

Care leavers in England data pack

October 2012



Department
for Education

Purpose of the data pack

The aim of this pack is to:

- summarise national data about children who leave care aged 16 and over and outcomes of care leavers at age 19;
- help local authorities to compare their performance with others; and,
- investigate issues such as age of leaving care and placement stability on the outcomes of care leavers.

Analysis in this pack is derived from data provided by local authorities to the Department for Education through the SSDA903 collection. Data are collected on the characteristics and care patterns of all looked after children including those who leave care, and additional information is available on the experience and activity of young people aged 19 who were looked after on 1 April when they were aged 16. Data on 19 year olds is available from 2002.



Context and policy

Improving outcomes for care leavers is a key Government priority. Too many care leavers leave care with poor educational attainment and end up long term unemployed. However we also know that being in care can transform their lives and give them good life chance opportunities.

In 2010 the Government strengthened the duties local authorities have towards their care leavers. The Care Leavers (England) Regulations 2010 and the statutory guidance Volume 3: Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers came into force in April 2011 and are based on the best local practice.



Context and policy (2)

The principles in the underlying statutory framework are that young people should:

- **Usually remain looked after until their 18th birthday unless there is a good reason to change their status;**
- **be listened to in the development and implementation of their Pathway Plans;**
- **be supported into education, training or employment;**
- **be provided with accommodation which is suitable and safe; and**
- **be given information and advice, as well as practical and financial support to make the transition into independent living**

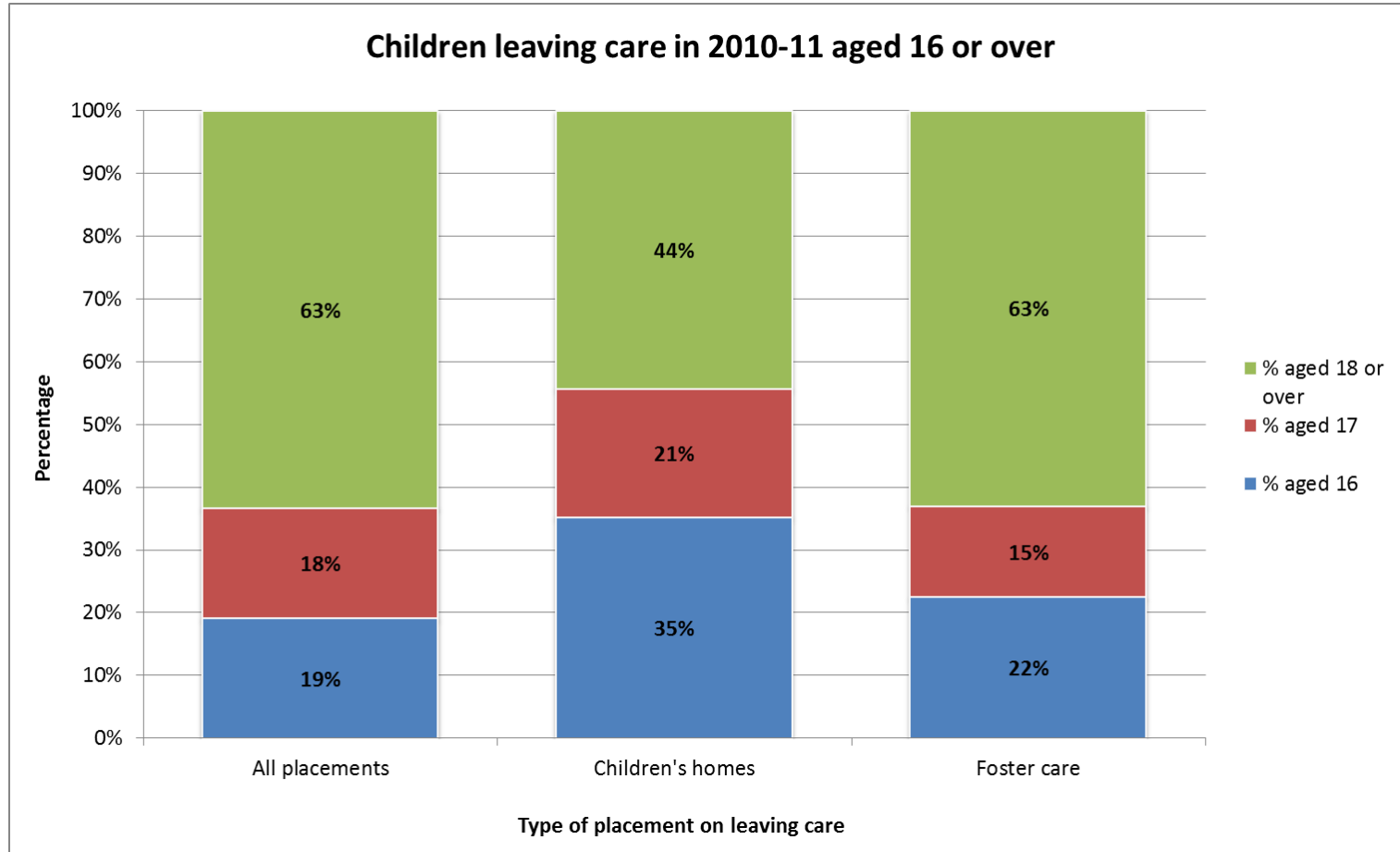
Key Findings

... for young people who ceased to be looked after

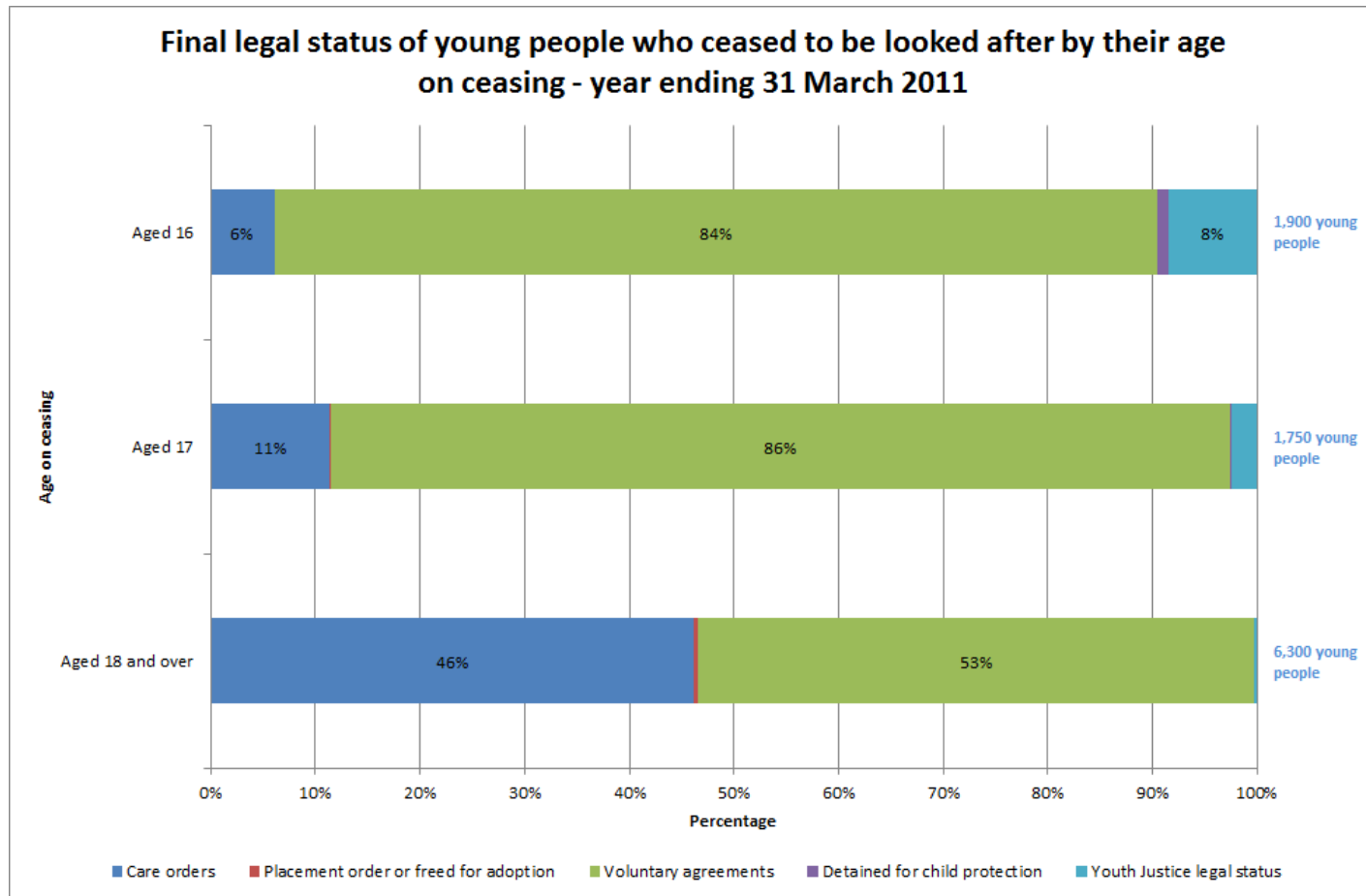
- **The number of young people aged 16 and over leaving care has risen each year from 8,170 in 2007 to 10,000 in 2012.**
- **More than half of these young people (63%) were aged 18 and over at the time of leaving care. 19% were aged 16 and 18% were aged 17.**
- **The number of 19 year olds who were looked after aged 16 was 6,610 at 31 March 2012. This is a rise from 6,290 at 31 March 2011.**
- **2,400 (36%) of young people in 2011-12 were not in education, employment or training. In 2010-11, this figure was 33%.**
- **The detailed analysis in this data pack uses data up to 31 March 2011. To increase robustness of findings, many figures are given as totals for the three years to 31 March 2011. Key headline figures for 2011-12 are now available and have been provided.**



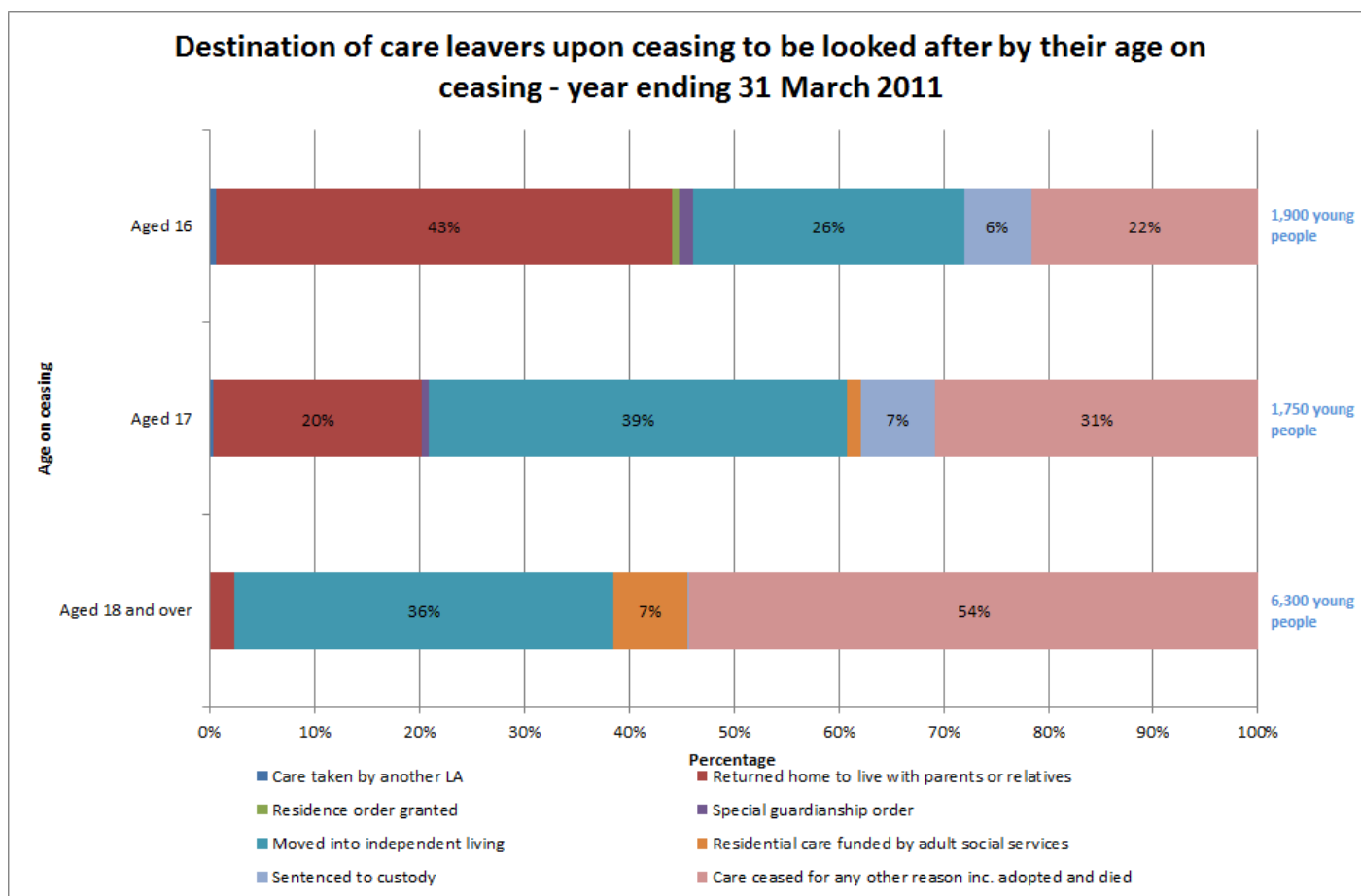
More than half the children in children's homes leave care before they turn 18, compared with around a third of children in foster care.



Young people on care orders are more likely to leave care at aged 18 than those who are voluntarily accommodated.



Destinations of care leavers aged 16 and over varied according to their age. 16 year olds were more likely to return home to their parents whereas those aged 18 and over were more likely to move into independent living or adult social service care.



The large percentage of 18 year olds in the “Care ceased for any other reason” category are mainly those who cease to be looked after on reaching adulthood.



Key Messages

...on Care Leavers

- Too many young people are leaving care at age 16, particularly from children's homes. Although many go home 26% move to independent living
- The Government expects all local authorities to support and prepare young people for adulthood in a measured and flexible way so that young people move to independence when they are ready.
- When young people leave their final care placement the local authority must ensure that their new home is suitable for their needs and appropriate to their wider plans and aspirations, for example located near their education or work.

Key Messages

...on Care Leavers (2)

- **Local authorities need to commission a range of semi-independent and independent living options with appropriate support, for example supported accommodation schemes, foyers, supported lodgings and access to independent tenancies in the social and private rented sectors with flexible support.**
- **"Setting up home allowances" (also known as 'leaving care grants') are crucial in helping young people establish their identity and independence. These should be offered at a level that makes sure care leavers have what they need to set up safe, secure and stable accommodation.**

What local authorities should be asking themselves...

- **Is there enough focus on the young person's Pathway Plan to ensure that it is of high quality and written in the way which suits the young person e.g. includes their aspirations, pictures, messages etc? Care leavers often feel Pathway Plans are written to meet the local authority's own system and not for them.**
- **Is there sufficient focus on the standard of accommodation for the young person? Has Schedule 2 of the Care Leavers (England) Regulations 2010 been taken into account?**
- **Does the young person have ready available access to information about their care leaver entitlements including the setting up home allowance?**
- **Are you ensuring that the young person has a network of support so that they do not feel alone and experience loneliness?**

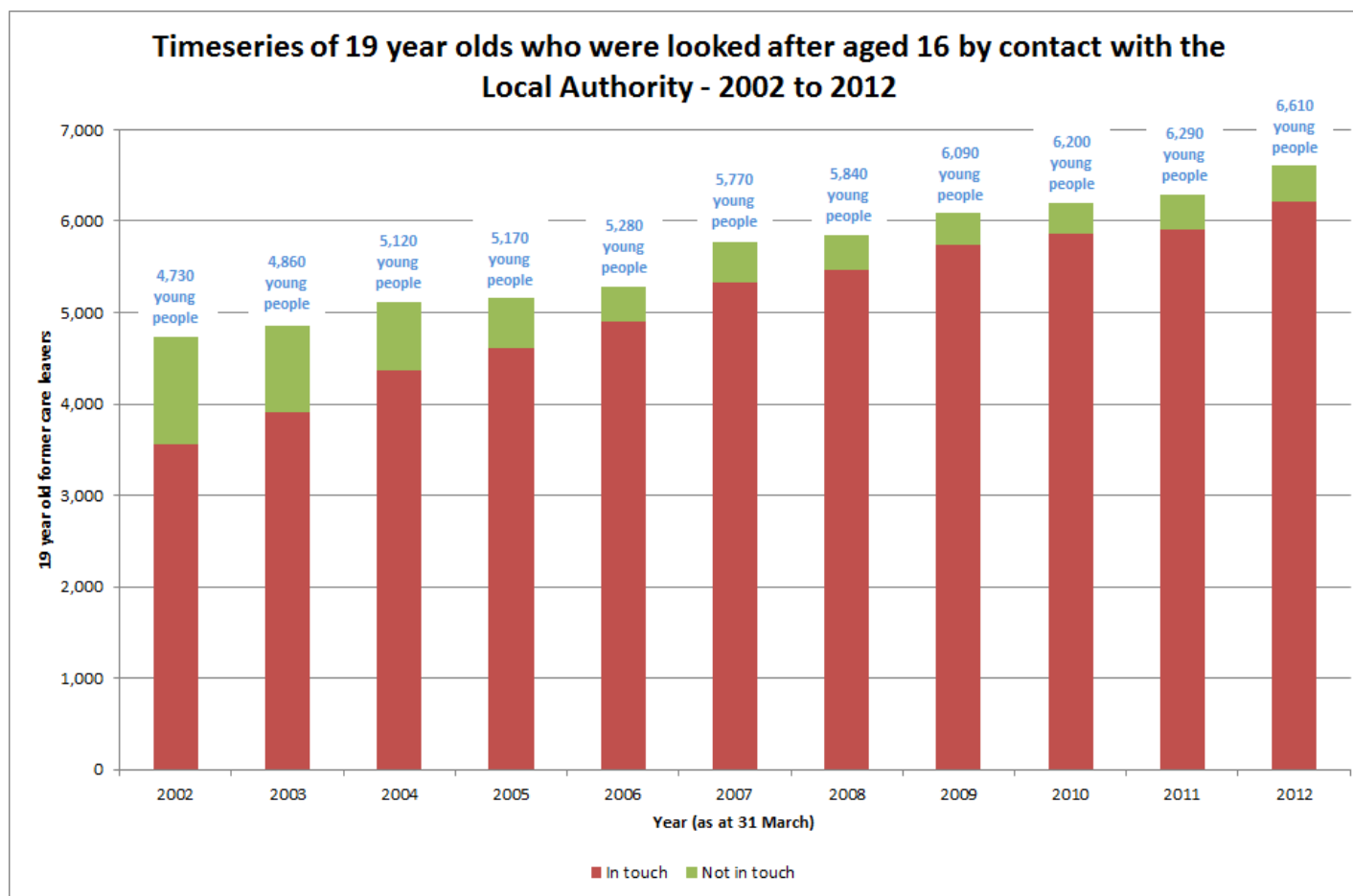
Key Findings

...for 19 year olds who were looked after aged 16 years old:

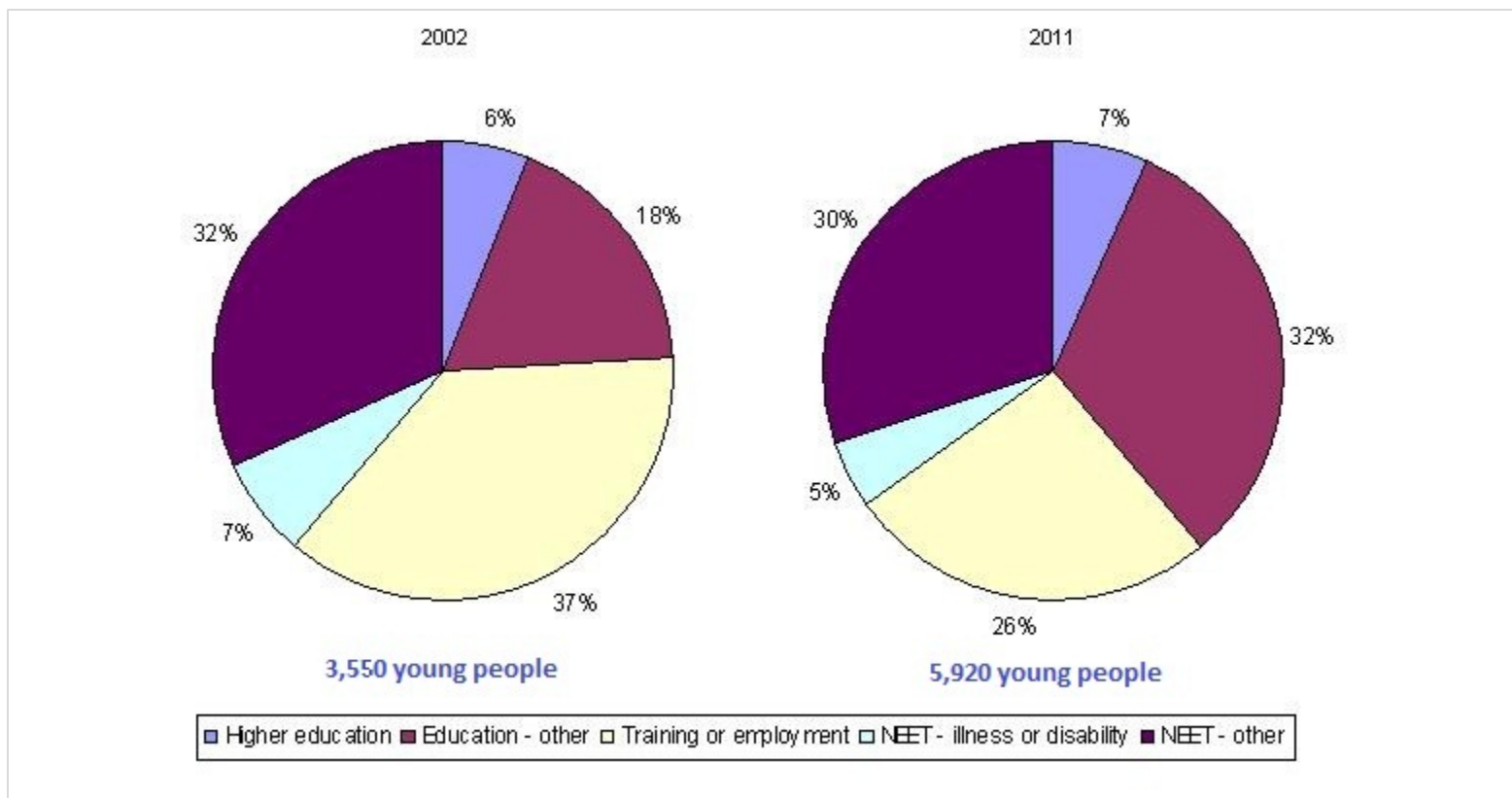
- **The number of 19 year old former care leavers has risen from 4,700 in 2002 to 6,600 in 2012.**
- **The most common activity types for former care leavers are education other than higher education, training or employment or not in education, employment or training for reasons other than illness or disability.**
- **The older young people leave care the more likely they are to remain in education**
- **Male former care leavers are much more likely to be in custody than females.**
- **The most common type of accommodation is independent living.**
- **89% of former care leavers were judged to be in suitable accommodation**



There has been a steady rise in the number of former care leavers aged 19 in the last decade from 4,730 in 2002 to 6,610 in 2012. Local authorities are also in touch with a higher number and proportion of care leavers than in 2002.



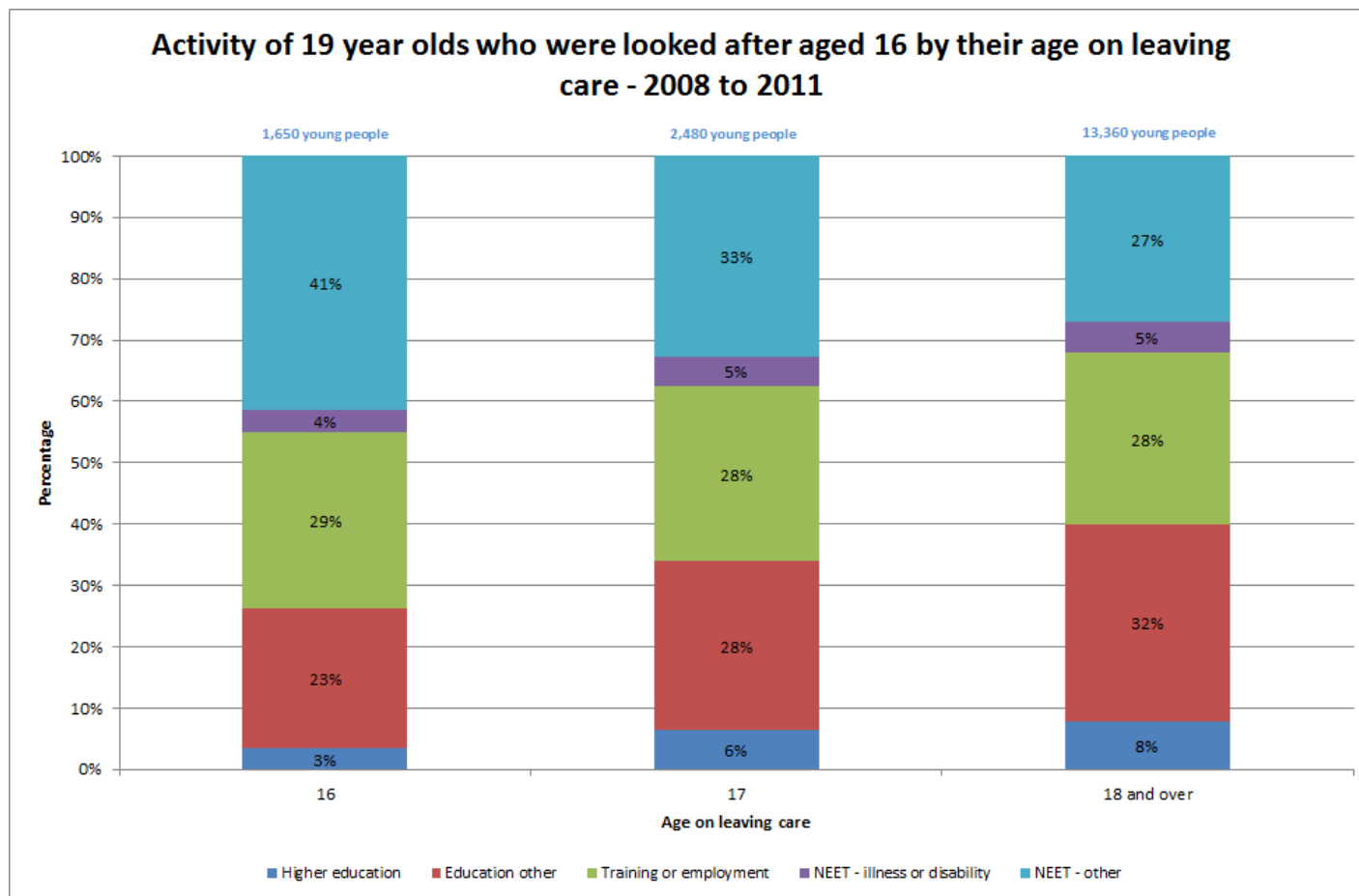
This chart compares the activities of 19 year old care leavers in 2002 and 2011. In 2011, 39% of young people were in education, 5% were not in education, employment or training (NEET) due to illness or disability and 30% were NEET for other reasons. There has been a shift since 2002 from training or employment to education.



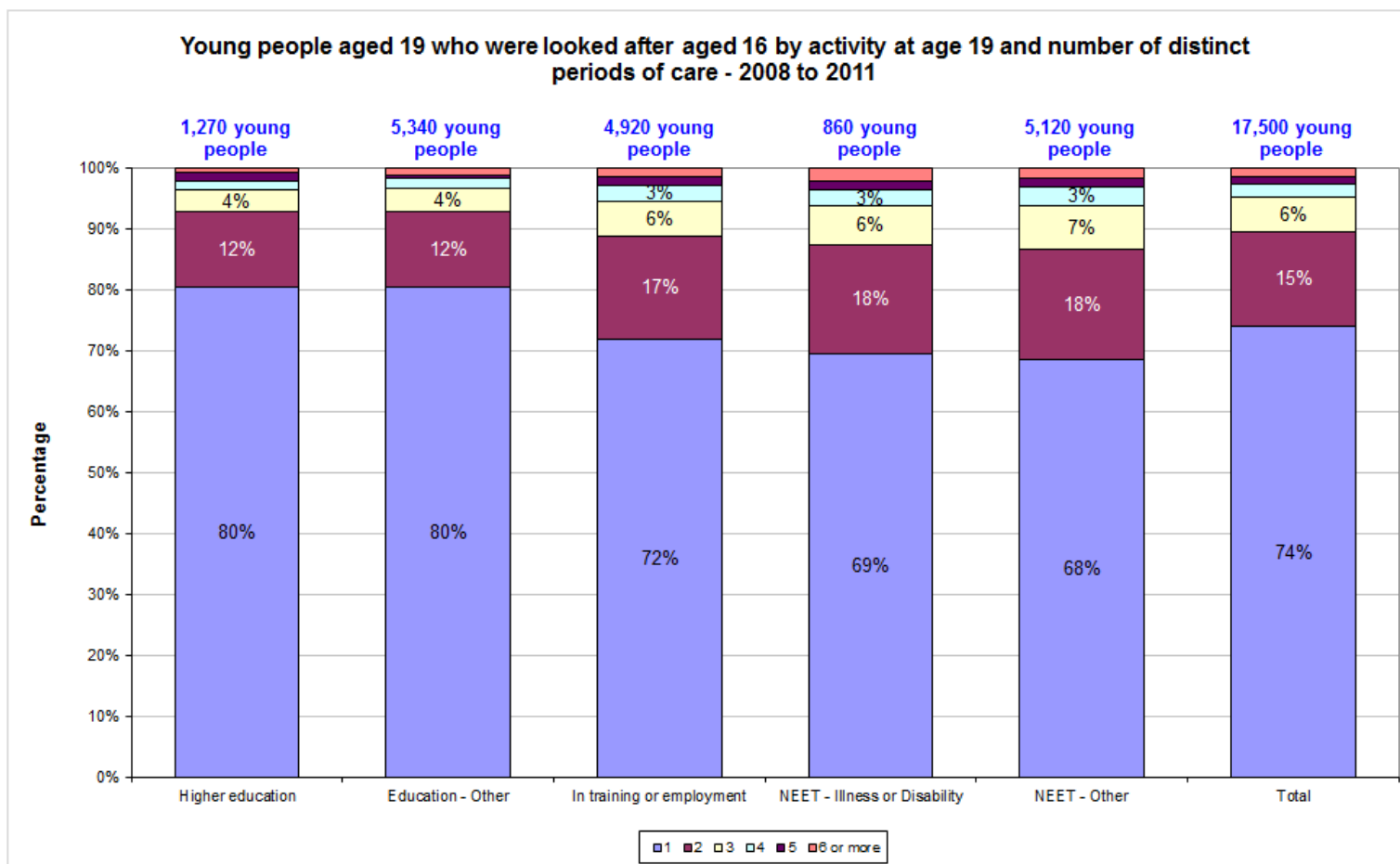
14.5% of 18 year olds in the general population were NEET in 2011 and so former care leavers are more likely to be NEET than the overall population. Around a quarter were in higher education – more than the 7% of care leavers in HE.



The older a person leaves care, the more likely they are to be in education at age 19. 40% of young people who ceased to be looked after aged 18 and over are in education compared to 26% of those who left care aged 16.



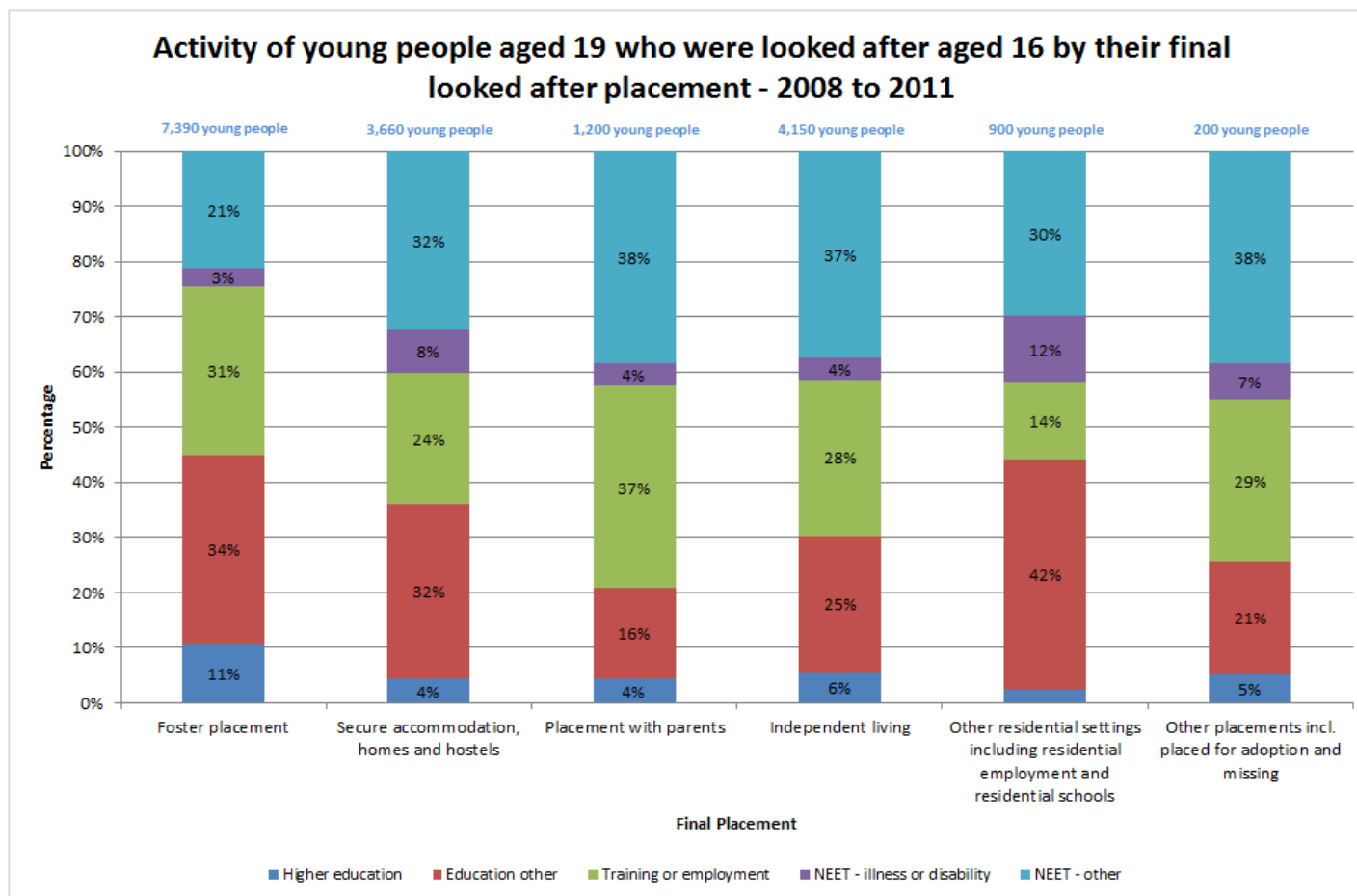
Young people in education at age 19 are more likely to have had stable care periods than those in other activities. 80% of young care leavers in higher or other types of education had a single period of care compared with 72% of those in training or employment and 69% of those who were NEET.



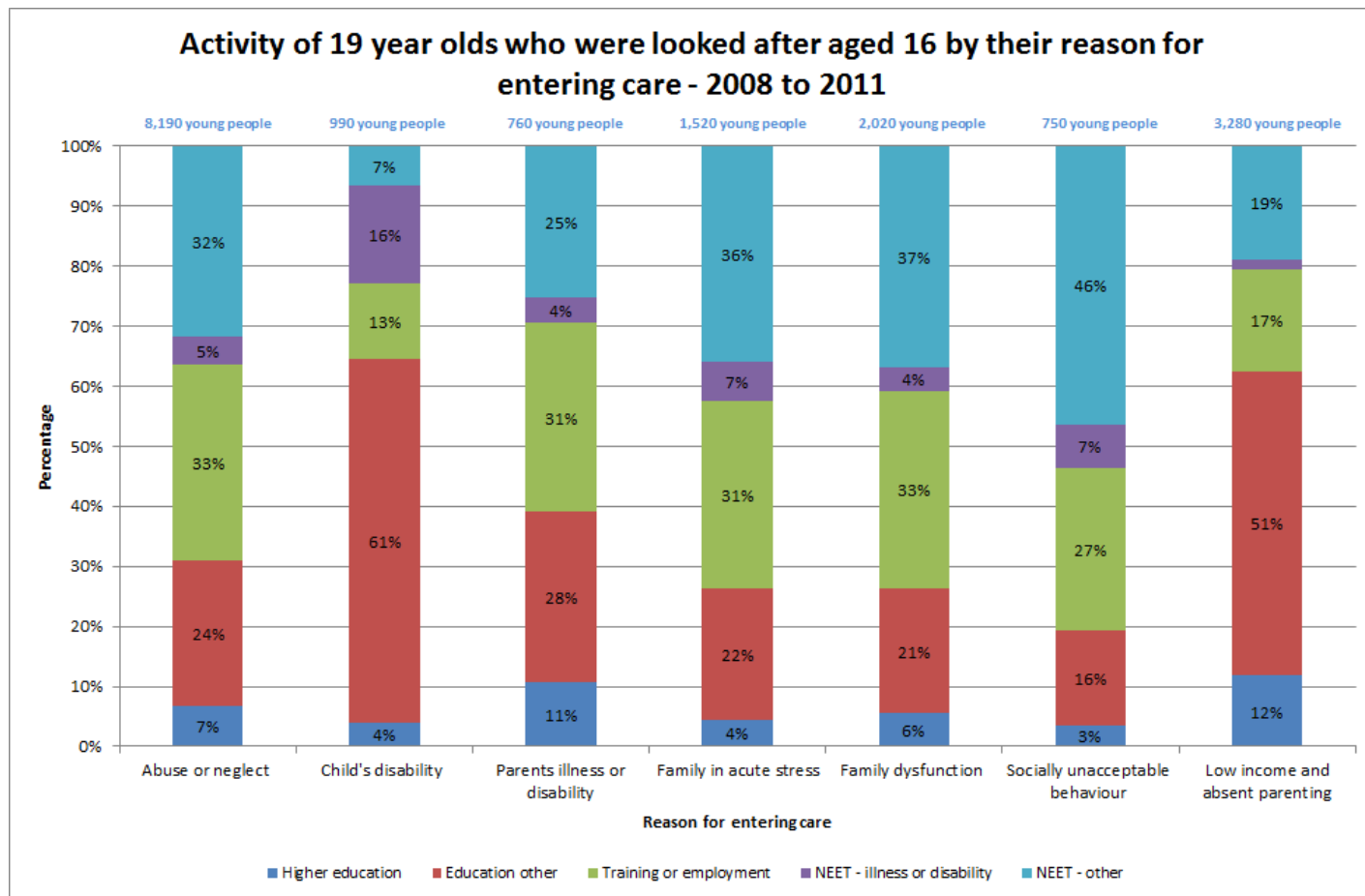
A very similar pattern is obvious when looking at the number of distinct placements within the most recent period of care. Young people with more than one placement were more likely to be NEET than those with a single placement.



Young people who were in foster placements immediately before leaving care are the most likely to be in higher education aged 19.

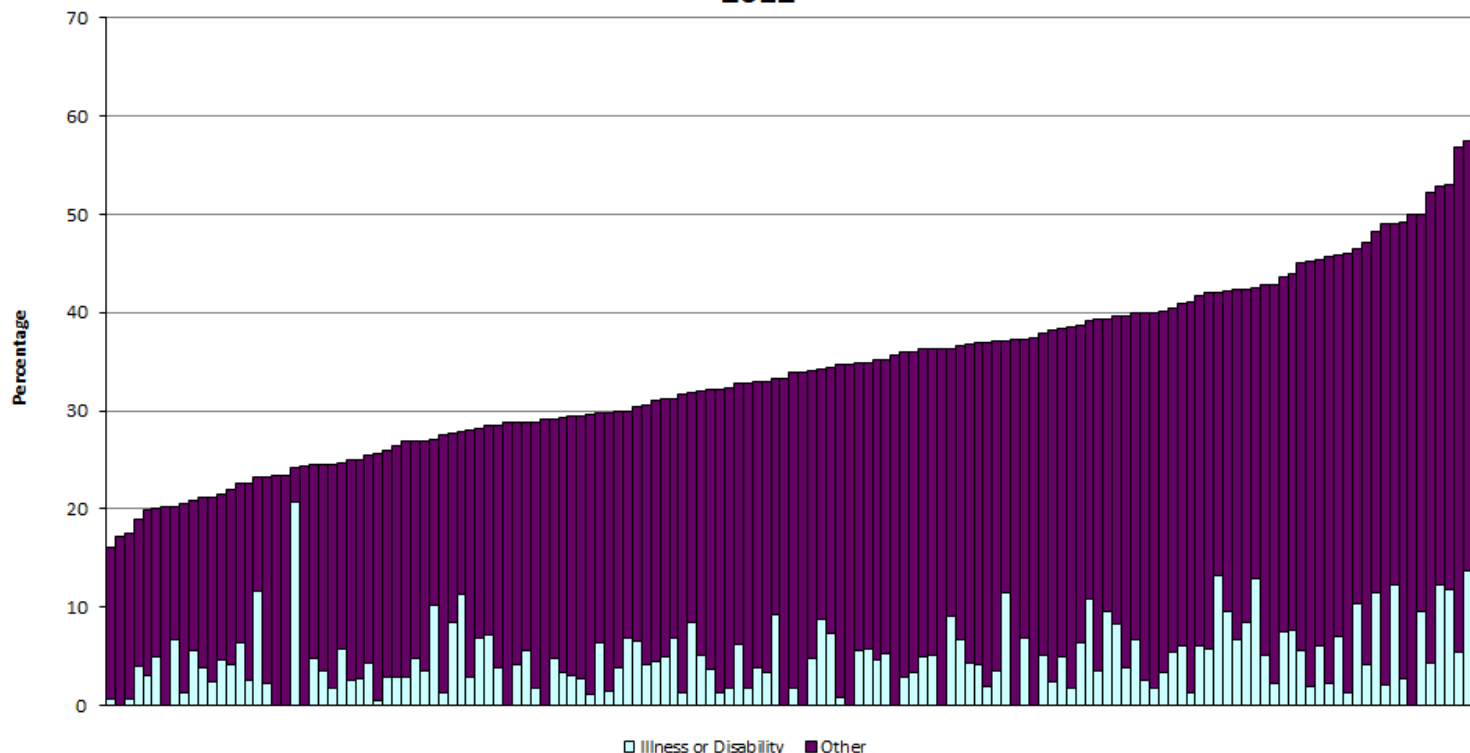


Young people who entered care due to socially unacceptable behaviour when they started to be looked after were the most likely to be NEET at age 19.



34% of former care leavers were not in education, employment or training. Across local authorities, the proportion ranged from 16% to 62%. There is also considerable variation in the proportion of young people who are NEET due to illness or disability.

Percentage of young people aged 19 who were looked after aged 16 who were not in education, employment or training by Local Authority - 2009 to 2012

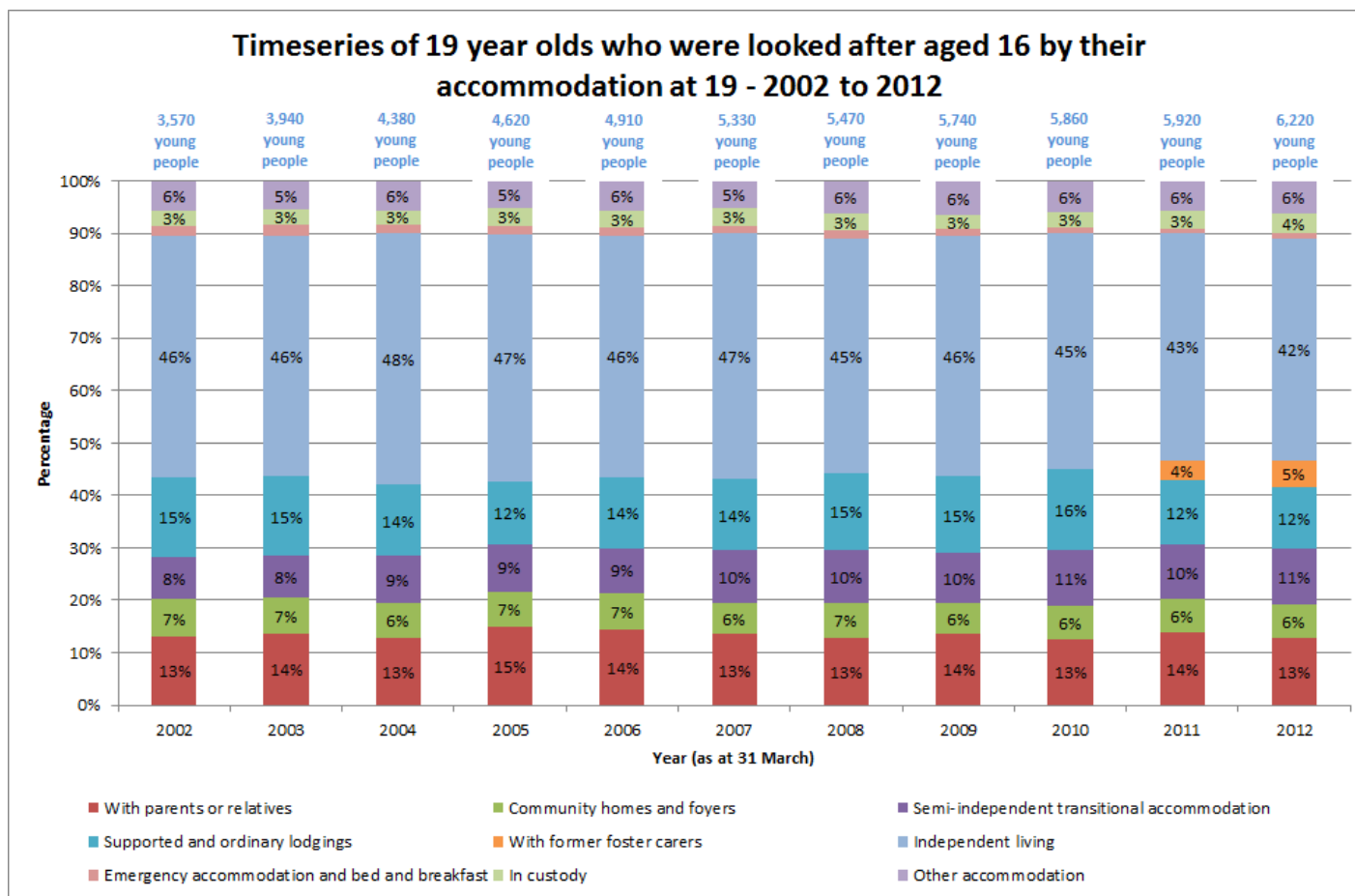


Local authority figures ranged from 16% to 62%.

Figures are taken from analysis as part of children in care performance tables and so denominators for these percentages include those not in touch with the local authority.



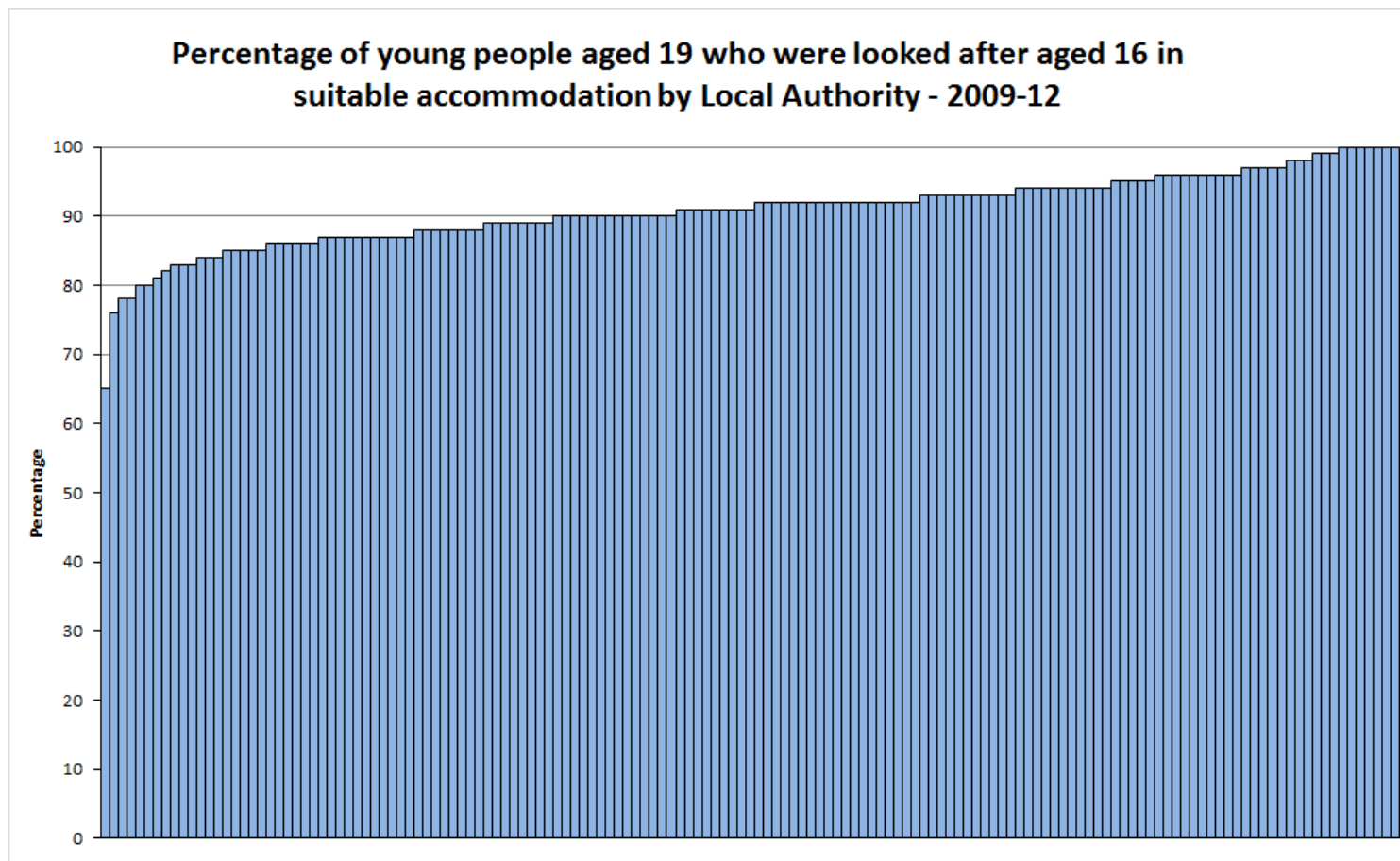
Care leavers are most likely to be living in independent accommodation (including that provided by a college or university or flat-sharing). Former foster carers were collected for the first time in 2011 and so are not available for previous years. There is little change in the distribution of accommodation types of young people since 2002.



Excluding former foster carers, the biggest rise in accommodation types are of those in semi-independent transitional accommodation from 8% to 11%. Information and definitions of accommodation types can be found in the [Guidance Notes for Looked After Children](#) in section 3.6.20.



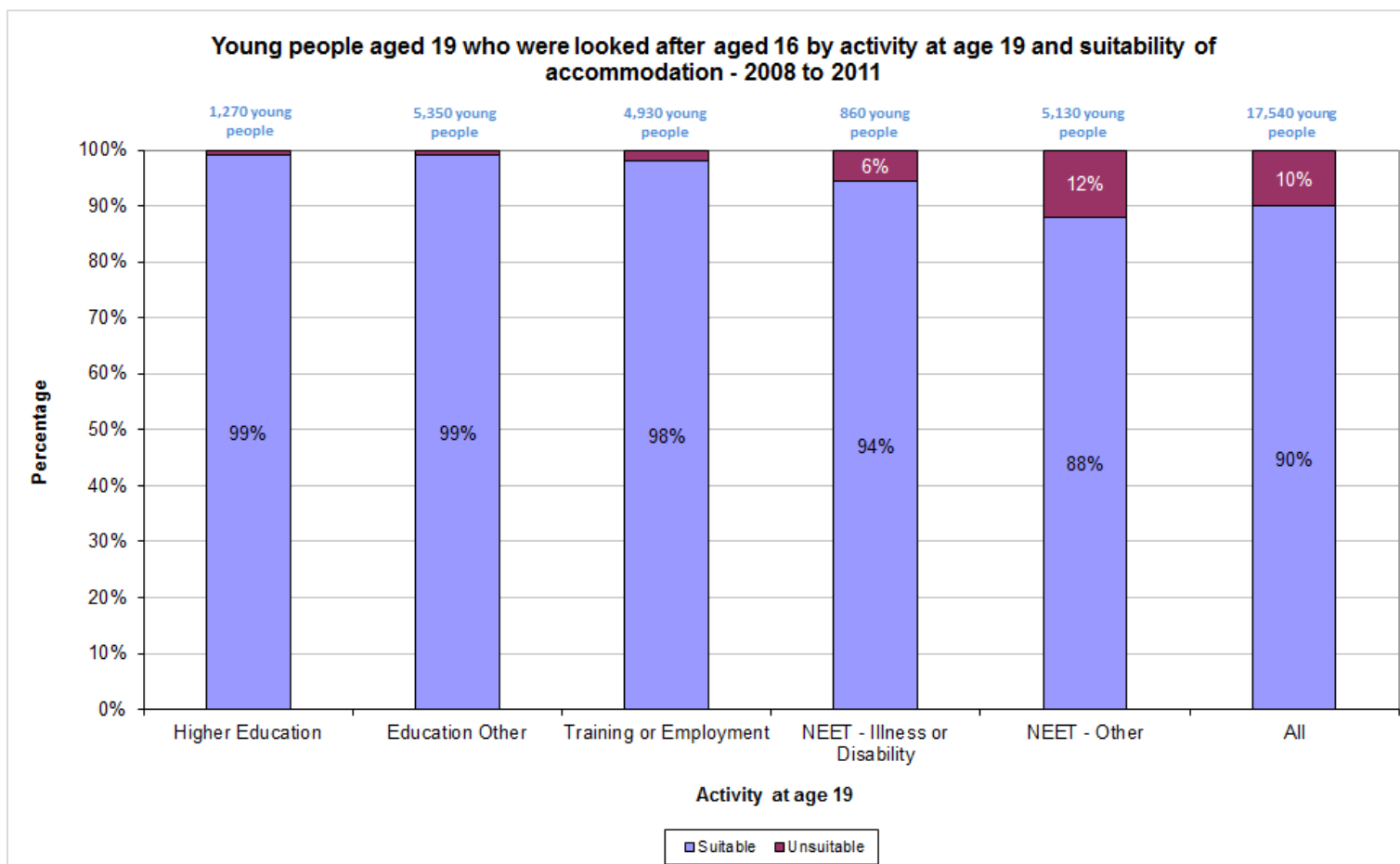
89% of care leavers aged 19 between 1 April 2009 and 31 March 2012 were judged to be in suitable accommodation. This showed a range between Local Authorities from 65% to 100%.



Local authority figures ranged from 65% to 100%.

Figures are taken from analysis as part of children in care performance tables and so denominators for these percentages include those not in touch with the local authority.

Young people in education, whether higher education or other types of education, were most likely to be in suitable accommodation (less than 1% deemed to be unsuitable). Those not in education, employment or training (NEET) for reasons other than illness or disability were the most likely (12% unsuitable).



Key Messages

...on Supporting Young People in Education

- **There is a link between stable placements whilst in care and being in education training or employment.**
- **One of the key indicators of future economic well-being is the level of education and training that a person achieves. Financial support and policies should encourage young people to remain engaged in education, take up training opportunities and undertake activities aimed at improving employability.**
- **The Department has been funding the FromCare2Work programme run by National Care Advisory Service which provides care leavers with employment opportunities. Local authorities should actively work with the programme.**
- **A new 16-19 Bursary scheme began in 2011. Looked after young people and care leavers should receive a guaranteed £1,200 bursary if they stay in full-time education.**



Key Messages

...on Supporting Young People in Education (2)

- **Local authorities have a duty to pay a HE bursary of £2,000 to any care leaver (or 'former relevant child' to use the technical term) who started a course of higher education after September 2008.**
- **Local authorities should to compare themselves with other local authorities. There is wide variation in the number of care leavers who are NEET or living in suitable accommodation. The National Care Advisory Service Benchmarking Forum includes over 50 local authorities who work together to tackle shared problems and share best practice. Local authorities should consider joining the Forum.**
- **Buttle UK has developed a care leavers Quality Mark for higher and further education institutions, who actively support them during their period of study. Local authorities should ensure care leavers know about the Quality Mark and which institutions have reached the Quality Mark standard.**



What local authorities should be asking themselves...

- **Is there enough focus on the young person's Pathway Plan to ensure that it clearly maps out the needs and ambitions of the young person?**
- **Does the young person have readily available access to information about their care leaver entitlements, including financial support for further/higher education?**
- **Does the young person know about the 16-19 Bursary and are they encouraged to stay on in full-time education to 19?**
- **Does the young person know about the HE Bursary if they are considering going to university?**

Future analysis and next steps

- **The Department is assessing the possibility of matching data on care leavers to comparative data for the general population of young people.**
- **Local authorities now have a duty to provide Personal Advisers to care leavers up to the age of 25.**
- **The Department has just agreed changes to the looked after children data collection from 2013-14 onwards to collect information on activity and accommodation of former care leavers at the ages of 20 and 21.**



More information on Figures in Pack

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Further information on care leavers can be found in the Statistical First Release Children Looked After by Local Authorities in England (including adoption and care leavers) – year ending 31 March 2012 at:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s001084/index.shtml>

