shows what accidents children and young people thought were most likely to happen to someone of their age. Children could list more than one type of accident. We have given the percentages of children who listed each type of accident, and listed everything put forward by at least one in 10 children.

Table 4: Most likely accidents to children, compared with last year

	2009	2008
Road traffic accident	45%	46%
Results of too much alcohol	14%	10%
Injury while being beaten up or fighting	13%	10%
Being stabbed or shot	11%	6%
Falling over	10%	10%
Results of drugs	10%	9%

Based on answers from 963 children (232 did not answer this question). In 2008, 709 children answered the same question and 212 did not.

We had not given children suggested sorts of accident to choose from, so these are entirely their own answers. The list is a mixture of accidents caused by other people, and things that children might bring on themselves, like the results of drugs or having too much alcohol. **Road accidents are by far the most likely sort of accident to happen to them, according to children.** The 45% who listed road traffic accidents this year is very close to the 46% who listed these last year. There were no big changes in the likelihood of different sorts of accidents compared with last year. The percentage of children listing stabbings or shootings was up from 6% last year to 11% this year, the percentage listing the results of too much alcohol was up from 10% last year to 14% this year, and the percentage listing injury from being beaten up or fighting was up from 10% last year to 13% this year. There were no big differences between disabled children and children generally in the types of accidents they listed.



There were some big differences between boys and girls in what they listed as the most likely sorts of accident:

- Twenty-one per cent of girls thought the results of too much alcohol were a likely cause of accidents, compared with only 7% of boys
- The percentage of girls who listed alcohol as a main cause of accidents had gone up from 14% last year to 21% this year, while the percentage of boys who listed alcohol had stayed exactly the same, at 7%.

There were also some big differences between younger and older children in the accidents they thought most likely:

- Older children and young people were much more likely to list alcohol as a cause of accidents for people of their age. Twenty per cent of young people aged 14 plus listed the results of alcohol, compared with only 3% of those under 14.
- Older children and young people were also much more likely to list the results of drugs as likely accidents for people their age. Fourteen per cent of those aged 14 plus listed the results of drugs, compared with only 3% of those aged under 14.
- Younger children were much more likely to list falling accidents than older young people. Seventeen per cent of those under 14 listed falling over, compared with 6% of those aged 14 plus.

There were also some big differences between children and young people living in different settings in the sorts of accidents they thought were most likely. Boarders in boarding schools and children in children's homes were more likely than others to list injuries from fighting. Care leavers and children in residential special schools were less likely than others to list road traffic accidents. Children in residential special schools were also more likely to list being stabbed or shot as a likely type of accident. Alcohol was less likely to be listed as a cause of accidents by children in residential schools, and by children in care but living at home.

Care leavers listed the likely causes of accidents very differently from other children and young people. They were less likely than others to list road traffic accidents, but more likely than others to list the results of alcohol, the results of drugs, and injury during fights.

'I have been in many situations where I am at a lot of risk of getting hurt or it was just probably paranoia'

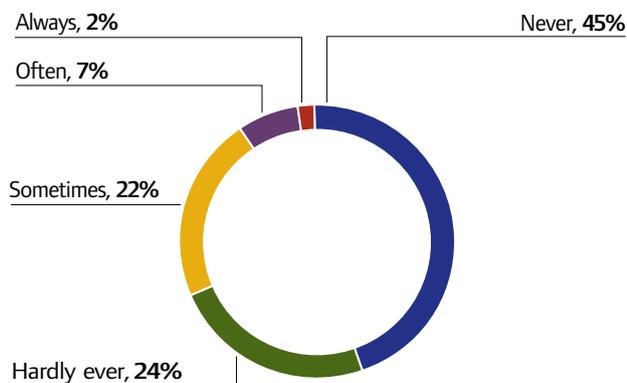
Bullying

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 which deal with bullying, we leave it to children themselves to decide whether what is happening to them counts as bullying. We do, however, ask them exactly what happens to them.

Here are the figures for how often children are being bullied in 2009.

Figure 11: How often children are bullied



Based on answers from 1,164 children (31 did not answer this question). In 2008, 885 children answered the same question and 36 did not.

Nine per cent of children said they are being bullied often or always, and 69% say they are hardly or never bullied. Forty-five per cent said they are never bullied.

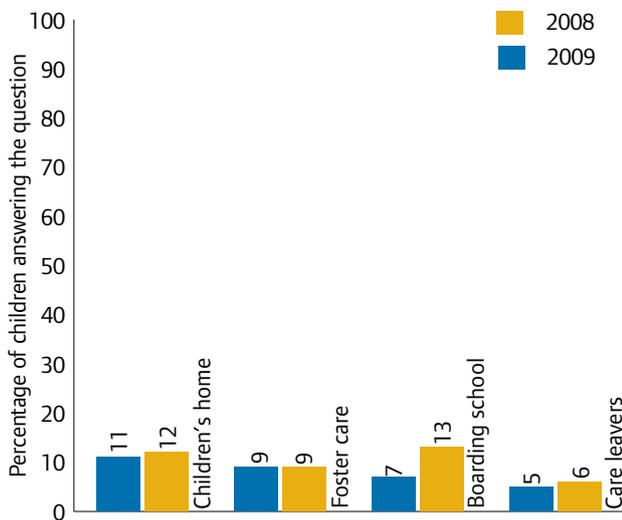
Last year, the percentage of children who said they were often or always bullied was the same, 9%, but the figure of 45% who said this year that they were never bullied was up from 39% in 2008. The level of bullying reported by children has dropped very slightly since 2008, though this could just be a chance difference between the two surveys.

There was hardly any difference between boys and girls in how much they are being bullied. We had found the same last year. **Younger children (under 14) were more likely to say they were being bullied than older young people.** This was the same as last year too. This year, 60% of those under 14 said they were never or hardly ever bullied, compared with 74% of over 14s. As we had found last year, **disabled children were more likely to be bullied.** Twenty per cent of disabled children said they were bullied often or always, compared with only 9% of children generally. The figure was 20% last year too.

Bullying varied between different sorts of placement. Figure 12 shows the percentages of children who told us they were often or always bullied in different sorts of placement. We have only included those placements from which at least 100 children responded to the question in each year.

'I get bullied because colour of my hair (ginger)'

Figure 12: How much children reported being often or always bullied



Based on answers from 1,138 children (57 did not answer this question). In 2008, 870 children answered the same question and 51 did not.

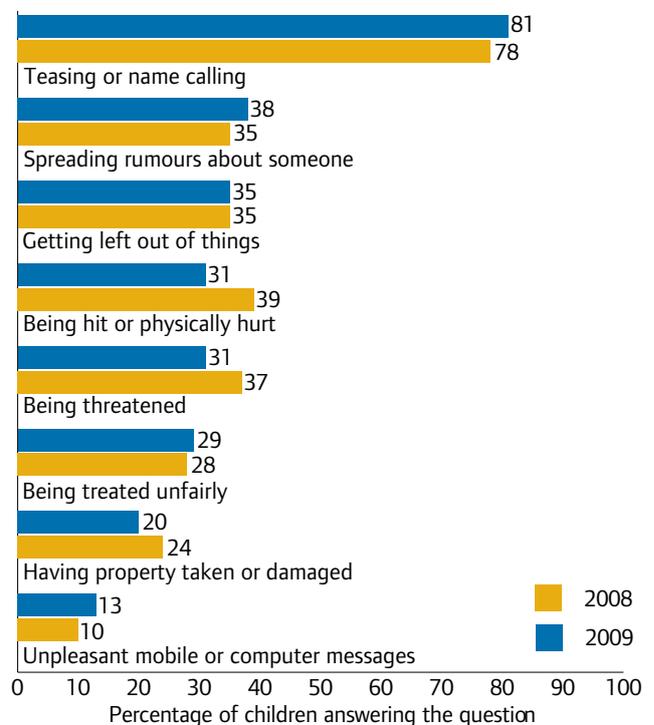
This year, children in children's homes and foster care reported slightly higher levels of bullying than boarders in boarding schools or care leavers. Although the number of children answering the question was too low to make the chart, 20 out of the 34 children in residential special schools who answered the question said they were being bullied often or always. This is a higher proportion than in any other sort of placement, and is the same proportion as last year. Reported bullying has dropped most since last year in boarding schools.

'Just being stared at might not be an actual form of bullying but it's not nice for everyone to stare all the time because of a condition I have'

What bullying is

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

Figure 13: Types of bullying



Based on 1,502 answers this year from 514 of the 641 children who reported ever being bullied (127 did not answer this question).

Bullying continued

Eighty-one per cent of all reported bullying this year was teasing or name calling. This is a slightly higher percentage than last year, when children reported 78% of all bullying as teasing or name calling. Differences from last year were not big, but looking at some of the main different sorts of bullying, being hit or physically hurt had dropped slightly from 39% last year to 31% this year, and having property taken or damaged had dropped slightly from 24% last year to 20% this year. Having unpleasant messages left on mobile phones or computer sites had gone up slightly from 10% of all reported bullying last year, to 13% this year.

Using our rule that a difference of 10 percentage points counts as a big difference, there were some big differences between girls and boys in the sorts of bullying reported. **Girls were much more likely than boys to report rumours being spread between people, being left out of things, and being sent bullying messages on mobile phones or computer sites. Looking at all forms of cyberbullying (on mobile phones, computers and social networking sites), 26% of girls and 12% of boys reported being the victims of cyberbullying.**

Younger children, aged under 14, were more likely than those over 14 to be bullied by being left out of things. Last year, we had found that younger children were more likely to be teased or called names, but there was not much difference for this type of bullying between younger and older children this year.

Disabled children reported much the same sorts of bullying as everyone else.

Where you lived made a big difference to the way you were likely to get bullied.

- Children from children's homes were more likely to get left out of things.
- Boarders in boarding schools were much less likely than other children to be threatened or have bullying messages left on their mobile phones or by computer.
- Children in residential special schools were less likely than others to report having rumours spread about them, being left out of things, being treated unfairly, or being sent bullying messages by mobile phone or computer.
- Students living in further education colleges were much less likely than others to report being teased or called names, or being threatened.
- Care leavers were much more likely than others to report being treated unfairly, but much less likely than others to be teased or called names, or to get left out of things.
- Children in care but living at home with parents or relatives were much more likely than others to report being teased or called names, being threatened, or being treated unfairly.

There were no big differences between foster children and others in the types of bullying they reported.

'Get teased at school
being told I shouldn't
have been born'



'It can be because of different things, for example being gay or maybe a birthmark'

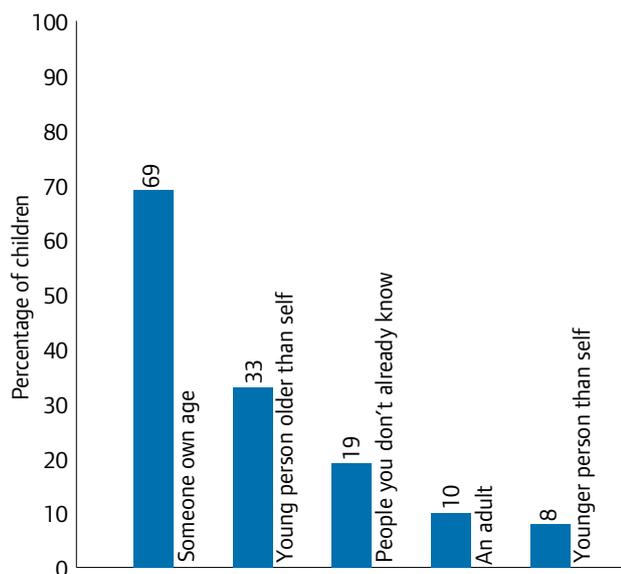
'I don't know if it's bullying or stereotyping'

Bullying continued

Who does the bullying

The next chart shows who the 508 children who answered this particular question said they were usually bullied by.

Figure 14: Who the bullies are



Based on answers from 508 of the 641 children who reported ever being bullied (133 did not answer this question).

Over two thirds of the children (69%) were being bullied by someone of much their own age. This is slightly up on the 65% last year who were being bullied by someone of much their own age. There were no big differences since last year in who did the bullying.

There were no big differences this year between boys and girls in who they were being bullied by. Boys did not report being much more likely to be bullied by a young person older than themselves, as they had last year. Children aged under 14 were, as expected, much more likely than those aged 14 plus to be bullied by someone older than themselves, but being bullied by an older child or young person had dropped from 49% of those under 14 who were being bullied last year, to 40% this year.

Looking at the results for children living in different settings, we found that:

- being bullied by someone of much the same age was much more likely in boarding schools than other settings
- being bullied by someone of much the same age was much less likely in children's homes, residential special schools or foster care, than other settings
- being bullied by an older child or young person was much more likely in residential special schools
- being bullied by an older young person was, as you would expect from their age, much less likely for care leavers or students in further education colleges than for those in other settings
- being bullied by someone you don't know was much more likely for care leavers and students living in further education colleges
- being bullied by someone you don't know was much less likely for children in residential special schools
- being bullied by someone younger than yourself was much more likely for children in care living at home than it was for other children
- disabled children were, as we found last year too, much more likely than other children to be bullied by someone younger than themselves.

'Teased about that I am fostered'

Being bullied for being in care

From both last year's monitor, and from our other consultations, we know that children in care can often be bullied just for being in care. We had answers from 685 children in care. **One in five children (20%) said they had been bullied just for being in care.** This was very close to the 21% who told us they had been bullied for being in care in 2008.

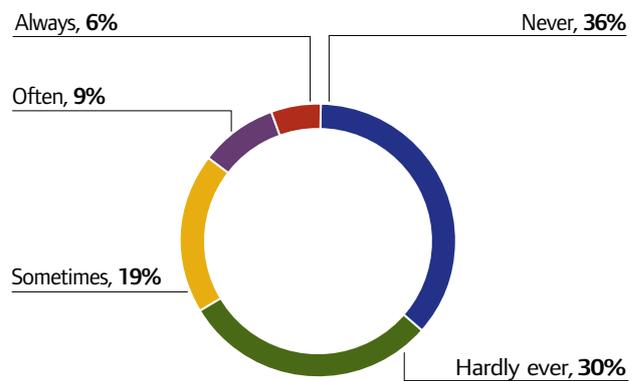
Girls were much more likely than boys to be bullied just for being in care. Twenty-four per cent of girls and 13% of boys said they had been bullied for being in care. There was no big difference between children from children's homes, and foster children, in how likely they were to be bullied for being in care. Twenty-three per cent of those from children's homes and 21% of those from foster homes said they were bullied for being in care. Younger children and older young people had much the same chance of being bullied for being in care. Care leavers no longer in care were just as likely as those still in care to be bullied because they came from care; **19% of care leavers were bullied because they used to be in care.** Disabled children in care were no more likely than other children to be bullied for being in care.

'Cyberbullying is on the increase'

Worrying about bullying

We already know from last year's monitor that many children worry about getting bullied, and that children can worry about this even if they are not actually being bullied. The next chart shows how much children worry about bullying.

Figure 15: How often children worry about being bullied

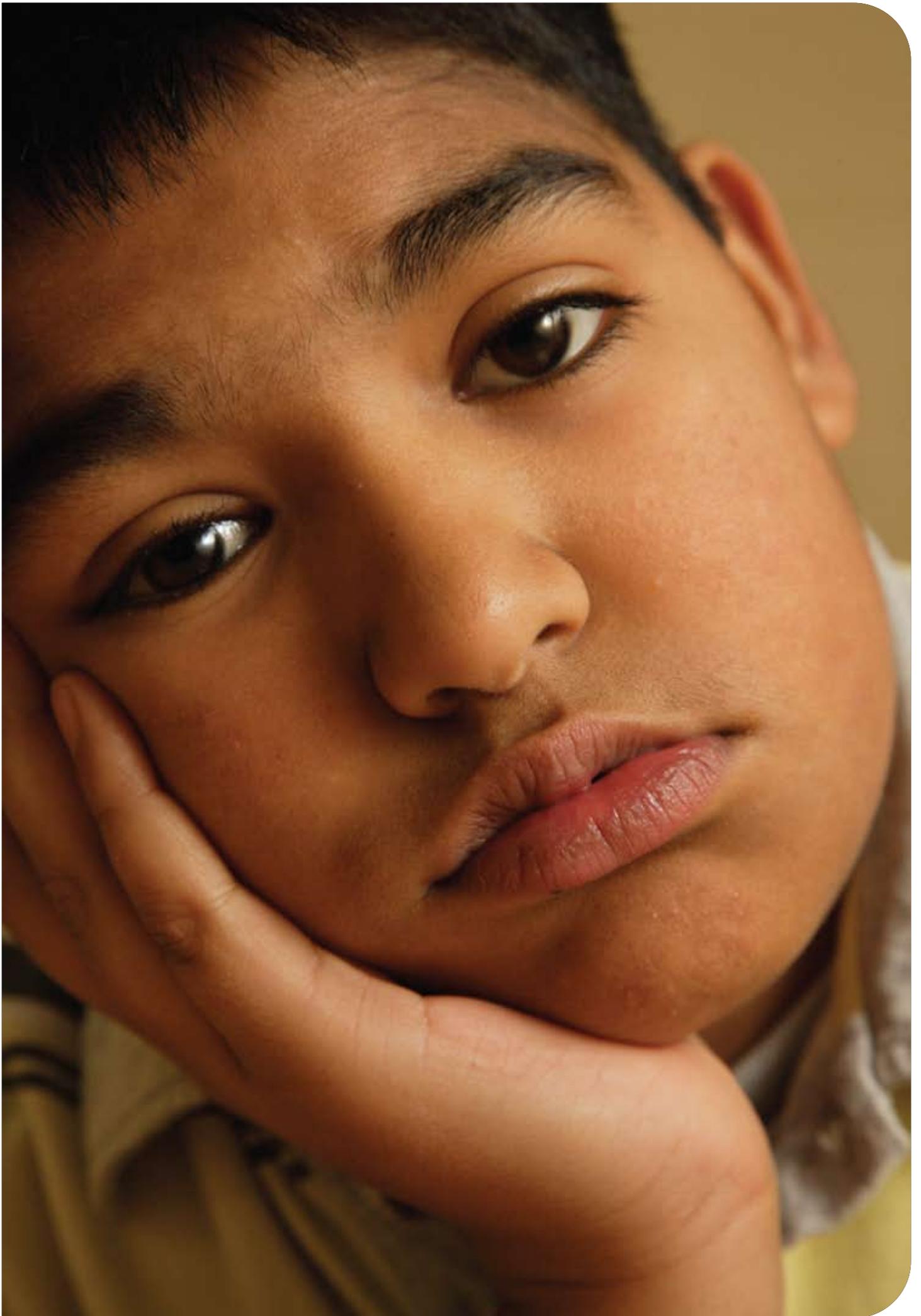


Based on answers from 1,099 children (96 did not answer this question).

Fifteen per cent of children are often or always worried about getting bullied, while 66% never or hardly ever worry about it.

There is slightly more worrying about bullying than actual bullying. Nine per cent of children are often or always bullied, but 15% often or always worry about being bullied. This year, though, the amount of worrying over and above actual bullying is slightly less than it was last year. We know from last year's monitor that the people who are most likely to worry about being bullied are people who are actually being bullied, and this year both bullying and worrying about bullying are slightly lower than they were last year.

Last year, the same percentage of children said they often or always worried about being bullied, but this year slightly more said they never or hardly ever worried about it (62% last year, compared with 66% this year).



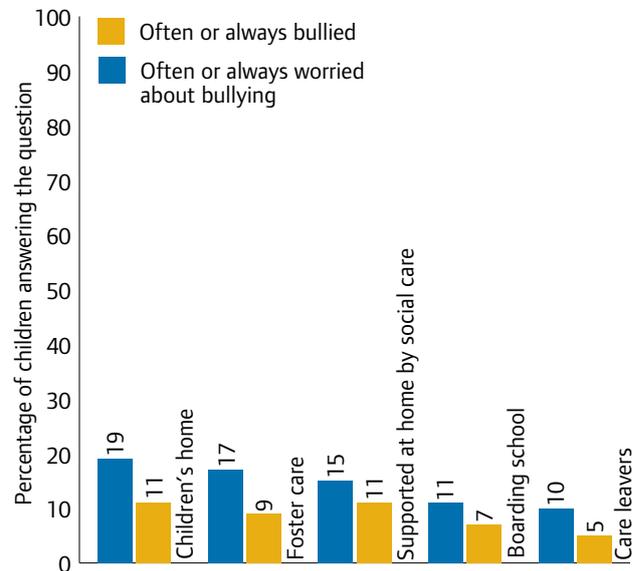
There was no big difference between boys and girls in how much they worry about bullying. **Children under 14 worried much more about being bullied than young people over 14 did. Twenty-one per cent of children under 14 often or always worried about getting bullied, compared with 12% of those over 14, and 59% never or hardly ever worried about it, compared with 71% of those aged over 14.**

As well as being more likely to get bullied, **disabled children worry much more than others about being bullied. Twenty-two per cent of disabled children worry often or always about being bullied, compared with 15% of all children, and 50% say they never or hardly ever worry about being bullied, compared with 66% of all children.** The level of worrying among disabled children has, however, gone down since last year. Compared with last year, the percentage of disabled children who often or always worry about being bullied has gone down slightly, from 27% to 22%, and the percentage of disabled children who never or hardly ever worry has gone up from 40% to 50%.

Figure 16 compares how much children in different settings worry about being bullied, with the amount of actual bullying they reported to us. We have included all the settings where at least 100 children told us both whether they were being bullied and whether they worried about being bullied.

‘Lots of people bully me because they think it’s fun’

Figure 16: Worrying about bullying, compared with how much bullying is reported



Based on answers from 1,164 children who answered the question about being bullied (57 did not answer this question) and from 1,099 children who answered the question on worrying about bullying (96 children did not answer that question).

Overall, children worry more about bullying than they report actually being bullied. Children in children’s homes worry most about bullying. Care leavers worry least about bullying. One main difference between this year and last year was that in 2008 children in care living at home reported being much more worried about bullying than they reported actually being bullied than they did this year.

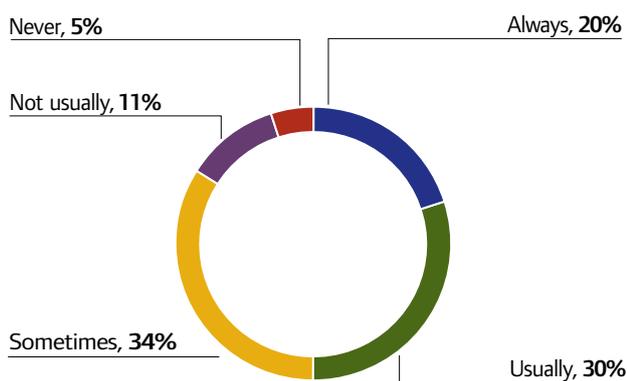
Having a say in what happens

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. 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 consider their views and feelings make.

Figure 17 shows how often children told us they get asked for their opinions about things that matter to them.

Figure 17: How often children are asked for their opinions on things that matter



Based on answers from 1,177 children (18 did not answer this question). In 2008, 894 children answered the same question and 27 did not.

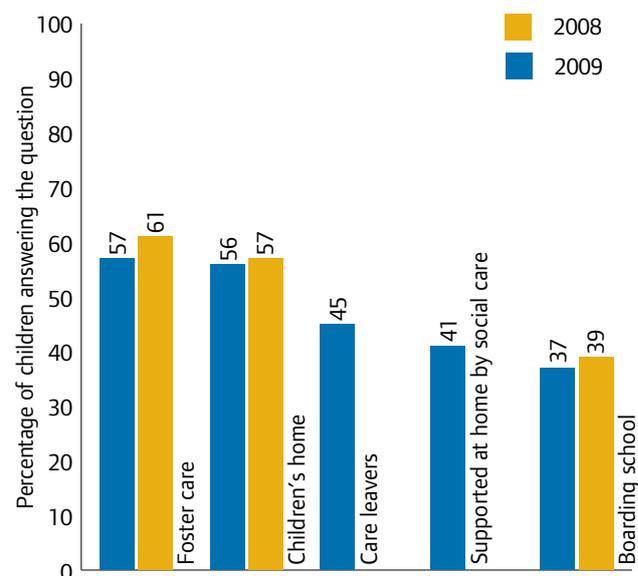
'Adults just do what they think is right for you and sometimes they're not right!'

Half the children (50%) said their opinions were usually or always asked on things that mattered to them. This was down from 55% last year. Sixteen per cent said their opinions were not usually, or never, asked. This was slightly up from 14% last year. In 2009, children reported a slight drop from 2008 in how often their opinions were asked about things that mattered to them.

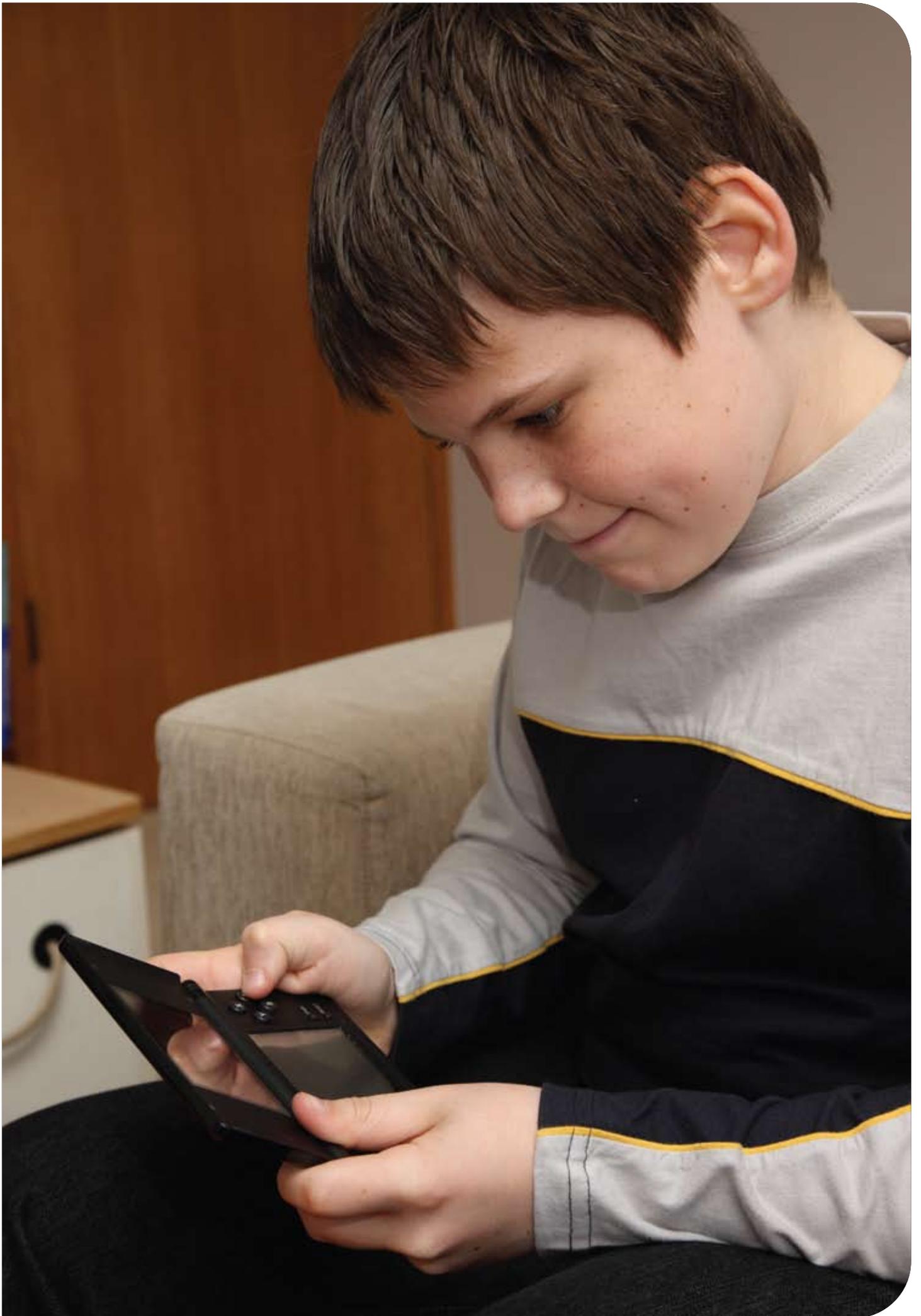
There were no big differences between boys and girls, disabled children and others, or over- and under-14s in how often their opinions were asked. Last year, we had found that those over 14 were much more often asked their opinions than those under 14, but this year fewer over-14s were often or always asked for their opinions (52%, down from 61% last year).

How often children were asked for their opinions varied according to where they were living. Figure 18 shows the percentages of children in different settings who said they were usually or always asked for their opinions, this year and last year. We have included the percentages where at least 100 children answered the question.

Figure 18: How often children are asked for their opinions in different settings



Based on answers from 1,177 children in 2009 (18 did not answer this question). In 2008, 894 children answered the same question and 27 did not.



Having a say in what happens continued

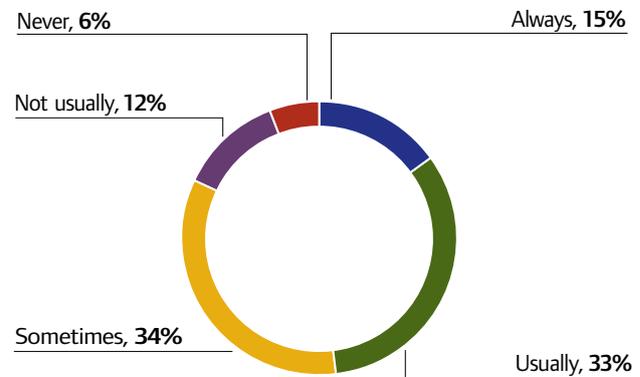
From these figures, children and young people in care and living in foster care or children's homes are the most likely to be asked for their opinions, and those living in boarding schools are the least likely. Residential students in further education colleges also told us they were not so likely to be asked for their opinions, with 19 out of 57 students answering the question saying they were usually or always asked their opinions. The results are much the same as last year, except for a drop since last year in how much care leavers said their opinions are asked. In 2008, 24 out of 41 care leavers answering the question (over half) said they were usually or always asked for their opinions, but this year the proportion had fallen to 45% of the 116 care leavers answering the question.

How much difference children's opinions make

Of course, being asked for your opinion is one thing, but your opinion making a difference to decisions is quite another. We know from many consultations with children that professionals are quite good nowadays at asking children for their views, but children regularly tell us that they don't often feel that much notice is taken of their opinions.

Figure 19 shows how much difference children said their opinions, once they were asked for, made to decisions about their lives.

Figure 19: How often children's opinions make a difference to decisions about their lives



Based on answers from 1,171 children (24 did not answer this question). In 2008, 888 children answered the same question and 33 did not.

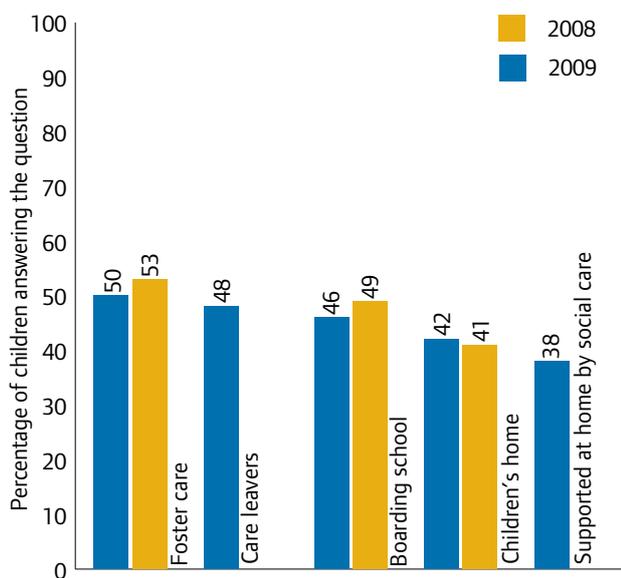
Overall, just under half (48%) of the children and young people said their opinions usually or always made a difference to decisions about their lives, while 18% said their opinions didn't usually or ever make a difference. These figures were close to those from 2008, when 49% said their opinions usually or always made a difference, and 16% said their opinions didn't usually or ever make a difference.

'As I learnt in my life you have to have your say otherwise it isn't your life that you are living, it's other people's'

There were no big differences between boys and girls, between over-14s and under-14s, or between disabled children and other children in how much difference their opinions made.

In the next chart, we show how much difference children’s opinions make in each of our different settings, compared with the results for last year. Again, we have given the percentages where at least 100 children answered the question.

Figure 20: How often the opinions of children living in different settings made a difference in 2009, compared with 2008



Based on answers from 1,171 children (24 did not answer this question). In 2008, 888 children answered the same question and 33 did not.

Once they were asked for their opinions, children in foster care and care leavers thought their opinions made most difference to decisions about their lives, and children supported at home by social care services thought their opinions made the least difference. Thirty-three out of 57 further education college students answering the question this year told us they thought their opinions usually or always made a difference.

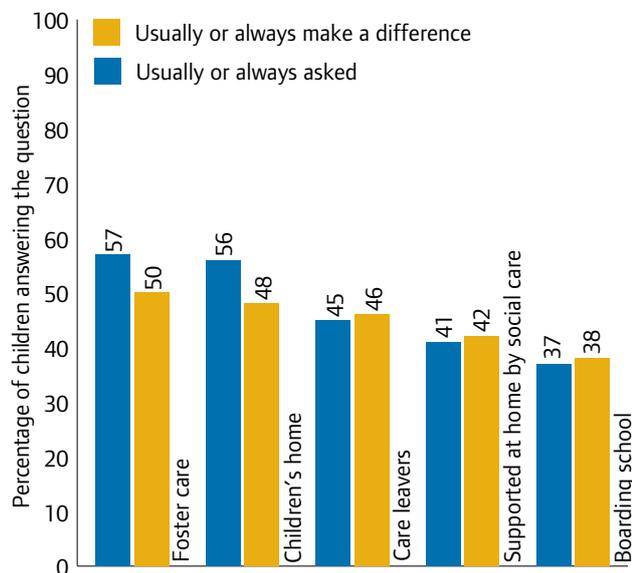
This is a higher proportion than in other settings, but the numbers are too small to be sure of this result. Although the numbers were again small, the proportion of children in residential special schools who thought their opinions made a difference was higher than in other settings, with 23 out of 44 children answering the question this year telling us their opinions usually or always made a difference. The scores for ‘making a difference’ were close to those we found last year.

Figure 21 compares how much difference children’s opinions made in different settings, with how often they told us they were asked for their opinions.

‘I always get to have my say in everything that goes on in my life’

Having a say in what happens continued

Figure 21: How often children are asked their opinions, compared with how much difference their opinions make



Based on answers from 1,177 children answering the question about how often their opinions are asked (18 did not answer this question) and 1,171 answering the question about how often their opinions make a difference (24 did not answer this question). Figures given for settings where at least 100 children answered each question.

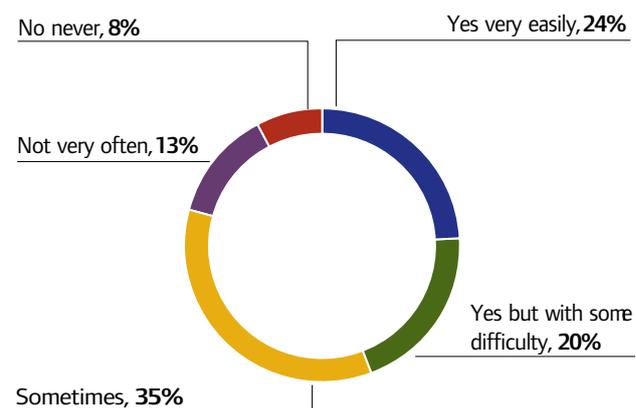
Children in foster care and those in children's homes are the most likely to be asked for their opinions, but what they said didn't quite so often make a difference to decisions about their lives. In other settings, similar proportions of children told us they were asked for their opinions and told us their opinions made a difference.

'I'm quite shy and quiet so people don't usually listen to me'

Getting decisions changed

Many children contact the Office of the Children's Rights Director for help or advice when something happens that they believe is against their rights or welfare. Very often, they have been told that a decision has been made about their lives and they want to challenge that decision, because they believe it is against their best interests, or it goes totally against their wishes. In our monitor, we have therefore asked how often children find they can get a decision changed after someone else has made it for them. Figure 22 sets out their answers.

Figure 22: Can children get a decision changed after it has been made for them?



Based on answers from 1,165 children (30 did not answer this question). In 2008, 884 children answered the same question and 37 did not.

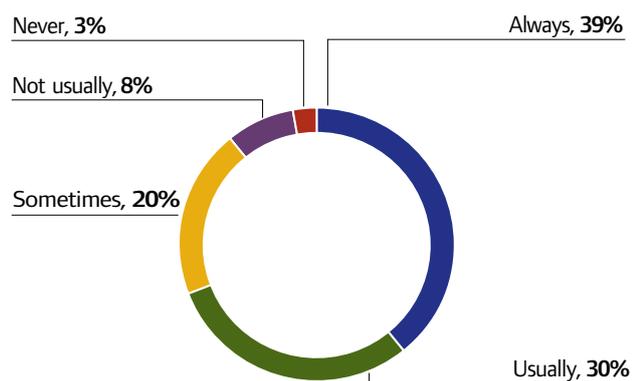
Twenty-one per cent of children found that they could not very often, or never, get a decision about their lives changed once someone else had made it, and 44% could get it changed, either easily, or with some difficulty. This is almost the same as last year, when the figures were 21% and 43%.

There were no big differences between boys and girls on this, or between disabled children and others. **Young people aged over 14 could get decisions changed much more than those under 14 could**, as we had found last year. Forty-seven per cent of over-14s could get a decision changed easily or with difficulty, compared with 37% of those under 14. There were some big differences between children in different settings. **Care leavers were much more likely to be able to get a decision about them changed. Children in foster care were much less likely than others to get a decision about them changed.**

Being told about changes in your life

One of the things children have asked to become a right for them is to be told about major decisions in their lives well in advance, and to be kept informed of what is happening about changes or decisions in their lives. In our annual monitoring, we check on how often children are told about major changes that are going to happen in their lives. The chart below sets out what children told us about this in 2009.

Figure 23: How often adults tell children about major changes that are going to happen in their lives



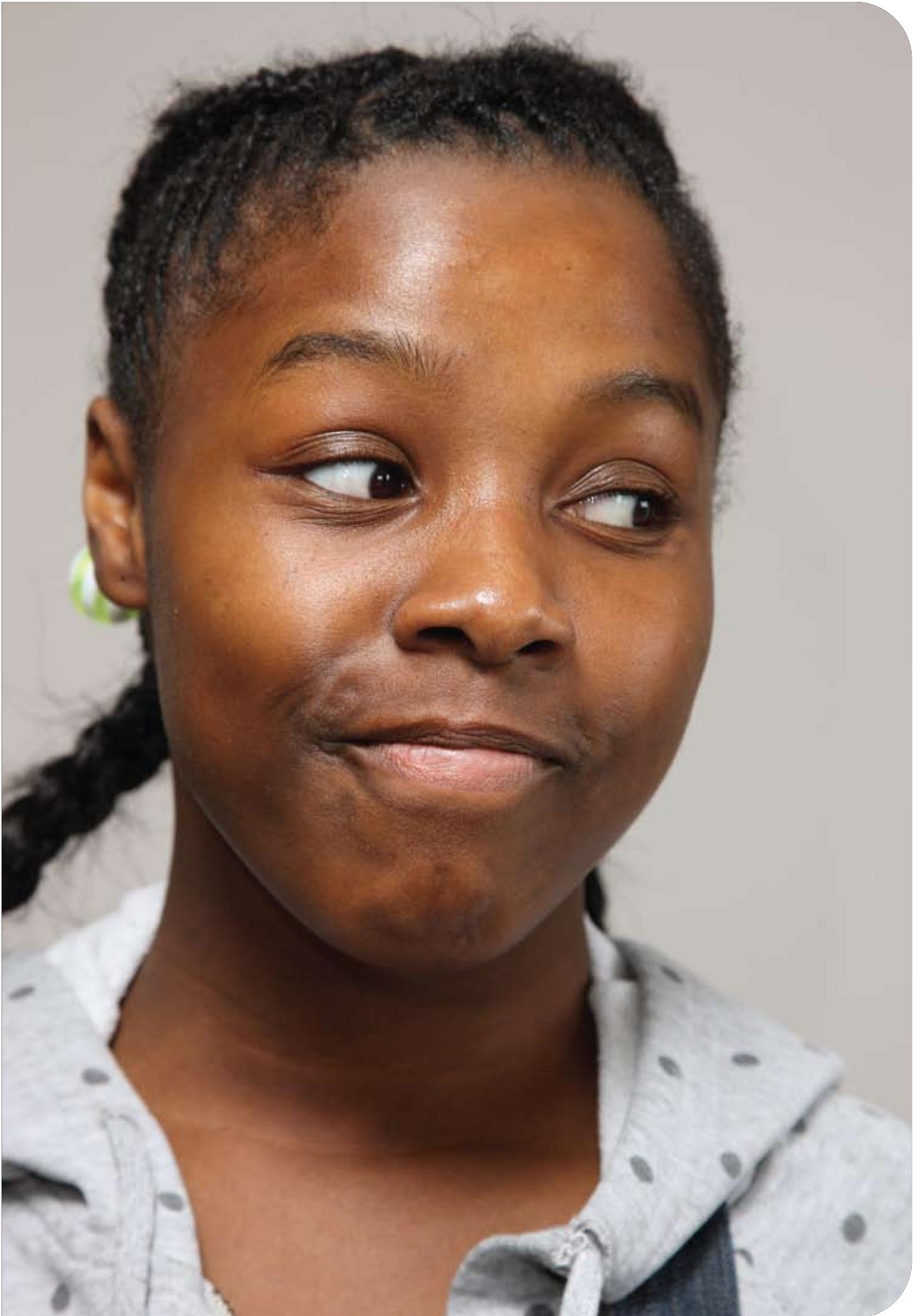
Based on answers from 1,174 children (21 did not answer this question). In 2008, 888 children answered the same question and 33 did not.

Just over two thirds of children (69%) told us that they are usually or always told what is going on when major changes are going to happen in their lives. This is down from 73% in 2008. **Eleven per cent told us that they are not usually or never told.** This is slightly up from 9% in 2008.

There were no big differences between girls and boys, or between disabled children and others in how much they were told about changes to their lives. There was a big difference between age groups. **Young people over 14 were much less likely to be told about changes that were going to happen in their lives than children under 14 were. Sixty-four per cent of over-14s said they were always or usually told, compared with 75% of children aged under 14.** This is a change from last year, when there wasn't a big difference in this between the age groups.

There were also some big differences between different settings in how much children were told about changes coming up in their lives. **Children in foster care and care leavers were much less likely than others to be told about changes coming up in their lives.**

'I think that social workers should listen to u a lot more'



Making complaints and suggestions

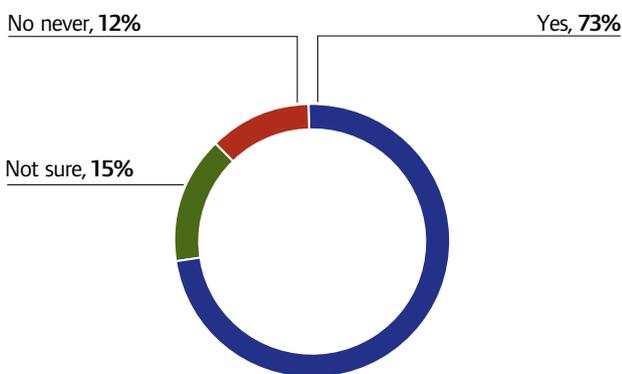
If children are not happy with the way they are being looked after, or with the social care or help they are receiving, they have the right to make a complaint, or to make a suggestion that could help improve things. Children who are in care also have the right to have the help of an advocate (someone to speak on their behalf) in making a complaint or a suggestion.

There are official complaints and representations procedures for children to use, which are set up by law. As well as these, and in many ways more important, 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 using the formal procedures.

Making a complaint

Figure 24 shows how well children knew about how to make a complaint about how they are being cared for.

Figure 24: How many children know how to make a complaint



Based on answers from 1,181 children (14 did not answer this question). In 2008, 899 children answered the same question and 22 did not.

Just under three quarters (73%) of children told us they did know how to make a complaint. Twelve per cent didn't know. This is very close to last year's figures of 75% and 12%. There were no big differences between girls and boys, over- and under-14s, and disabled children and other children in knowing how to make a complaint.

We did find some big differences between different settings in how many children knew how to make a complaint. **Children in children's homes were much more likely to know how to make a complaint** than other children (84% knew, compared with 73% of other children). **Care leavers were also much more likely to know how to make a complaint** than others (83% knew, compared with 73%). **Residential students in further education colleges were least likely to know how to make a complaint.** Fifty-eight per cent of these students knew, again compared with 73% for all children and young people this year.

This year, **over one in three (37%) of the 1,168 children who answered the question about making complaints told us they had actually made a complaint.** This was down from 43% last year. There were no big differences between girls and boys, under-14s or over-14s, or disabled children and other children. **Children in children's homes and children in residential special schools were much more likely than others to have made a complaint** (51% of those in children's homes and 58% of those in residential special schools had, compared with 37% of all children). **Residential students at further education colleges were much less likely to have made a complaint** than other children and young people (21% of these students had made a complaint).

Making complaints and suggestions continued

In last year's monitor, we realised that many of the children who had made a complaint had not used any formal complaints procedure, but had raised their concerns with other people, such as a social worker, for them to sort out. This year, we asked children in what way they had made their complaints. We offered a number of suggestions in our survey. The table shows the different ways children had made their complaints, out of the 361 who had both made a complaint and had told us how it had been made (some children had made more than one complaint, using different methods, and we have counted all their answers).

Table 5: How children made their complaints

Way of making a complaint	Number of children	%
Through a social worker	109	30%
Using the complaints procedure of the home or school I live in	104	29%
None of these ways	90	25%
Through a council's complaints procedure	56	16%
Through a parent	52	14%
Through an advocate	38	11%

Based on answers from 361 of the 429 children who told us they had ever made a complaint (68 did not answer this question).

Those who said they had not made their complaint in any of these ways told us the other ways they had made their complaints. These included making a complaint to a teacher, to foster carers, to a children's rights officer, to a school council or children in care council, or direct to the head or a manager of a service. Some told us about complaints they had made about how they had been looked after in some public settings, like a restaurant.

Only just over one in six (16%) of the children who had made a complaint had used a council complaints procedure, and 29% had used the internal complaints procedure of a children's home or school. The most common way of making a complaint was through a social worker (even though many children answering the survey were not in care and wouldn't have had a social worker).

There were no big differences between girls and boys, or between disabled children and others, in what sorts of methods children had used to make complaints. One big difference was that **those aged over 14 were more likely to use the council's complaints procedure than children under 14 were.**

There were big differences between different settings. As expected, those in schools and colleges were unlikely to make complaints through a social worker (even though we might expect quite a high proportion of people in residential special schools to have a social worker), foster children were not likely to make complaints through a school or home complaints procedure, and those in boarding schools were unlikely to make complaints through a council's complaints procedure.

'Through the children in care council'

Foster children were more likely than others to make a complaint through a social worker. Children in residential special schools and children in children's homes were more likely than others to make a complaint either through the local complaints procedure of their own school or home, or through the council's complaints procedure.

As many as 71% of the children in residential special schools who had made a complaint had used the school's own internal complaints procedure.

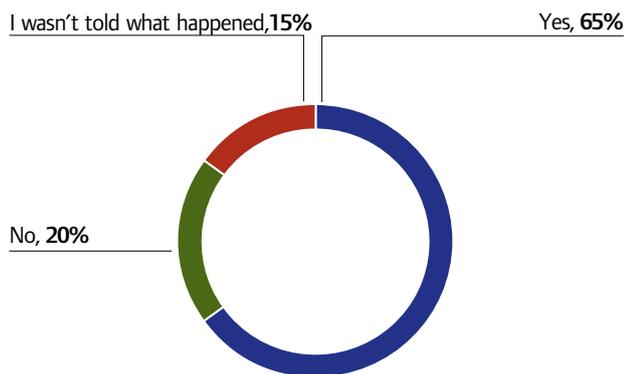
Children in boarding schools and children living at home with social care support were both more likely than others to make a complaint through a parent; but care leavers were, not surprisingly, much less likely than others to make a complaint through a parent. Those in boarding schools or residential colleges and those living at home with social care support were all much less likely than others to make a complaint through an advocate.

Our final question about making a complaint was to ask children who had made one how well their last complaint had turned out. We asked whether they thought it had been sorted out fairly (not whether it had been upheld). Figure 25 shows the results.

Nearly two thirds (65%) of the 354 children who had both made a complaint and told us how it turned out said their complaint had been sorted out fairly. On the negative side of things, **15% said they were not told what had happened to their complaint.** These figures were very close to those we found in 2008, when again 65% had said their complaint was sorted out fairly, and 17% had said they had not been told what had happened to their complaint.

We found no big differences between boys and girls, or between over- and under-14s in either how fairly their complaints were sorted out, or whether they were told what had happened. Although not quite enough to count as a big difference, a higher percentage of disabled children (74%) than other children said their last complaint had been sorted out fairly.

Figure 25: Were complaints sorted out fairly?



Based on answers from 354 of the 429 children who told us they had ever made a complaint (75 did not answer this question).

'I think advocates are very good as they have helped me in the past and probably will in the future'

Making complaints and suggestions continued



‘It’s just such a bureaucratic system when making a complaint and it’s as if no one wants to have the problem sorted. You sometimes have to go up high until the very top person to be heard, which makes me wonder what’s the use of the other lower people’

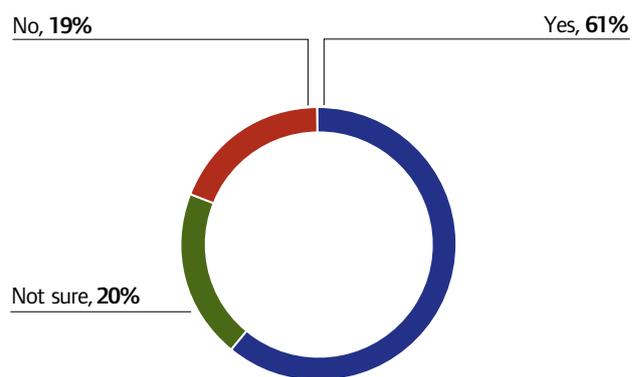
Where children were placed made a big difference to whether their complaints were sorted out fairly, and sometimes also to whether they were told what had happened as a result of their complaint. **Those in children’s homes, residential special schools and care leavers were more likely say that their complaints had been sorted out fairly** than other children were. **Residential special schools did best of all in dealing with complaints.** As many as 85% of those in residential special schools had their complaints sorted out fairly, and everybody in a residential special school had been told the result of their complaint. **Students in further education colleges reported by far the least fairness in dealing with complaints out of all the settings.** Sixty per cent of students in further education colleges said their complaints had not been sorted out fairly. We do need to be careful not to make too much of these findings about students in further education colleges, though, because there were not very many students in our survey. **Those in boarding schools reported less fairness in sorting out complaints than children generally,** with 31% saying their last complaint had not been sorted out fairly. Another 31% of boarders said they had not been told the result of their complaints. **Children supported at home by social care services were much less likely than children generally to hear the results of their complaints.**

‘I wrote a letter to the independent reviewing officer and my social worker’s manager’

Making a suggestion

This chart shows how many children told us they knew how to make a suggestion for improvements in the way they (or others) were cared for.

Figure 26: How many children know how to make a suggestion



Based on answers from 1,170 children (25 did not answer this question). In 2008 894 children answered this question and 27 did not.

Sixty-one per cent of children said they had been told how they could make a suggestion to improve things, and 19% said they hadn’t been told. This is again very close to the figures for last year, which were 61% and 20%.

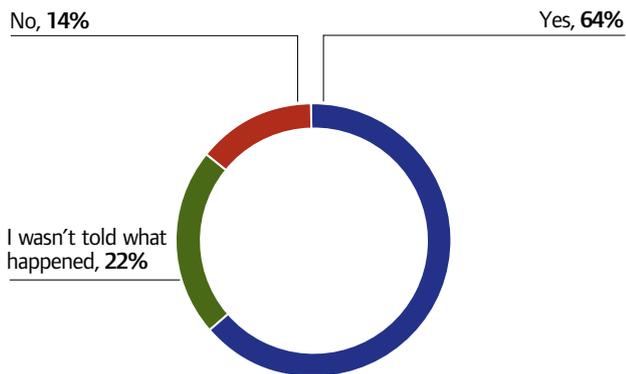
There were no big differences between boys and girls, between under 14s and over 14s, or between disabled children and other children. There was, though, a big difference between children and young people in boarding schools and colleges, and those in care. **Boarders in boarding schools were less likely to have been told how to make a suggestion for improvements in their care (49% of boarders said they had), and so were residential students in further education colleges (where 42% said they had been told how to make a suggestion about how they were cared for).**

Making complaints and suggestions continued

This year, **41% of children told us they had actually made a suggestion for improvements to care.**

This was exactly the same figure as in 2008. No big differences came out this year between boys and girls, or between disabled children and others. Young people over 14 were rather more likely to make a suggestion than those under 14, but this was not enough to count as a big difference. **Children in children's homes and care leavers were much more likely to make suggestions for improvement to care, and children in care living at home were much less likely, than children generally.** Figure 27 shows how many suggestions children thought had been dealt with properly.

Figure 27: Were suggestions dealt with properly?



Based on answers from 393 children out of the 479 who told us they had made a suggestion (86 did not answer this question).

From these answers, **just under two thirds (64%) of children's suggestions had been dealt with properly, close to the 65% of complaints that were sorted out fairly, but children were rather less likely to hear what had happened to any suggestions they had made.** Twenty-two per cent said they hadn't been told what had happened to their suggestions, compared with 15% who said they hadn't been told what had happened to their complaints.

We found no big differences in whether suggestions were dealt with properly between girls and boys, over-14s and under-14s, or disabled children and other children. **Children in children's homes were the most likely to have suggestions dealt with properly.** Seventy-six per cent of children from children's homes said their suggestions were dealt with properly, compared with 64% generally. **Those living in boarding schools or further education colleges were less likely than children generally to say that their suggestions had been dealt with properly, and were more likely than children generally not to know what had happened to suggestions they had made.**

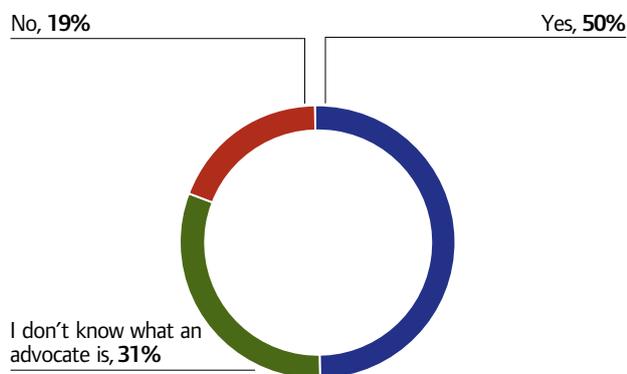
Getting an advocate

Children in care have a legal right to have an advocate to help and speak for them if they wish, whenever they use their council's official complaints procedure to make a complaint or a suggestion. We asked children if they knew how to get hold of an advocate if they wanted to make a complaint.

'The complaint took so long to sort out that it was pointless in the end'

'I have never felt the need to make a complaint or suggestion because I find everything is fine'

Figure 28: Do children know how to get an advocate?



Based on answers from 1,154 children (41 did not answer this question). In 2008 862 children answered this question and 59 did not.

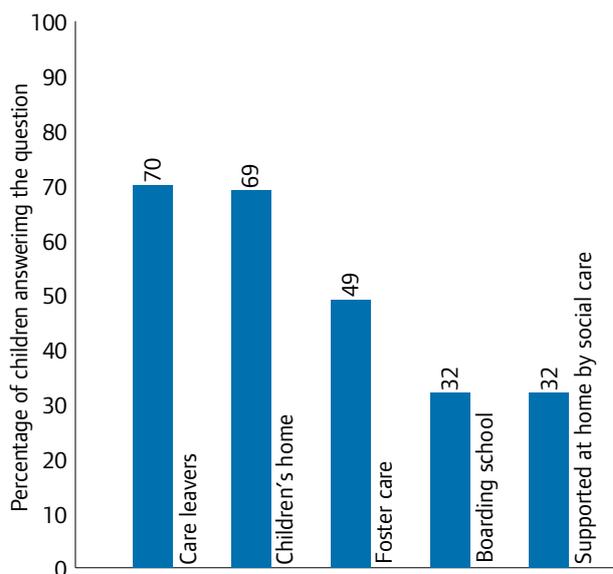
Looking at all the children, both in care and not in care, who took part in the 2009 monitoring survey, exactly **half (50%) of the 1,154 who answered this question said yes, they did know how to get hold of an advocate. Of the rest, just under a third (31%) said they didn't know what an advocate is.** There was no big difference since last year, though the percentage who knew how to get hold of an advocate had dropped slightly from 54% last year to 50% this year, and the percentage who didn't know what an advocate was had gone up very slightly from 29% last year to 31% this year.

Young people aged over 14 were more likely to know what an advocate is, and to know how to get hold of one, than under-14s did. Disabled children were also less likely to know what an advocate is than children generally.

Because it is children in care who have the right to have the help of an advocate, we looked especially at what children from care told us about advocates. Only counting the 838 children in care who answered this question, we found that **53% of children in care knew how to get hold of an advocate. Over a quarter of children from care, 29%, did not know what an advocate is.**

As Figure 29 shows, there were some big differences between different settings.

Figure 29: Percentages of children in different settings who know how to get hold of an advocate



Based on answers from 1,154 children (41 did not answer this question).

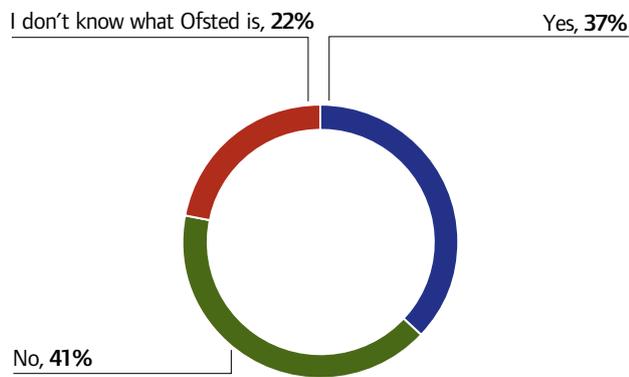
Care leavers and children from children's homes were much more likely than other children both to know what an advocate is and to know how to get hold of one. Children supported at home by social care were much less likely than other children in care to know what an advocate is or to know how to get hold of one. The percentages of boarders in boarding schools and of children in care supported at home by social care who knew how to get an advocate were exactly the same, even though very few boarders (12 children) were in care.

Making complaints and suggestions continued

Contacting Ofsted

Figure 30 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. The legal regulations or the national minimum standards for each type of placement (including 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.

Figure 30: Do children know how to contact Ofsted?



Based on answers from 1,155 children (40 did not answer this question). In 2008 872 children answered this question and 49 did not.

Well over a third of children (37%) did know how to contact Ofsted, but just over one in five (22%) didn't know what Ofsted is. These figures are a slight improvement since last year, when 35% knew how to contact Ofsted and 28% didn't know what Ofsted is.

One big difference between groups of children was, as we had found last year, that **children aged under 14 were much less likely to know what Ofsted is, than those aged 14 plus**. This year, 34% of those under 14 didn't know what Ofsted is, compared with 14% of those aged 14 plus. This was a big difference from last year, when 47% of under-14s didn't know what Ofsted was. Last year, 18% of those aged 14 plus didn't know what Ofsted was.

Looking at the big differences between different settings, children in children's homes and residential special schools, and care leavers were much more likely to know how to contact Ofsted than children generally, and children in care but living at home were much less likely to know how to contact Ofsted. As we saw last year, **children living in places which are regularly inspected by Ofsted inspectors were the most likely to know how to contact Ofsted**. There were no big differences between children in different settings in how likely they were to know what Ofsted is.

A big difference that we found this year, though not in 2008, was that **disabled children were much less likely to know what Ofsted is** than children generally. This year, 36% of disabled children said they didn't know what Ofsted is, compared with 22% of children generally.

'I thought Ofsted was only a school inspection thing?'

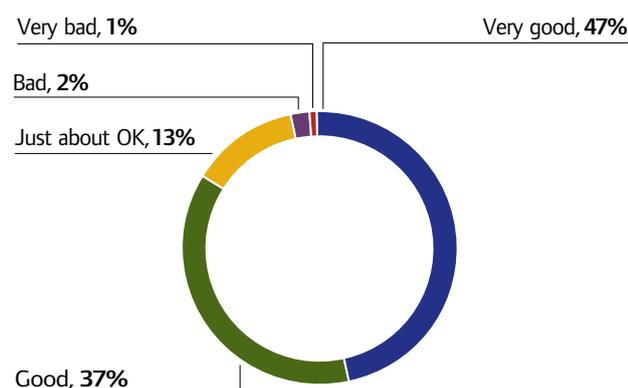


Education

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

Out of the children and young people answering this year's monitor survey, 1,054 were in some form of education. This year, we asked all children who were in education, whether or not they were also in care, about their education. We also looked in detail at the differences in what children in different settings told us about their education.

Figure 31: How children rate their education



Based on answers from 888 children out of 1,054 who told us they were in education (166 did not answer this question). In 2008 808 children answered this question and 89 did not.

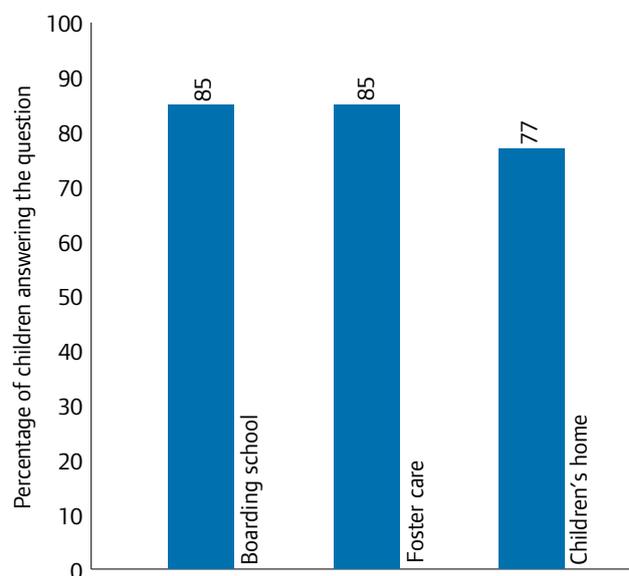
'I work hard but get distracted easily'

Overall, **84% of children rated their education as either good or very good, and only 3% as either bad or very bad. We did not tell children what they should count as good or bad about their education, these were the children's own views.**

There were no big differences between girls and boys, between disabled children and others, or between over- and under-14s.

Figure 32 shows how children in each different setting rated their education in 2009.

Figure 32: How children from different settings rate their education



Based on answers from 888 children out of 1,054 who told us they were in education (166 did not answer this question). Figure shows percentages for settings where at least 100 children answered the question.

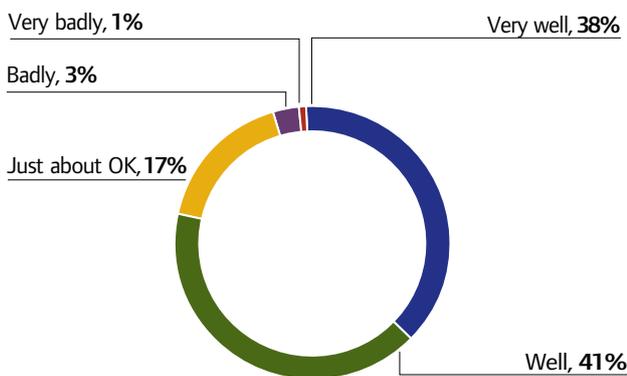
Overall the differences were small, but **those in boarding schools and foster care rated their education equally the best, and those in children's homes rated it the worst.**

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 how the children themselves think they are doing in their education at school or college.

The chart shows how all the 887 children and young people who answered this question in our survey thought they were doing in their education.

Figure 33: How well children say they are doing in education



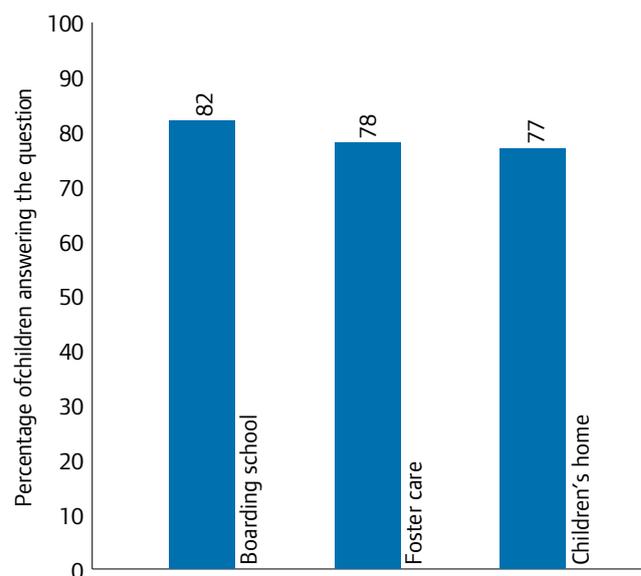
Based on answers from 887 children out of 1,054 who told us they were in education (167 did not answer this question).

'I'm in a secure unit and have to attend education which I haven't in the past'

Overall, 79% of children and young people in education say they are doing well or very well in their education, and only 4% say they are doing badly or very badly. Again, we did not suggest how the children should judge how well they were doing. There were no big differences between girls and boys, over- and under-14s, or between disabled children and others.

Figure 34 gives the percentages of children from different settings who said they were doing well or very well in their education.

Figure 34: How well children in different settings say they are doing in education



Based on answers from 887 out of the 1,054 children who said they were in education (167 didn't answer the question). Percentages given where answers were received from at least 100 children in the setting.

Education continued

Although the differences are not big, boarders at boarding school rated how well they were doing above the ratings given by children and young people from children's homes or foster homes. Ratings by foster children and those from children's homes were similar. Children in residential special schools gave a high rating of how they were doing in education, with 22 out of the 27 who answered this question saying they were doing well or very well. **The numbers answering the question were small, but the 46 residential students in further education colleges who answered this question rated the quality of their education slightly more highly than other groups, but rated how they were doing in that education slightly less than children and young people from any other setting.**

Among those in care, although again the differences are small, **those living in care but at home rated how they were doing in their education higher than those living anywhere else, but those in children's homes rated how they were doing at school or college lower than those living at home, in residential special schools, in foster care, or care leavers who were still in education.**

We asked children to give us their reasons for why they thought that they were doing well or badly in their education. We did not make any suggestions for them to choose from, so the reasons are entirely from the children who answered the survey themselves.

'Education is really boring but you need to learn'

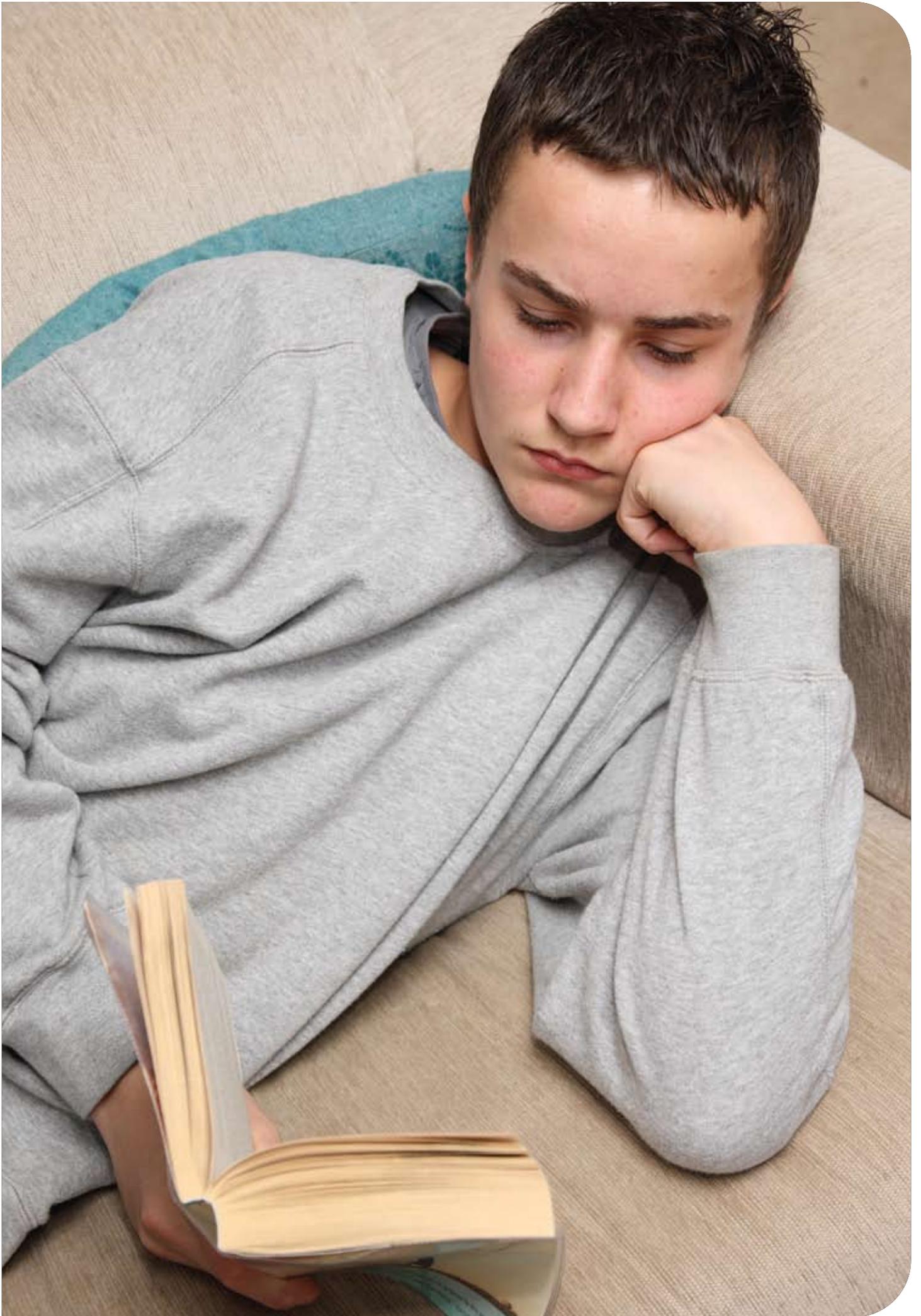
The top three **reasons given for doing well or very well in education** were:

- keeping on target with work and grades (from 21% of those doing well or very well)
- working hard (from 21% of those doing well or very well)
- helpful teachers (from 12% of those doing well or very well).

The next reason didn't quite make it over our usual cut-off point of coming from at least one in 10 children. It was **enjoying learning, which came from 9% of children saying they were doing well or very well in education.**

Next are the **reasons given for doing badly or very badly in education** which each came from at least one in 10 children who had told us they were doing badly or very badly.

- Struggling without enough help in some subjects (from 23% of those doing badly or very badly).
- Poor attendance at school or college (from 16% of those doing badly or very badly).
- Not interested in school or don't like school (from 13% of those doing badly or very badly).
- Easily distracted, then misbehave (from 10% of those doing badly or very badly).
- Not working hard enough (from 10% of those doing badly or very badly).
- Personal problems (from 10% of those doing badly or very badly).



Care and care planning

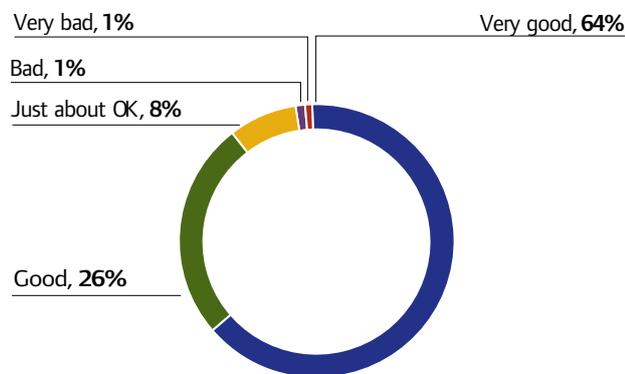
The final two sections of this report are about children either in care or leaving care, rather than all the children included in my work as Children's Rights Director.

Altogether, 863 children who completed the 2009 monitor survey were in care. This is 72% of the total. Of those, 51% were girls and 49% boys, 44% were aged under 14 and 56% were aged 14 or over, and 4% said they had a disability. Sixty-one per cent lived in foster care, 21% in children's homes and 8% lived at home with parents or relatives. The rest were either care leavers, or living in boarding schools, residential special schools or residential further education colleges.

Quality of care

In each year's monitor, we ask children in care to rate the quality of their own care for us. Figure 35 shows the overall ratings for 2009.

Figure 35: How children rate their care



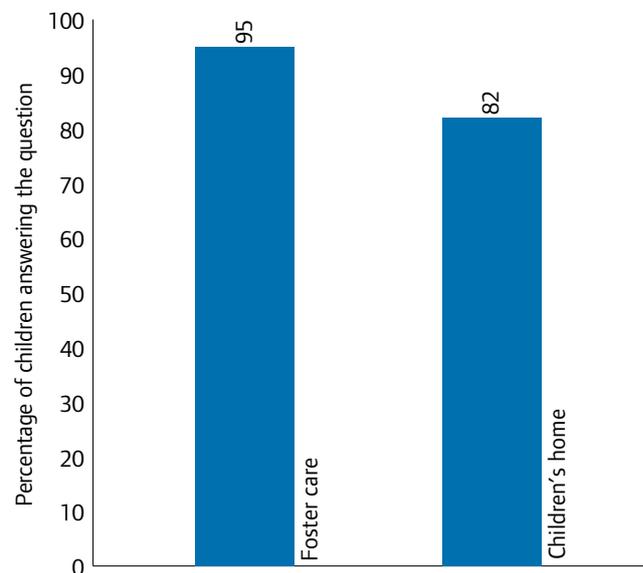
Based on answers from 721 children out of 863 in care (142 didn't answer the question). In 2008, 679 children answered this question.

In 2009, **90% of children in care rated their care overall as either good or very good.** This is up from 88% last year, though the main change is a slight increase in the numbers rating care as 'good' rather than 'just about OK'. The percentage giving the top 'very good' rating this year was actually slightly down, from 67% to 64%.

The percentage of children rating their care as bad or very bad was just 2%, exactly the same as in 2008.

Like last year, there were no big differences in overall ratings of care between boys and girls, under- or over-14s, or disabled children and other children. Figure 36 compares the percentages of children in foster care and in children's homes who in our survey rated their care as good or very good.

Figure 36: How children in foster care and children's homes rate their care



Based on answers from 721 children out of 863 in care (142 didn't answer the question). In 2008, 679 children answered this question.

There is a big difference in how well children in care in different types of placement rate their care. Overall, as we found last year, **children in foster care rate the quality of their care the highest. Children in care but living at home with parents or relatives rate their care almost as well as foster children (40 out of 44 children in care living at home rated their care as good or very good). Children in children's homes gave their care a much lower rating.**

The 95% of foster children who rated their care as good or very good this year was slightly up from 93% last year.

The percentage of children in children's homes who rated their care as good or very good this year had, however, risen markedly from 70% in 2008 to 82% in 2009.

Social workers

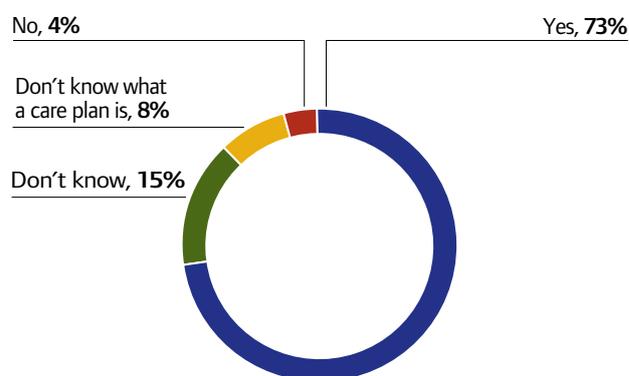
In many of our consultations, children in care have stressed the importance of social workers to their lives. Every child in care should have either a social worker, or another caseworker (such as a leaving care worker) allocated to them. When we checked this in our survey this year, **91% of the children in care who answered our question on this said they had a social worker, and another 3% said they had a different sort of caseworker. That left 6%, 44 children altogether, who told us that they didn't have a social worker or caseworker at the time they filled in our monitor survey.** That is slightly worse than in 2008, when 92% told us they had a social worker, 4% that they had another sort of caseworker, and 3% that they didn't have either.

'I have been moved around a few times and all the other places that I have lived are not as good as where I am living. And now I have realised where I live is brilliant... I wish I moved here earlier'

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. They should be involved in making the plan, and it should be kept up to date. Figure 37 shows what children told us about whether they had a care plan.

Figure 37: Do children in care have a care plan?



Based on answers from 723 children out of 863 children in care (140 didn't answer the question). In 2008, 690 children answered this question.

In 2009, **just under three quarters, 73%, of children in care told us they knew what a care plan is, and knew they had one.** That was close to the figure of 72% in 2008.

Neither girls nor boys, nor children with or without a disability were much more likely to have a care plan they knew about. But younger children were much less likely than older children to have a care plan they knew about. There was a big difference between the age groups. **Only 62% of those aged under 14 had a care plan they knew about, compared with 77% of those aged 14 and over. As many as 21% of those aged under 14 didn't know what a care plan is, compared with only 5% of over-14s.** The difference in knowing about care plans is not likely to be because younger children are not able to understand them, because all these figures come from children who understood enough to answer our survey questions about care plans.

Care and care planning continued

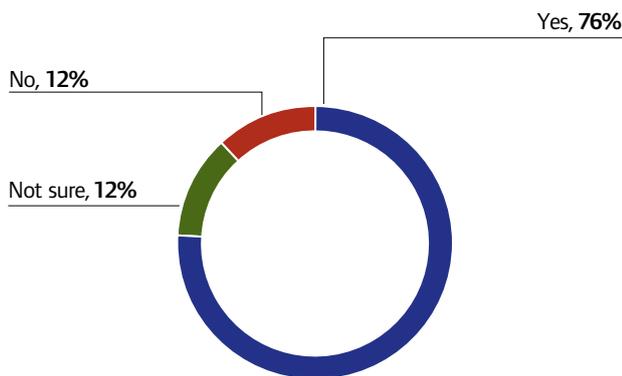
The percentage of children under 14 who had a care plan they knew about had gone down since 2008, from 69% last year to 62% this year.

There was one big difference between children in different types of placement to do with having care plans. **Children in children's homes were more likely than other children to have care plans they knew about. Eighty-three per cent of children in children's homes had care plans they knew about,** though this was down from 88% in 2008.

Knowing what care plans say

As we found in 2008, and again in 2009, children could know they had a care plan, but not know what was in it. This is shown on Figure 38.

Figure 38: Do children know what their care plan says?



Based on answers from 513 of the 531 children who said they had a care plan (18 didn't answer the question). In 2008, 487 children answered this question.

Only just over three quarters (76%) of children who know they have a care plan know what is in it. Of the other quarter, half are not sure what is in it, and the other half say they definitely do not know what is in it. This has, however, improved slightly since 2008, when 73% told us they both knew they had a care plan and knew what was in it.

We found two big differences on this. **Disabled children were less likely than others to know what was in their care plan,** with 66% knowing this compared with 76% of children overall. **Children in care but living at home with a parent or relative were also much less likely to know what was in their care plan.** Sixty per cent of these children knew what was in their plan, compared with the overall figure of 76%.

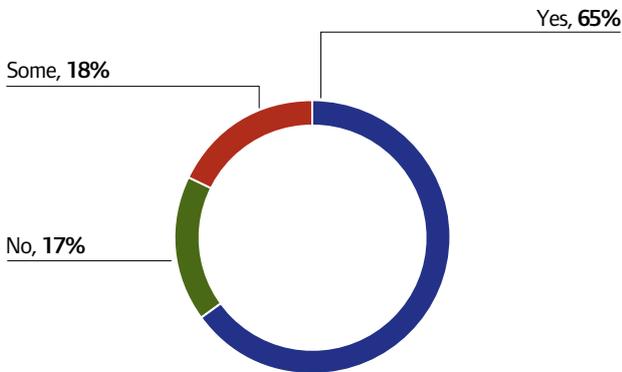
Having a say in your care plan

Children have told us very often in our past consultations that it is very important that they have a say in the big decisions about their lives and their futures. Their care plans contain these decisions, and the law requires that children have a say in their care plans, depending on their age and understanding.

Figure 39 shows how many children, out of those who knew they had a care plan, told us they had a say in what it said was planned for their future.

'They are tough on me and I need that and I'm making good progress and I love these people very much!'

Figure 39: Do children have a say in their care plan?



Based on answers from 512 children out of 531 who said they had a care plan (19 children didn't answer the question). In 2008, 468 children answered this question.

Not quite two thirds of children who knew they had a care plan told us they had a definite say in what was planned for them in their care plan, with another 18% saying they had some say.

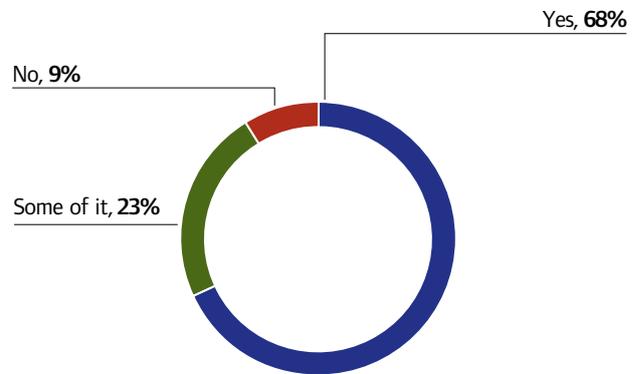
The amount of say children had in their care plans has improved since 2008. Sixty-five per cent of children having a say this year is well up from 52% in 2008, and 17% having no say this year is down from 25% in 2008.

Girls and boys, over- and under-14s and disabled children all said they had much the same say in their care plans. The big difference this time was that children in care but living at home had much less say in their care plans than children and young people generally. In 2008 we had found that younger children (those aged under 14) had less say in their care plans. This age difference had gone by 2009.

Agreeing with your care plan

We know from the answers to other monitor questions that children can be asked for their views, but sometimes their views may not make much difference. So we asked whether children who had a care plan and knew what it said actually agreed with what was in it. Their answers are in Figure 40.

Figure 40: Do children agree with their care plan?



Based on answers from 499 out of the 531 children who said they had a care plan (32 children didn't answer the question). In 2008, 453 children answered this question.

Just over two thirds, 68%, of children who had a care plan and knew what it said agreed with it. Almost another quarter, 23%, agreed with some, but not all, of it. Just under one in 10, 9%, did not agree with their care plan.

The percentage who agreed with all of their care plan had gone up from 66% last year to 68% this year. In 2009, the percentage who did not agree with their care plan had gone up from 7% last year to 9% this year, and the percentage who agreed with either all or some of their care plan had gone down from 93% last year to 91% this year.

'I feel like I'm part of the family and not just a foster child. I think it is important to feel like this'

Care and care planning continued



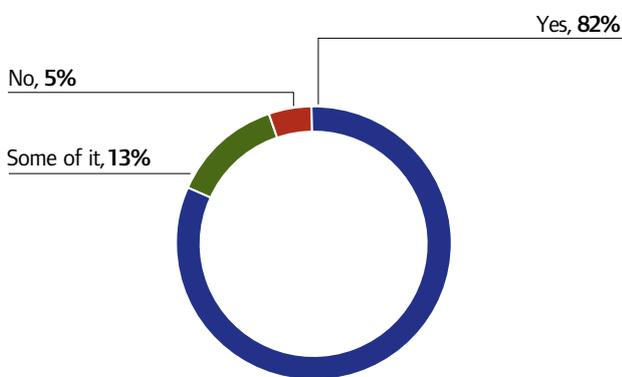
‘Things change on a daily basis so I often have varied feelings about the placement I am in at the minute’

This year, there were two big differences between groups of children. **Children in children’s homes were much less likely to agree with the whole of their care plan than other children, and disabled children were much more likely than others to agree with the whole of their care plan.** The percentage of those in children’s homes who fully agreed with their care plans was 58%, exactly the same as last year, while the percentage for others had gone up slightly. Boys and girls, and those over and under 14, said much the same about whether they agreed with their care plans.

Keeping to care plans

Sometimes children contact us at 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. It is important for us to keep a check on how well children's care plans are being kept to. In our monitor survey, we asked children who knew about their plans to tell us whether their care plans were being kept to. The answer for 2009 is in Figure 41.

Figure 41: Is your care plan being kept to?



Based on answers from 493 out of 531 children who said they had a care plan (38 didn't answer the question). In 2008, 445 children answered this question.

This year, **82% of children told us their care plan was being kept to. One in 20, 5%, said it was not being kept to at all.**

'I am living with a relative and that is better than living with someone I don't know at all'

There had been a slight improvement in care plans being kept to since 2008. This year's figure of 82% of care plans being kept to was up from 79% last year, and this year's figure of 5% not being kept to at all was down from 7% last year. The 13% of children saying that some, but not all, of their care plan was being kept to was close to the figure of 14% last year.

In 2009, unlike last year, there was a big difference between girls and boys in how well their care plans were being kept to. **This year boys were much more likely than girls to tell us their care plans were being fully kept to.** Eighty-eight per cent of boys said their care plans were being fully kept to, compared with 76% of girls. Girls were more likely than boys to say that some, but not all, of their care plans were being kept to. We had not found this difference in 2008, so this is something we will be checking again next year.

There was no big difference between under- and over-14s in how well their care plans were being kept to. Although not quite enough to count as a big difference, disabled children were rather more likely to say their care plans were fully kept to than other children. Ninety-one per cent of disabled children said their care plans were fully kept to, compared with 82% of children generally.

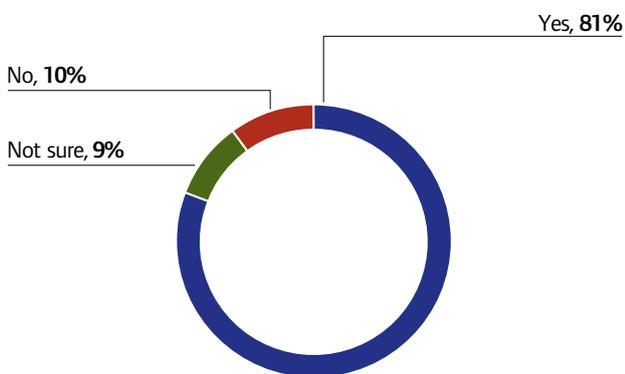
There were no big differences between children living in different sorts of placement in whether their care plans were being fully kept to. One improvement we saw in this year's figures, though, was that the percentage of children in children's homes whose care plans were being fully kept to had gone up from 70% last year to 76% this year.

Care and care planning continued

Being in the right placement

An important check we make in our monitor surveys is whether children believe that the placement they are in is the right one for them. In our consultations, children tell us that getting the right placements for them are the biggest and most important decisions that councils make in their lives. The 2009 findings on this are in Figure 42.

Figure 42: Are you in the right placement for you?



Based on answers from 722 out of 863 children in care (141 children didn't answer this question). Those answering the question included 426 in foster homes, 164 in children's homes, and 46 living at home with social care support, and 41 living in boarding schools, residential special schools or further education colleges (45 didn't tell us where they were placed). In 2008, 485 out of 680 children in care answered this question and 195 did not.

Just over eight out of 10 (81%) of children in care told us they were in the right placement for them. One in 10, 10%, said they were not in the right placement for them.

The children's assessment is that there has been a slight worsening since last year in getting children in the right placement. Those who said they were in the right placement had gone down from 84% in 2008 to 81% in 2009, and those who said they were in the wrong placement for them had gone up from 8% in 2008 to 10% in 2009. We will be checking this carefully again next year.

A change since last year was that in 2009 there was a big difference between age groups. This year, **young people aged 14 plus were much less likely than younger children to say they were in the right placement. Seventy-six per cent of over-14s said they were in the right placement, compared with 86% of under-14s.** There was no big difference between girls and boys, or between disabled children and other children.

As we found in 2008, **children in foster homes were much more likely to say they were in the right placement than children in children's homes. In 2009, 57%, a fall from 63% in 2008, of children in children's homes said they were in the right placement, compared with 90% of foster children.**

Children in care but living at home with their parents or relatives were much more likely than other children to say they were living in the right place for them.

We asked children to give their reasons for saying that their placement was either right or wrong for them. We did not give them any suggested answers. They gave the same reasons in 2009 as they had last year. **The main reasons for a placement being the right one were that children were happy and settled there, that they felt safe and well looked after, and that they had kind and supportive carers.**

'I asked to move. But when I did I realised that I was better off where I was before and again asked to move back'

Children also gave the same top three reasons for a placement being the wrong one for them. **Their reasons were that they wanted to be with their own families instead, that they didn't get on with someone (staff or child) at the placement, or that they simply didn't like the place.**

For children in children's homes, the top reason for saying a children's home was the wrong placement was that the person felt it was time to move on somewhere else. **Wanting to be in foster care instead did not come through as a big reason for saying a children's home was the wrong placement.** For children in foster homes, the top reason for saying the foster placement was the wrong one was that the child wanted to be nearer their birth family or friends, sometimes because they had been placed in a foster home outside their home area.

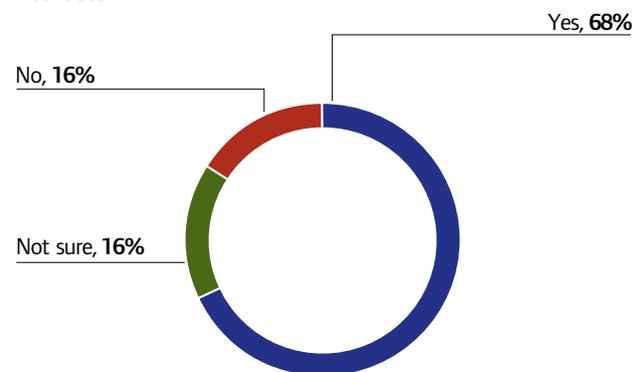
Changing placements

The children who took part in our 2009 monitor had most often just had one change of placement in their life in care, though because some of the children had many changes, the average was four changes.

Most people see changes in living placements as something to be avoided if possible, and one of the ways children's social care services are checked up on is to count how many times children have to change placements. When we have consulted children though, they have usually told us that sometimes a change of placement can be the right thing to do and is a move for the better. On the other hand, sometimes a move is something the child does not want to happen, and children often tell us they have been told they are being moved because of the cost of their placement, or because there is a policy to move children closer to their home area.

So in our monitor each year we are checking whether the last time each child moved to a new placement, the child thought it was, or was not, in their best interests. Figure 43 shows what children told us in 2009.

Figure 43: Was your last placement change in your best interests?



Based on answers from 649 out of 863 children in care (214 didn't answer this question).

Overall, **just over two thirds (68%) said their last placement move was in their best interests. Sixteen per cent said their last move was not in their best interests.** The rest were not sure.

These figures were very close to those for 2008, but very slightly worse. The table compares what children said this year about placement moves with what children said last year.

Table 6: Whether placement changes are in children's best interests

Was your last placement change in your best interests?	2008	2009
Yes	69%	68%
Not sure	16%	16%
No	15%	16%

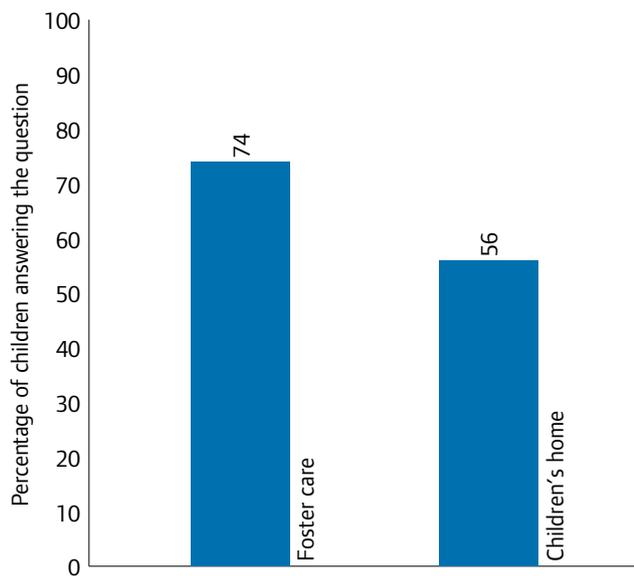
Based on answers from 649 out of 863 children in care (214 didn't answer this question). In 2008, 599 answered this question out of 680 children in care, and 81 did not.

Care and care planning continued

This year there were no big differences between boys and girls, over- and under-14s, or disabled children and others in whether they thought their last placement move was in their best interests. In 2008, there had been a big difference between age groups, with more over-14s saying their last move was not in their best interests, but we did not find a big difference this year. This was because the percentage of over-14s saying their last move was not in their best interests had fallen from 21% in 2008 to 17% this year.

There were some big differences in the percentage of children in different types of placement who thought their last move was in their best interests. Figure 44 shows the difference in view between those now in foster care and those in children's homes. The figure shows the percentages of children saying their last move was in their best interests.

Figure 44: How children in foster care and children's homes rate their last placement move



Based on answers from 649 out of 863 children in care (214 didn't answer this question). In 2008, 599 answered this question out of 680 children in care, and 81 did not.

Clearly, in our survey children in foster homes were more in agreement with their move into foster care than children placed in children's homes were with their move to their current children's home placement. Although numbers are small, care leavers were very likely to see their last change of placement out of care as in their best interests (19 out of 23 care leavers who answered the question said this). Children in care but who had now moved back to live at home with parents or relatives were also strongly in agreement with that move (30 out of 37 answering the question said their move back home had been in their best interests). Over half (56%) the children in children's homes thought their move to their present home was in their best interests, a quarter, 25%, thought it was not in their best interests, and 18% were not sure. Almost three quarters (74%) of children in foster care thought their move to their present foster home had been in their best interests, 11% thought it was not in their best interests, and 15% were not sure.

'Don't want to leave in case it is not as good!!!'

Again, we asked children to tell us their reasons for considering their last move to be either in their best interests or not in their best interests. Again, we did not suggest any reasons. **The top three reasons for children considering their last move to be in their best interests were: feeling happier, safer, settled and better looked after in the new placement; generally liking the new placement more; and the new placement being the right one to be in.** This year, the top reasons didn't include disliking the previous placement, as they had last year.

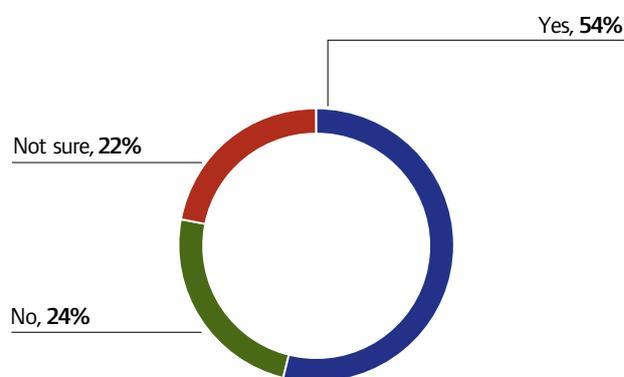
There were **many different reasons for the last placement change being against the child's best interests. The only ones which came from at least one in 10 children were that the child simply didn't like the new placement or, where the move had been away from their own birth family, that they had wanted to stay with their own family.**

When children in care move to a new placement, they sometimes also have to move to a new school. Professionals often try hard to avoid a change of school, and see changing schools as damaging children's education. Indeed, many people say that children in care may not do as well in school or college as other children because they often have to change schools when they move to a new placement. The government has a new policy of trying never to change a young person's school when they are preparing for, or doing, their exams at the end of their schooling.

The children taking part in the 2009 monitor survey had on average changed school twice in their lives in care so far, because of changes in their living placements. The majority had only had one of these changes of school, though. The average is higher because some children had many school and placement changes.

However, from last year's monitor we learned that over half the children who had had to change schools because they moved to a new living placement actually thought the change of school had been in their best interests. It had been good, either for their education or socially. This is therefore something we are checking closely in each year's monitor report. Figure 45 shows the 2009 figures.

Figure 45: Last time you had to change schools because you moved to a new placement, was the change of school in your best interests?



Based on 492 children answering this question in 2009. In 2008, 428 children answered this question.

'I was quite settled where I was and liked living there, however other people thought it was in my best interest to be moved'

Care and care planning continued

Again, just over half (54%) of the children who changed schools because they had changed to live in a new placement considered that the change of school had been in their best interests. Just under a quarter (24%) considered that the change had not been in their best interests.

However, there had been a slight drop since 2008 in the percentages of children considering their last school change to be in their best interests. This year's figure of 54% was down from 58% last year, and the 24% who considered their last school change not to have been in their best interests was slightly up from 22% last year.

Although the figures have changed slightly since 2008, it is still the case that **according to children themselves, changing school when changing placement is slightly more likely than not to be in the child's best interests.**

There were no big differences between girls and boys, children in different types of care placement, or between disabled children and others. The big difference we found last year between children in children's homes and children in foster care had evened out this year.

Unlike last year, though, we found a big difference between children under 14 and those aged 14 plus. **The younger age group were much more likely than older children to consider their last change of school when changing placements to be in their best interests.** Sixty per cent of those under 14 said changing school when changing placements was in their best interests, compared with exactly half (50%) of those aged 14 plus.

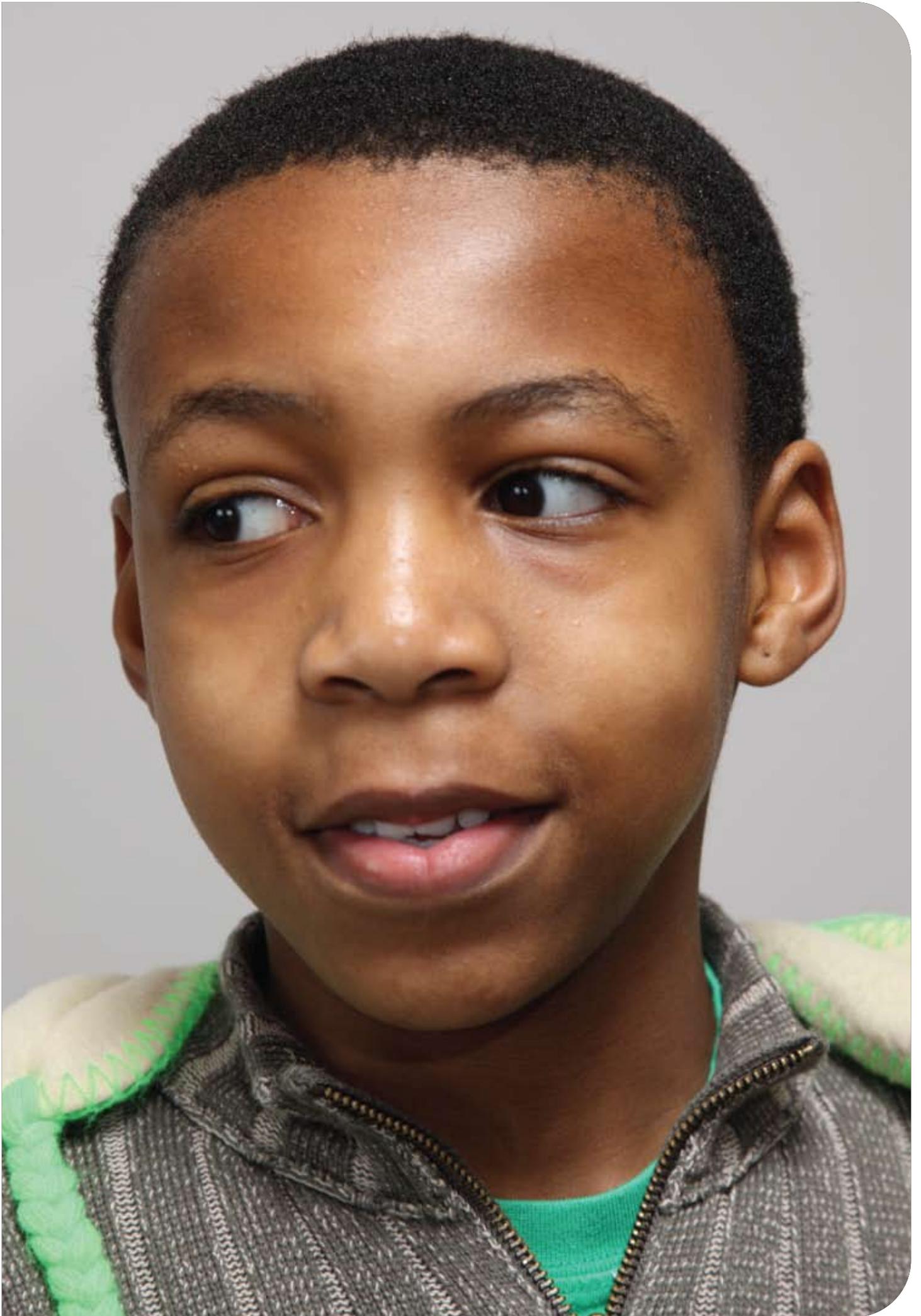
Even though we found that children now living in children's homes were much less likely than foster children to say that their last placement change was in their best interests, there was no big difference between these groups of children in whether they thought their last change of school was or was not in their best interests.

Children gave us their reasons for considering that their last change of school when they moved placement was, or was not, in their best interests. Again, we didn't suggest any answers. Four reasons each came from at least one in 10 children for saying their last change of school when they moved placement was in their best interests. These were:

- The new school is nearer to where I live
- The new school meets my needs better
- I like the new school more than the old one
- I am doing better at the new school than I did at the old one.

These reasons are a mixture of believing that the new school is giving the child a better education, welcoming a school that is closer to home, and simply liking the new school more. Making new friends came next, but not from quite enough children to make the list of reasons which came from at least one in 10.

'I missed my old friends,
it was like being put on a
desert island'



Care and care planning continued

Children's top reasons for considering that changing schools when they last changed placement was not in their best interests were:

- I didn't want to leave my old friends
- I liked my old school more than the new one
- I am not doing as well at the new school as I did at the old one
- I don't know why I had to change schools.

This time, leaving friends behind is the top reason for a change of school being considered as against the child's best interests. Children also considered a change of school as against their interests if they didn't think the change was necessary, or if they hadn't had any say in whether or not to change schools.

Two things that can be for or against a change of schools are whether the child likes one school more than the other, and whether the child believes one school will meet their educational needs better than the other.

'I do not tell anybody I'm in care'

Brothers and sisters in care

From other consultations we know that many children are separated from their brothers or sisters ('siblings') when they are in care, and that this worries many children in care. We have therefore added questions to this year's monitor about brothers and sisters, to find out how many children in care have been separated from their brothers and sisters, how many are placed together, and what children's views are about this.

Out of the 706 children who answered our question about this, **nearly two thirds (63%) of children in care had brothers or sisters who were also in care.**

There were some big differences. **Children aged under 14 were much more likely to have brothers or sisters who were also in care than were older children.**

Three quarters (75%) of under-14s in care had brothers or sisters also in care, compared with 55% of the 14 plus age group. **Foster children were much more likely to have brothers or sisters in care than were children in children's homes.** Seventy-one per cent of foster children had brothers or sisters in care, compared with 54% of those in children's homes. **Disabled children were much less likely to have brothers or sisters in care than were other children.** Fifty-three per cent of disabled children had brothers or sisters in care, compared with 63% for children generally.

Out of 434 children in care who had brothers or sisters also in care, and who answered this question, **just under a quarter (24%) had their brothers or sisters living with them in the same placement, and just over three quarters (76%) had been separated from brothers or sisters who lived in different care placements.**

There were big differences between groups of children in the percentages who had been separated from brothers or sisters in care. Here are the big differences we found in 2009:

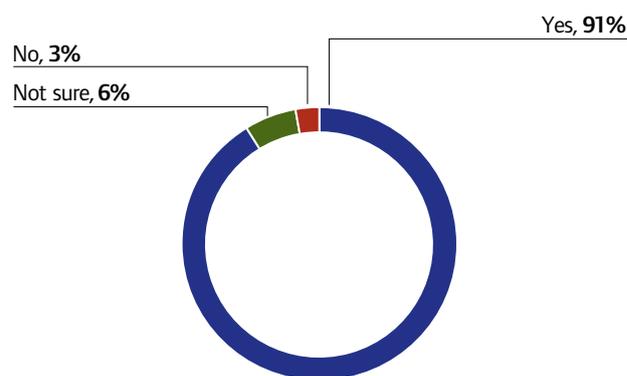
- Boys were more likely to be placed separately from their siblings than girls were. Eighty-one per cent of boys had at least one sibling in care who was living in a different placement, compared with 71% of girls.
- Those aged over 14 were more likely than those under 14 to be separated from brothers or sisters. Eighty-two per cent of over-14s were separated from at least one sibling in care, compared with 70% of under-14s.
- Children in children's homes were more likely to be separated from brothers or sisters than foster children were. Ninety-three per cent of children in children's homes were separated from at least one sibling in care, compared with 73% of foster children.

Looking at both how many children in different groups had brothers or sisters who were also in care, together with how many in different groups had been separated from brothers or sisters in different placements, we found:

- Those aged under 14 were both more likely than older children to have brothers or sisters in care, and less likely to be separated from them in different placements
- Foster children were both more likely than those in children's homes to have brothers or sisters in care, and more likely to be in the same placement as their siblings
- Disabled children in care, although they were much less likely to have brothers or sisters who were also in care, were not much more or less likely than other children in care to be separated from their siblings.

We asked children what they thought about whether it was right to keep brothers and sisters together, or to separate them. Children in care who were not separated from brothers and sisters in care but lived with them in the same placement mostly thought that it was right that they were placed together. As Figure 46 shows, **91% of the children who had not been separated from brothers or sisters in care said that being placed with their siblings was right for them.** There were no big differences in this between girls and boys, over- and under-14s, children in different sorts of placement, or children with disabilities and others.

Figure 46: Whether children placed with their brothers or sisters thought it was right to place them together

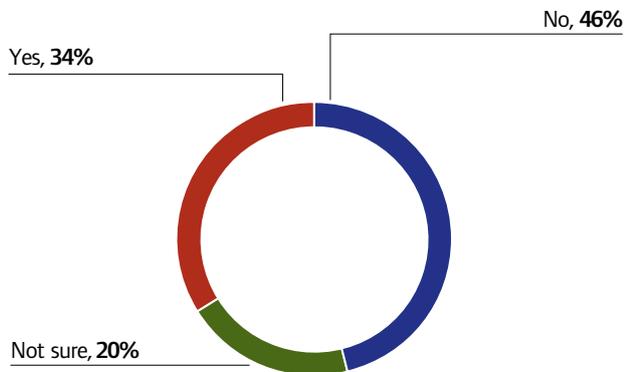


Based on answers from 102 children out of 104 children in care who were not separated from a brother or sister in care (2 children did not answer the question).

As Figure 47 shows, children who had been separated from brothers and sisters in care took a rather different view. **Less than half (46%) of the children who had been separated from brothers or sisters in care thought it was wrong that they had been separated. Just over a third (34%) thought it was right that they had been placed in different placements,** often because they had different needs. One in five (20%) children who had been separated from brothers and sisters were not sure whether this was right for them or not.

Care and care planning continued

Figure 47: Whether children separated from brothers or sisters in care thought it was right to place them apart



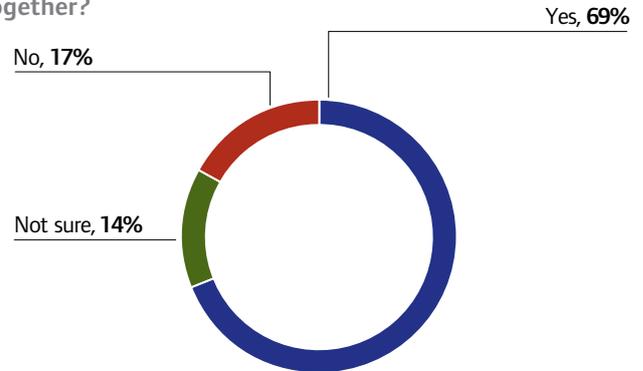
Based on answers from 328 children out of 330 children in care separated from brothers or sisters in care (2 children separated from brothers or sisters in care did not answer this question).

On this question, we found just one big difference between different groups of children. **Among children who had been separated from brothers or sisters in care, those living in children's homes were much more likely to think this was wrong than foster children were.** Fifty-nine per cent of children in children's homes who had been separated thought this was wrong and 23% thought it was right. Forty-two per cent of foster children who had been separated thought this was wrong and 38% thought it was right.

Figure 48 gives children's overall view in our 2009 survey on the question of whether brothers and sisters in care should be placed together. We had answers from 694 children in care on this question.

'I feel that I am treated differently by social services because I am in care with my aunt and uncle and not with a stranger'

Figure 48: Should brothers and sisters in care be placed together?



Based on answers from 694 children (169 children didn't answer the question).

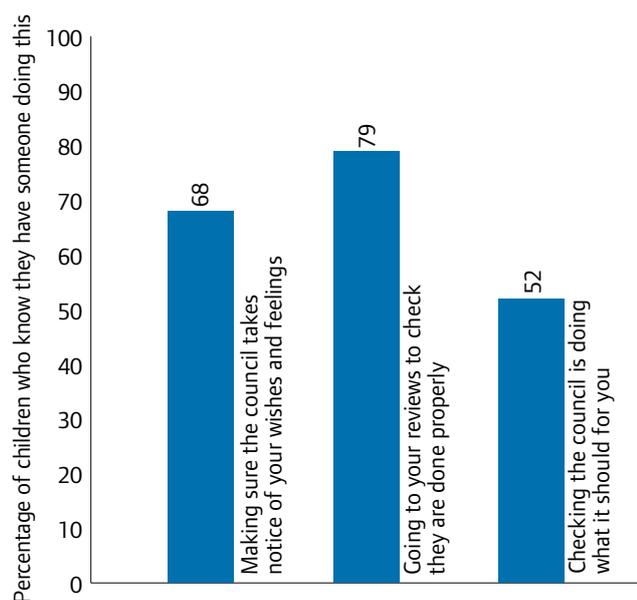
Overall, the view of children in the 2009 monitor was that brothers and sisters should be placed together and not separated. **Over two thirds (69%) of children in care thought siblings should be placed together.**

Independent reviewing officers

The government is making the role of independent reviewing officers for children in care much stronger, so we have added a check on this to our monitor this year. Every child in care should have an independent reviewing officer. 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 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. We asked children in the 2009 monitor about each of these jobs of independent reviewing officers, and whether they knew how to get in touch with their independent reviewing officer. We will keep a check on these questions in future monitor reports, to see how children see the work of independent reviewing officers developing over coming years.

Figure 49 shows what percentage of children in care knew about having someone (other than their social worker) doing each of these independent reviewing officer jobs for them.

Figure 49: The percentage of children in care who know they have an independent reviewing officer for each of these tasks

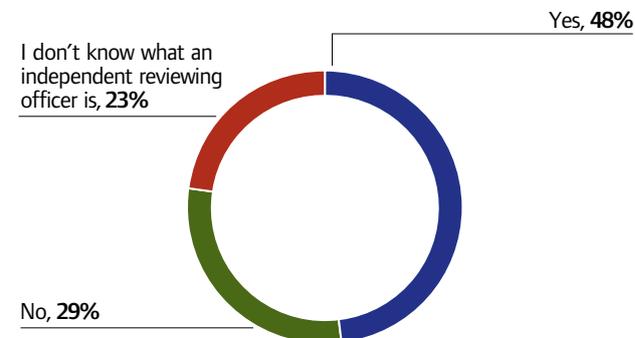


Based on answers from 660 children (203 children didn't answer the question).

From these findings, it is clear that children know most about the jobs of independent reviewing officers which have most to do with their care reviews. Seventy-nine per cent know they have someone other than their social worker at their reviews to check these are done properly, and 68% say they are aware of someone making sure their wishes and feelings are taken into account.

Of course, not all the people children were referring to here were necessarily their independent reviewing officers. As we can see from the next chart, when we asked whether children knew how to get in touch with an independent reviewing officer, **nearly a quarter (23%) of children in care in our survey didn't know what an independent reviewing officer was.**

Figure 50: Do children know how to get in touch with their independent reviewing officer?



Based on answers from 691 children (172 didn't answer the question).

From this chart, nearly **half (48%) of children in care in our survey told us they knew how to get in touch with their independent reviewing officer. Twenty-nine per cent knew what an independent reviewing officer was, but not how to get in touch with one.**

There were two big differences to report here between groups of children. One was that **children in children's homes in our survey were much more likely than the children in foster care to know how to get in touch with their independent reviewing officer.** Fifty-eight per cent of those in children's homes knew this, compared with 48% of those in foster care. The other big difference was that **disabled children were much less likely than others to know how to get in touch with one.** Only 34% of disabled children in care in the survey knew how to do this.

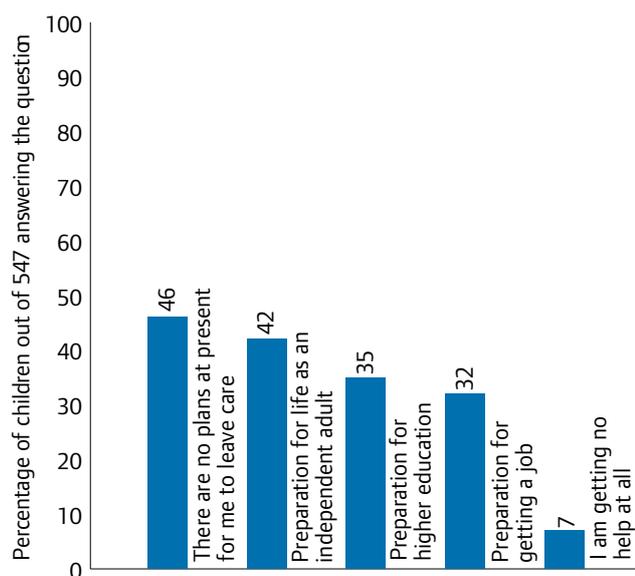
Leaving care

The last section of our 2009 monitor is also about children in care; this time about their experiences of leaving care. We know from many consultations that leaving care is a particularly difficult time for young people in care, and it is a subject on which the government has introduced some new ideas. We have therefore included some extra questions in this year's monitor about leaving care.

Preparing for the future

The chart below shows how children in care said they were being helped to prepare for the future when they left care. We had answers to this question from 547 children and young people in care.

Figure 51: The help children are getting to prepare for leaving care



Based on answers from 547 children.

Nearly half the children (46%) said they did not have leaving care plans yet. Out of those who did, **the most usual preparation for the future was general help in preparing for independence as an adult, but it is worth noting that preparing for higher education was slightly more common than preparing for getting a job.**

As we would expect, those over 14 had much more preparation work going on than those under 14. However, even so, nearly a third of those aged over 14 said there were no plans for them to leave care yet. **Over half (54%) of those aged over 14 were getting general help to prepare for life as an independent adult, compared with 26% of those aged under 14. Forty-three per cent of those over 14 were being helped to prepare for higher education, and 37% for getting a job.**

There were big differences between children in children's homes and foster children in what they told us about the preparation they were getting for the future. Sixty per cent of those in children's homes said they were getting help to prepare for life as an independent adult, compared with 35% of foster children. Forty-three per cent of those in children's homes said they were getting help to prepare for higher education, compared with 32% of foster children, and 40% of those in children's homes were getting help to prepare for getting a job, compared with 27% of foster children. However, many of these differences may be because more children in children's homes were at the stage where there were plans for them to leave care. Only 34% of those in children's homes said there were as yet no plans for them to leave care, compared with 55% of foster children.

'I have made the decision to be here and I enjoy and I have made a home for myself'

After leaving care

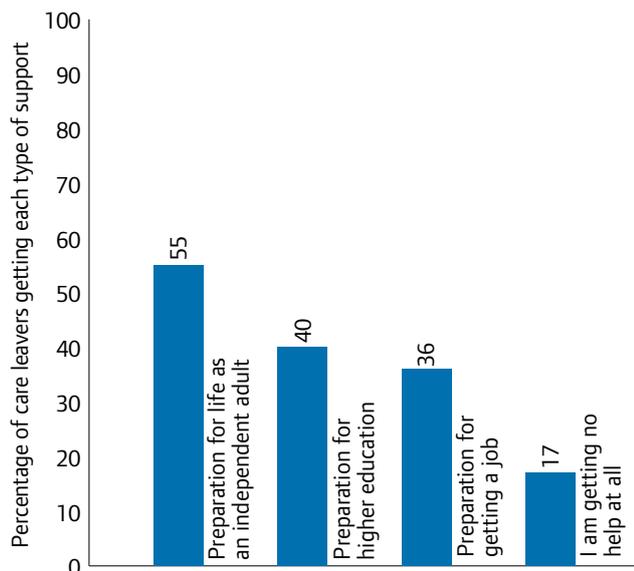
A total of 163 young people who had recently left care took part in this year's monitor. Out of these, 135 told us about what they were now doing. **Forty-seven per cent of care leavers who responded were still in education, 13% were in work and 4% were in work training. Just over a third, 36%, were in none of these.**

Sixty-four per cent of the care leavers told us that they had a social worker, and another 17% that they had another sort of caseworker to support them. Nineteen per cent said they did not have any social worker or caseworker.

The percentage of care leavers who had a social worker or other sort of caseworker had fallen from 88% in 2008 to 81% in 2009, mainly through a fall in the percentage who had specialist caseworkers other than social workers.

Figure 52 shows the help those who had actually left care told us they were getting to prepare for the next steps in their lives.

Figure 52: Help for care leavers

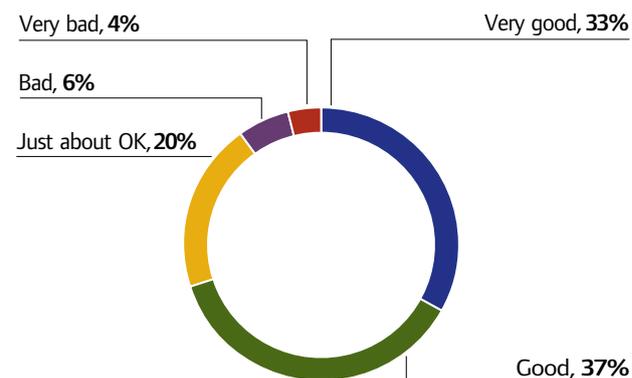


Based on answers from 128 care leavers out of 163 care leavers taking part in the survey (36 did not answer the question).

Compared with last year, slightly fewer care leavers told us they were getting help to live as independent adults (down from 59% last year to 55% in 2009), and fewer told us they were getting help in getting a job (down from 44% last year to 36% in 2009). However, slightly more said they were getting help in preparing for higher education (up from 38% last year to 40% in 2009), and slightly fewer said they were getting no help at all (down from 21% last year to 17% in 2009).

We asked care leavers to rate the quality of the support they were getting. We had responses from 135 care leavers. Figure 53 shows their ratings in 2009.

Figure 53: How care leavers rate the support they are getting



Based on answers from 135 care leavers (28 didn't answer the question).

'I am around a lot of drug users and I do not feel safe'

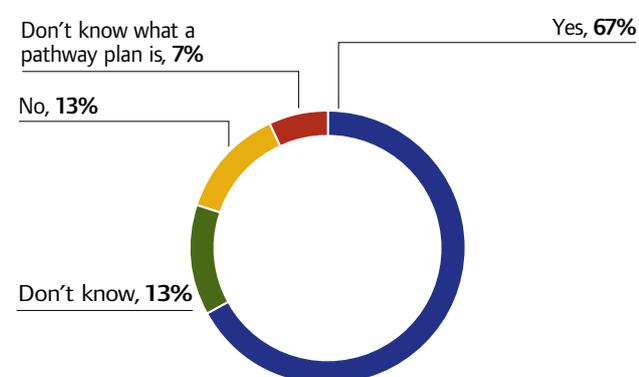
Leaving care continued

Overall, 70% of care leavers rated their support as good or very good. This was slightly improved from 67% in 2008.

Pathway plans

Plans for care leavers and their support are called 'pathway plans'. Just as we had asked children still in care about their care plans, we asked care leavers about their pathway plans.

Figure 54: Do care leavers have pathway plans?



Based on answers from 134 care leavers (29 didn't answer this question).

Just over two thirds (67%) of care leavers said they had a pathway plan. Seven per cent didn't know what a pathway plan is. Thirteen per cent knew what one is but said they didn't have one. Another 13% knew what one is but didn't know whether or not they had one themselves. These figures came from the responses of 134 care leavers this year.

Out of those who had pathway plans, 86% of care leavers this year knew what was in their pathway plans, 80% had a say in what their pathway plans were and 78% told us they agreed fully with their pathway plans. Another 16% said they agreed with some, but not all, of their pathway plans. Seventy-seven per cent told us that their pathway plans were being fully kept to, and again another 16% said that they were being partly kept to.

In 2008, we did not have answers about pathway plans from enough care leavers to be able to compare this year's results properly with last year's. From the figures we do have, it looks as if this year, fewer care leavers than in 2008 had a pathway plan, but those who did were more likely to say it was being kept to, but we cannot be very certain about this.

Where care leavers live

This year, for the first time, we asked care leavers what sort of accommodation they were living in. We had answers from 132 care leavers (31 didn't answer this question). Here are the three most usual places for care leavers responding to our survey to live, in 2009:

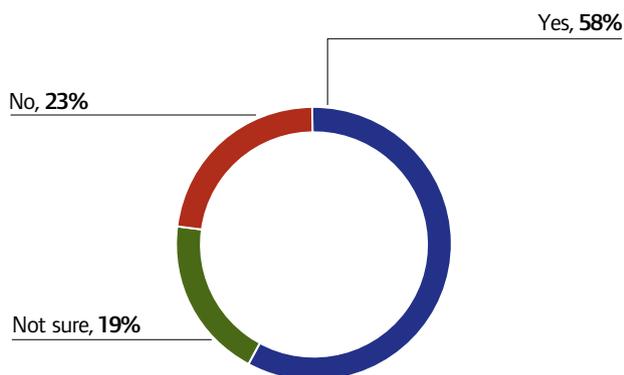
- Alone in their own flat (32% of care leavers)
- Supported lodgings (12% of care leavers)
- Shared house or flat with friends (11% of care leavers).

'It is a private rented run down damp and mould constantly cold and my 15-month-old daughter is always ill and no one wants to help'

There were no other sorts of accommodation in which more than one in 10 care leavers responding to the survey were living. Other places included hostels, living with a friend's family, living in a university hall of residence, and bed and breakfast accommodation. Seven per cent were still living with foster parents, and three per cent were still living in a children's home. **Although many children in care tell us they expect to return to live with their parents again when they leave care, only 6% of care leavers in our survey told us they were back living with their parents.** Two care leavers were living in a secure unit.

Figure 55 shows whether care leavers thought they were living in the right place, and Figure 56 shows how they rate the quality of their accommodation.

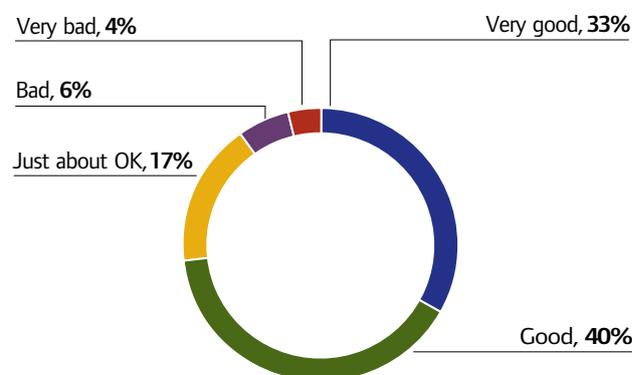
Figure 55: Are care leavers living in the right place for them?



Based on answers from 134 care leavers (29 didn't answer this question).

Just under a quarter (23%) of care leavers answering our survey in 2009 considered they were in the wrong accommodation for them, and 58% considered their accommodation right for them. Although last year we only had information on this from 32 care leavers, compared with 134 this year, and cannot be certain of how things have changed between the two years, things appear to have improved slightly since last year, when 31% of care leavers told us they considered they were in the wrong accommodation.

Figure 56: The quality of care leavers' accommodation



Based on answers from 133 care leavers (30 didn't answer this question).

Overall, just under three quarters (73%) of care leavers in our 2009 survey rated the standard of their accommodation as either good or very good. One in 10 (10%) rated their accommodation as bad or very bad.

Finally, it is important to remember that some care leavers had told us earlier in this monitor that they felt at risk in their lives. As we have already reported, 19% of care leavers told us in 2009 that they get bullied just because they used to be in care. We also heard in 2009 that just over one in 10 care leavers (11%) felt unsafe or very unsafe where they were living.

'I think the support within social service and leaving care varies'

Some final words

About being in care in 2009

'Above where I wrote brothers and sisters should be together in care, that shouldn't always happen because it's not always for the best'

'Being in care is horrible. This is made worse for me because I am in care unjustly'

'Care can be hard at times but when it does I get through it. I always have my friends and my sister if I need anyone to talk to about being in care'

'I am happy in care where I live'

'I have to lie at school because if they [kids] knew I was in care they would bully me'

'I know that it is better than living with my mam and dad so I'm happy'

'I don't get bullied because everyone I know in my school knows why I am in care and they know I shouldn't be ashamed of why I am in care. It's my mother and father who should be ashamed'

'I may hate being in care but it has done me the world of good'

'I wish it was easier to change social workers'

'I think it is great that people get a say in the things that are happening with our lives'

'It's a shame that me and my brother couldn't be put into the same placement together!'

'It changes your life not being at home'

'Just because a child is in care does not make us different to any other child'

'It is the worst thing to ever happen to anyone'

'When you are in care people judge you differently and if something goes wrong you're blamed just because you're in care'

'I think you should be able to speak to your social worker without anyone else there'

And a final word on our monitoring survey...

My aim in asking for children's views is that people who make decisions read them, take notice of them, and act on them.

One child this year wrote, having filled in their monitoring survey to the end:

'I think these surveys are pointless, nothing ever gets heard, if it does nothing ever changes.'

My own final word is to ask readers of this monitoring survey to prove that child wrong!

Appendix

We are grateful to the children and staff of the following establishments and services for taking part in the *Children's care monitor 2009*. We look forward to working with them again on next year's care monitor.

Independent childcare providers

(children's homes and independent fostering agencies)

Ark House
Brookfield House
Burbank Children's Home
By the Bridge
Companions
Five Rivers Family Placement Service
Foster Care Associates – South West
Fostering Solutions Ltd
Fosterplus Ltd
Futures for Children
Hillcrest Fostercare
Kibblestone Home Farm
Nexus Fostering
Orange Grove Midlands Ltd
Peartree
Phoenix Fostering
Solutions Fostering Agency
Supported Fostering Services
SWIS Foster Care Ltd
Team Fostering
The Adolescent & Children's Trust (TACT)
The Foster Care Co-operative Ltd

Local authorities

Barnsley MBC
Bedfordshire County Council
Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council
Bournemouth Borough Council
Bracknell Forest Borough Council
Bradford MBC
Bristol City Council
Buckinghamshire County Council
Bury MBC
Coventry City Council
Cumbria County Council
Darlington Borough Council
Doncaster MBC
Essex County Council
Gateshead MBC
Greenwich Council
Hampshire County Council
Hartlepool Borough Council
Herefordshire Council
Hertfordshire County Council
Isle of Wight Council
Lancashire County Council
Leicestershire County Council
London Borough of Barking & Dagenham
London Borough of Bexley
London Borough of Enfield
London Borough of Hackney
London Borough of Islington
London Borough of Lambeth
London Borough of Merton

Appendix continued

London Borough of Tower Hamlets
Medway Council
Milton Keynes Council
Norfolk Council
Northumberland County Council
Nottinghamshire County Council
Oldham MBC
Oxfordshire County Council
Rochdale MBC
Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead
Sandwell MBC
Sefton MBC
Slough Borough Council
Solihull MBC
Somerset County Council
South Tyneside Council
St Helen's Council
Staffordshire County Council
Stockport MBC
Suffolk County Council
Torbay Council
Trafford MBC
West Sussex County Council
Westminster City Council
Wigan MBC
Wirral MBC

Schools and colleges

Bellerbys College
Bromsgrove Preparatory School
Brymore Secondary Technical School
Canford School
Chaigeley School
College of West Anglia
Furrowfield School
Grantham College
International College Sherbourne School
John Leggott College
Muntham House School
Northumberland College at Kirkley Hall
Peter Symonds College
South Tyneside College
St Clare's School
St Felix School
The Hammond School
The Royal Alexandra & Albert School
The Westgate school
Valence School
Wells Park School

And members of the Be Heard Young People's Panel

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