

Children's social care questionnaires 2018

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



Background

We use online surveys to gather views about children's homes, secure children's homes, adoption services, fostering services¹ and 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 2018, the surveys were open during three separate points in time between May and November.⁵

We wrote to all local authorities across the country and received responses from 26,546 individuals in total.

The surveys we sent out in 2018 differed slightly from what we produced in previous years. We reduced the number of questions we asked and focused on the most important things we wanted to know about. The questions in 2018 were thematic in nature and more consistent across all the groups we addressed.

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.⁶

This is the fourth year that we have published data and a report about the survey responses. For the first time, we have also published accompanying data for all adult responses.

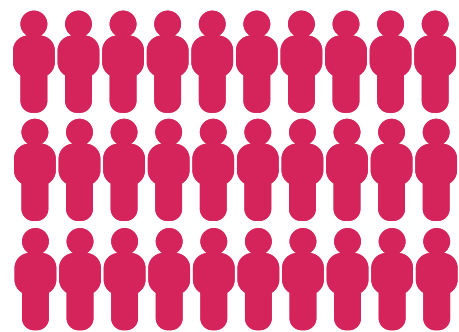
Who are the children we are talking about?



over 11.5 million
children aged
0–17 years in
England



75,420
are children
looked after⁷



3,024

...children told us about their
children's homes, residential
special schools or foster carers.



73% of children
looked after live
with foster carers
(55,200)⁸

You can view the accompanying data here: www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-care-questionnaires-2018-what-children-and-young-people-told-ofsted

What we found in 2018

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

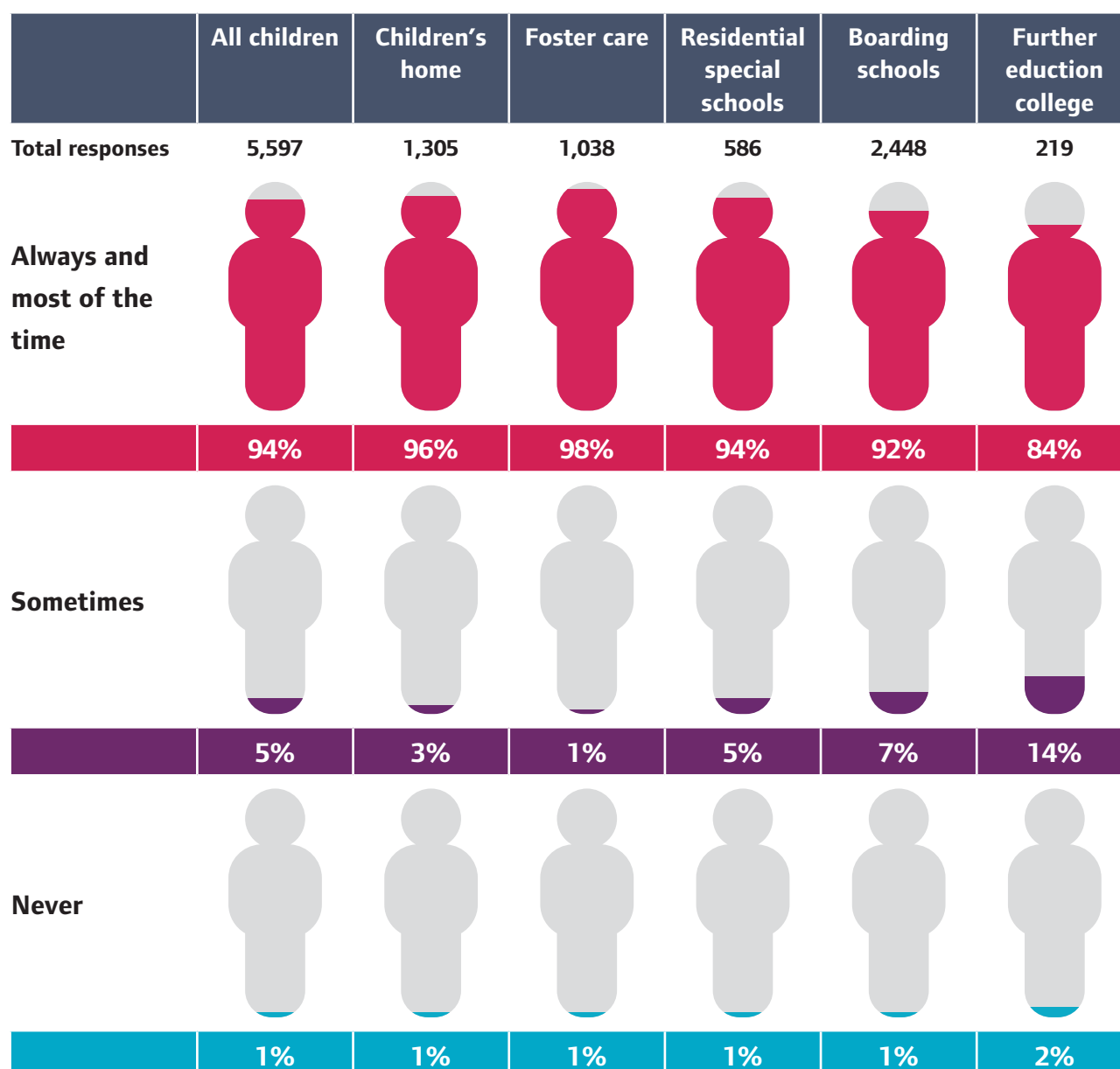
We asked children the following questions:

- Are you well looked after?
- Are you helped to do well with your learning?
- What do you like about being here?
- What would you change?

Are you well looked after?

In 2018, we asked children if they were well looked after by staff/foster carers. Children were also asked this question in the survey sent out in 2017. We have found that the combined percentage of children answering 'always' and 'most of the time' in 2018 is almost identical to the responses we received in the previous year.

- The combined responses of 'always' and 'most of the time' for children in children's homes was 96% and for those staying with foster carers was 98%.
- The responses for 'always' were higher this year and more so for children's homes.



Quotes about being looked after

'It's really homey. They do their best to make you feel loved, safe and welcome. The staff is nice almost to a fault and we're given everything we need.'

(boarding schools row 23530)

'I can talk freely to my carers. I am provided with everything I need and I am cared for always. I am taught of how to keep safe and if I am unsure of anything I can ask my carers. I am taught of how to cook, clean my room, help with the shopping, and also save some money.'

(foster care row 8834)

'I like residential time because I like when if you've got a problem you can talk to your Key Worker and they also do a catch up with you and you can tell them about how your day has been – it's a nice thing to do... Staff are always there and they always help you if you get stuck. I really like how if you've got a problem you can tell them.'

(residential special schools row 610)

'I like being here because I get the right support to help me succeed in preparing for my future and staff help me with everyday challenges... Staff encourage me to do things outside of my comfort zone and help me through the tough times and help me take positives out of negative behaviour I might display.'

(children's homes row 6339)

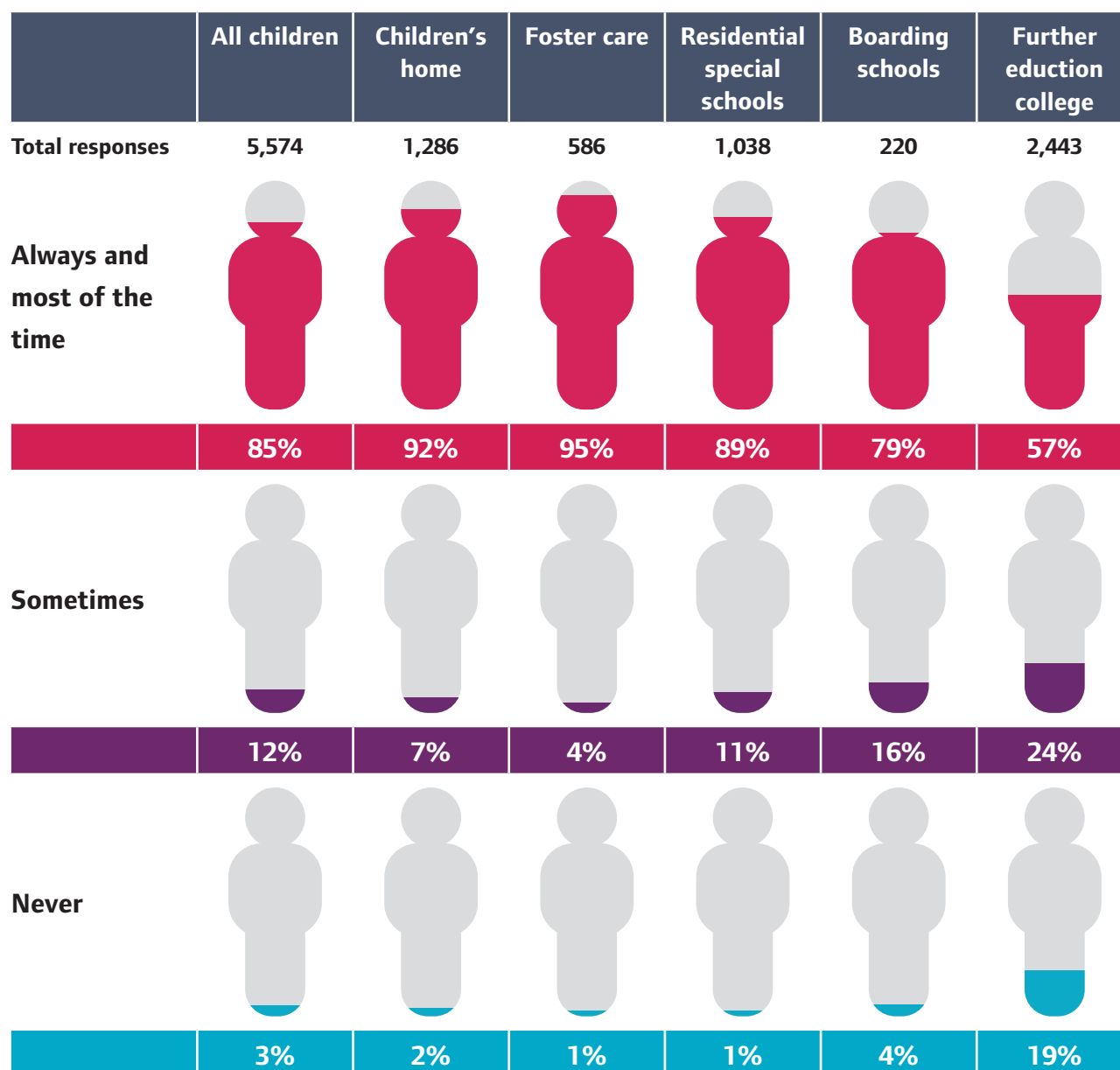
'... If you have any problems that they would always be there to listen and if your in the right they will stand in your corner and if not they will tell you that you was the one in the wrong and talk where it went wrong and look at solutions.'

(foster care row 13461)

Are you helped to do well with your learning?⁹

We asked children in children’s homes if staff helped and supported them to do well in their education and 92% of children answered always/most of the time.

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



Quotes about being helped with learning

'When I first came to [the home]... I was at a point where I struggled to leave the house and get up in a morning but I'm now attending college and looking for employment.'

(children's homes row 6032)

'I am allowed to learn independence skills, such as cooking, cleaning and budgeting, with the help of a friendly member of staff. I like the ability to be independent, whilst still having a member of staff if need be.'

(residential special schools row 2097)

'[Foster parents] support my love of music and encourage me to push myself to do well in my future. They have always supported my education as I was behind in a lot of subjects when I came to live with them over 2 years ago.'

(foster care row 4015)

'I'm doing good at school now. I can do lots of new things like ride a bike. Learned to swim and have a lot of friends and Certificates. I got a good school report and I feel happy.'

(foster care row 15745)

What do you like about being here?

In previous years, we have only looked at what children living in children's homes and with foster carers have told us in that specific year. We are able to see from the themes below that the answers children gave strongly reflect what children have told us in previous years.

At their children's homes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Staff (e.g. caring, supporting, helpful) ■ Activities ■ Feeling safe ■ Friends ■ Food ■ Nice environment (e.g. clean, tidy, own room) ■ Independence
With their foster carers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Feeling part of the family ■ Feeling cared for, supported and helped ■ Feeling safe ■ Having fun ■ Activities and holidays ■ Food
At their residential special school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Being with friends ■ Activities ■ Staff ■ Food
At their boarding school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Friends ■ Staff ■ Independence/freedom ■ Activities
At their further education college	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Staff ■ Freedom and independence ■ Friends

'The staff here are always here if we need at talk even at 3 in the morning. there is always an amazing choose of activities to do. There is all ways healthy meals for breakfast, lunch and dinner.'

(children's homes row 16551)

'... I feel safe here and i know that the staff team love me and care for me. I get to do things i have not done before. peoepl undertsand me and even if i am upset, i know they will help me.'

(children's homes row 12560)

'I like being here with this family because they support me and they fight for me. They have helped so much in my life and shaped me to be who I am today. The family is very welcoming and treat me as if I was one of their own.'

(foster care row 11175)

What would you change?

In previous years we've only looked at what children living in children's homes and with foster carers told us in that specific year. We are able to see from the themes below that the answers children gave strongly reflect what children have told us in previous years.

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

'... I feel as though the newer children aren't settling in very well, they are silly with each other and more often than not do not bring a happy environment into the house. They sometimes don't make me feel comfortable in [name of home] and that is incredibly hard for me, considering I call [name of home] my home.'

(children's homes row 16887)

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

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 The surveys for residential special schools and further education colleges with residential provision were open from 14 May to 22 June. The surveys for children's homes, fostering agencies, adoption agencies, adoption support agencies and residential family centres were open from 9 July to 17 August. The surveys for boarding schools were open from 1 October to 9 November.
- 6 You can view Ofsted's privacy notice here: www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-privacy-notice/social-care-ofsted-privacy-notice.
- 7 '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.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 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?'.