

BECOME.

THE CHARITY FOR CHILDREN IN CARE
AND YOUNG CARE LEAVERS

Settled at Christmas:

The instability faced by children in care over the Christmas period

December 2023

About Become – Become is the national charity for care-experienced children and young people. We put young people at the heart of everything we do, supporting them to get the help they need now and empowering them to bring about change in their own lives, the care system and society.

Executive Summary

We know through our work with care-experienced children and young people that Christmas can be a particularly isolating and lonely time. Our 'Settled at Christmas' research explores how many children and young people in care are moved over the Christmas period, as such instability is likely to compound the loneliness and isolation many already feel.

Our research found that in England between 18 December 2022 and 3 January 2023 –

- **Over 2,139 children were moved or came into care over the Christmas period (on average 134 children a day)**
 - At least 1241 children who were already in care moved homes (on average 78 children a day)
 - At least 898 children came into care (on average 58 a day)
- **At least 349 children were moved more than 20 miles over Christmas (on average 22 a day)**
- **On average, 28% of children who changed placements were moved more than 20 miles awayⁱ**
- **Data provided by some local authorities shows that some children in their area were moved more than once during this period**

Instability is of course an issue all year round and getting worse. During 2022-2023 there were a total of 57,690 “placement changes”ⁱⁱ in England, an increase from 54,620 changes in 2021/2022. We know that such moves over the Christmas period can be particularly difficult and increase feelings of anxiety and isolation in care experienced children.

While families across the country will be enjoying time together, young people in care are being uprooted and moved, and facing increasing uncertainty. One young person Become supports told us **“Christmas (...) often reminds me that I don't have a 'normal' family (..) I am reminded of how different my experience of the world is from them”**.

These moves can be abrupt, and not the child's choice, which only exacerbates feelings of being unsettled and uprooted. It can also lead to children being unable to maintain relationships, to feel safe and secure, and to remain connected to the people around them. It increases their feelings that they have little agency over their lives and their futures. Being moved at Christmas can be even more challenging for children as regular support services may be reduced or not available and being able to communicate with the professionals looking after you can also be more difficult. With schools closed, it can be harder to find networks of support and if you have also been moved away from important relationships with friends for example, this can make it a particularly lonely time.

This report should be a wakeup call for Government to address the instability children in the care system are facing as a matter of urgency. As a first step, government must make a commitment to reduce the number of moves children in the care system experience and provide the necessary additional funding to boost the number of children's homes in areas that need them, and to focus on recruitment and retention of more foster carers, particularly for those children who are currently not well served by the system.

We are calling on government to make long term stability the goal for every child in care, ensuring that more children are moved to homes that are suitable for them to begin with, in an appropriate location which meet all of their needs by:

- **Government providing a national commitment that all children in care should live in care settings that meet their needs and best interests.** The Department for Education should collect and report annually on the numbers of children who are placed in homes miles from home due to a lack of appropriate places closer to home.
- **Government developing a national strategy for children's residential care** which includes the provision of capital funding to boost not-for profit sufficiency of the right type in the areas it's needed most.
- **Government developing and investing in a national foster carer and children's social care workforce recruitment and retention drive** which addresses current shortages, particularly in foster carers for sibling groups and older teenagers, children's social workers, and children's home managers and staff.
- **Local authorities being required to publish sufficiency plans,** which set out their plans for ensuring there is sufficient appropriate accommodation and care placements for children in care within their local area. These plans should be updated annually. Local authorities should record and report on the number of children who are placed in homes miles from home due to a lack of appropriate places closer to home and collect and publish data about the extent to which sufficiency is being met in their area.

Key findings

More than 2000 children and young people were moved or came into care over the 16-day Christmas period from 18 December 2022 to 3 January 2023.

At least 1241 children who were already in care moved homes (on average 78 children a day) and at least 898 children came into care (on average 58 a day).

Some local authorities reported a higher number of moves than children, meaning some children had been moved more than once in that 16-day period.

The instability faced at Christmas is a reflection of the annual picture. In 2022/23, 10 % of all children in the care system were moved three or more times (8, 640 children in total), with almost a third of all children in care (31%) moved two or more times. ⁱⁱⁱ

There were a total of 57,690 “placement” changes in England, an average of 158 a day, but we know that such moves over the Christmas period can be particularly difficult and increase feelings of anxiety and isolation in care experienced children.

“I usually dread Christmas and I think it exacerbates the grief of missing something I never really had, I think there is a lot of pressure around Christmas and it can be worse for care leavers who don’t have family to spend it with..” ^{iv}

There is some variation between local authorities in terms of the absolute number of children moved during the Christmas period, but to some degree this reflects differences in the total number of children in care in a local area. It is harder to make a clear comparison about the proportion of children being moved in an area, due to data limitations. However, the data available suggests that there is also some variance between local authorities in the proportion of children being moved at Christmas.

The general picture across the country looks relatively similar to last year in terms of numbers of children moving “placements” (at least 1257 children who were already in care were moved over the Christmas period in 2021 – 2022). 34% of local authorities reported a rise in numbers of children moving and 33% reported a decrease – it’s disappointing that overall there has been such little change for children in care at Christmas.

Over the Christmas period in 2022 -2023, more than

2,139

children in England were moved or came into care

31% of children in care in England were moved two or more times in 2022/23

Over the Christmas period in 2022 – 2023, on average

898

children in England came into care

We have included the full data breakdown by local authority on pages 12 - 23

The impact of moving for children

Whilst there can be valid reasons for children being moved, too often moves can be due to a lack of suitable places being available, poor planning or unsuitable matching of places. Moving can create huge instability and insecurity for children in the care system.^v It can make them feel as though they have no agency over their lives, and that their lives, relationships and connections can be uprooted at any time.

It means being forced to create new relationships, routines and adapt to a new home, community and potentially a new school and can lead to children being separated or disconnected from the people, places and things that are most important to them – this could include friends, family, professionals, community, schools, hobbies or interests.

In many cases, moves can be abrupt and lead to children feeling uprooted and unsettled. Quite often, the move is not primarily the choice of the child, which can lead children to feel like they shouldn't get too settled or form relationships as they may be moved and uprooted again.

As our GoneTooFar^{vi} research has highlighted, moving home – and particularly regular moves or moves far away from their home area - can make it difficult for children to develop and maintain the trusting and loving relationships that they need. It can impact negatively on their mental health and wellbeing; and can exacerbate trauma or adversity that they experienced before entering the care

Sometimes a move will be positive, moving a child to a more suitable or longer-term home and in the run up to Christmas, social workers may be going the extra mile to get a child into a good home in time for Christmas.

“This year I moved into my own flat, so it feels like a weight has been lifted because whatever happens, at least I know where I’m going to be on Christmas day. I want to make it feel as ‘happy’ as I can”

But moving home at Christmas can also be particularly difficult for children in care, compared to other times of the year. This is partly due to the symbolism that Christmas represents family time; and the comparison that brings with the upheaval and instability that they are facing, and potentially the separation from their family or the people that matter most to them.

We also know from our work with young people that moving over Christmas can present particular practical challenges. Whilst all local authorities will have staff that are supporting children in care over the Christmas and bank holidays, including on Christmas day itself, regular services are less likely to be available. With schools closed, children won't have the

same distractions, and contact with their existing network of friends through school may be more limited. If they are feeling low, it can be harder to access professional support.

Reasons children are moved

Children can be moved for a range of reasons, sometimes complex, however moves are often the result of “placements” breaking down or no longer being able to meet the needs of the child. This is particularly an issue for older children, and it is estimated that around half of teenage “placements” break down before the young person reaches 18^{vii}

The Christmas period can be a time of additional pressure for many families, and we know from the young people we work with that it can bring anxiety and stress and have a particular emotional impact on them. The added stress brought about by this period may be a factor in relationships, and so “placements” breaking down.

“In some ways I am looking forward to being free from home and feeling safe, but by the time Christmas arrives I will have moved into my fourth home within the space of eight months...I’m scared that the host family I will have moved to won’t want to spend their day with me because they might not class me as ‘family’”

Sometimes an emergency move might be necessary for example to protect a child from sexual exploitation or gang involvement.^{viii} Other factors for moves can include concerns about the standard of care, child protection concerns, or the closure of care settings, such as children’s homes, although this is not common and represents about 3 % of moves in total.^{ix} In a small proportion of cases (4 % in 2023), the move was because the child had requested that the “placement” ended.^x

Older children, those in secure/specialist residential, and children’s homes and those with social emotional and mental health needs are more likely to experience multiple moves than other children.^{xi}

Generally, it is better for children to be moved if the home is unable to meet their needs. However, this highlights a major issue in the system – a lack of suitable places for children to live means that far too often children are being placed in homes that are not a good match for them. This might be because the home is unable to meet all their needs, or it is not in their local area. In 2023, in at least 21 % of “placements” children were placed more than 20 miles away from home.^{xii}

Coming into care

898 children entered the care system during the Christmas period in 22/23 and over the course of the year, 33,000 children will have come into care.

We know from our work with young people what a difficult and confusing process this can be - getting to know new people that you are living with, being in a new environment, sleeping in a different bed, and working out new house rules, all of which can be really unsettling. Quite often, during this initial period, long term plans will not yet have been put in place, which can add to the feelings of uncertainty.

Any child or young person coming into care will have experienced some form of trauma and whilst everyone's situation is different, inevitably there will be strong emotions to manage about being separated from family, maybe including brothers and sisters.

Coming into care for the first time during the Christmas period can be even more challenging – heightened emotions, regular services not available and being able to communicate with the professionals looking after you can also be more difficult. If you have also been moved away from important relationships with friends for example, this can make it a particularly lonely time.

Moving far away

This year we asked local authorities how far children were being moved over the Christmas period, because we know from our own 'Gone Too Far' research the negative and long term impact that living far away from their friends, family, schools and communities can have on children in care – including adversely impacting on their wellbeing, key relationships, education and development. There can be some legitimate reasons why children are moved far away, such as to safeguard them from harm or to move closer to a wider family connection, however too often this is simply due to a lack of appropriate homes in their local area

Of the 105 local authorities who provided full data in response to Q2, which looked at distances of moves, 62 local authorities only provided this data in response to Q1a which asked specifically about children being moved between "placements". These 62 local authorities had a total of 696 children who experienced a "placement" move, and of those, 195 children were moved more than 20 miles, so whilst there are limitations with this data,

"My first Christmas in care wasn't the best and I just spent it alone with a microwave meal, but I remember going for a walk and seeing families out together. Usually no one says "good morning" or even smiles, but on that day, everyone said it.

It made me feel a bit more thankful to know that, while I was struggling, this time of year had enough impact to make people kinder and it gave me hope that one day, I might experience it that way"

“Christmas (...) often reminds me that I don’t have a ‘normal’ family (...). I am reminded of how different my experience of the world is from them”

we can estimate that on average 28% of children who changed ‘placements’ were moved more than 20 miles away. This data is not a like for like comparison with national data, as the national figures only record whether children are 20 miles or more from home (not the last placement)

New Government statistics released on 16 November 2023^{xiii}, show that the number of children moved miles away from their communities and support networks continues to rise. In 2023 more than a fifth of children in care in England (21%) were living more than 20 miles away from home and that number has increased by 62% in the last decade. Almost a third (32%) of children in care living in children’s homes, secure units and supported accommodation in 2023 were living more than 20 miles from home.

Recommendations

This is a national issue facing local authorities across the country, yet despite recent Government proposals to improve the care system^{xiv}, there is still no national strategy to tackle the instability in the care system and reduce the number of moves children in the care system experience.

We need ambitious, urgent and sustainable change to the care system to ensure that all children in care experience the stability they need to heal and thrive. This means ending the experiences of children being moved from home to home, or from school to school, being placed away from siblings or miles away from home – unless it is in the child’s best interests.

Long term stability should be the goal for every child in care, ensuring that more children are moved to homes that are suitable for them to begin with, in an appropriate location which meet all of their needs by:

- **Government providing a national commitment that all children in care should live in care settings that meet their needs and best interests.** The Department for Education should collect and report annually on the numbers of children who are placed in homes miles from home due to a lack of appropriate places closer to home.
- **Government developing a national strategy for children’s residential care** which includes the provision of capital funding to boost not-for profit sufficiency of the right type in the areas it’s needed most.
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- **Local authorities being required to publish sufficiency plans**, which set out their plans for ensuring there is sufficient appropriate accommodation and care placements for children in care within their local area. These plans should be updated annually. Local authorities should record and report on the number of children who are placed in homes miles from home due to a lack of appropriate places closer to home and collect and publish data about the extent to which sufficiency is being met in their area.

Methodology

We sent a freedom of information request on the 20 September 2023 to all 152^{xv} local authorities in England, which asked:

1. In total, how many Looked After children for whom your Local Authority is the corporate parent:

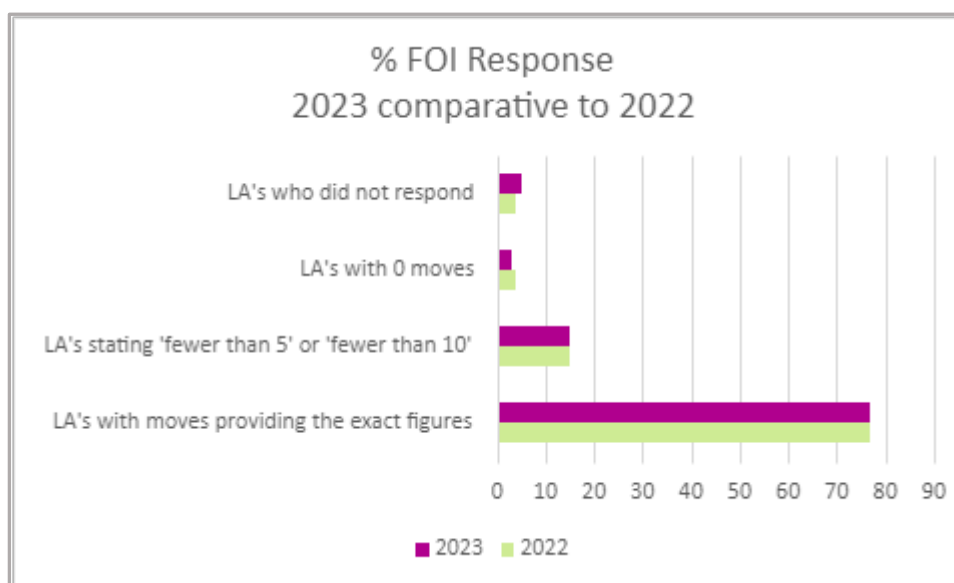
- a) moved from one placement to a different placement between 18 December 2022 and 3 January 2023
- b) became a Looked After Child between 18 December 2022 and 3 January 2023

2. How many Looked After children for whom your Local Authority was the corporate parent, moved between 18 December 2022 and 3 January 2023 to:

- a) a placement that was more than 20 miles from either their home or their last placement
- b) a placement that was 20 miles or less from their home or their last placement;
- c) a placement for which the distance from home or their last placement is not known or recorded.

Following our first report in December 2022^{xvi}, we re-ran the research question1 (a) this year and so now have comparative data to share for this question only.

In total, we received responses from 146 local authorities (a response rate of 96%). This is in line with the previous year (2021 – 2022) where we received the same response rate of 96%.



In relation to children already in the care of the local authority being moved at Christmas, (22) local authorities gave a figure of 'less than five' or 'less than 10' (as they said that disclosing the number could lead to identification of individuals). For each of those local authorities we have counted that as one young person for 'less than five' and two young people for 'less than 10', although the actual number may be higher.

Of the 105 local authorities who provided full data in response to Q2, which looked at distances of moves, 62 local authorities only provided this data in response to Q1a which asked specifically about children being moved between placements. These 62 local authorities had a total of 696 children who experienced a placement move, and of those, 195 children were moved more than 20 miles, which gives an average 28%. However, this data is not a like for like comparison with national data, as the national figures only measure 20 miles from home, not also from the last placement, which may account for why the 28% figure is higher than the national average for 22/23, which shows that across England over 21% of 17,630 children in care had been moved more than 20 miles away from homes (17,630) over 21% of all children in care.

The full data breakdown across local authorities is on pages 12 - 23

Data sources for the tables:

Become's FOI, sent September 2023:

- Number of children moved Christmas 22/23
- Number of children who became looked after Christmas 22/23
- Number of children moved more than 20 miles Christmas 22/23
- Number of children moved less than 20 miles Christmas 22/23
- Number of children where distance was not recorded 22/23

Become's FOI, sent September 202: Number of children moved at Christmas 2021/2022

Number of 'Looked After Children' as of 31/3/2023 - [Create your own tables, Table Tool – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](#)

Number of placement changes in 22/23 –[Create your own tables, Table Tool – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](#)

* There are challenges in accurately comparing the number of children moved during Christmas in each local authority with the total number of children under the care of that local authority. We do not have data on how many 'Looked After Children' there were for the period 18 December 2022 to 3 Jan 2023, so we have included the most recently available data on the numbers of children in care to provide a comparator

Eastern										
Local Authority	Number of children moved Christmas 22/23	Number of children who became looked after Christmas 22/23	Distance from home or last placement of children moved during Christmas 22/23			Proportion of children in care moved during Christmas 2022/23		Proportion of children in care moved during Christmas 2021/22		Number of placement changes in 22/23 ¹
			No. of children moved more than 20 miles from home or last placement	No. of children moved 20 miles or less from home or last placement	Number of children where distance from home or last placement was not recorded	Number of Looked after children as of 31/3/23	% of total looked after children experiencing a placement move during Christmas 22/23 ²	Number of children moved Christmas 21/22	% of Christmas moves 21/22 compared to looked after children as of 31/3/22	
Bedford	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	0	273	-	6	2%	224
Cambridgeshire	2	3	1	1	0	646	↓ 0.3%	8	1.3%	370
Central Bedfordshire	6	4	1	5	0	380	1.6%	Fewer than 5	-	205
Essex	23	27	9	13	1	1164	↑ 2%	8	0.7%	879
Hertfordshire	10	13	6	8	9	965	↓ 1%	16	1.5%	623
Luton	-	-	-	-	-	420	-	4	1%	240
Norfolk	15	25	6	9	0	1213	↑ 1.2%	11	1%	693
Peterborough	14	8	3	11	0	412	↑ 3.4%	7	1.9%	267
Southend-on-Sea	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	310	-	Fewer than 5	-	216
Suffolk	23	6	8	13	2	983	↑ 2.3%	18	1.9%	765

¹ National and regional numbers have been rounded to the nearest 10. Percentages rounded to the nearest whole number. Historical data may differ from older publications which is mainly due to amendments made by local authorities after the previous publication. Figures exclude children looked after under a series of short-term placements.

² Total number of looked after children is those at 31 March 2023

Thurrock	0	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	0	292	0%	6	2%	182
11 Local Authorities	>95	>89				7058		86		4664

East Midlands										
Local Authority	Number of children moved Christmas 22/23	Number of children who became looked after Christmas 22/23	Distance from home or last placement of children moved during Christmas 22/23			Proportion of children in care moved during Christmas 2022/23		Proportion of children in care moved during Christmas 2021/22		Number of placement changes in 22/23
			Number of children moved more than 20 miles Christmas 22/23	Number of children moved less than 20 miles Christmas 22/23	Number of children where distance was not recorded 22/23	Number of Looked after children as of 31/3/23	% of total looked after children experiencing a placement move during Christmas 22/23	Number of children moved Christmas 21/22	% of Christmas moves 21/22 compared to looked after children as of 31/3/22	
Derby	10	8	10	0	0	620	↑ 1.6%	8	1.2%	643
Derbyshire	Fewer than 5	29	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	0	995	-	11	1.2%	1078
Leicester	8	7	4	4	0	630	↓ 1.3%	10	1.6%	302
Leicestershire	7	12	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	681	↑ 1%	5	0.7%	278
Lincolnshire	10	14	7	3	0	728	↑ 1.4%	7	0.9%	520
North Northamptonshire	-	-	-	-	-	545	-	-	-	349
Nottingham	13	7	4	9	0	721	↑ 1.8%	9	1.2%	602
Nottinghamshire	17	15	7	10	0	961	↑ 1.8%	15	1.5%	770
Rutland	0	0	0	0	0	32	0%	0	0%	8
West Northamptonshire	-	-	-	-	-	688	-	-	-	424
10 Local Authorities	>66	>92				6601		65		4974

Greater London										
Local Authority	Number of children moved Christmas 22/23	Number of children who became looked after Christmas 22/23	Distance from home or last placement of children moved during Christmas 22/23			Proportion of children in care moved during Christmas 2022/23		Proportion of children in care moved during Christmas 2021/22		Number of placement changes in 22/23
			Number of children moved more than 20 miles Christmas 22/23	Number of children moved less than 20 miles Christmas 22/23	Number of children where distance was not recorded 22/23	Number of Looked after children as of 31/3/23	% of total looked after children experiencing a placement move during Christmas 22/23	Number of children moved Christmas 21/22	% of Christmas moves 21/22 compared to looked after children as of 31/3/22	
Barking and Dagenham	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	429	-	Fewer than 5	-	340
Barnet	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	0	0	334	-	14	4.2%	212
Bexley	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	0	0	265	-	Fewer than 5	-	146
Brent	10	8	0	10		319	↓ 3.1%	23	6.7%	287
Bromley	7	2	2	5		343	2%	Fewer than 5	-	235
Camden	3	6	1	5	3	197	↑ 1.5%	2	1%	100
City of London	0	1	0	0	0	9	↓ 0%	1	10%	10
Croydon	31	5	7	24	0	531	↑ 6%	5	0.9%	266
Ealing	6	3	1	8	0	297	↓ 2%	7	2.1%	206
Enfield	14	3	1	13	0	423	↑ 3.3%	1	0.2%	214
Greenwich	6	4	1	5	0	414	↑ 1.4%	6	1.3%	218
Hackney	14	6	1	13	0	392	↑ 3.6%	12	2.9%	285
Hammersmith & Fulham	Fewer than 5	6	Fewer than 5	0	0	212	-	Fewer than 5	-	122
Haringey	10	Fewer than 5	0	10	0	370	↓ 2.7%	13	3.3%	216

Harrow	6	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	5	0	179	↓ 3.4%	8	4.2%	112
Havering	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	0	241	-	Fewer than 5	-	155
Hillingdon	3	13	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	351	↓ 0.9%	7	1.7%	121
Hounslow	-	-	-	-	-	322	-	6	2%	246
Islington	5	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	5	0	325	↑ 1.5%	5	1.2%	206
Kensington & Chelsea	3	1	0	4	0	105	2.9%	Fewer than 5	-	53
Kingston-Upon-Thames	2	0	2	0	0	111	↑ 1.8%	0	0%	77
Lambeth	9	8	Fewer than 5	6	Fewer than 5	404	↑ 2.2%	0	0%	283
Lewisham	10	4	1	6	3	439	↑ 2.3%	3	0.6%	244
Merton	0	3	0	0	0	123	↓ 0%	2	1.6%	69
Newham	17	Fewer than 5	0	17	0	411	↑ 4.1%	7	1.6%	294
Redbridge	0	0	0	0	0	315	↓ 0%	6	2%	93
Richmond-Upon-Thames	0	1	0	0	0	130	0%	0	0%	87
Southwark	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10	0	420	-	18	3.9%	295
Sutton	10	2	1	8	1	234	4.3%	Fewer than 5	-	196
Tower Hamlets	6	5	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	0	301	2%	No response	-	209
Waltham Forest	10	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	6	Fewer than 5	343	3%	Fewer than 5	-	175
Wandsworth	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	0	Fewer than 5	0	237	-	Fewer than 5	-	148
Westminster	3	3	0	4	2	182	↓ 1.6%	3	1.7%	98
33 Local Authorities	>193	>96				9708		158		6018

North East										
Local Authority	Number of children moved Christmas 22/23	Number of children who became looked after Christmas 22/23	Distance from home or last placement of children moved during Christmas 22/23			Proportion of children in care moved during Christmas 2022/23		Proportion of children in care moved during Christmas 2021/22		Number of placement changes in 22/23
			Number of children moved more than 20 miles Christmas 22/23	Number of children moved less than 20 miles Christmas 22/23	Number of children where distance was not recorded 22/23	Number of Looked after children as of 31/3/23	% of total looked after children experiencing a placement move during Christmas 22/23	Number of children moved Christmas 21/22	% of Christmas moves 21/22 compared to looked after children as of 31/3/22	
County Durham	29	26	3	26	0	1067	↑ 2.7%	14	1.4%	708
Darlington	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	0	322	-	5	1.8%	306
Gateshead	14	21	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	0	528	↑ 2.7%	7	1.4%	199
Hartlepool	Fewer than 5	5	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	321	-	Fewer than 5	-	139
Middlesbrough	13	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	0	513	2.5%	13	2.5%	383
Newcastle-Upon-Tyne	11	9	2	9	0	635	↑ 1.7%	6	0.8%	352
North Tyneside	6	5	-	-	-	360	↑ 1.6%	6	1.1%	305
Northumberland	6	7	3	10	0	450	↓ 1.3%	5	1.6%	336
Redcar and Cleveland	2	8	0	2	0	399	↓ 0.5%	5	1.4%	254
South Tyneside	4	6	0	10	1	310	↑ 1.2%	2	0.7%	163
Stockton on Tees	11	4	4	7	0	574	↓ 1.9%	12	2%	376
Sunderland	2	2	1	1	0	500	↓ 0.4%	18	3.2%	375
12 Local Authorities	>100	>95				5979		94		3896

North West										
Local Authority	Number of children moved Christmas 22/23	Number of children who became looked after Christmas 22/23	Distance from home or last placement of children moved during Christmas 22/23			Proportion of children in care moved during Christmas 2022/23		Proportion of children in care moved during Christmas 2021/22		Number of placement changes in 22/23
			Number of children moved more than 20 miles Christmas 22/23	Number of children moved less than 20 miles Christmas 22/23	Number of children where distance was not recorded 22/23	Number of Looked after children as of 31/3/23	% of total looked after children experiencing a placement move during Christmas 22/23	Number of children moved Christmas 21/22	% of Christmas moves 21/22 compared to looked after children as of 31/3/22	
Blackburn with Darwen	9	1	2	6	1	355	↓ 2.5%	13	3.3%	251
Blackpool	16	13	5	24	0	539	↑ 2.9%	11	1.8%	411
Bolton	8	4	0	12	0	562	↑ 1.4%	4	0.7%	349
Bury	4	0	0	4	0	350	↓ 1.1%	11	3%	234
Cheshire East	13	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	16	0	580	↑ 2.2%	5	0.9%	412
Cheshire West and Chester	6	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	5	0	589	↓ 1%	9	1.6%	332
Cumberland*	7	6	5	7	1	-	-	-	-	-
Halton	-	-	-	-	-	386	-	-	-	238
Knowsley	1	8	0	1	0	328	0.3%	-	-	155
Lancashire	9	17	3	6	0	1875	↓ 0.4%	21	1%	1131
Liverpool	25	5	6	19	0	1477	↑ 1.7%	19	1.1%	890
Manchester	18	21	2	25	10	1332	↓ 1.4%	27	1.9%	905
Oldham	-	-	-	-	-	539	-	25	4.6%	345
Rochdale	9	3	1	9	0	602	↓ 0%	4	0.7%	340
Salford	9	6	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	0	554	↓ 1.1%	10	1.7%	402
Sefton	7	2	1	6	0	611	0.3%	-	-	351

St Helens	6	4	2	4	0	469	↓ 0.9%	7	1.4%	272
Stockport	7	7	Fewer than 5	6	0	481	↑ 1.5%	5	1.1%	309
Tameside	4	1	0	5	0	656	↑ 0.2%	0	0%	429
Trafford	5	6	0	5	0	350	1.7%	-	-	138
Warrington	7	Fewer than 5	5	5	Fewer than 5	333	↓ 0.30%	1	0.3%	237
Westmoreland & Furness*	7	6	Fewer than 5	7	1	-	-			-
Wigan	11	Fewer than 5	11	Fewer than 5	0	679	↓ 0%	12	1.9%	435
Wirral	11	Fewer than 5	0	11	0	772	↓ 0.13%	10	1.2%	469
24 Local Authorities *Cumberland and Westmoreland & Furness are new LAs which replaced 'Cumbria LA' from 1/4/2023	>199	>115				14419		203		9492

South East										
Local Authority	Number of children moved Christmas 22/23	Number of children who became looked after Christmas 22/23	Distance from home or last placement of children moved during Christmas 22/23			Proportion of children in care moved during Christmas 2022/23		Proportion of children in care moved during Christmas 2021/22		Number of placement changes in 22/23
			Number of children moved more than 20 miles Christmas 22/23	Number of children moved less than 20 miles Christmas 22/23	Number of children where distance was not recorded 22/23	Number of Looked after children as of 31/3/23	% of total looked after children experiencing a placement move during Christmas 22/23	Number of children moved Christmas 21/22	% of Christmas moves 21/22 compared to looked after children as of 31/3/22	
Bracknell Forest	5	0	0	5	0	157	3.2%	Fewer than 5	-	128

Brighton and Hove	6	5	0	6	0	345	↑ 1.7%	6	1.5%	262
Buckinghamshire	13	7	6	6	1	497	↑ 2.6%	5	0.9%	380
East Sussex	12	Between 5 and 10*	Fewer than 5	12	Fewer than 5	661	↑ 1.8%	5	0.7%	494
Hampshire	11	21	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	1853	↓ 0.6%	46	2.6%	1833
Isle of Wight	2	4	0	6	0	288	↓ 0.7%	7	2.5%	192
Kent	45	31	11	14	20	1942	↓ 2.3%	54	3%	1500
Medway	12	Fewer than 5	6	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	465	2.6%	Fewer than 5	-	311
Milton Keynes	11	9	5	5	0	354	↑ 3.1%	5	1.3%	290
Oxfordshire	7	13	3	2	0	881	↓ 0.8%	11	1.2%	788
Portsmouth	6	7	1	5	0	388	↓ 1.5%	8	2%	249
Reading	3	7	4	6	0	252	↓ 1.2%	7	2.9%	148
Slough	3	8	3	1	7	253	↓ 1.2%	12	5.1%	165
Southampton	4	7	0	4	0	538	↓ 0.7%	19	3.3%	513
Surrey	19	14	9	6	4	1013	↑ 1.9%	17	1.6%	581
West Berkshire	2	2	0	2	0	197	↑ 1%	1	0.6%	143
West Sussex	23	11	8	15	11	887	↑ 2.6%	14	1.6%	733
Windsor and Maidenhead	3	2	0	3	0	151	↓ 2%	5	3.9%	100
Wokingham	3	1	0	3	0	137	↓ 2.2%	4	2.9%	77
19 Local Authorities *East Sussex has been counted as 5 for column 2	>190	>155				11259		228		8887

South West						
Local Authority	Number of children moved	Number of children who became	Distance from home or last placement of children moved during Christmas 22/23	Proportion of children in care moved during Christmas 2022/23	Proportion of children in care moved during Christmas 2021/22	Number of placement

	Christmas 22/23	looked after Christmas 22/23	Number of children moved more than 20 miles Christmas 22/23	Number of children moved less than 20 miles Christmas 22/23	Number of children where distance was not recorded 22/23	Number of Looked after children as of 31/3/23	% of total looked after children experiencing a placement move during Christmas 22/23	Number of children moved Christmas 21/22	% of Christmas moves 21/22 compared to looked after children as of 31/3/22	changes in 22/23
Bath and North East Somerset	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	228	-	Fewer than 5	-	124
Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	0	516	-	7	1.4%	154
Bristol	-	-	-	-	-	732	-	7	1%	409
Cornwall	16	5	5	11	0	565	↓ 2.8%	18	3.5%	544
Devon	18	16	10	8	0	893	2%	17	2%	746
Dorset	15	2	3	12	0	435	↑ 3.4%	5	1.1%	327
Gloucestershire	26	14	8	32	0	864	↑ 3%	19	2.2%	726
North Somerset	Fewer than 5	6	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	0	223	-	Fewer than 5	-	181
Plymouth	5	5	4	6	0	500	↓ 1%	7	1.4%	330
Somerset	17	7	10	7	1	564	↑ 3%	11	1.9%	605
South Gloucestershire	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	256	-	Fewer than 5	-	115
Swindon	7	1	5	3	0	338	2%	Fewer than 5	-	288
Torbay	3	5	3	5	0	314	↓ 1%	7	2.3%	343
Wiltshire	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	454	-	7	1.6%	253
14 Local Authorities *we did not include Isles of Scilly in the FOI	>113	>65				6882		109		5145

West Midlands										
Local Authority	Number of children moved Christmas 22/23	Number of children who became looked after Christmas 22/23	Distance from home or last placement of children moved during Christmas 22/23			Proportion of children in care moved during Christmas 2022/23		Proportion of children in care moved during Christmas 2021/22		Number of placement changes in 22/23
			Number of children moved more than 20 miles Christmas 22/23	Number of children moved less than 20 miles Christmas 22/23	Number of children where distance was not recorded 22/23	Number of Looked after children as of 31/3/23	% of total looked after children experiencing a placement move during Christmas 22/23	Number of children moved Christmas 21/22	% of Christmas moves 21/22 compared to looked after children as of 31/3/22	
Birmingham	27	16	Fewer than 5	20	Fewer than 5	2201	↑ 1.2%	19	0.9%	1330
Coventry	9	14	3	7	0	724	1.2%	9	1.2%	463
Dudley	10	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10	588	↓ 1.7%	12	2%	357
Herefordshire	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10	412	-	0	0%	253
Sandwell	9	1	1	9	0	800	↑ 1.1%	9	1%	439
Shropshire	16	3	5	11	0	656	↑ 2.4%	9	1.4%	350
Solihull	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10	0	Fewer than 10	0	569	-	8	1.5%	383
Staffordshire	26	17	5	21	0	1384	↑ 1.9%	9	0.6%	870
Stoke-on-Trent	5	9	9	8	0	1107	↓ 0.5%	31	3%	877
Telford and Wrekin	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	453	-	7	1.6%	338
Walsall	5	8	0	5	0	650	0.8%	Fewer than 5	-	393
Warwickshire	8	8	2	5	1	778	↓ 1%	12	1.4%	834
Wolverhampton	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	0	Fewer than 5	0	501	-	6	1.1%	203
Worcestershire	13	3	3	11	0	1000	↑ 1.3%	9	1%	658
14 Local Authorities	<134	<87				11823		141		7748

Yorkshire and the Humber										
Local Authority	Number of children moved Christmas 22/23	Number of children who became looked after Christmas 22/23	Distance from home or last placement of children moved during Christmas 22/23			Proportion of children in care moved during Christmas 2022/23		Proportion of children in care moved during Christmas 2021/22		Number of placement changes in 22/23
			Number of children moved more than 20 miles Christmas 22/23	Number of children moved less than 20 miles Christmas 22/23	Number of children where distance was not recorded 22/23	Number of Looked after children as of 31/3/23	% of total looked after children experiencing a placement move during Christmas 22/23	Number of children moved Christmas 21/22	% of Christmas moves 21/22 compared to looked after children as of 31/3/22	
Barnsley	10	16	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	0	400	2.5%	Fewer than 5	-	194
Bradford	23	21	11	33	9	1588	↓ 1.4%	25	1.7%	784
Calderdale	4	1	2	2	0	356	↑ 1.1%	2	0.5%	184
Doncaster	5	8	1	4	0	542	↓ 0.9%	6	1%	460
East Riding of Yorkshire	4	1	3	1	0	350	↑ 1.1%	3	0.9%	214
Kingston upon Hull	5	2	1	4	0	773	↓ 0.6%	28	3.1%	743
Kirklees	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	592	-	9	1.4%	349
Leeds	28	19	8	20	0	1450	↓ 1.9%	30	2.1%	1327
North East Lincolnshire	16	5	0	16	0	575	↓ 2.8%	21	3.4%	425
North Lincolnshire	4	5	0	4	0	188	2.1%	Fewer than 5	-	145
North Yorkshire	7	9	3	3	1	464	↑ 1.5%	4	0.9%	306
Rotherham	10	2	1	6	3	542	↑ 1.8%	10	1.7%	393
Sheffield	16	8	3	13	0	653	↑ 2.5%	11	1.6%	590
Wakefield	11	5	2	12	1	635	↓ 1.7%	14	2.1%	629

York	7	1	0	0	0	262	↓ 2.7%	8	2.8%	120
15 Local Authorities	<151	<104				9370		173		6863

TOTALS ACROSS ENGLAND* (of those that responded)										
Local Authority	Number of children moved Christmas 22/23	Number of children who became looked after Christmas 22/23	Distance from home or last placement of children moved during Christmas 22/23			Proportion of children in care moved during Christmas 2022/23		Proportion of children in care moved during Christmas 2021/22		Number of placement changes in 22/23
			Number of children moved more than 20 miles Christmas 22/23	Number of children moved less than 20 miles Christmas 22/23	Number of children where distance was not recorded 22/23	Number of Looked after children as of 31/3/23	% of Christmas moves 22/23 compared to looked after children as of 31/3/23	Number of children moved Christmas 21/22	% of Christmas moves 21/22 compared to looked after children as of 31/3/22	
152 Local Authorities	<1241	<898	<349	<923	<115	83,099		1257		57,687

ⁱ These are the Local Authorities who have a combined number of 32 or more children being moved (which would average 2 a day over the Christmas period)

ⁱⁱ [Create your own tables, Table Tool – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk)

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoptions>

^{iv} All quotes are from young people we have worked with at Become

^v [Childrens-Commissioners-2018-Stability-Index-Overview.pdf \(childrenscommissioner.gov.uk\)](https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Childrens-Commissioners-2018-Stability-Index-Overview.pdf)

^{vi} [Our #GoneTooFar campaign - Become \(becomecharity.org.uk\)](https://www.become.org.uk/campaigns/our-gone-too-far-campaign)

^{vii} Sinclair, I., Baker, C., Wilson, K., and Gibbs, I. (2003) *What happens to foster children? Report Three*, York: University of York.

^{viii} [The Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/214441/The-Children-Act-1989-guidance-and-regulations.pdf)

^{ix} <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/fast-track/bba7bc5f-fd01-43c9-35a4-08daa20fa891>.

^x <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/fast-track/bba7bc5f-fd01-43c9-35a4-08daa20fa891>.

^{xi} [cco-stability-index-2020.pdf \(childrenscommissioner.gov.uk\)](https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/ccs-stability-index-2020.pdf)

^{xii} <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption-2021-to-2022>

^{xiii} [Create your own tables, Table Tool – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk)

^{xiv} ^{xiv} [Children's Social Care: Stable Homes, Built on Love consultation response \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/91444/Childrens-Social-Care-Stable-Homes-Built-on-Love-consultation-response.pdf)

^{xv} The 153 Local Authorities are those in England who are responsible for ensuring and overseeing the effective delivery of social care services for children, not including Isles of Scilly

^{xvi} [Home for Christmas - Become \(becomecharity.org.uk\)](https://becomecharity.org.uk)