

Children's social care questionnaires 2019

What children and young people have told us about their experiences of living in their respective settings, including children's homes, boarding schools and living with foster carers



Background

We use online surveys to gather views about children's homes, secure children's homes, adoption services, fostering services,¹ residential family centres, boarding schools, residential special schools and further education colleges.²

The surveys are for:³

- children
- learners
- parents
- staff
- social workers
- other professionals, such as independent reviewing officers.⁴

In 2019, the surveys were open between 29 April and 9 June. We wrote to 3,292 organisations and received 34,924 individual responses, of which 6,293 were from children.

The survey we sent out this year differed from the one we sent out last year. We reviewed the questions asked last year and made some changes. We focused on the most important things we wanted to know.

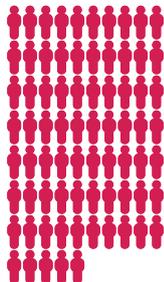
We use the responses, along with other information we have, such as previous inspection findings or any concerns, to decide when to inspect and what to focus on when we do.⁵

This is the fifth year that we have published data and a report about the survey responses. Like last year, we are publishing separately the accompanying data for all adult responses.

Who are the children we are talking about?



There are **12 million** children aged 0–17 years in England



75,420 are children looked after⁶



6,293

This year children told us about where they live



73% of children looked after live with foster carers (55,200)⁷

You can view the accompanying data at:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-care-questionnaires-2019-what-children-and-young-people-told-ofsted.

What we found in 2019

We asked children questions about the place where they live or stay. For example, this could be at their children's home, with their foster carers or at their boarding school. The questions we asked all children were similar in nature, so we are able to compare what they have told us about their living experiences across the different settings.

We asked all children the following five questions:

- Are you well looked after?
- Do you have somebody to talk to if you were having problems?
- Are you helped to do well with your learning?
- What do you like about being here?
- What would you change?

We also asked children staying in children's homes, residential special schools and in foster care the following additional question:

- Do you feel involved in decisions about your life?

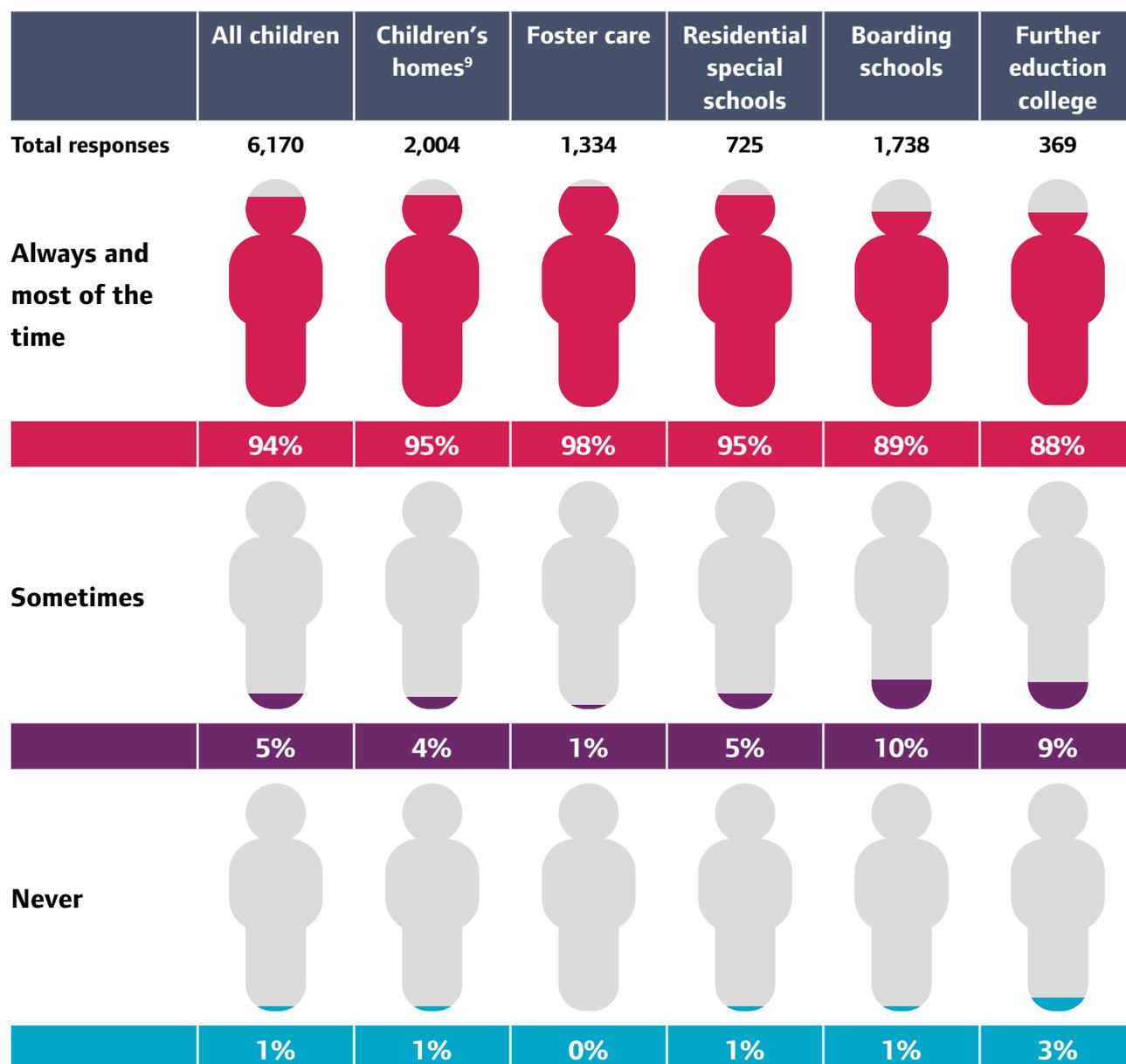
We asked children in secure children's homes:

- Are you helped to understand what is expected of you while you are at the home?
- Are you involved in making plans for when you leave the home?⁸

Are you well looked after?

For the last three years, we have asked children if they were well looked after by staff/ foster carers. We have found that the combined percentage of children answering ‘always’ and ‘most of the time’ in 2019 was almost identical to the responses we received in 2017 and 2018.

The combined responses of ‘always’ and ‘most of the time’ for children in children’s homes was 95%, and for those staying with foster carers was 98%.



Quotes about being looked after

'I love the carers who look after me take me to nice places and keep me safe.'

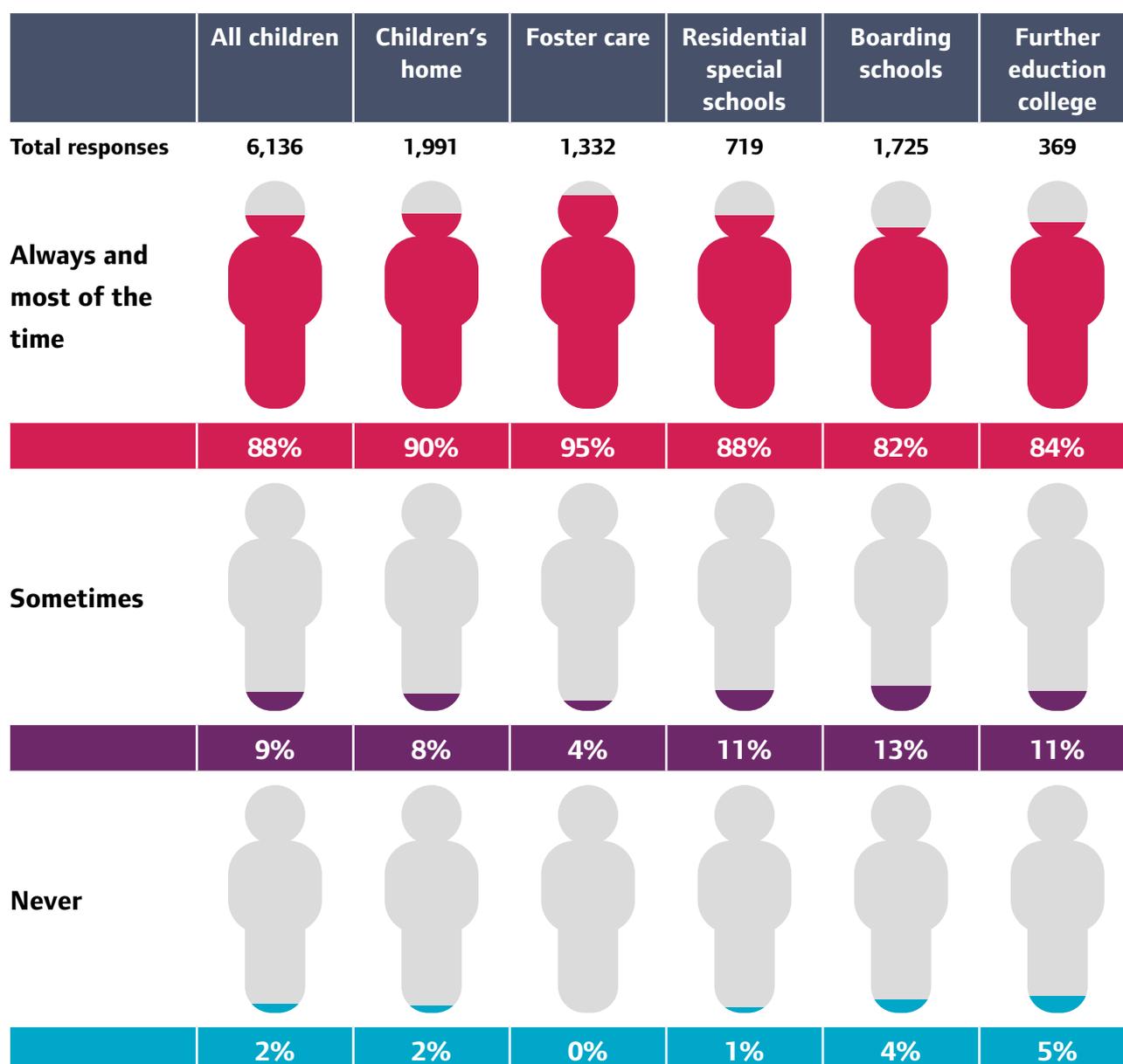
(children's home row 15202)

'I like being here, I like the girls and the dogs, they play with me and look after me. I like my bedroom and the garden, I enjoy playing with my new toys and being part of the family.'

(foster care row 1109)

Do you have someone to talk to if you were having problems?

This year, we asked children, for the first time, if they were able to speak to or go to someone if they were having problems. Eighty-eight per cent of all children responded that there was someone available to talk to 'always and most of the time'. For those in foster care, this was 95% of the children who responded.



Quotes about having someone to talk to if a child is having problems

'That they help me all the time when I am struggling and it's nice to talk to them when I need to and they are really nice and considerate to me'

(foster care row 4050)

'If you are upset the staff will always help you. If you ever want to talk to them then they might always stop what they are doing to talk to you either that or they will quickly finish doing what they are doing depends what it is they are doing'

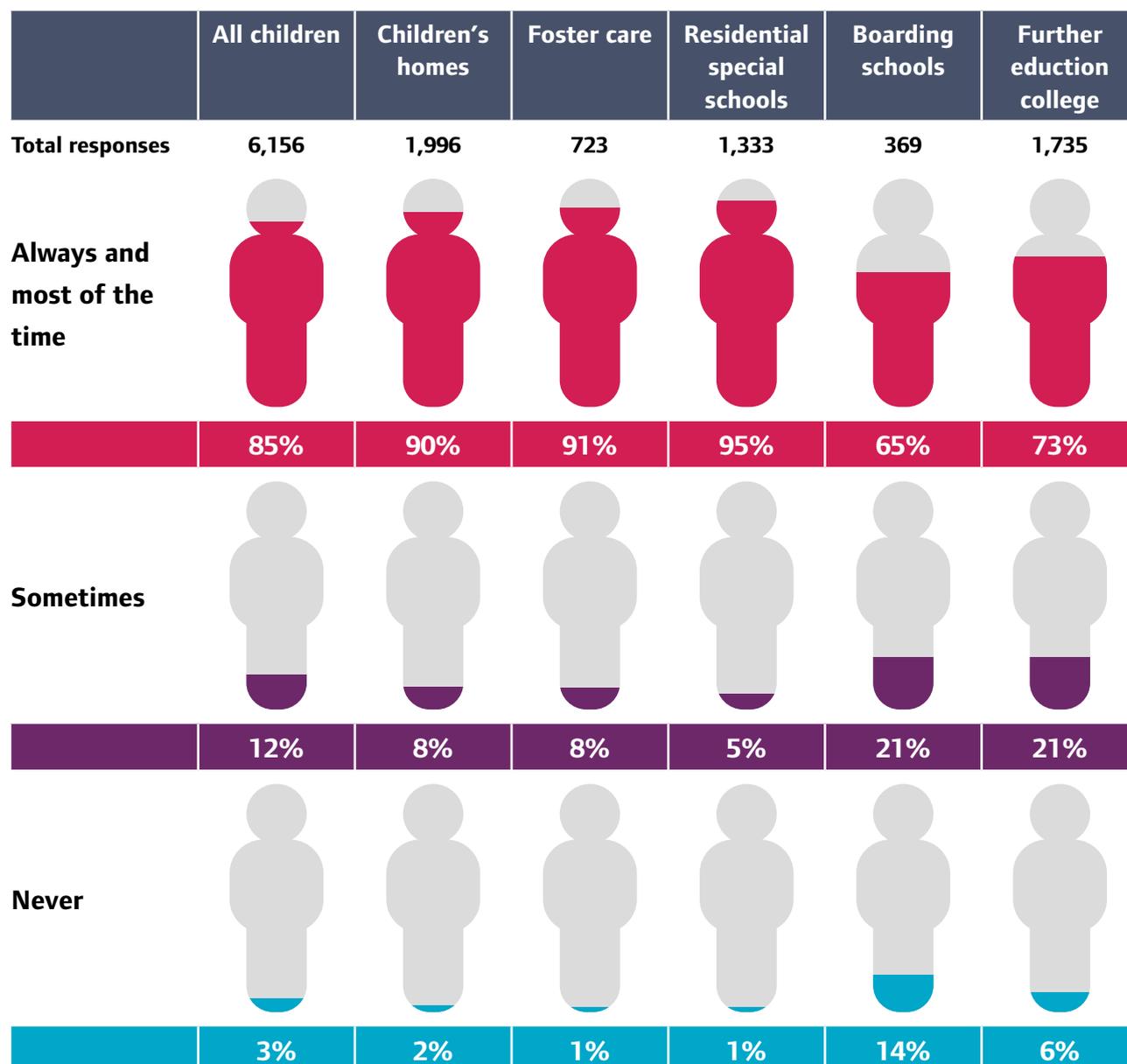
(children's home row 5946)

Are you helped to do well with your learning?¹⁰

The percentage of children who responded ‘always’ or ‘most of the time’ was 85%, which was identical to last year’s responses.

We asked children in children’s homes if staff helped and supported them to do well in their education and 90% of children answered ‘always’ or ‘most of the time’.

We asked children who live with foster carers if their carers helped and supported them to do well in their education and 95% said ‘always’ or ‘most of the time’.



Quotes about being helped with learning

'I like being here as I feel safe and protected. And my behaviour has improved compared to my behaviour in the past. I am doing a lot better at school now as well from before I did not attend school where I lived before, and living at the home has made this possible for me to improve my behaviour. I also like that I have contact with my brothers in the area I am from. This has all been organised by my staff.'

(children's homes row 6936)

'Staff know me very well and can tell when I need support more than I do myself. They have helped me to re-integrate with school and enabled me to feel support in order to do my GCSE's. They work very hard to consistently give me an outstanding quality of care.'

(children's homes row 10232)

'My foster carers look after me very well. They take me to college when its raining, when I can't go on my bike. I have lots of interests during the week including drumming lessons, snooker, and trampolining. However, I am revising for my retake of GCSE 'O' level english which my carers help me with. I have the best bed ever as it is so comfy and I hate leaving it! My bedding is changed every week and I am fed well. I am also bought lots of clothes. I have fun living here.'

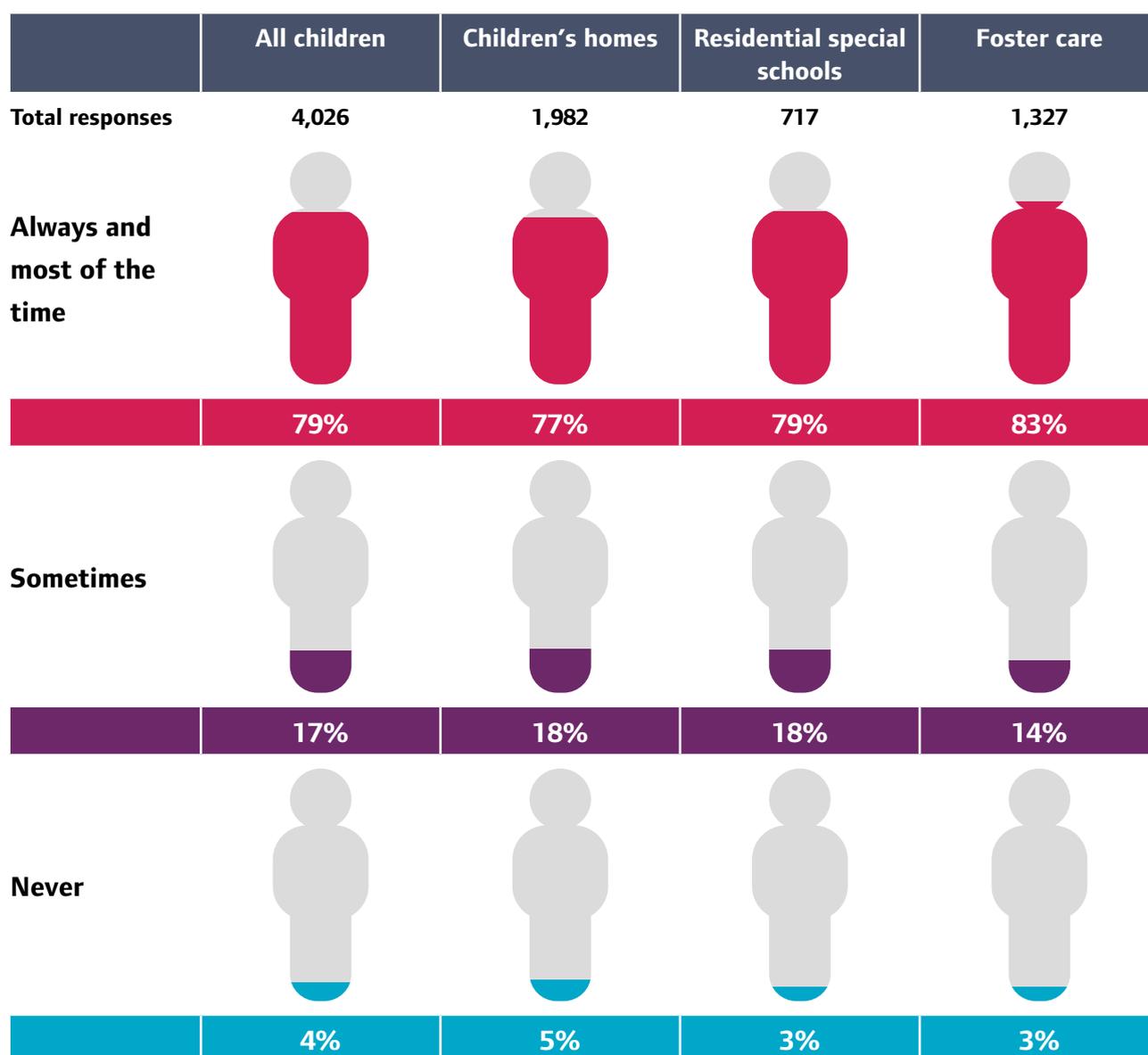
(foster care row 23902)

'My life is a million times better. My foster mum and [name] always put my needs first. She is support to give me great care. I am doing extremely well at school and have 100% attendance with a prediction that I will get 6 and 7 at my GCSEs. This is something I know I would not have achieve had I stayed home. Thank you [name] and my foster mum!'

(children's home row 34260)

Do you feel involved in decisions about your life?

This year, we asked children, for the first time, if they felt involved in decisions about their life. Seventy-nine per cent of all children responded that they felt involved 'always' or 'most of the time'.



Quotes about children feeling involved in decisions about their life

'The staff, my room. I like the look of the house. I like we get our own choice on what to buy in the weekly shop and the menu's, we pick the activities that we like to do. I have started to go back to education since I moved in here. I like my tutor.'

(Children's home row 10537)

'I get plenty of freedom within reason. Get support in the decisions and situations I've made/in.'

(Foster care row 17655)

What do you like about being here?

We asked children what they liked about the place where they live. We are able to see from the themes below that the answers children gave reflect what they have told us in previous years.

At their children's homes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Staff (e.g. caring, supporting, helpful) ■ Activities and outings ■ Feeling safe ■ Friends
With their foster carers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Feeling part of the family ■ Feeling safe and secure ■ Having pets ■ Activities and holidays ■ Food
At their residential special school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Being with friends ■ Activities ■ Friendly staff ■ Food
At their boarding school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Friends ■ Sport activities ■ Independence/freedom ■ The community atmosphere
At their further education college	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Supportive staff ■ Freedom and independence ■ Friends and socialising

Quotes about what children like about where they are

'I love the companionship that I have with my boarding buddies. I also love the fact that everyone is so kind and smiley, they make me feel at home.'

(boarding schools row 1356)

'I like living here. I like sleeping here, I like having tea here, I like watching DVD'S here, listening to music here, I like playing in the garden at the home, I like to go into the playground to play on the swings.'

(children's homes row 29350)

'Being here I feel respected and more like an individual than a foster kid. I am able to express my views freely. I am happy in my placement and my social worker and IRO [independent reviewing officer] listen to my views very well.'

(foster care row 22049)

What would you change?

We asked children what they would like to change about where they live. We are able to see from the themes below that children have given answers that also reflect those they gave last year.

At their children's homes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Other children ■ Better Wi-Fi, longer internet time ■ More spending money ■ The rules (e.g. later bedtimes, more phone time) ■ Larger garden/more play equipment
With their foster carers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Rules (e.g. later bedtimes, more time on tablet/computer) ■ More independence ■ Able to have a pet
At their residential special school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Food ■ More freedom/fewer rules ■ Better Wi-Fi
At their boarding school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Food ■ More access to mobile phones ■ Better Wi-Fi
At their further education college	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Food ■ Better facilities (e.g. kitchens, bathrooms, beds/mattresses)

Quotes about what could be changed

'I would like something to be changed about the peers behaviour around the house. I feel this necessary because there silly behaviour can get other peers agitated and make them feel down and I think people who can not respect the house and the rules should be moved on.'

(children's home row 5294)

'Being aloud [sic] my phone up stairs at least have my xbox in the actual house and be treated like my age because at the moment my social worker treats me as if im 10 still'.

(foster care row 5546)

Thank you to everyone who has completed our surveys and shared their views with us.

References

- 1 'Adoption services' includes voluntary adoption agencies and local authority adoption services. 'Fostering services' includes independent fostering agencies and local authority fostering services.
- 2 Under the Care Standards Act 2000, Ofsted has the powers to inspect these types of services. There is no law to say that children, staff and professionals have to share their views with us through this survey. It is optional, and we highly value the information we receive.
- 3 We do not inspect individual foster carers. We inspect the local authorities and agencies that recruit them.
- 4 In relation to children's homes and fostering services, the responses from children do not solely relate to children looked after. A number of children who are not looked after receive services, for example, children who receive short breaks or are placed under other arrangements. Most users of short breaks are children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities but other children in need may also receive short breaks. The breaks usually have two aims: to enable the child to participate in fun, interesting and safe activities and to provide a break for parents.
- 5 For more on how we use information, see our privacy notice:
www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-privacy-notice/social-care-ofsted-privacy-notice.
- 6 Children looked after in England including adoption: 2017 to 2018', Ofsted, 2018;
www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption-2017-to-2018.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 We only received a small number of responses to these two questions to children in secure children's homes. We have not included this data in this report to avoid the potential for sensitive personal information being identified and to avoid giving a potentially unrepresentative view of children staying in secure children's homes. We have included the responses to other questions answered by children in secure children's homes in the data for all children's homes.
- 9 Children's homes data includes the views of children staying in children's homes, secure children's homes and residential special schools registered as children's homes.
- 10 For children at boarding school or at a further education college, the question was 'Are you helped by boarding staff/residential staff with your learning?'