

MOVED DURING EXAMS:

THE INSTABILITY CRISIS AFFECTING CHILDREN IN CARE



BECOME

IN CARE.
LEAVING CARE.
WE CARE.

“I had to move to another school like 50 miles from where I started off. They only had Maths, English, and Science. Just doing those every day got very boring and made me go a bit insane. I would have liked to study History, IT, Geography, and Drama. I was going to get nine GCSEs and I only ended up getting five because of something completely out of my control. ”

- A child currently in care, aged 16

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Executive summary

All children need support and stability to thrive in school, in life, and entering adulthood. Our care system should ensure that happens and provide young people with stability at home, continuity at school, and connection to the people and places that matter to them.

But too often, children are being let down by an overwhelmed care system that is unable to provide them with the stability they need to reach their aspirations and fulfil their potential.

Our research reveals a crisis in educational stability affecting thousands of care-experienced children and young people during their most critical academic years. With nearly 84,000 children now in care, the system is systematically failing to meet its legal obligations under The Children Act 1989, which requires local authorities to safeguard and promote children's welfare, including their education.

Findings from Freedom of Information requests to all tier-one local authorities in England for the 2023/2024 academic year show an alarming level of disruption during exam periods, when stability should be non-negotiable.

Over 15,000 children in care (34%) moved homes during years 10 – 13, while more than 5,000 (12%) had to change schools.

Most concerning is the timing of these moves:

- **1,279 (13%)** children were relocated during their GCSE exam period
- **4,077 (30%)** were moved or had to leave care during their A-Level exam period.

These disruptions create a cascade of educational damage, including children being forced to take months off school, missed coursework, dropped subjects, disrupted exam preparation, delays in vital support being arranged and broken relationships with teachers and peers. Focus groups with young people reveal the profound impact on mental health and well-being, with children experiencing added stress at a time when they most need support. Personal testimony illustrates the impact this can have on young people in the care system.

School can often be the sole constant in care-experienced children's lives, yet the current

system can destroy years of academic progress overnight, delay or even prevent access to college, university, training or employment and create lifelong disadvantages.

The Government must act now.

We need the right homes in the right places for children in care and a proper safety net of support for care leavers. Only then will these children have a fair chance of achieving their ambitions.

We're calling on the Government to ensure that all children in care receive the stability they need, at home and in their education.

“

I had six moves during my A-Level year, four placement moves and two going into respite because my foster carer went on holiday. It was Covid at the time and we were being assessed on our coursework and mock exam results we were doing in that year. But throughout that year I had constant disruption. I was moving not achieving. When we were able to sit our A-Levels, in September, I had been moved out of care into semi-independent living, so was trying to manage that and cope with more disruption.

”

We want to see:

- 1. No child moved during GCSE and A-Level years (unless in exceptional circumstances).**
- 2. All children in care moved to homes that fully meet their needs and a national strategy to ensure the right type of homes in the right areas.**
- 3. An end to the care cliff, with no young person forced to leave care in the lead up to or during their exams.**
- 4. Schools and colleges better equipped to support children in care who face instability.**



Key findings:

The instability crisis facing children in care

In March 2025, we submitted Freedom of Information (FOI) requests to all 153 tier-one local authorities in England to obtain data about how many children in care moved home, moved school or moved far from home during their GCSE and A-Level years, and during exam periods. Between March and May 2025, we also carried out five engagement sessions with 70 care-experienced children and young people aged 15-27 to hear about the impact that moving home or school during GCSE and A-Level years can have.

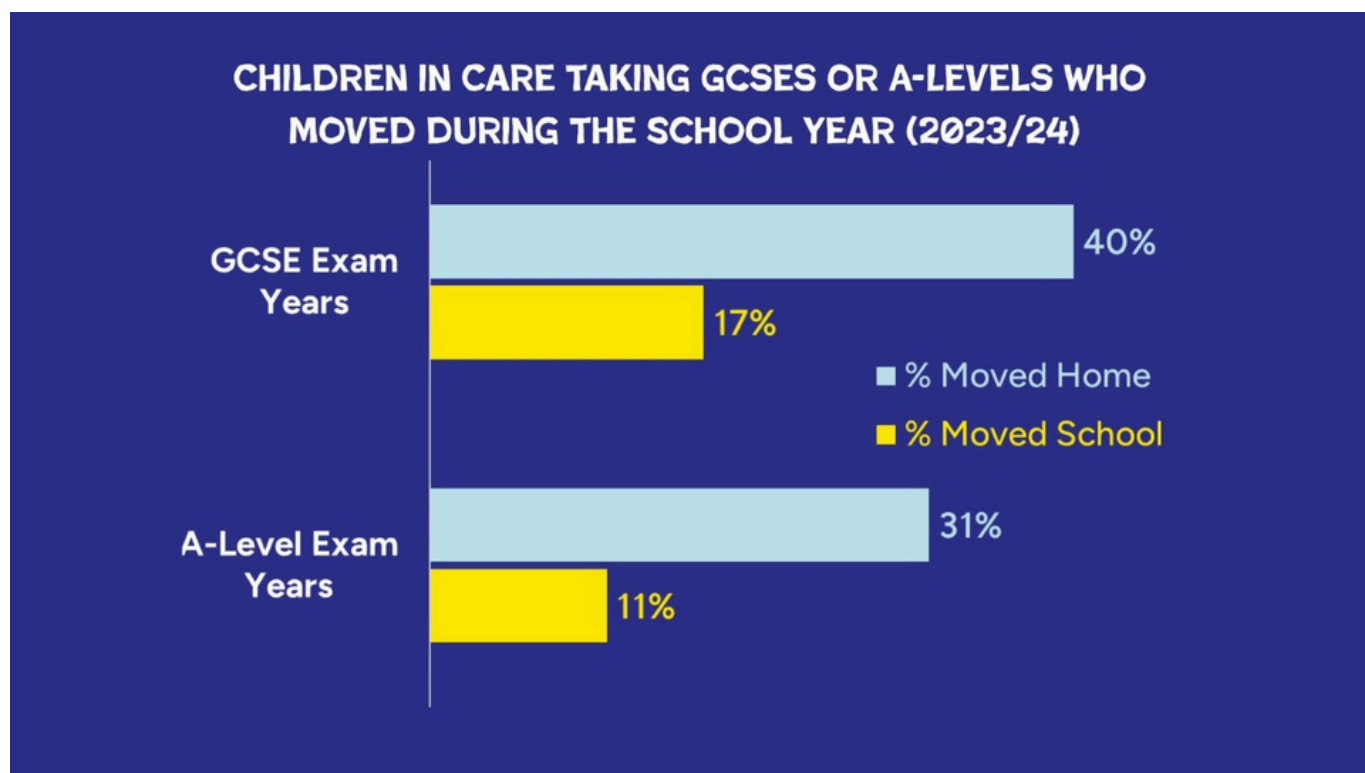
This report sets out the key findings from the responses we received to our FOI requests, and our engagement sessions with care-experienced young people. The full methodology, including the information we requested, the data we received from each local authority, and a note on our analysis and calculations, is in the appendix to this report.

Too many children in care are being moved—between homes, between schools, or out of care altogether—during exam years and even during exam periods. These moves often happen suddenly, at moments when young people most need routine and reassurance to feel safe and succeed.

Our research found that in the 2023/24 academic year, thousands of children in care experienced significant instability during key exam years (Years 10 to 13). We estimate that:

- **15,134 children in care moved home—that's 34% children in care in these year groups.**
- **5,447 children in care moved school, representing 12% of students in these year groups.**

These figures highlight the scale of disruption faced by children in care during critical academic periods—disruptions that can have lasting consequences for their education and well-being. The graph below shows how this instability is distributed between GCSE and A-Level students.



Statutory guidance states that everything possible should be done to prevent school moves during Key Stage 4 (the GCSE exam years) and that such moves should only occur in exceptional circumstances. Yet our findings show that **1 in 6 children** in care in **Key Stage 4 (17%)** moved school at least once during the 2023/24 academic year, raising serious questions about how this guidance is being implemented in practice.

One of the most concerning findings is the number of children moved during their formal exam periods in spring, when stability should be non-negotiable. During these critical months:

- **1,279 (13%)** children in care moved home during their GCSE exam period.



That's more than one in ten children taking their GCSEs

- **4,077 (30%)** children in care moved home or left care during their A-Level exam period.



That's three in ten children taking their A-levels

For some children in care, the disruption goes even further. Many are not just moved during key exam years, they are moved far from everything familiar: their friends, family, communities, and support networks.

- **2,730 (16%)** children in care were moved more than 20 miles from their home or previous placement during their GCSE years.
- **2,314 (9%)** children in care were moved more than 20 miles from their home or previous placement during their A-Level years.

16%

of children in care
moved 20+ miles
during their
GCSE years

Being moved miles from school, friends, and trusted adults during such a crucial period can severely affect a young person's ability to learn, prepare, and perform. As highlighted in our [Gone Too Far](#) and [Still Too Far](#) reports, these long-distance moves compound instability and make it even harder for children to feel secure, supported, and ready to succeed.

What is causing this instability?

Home moves

Children in care move home for many reasons, some of which can be complex. Moves can be requested by the carer (such as a foster carer or children's home manager), by the local authority or the child themselves.

However, moves are often the result of "placements" no longer being able to meet the needs of that child—including when the needs of the child have evolved or changed—or a relationship breakdown.

In 2024, over a quarter of all moves for children aged 10-17 were due to a change to, or the implementation of, the child's care plan, whilst 16% of moves were requested by the child's carer.¹ In a small number of cases, moves can also be the result of child protection concerns, concerns about the standard of care, or the closure of care settings, such as children's homes.²

Children in care face high levels of instability: more than a fifth of all children in care in England experienced at least one home move in 2024.³ On average, 162 children moved home per day in 2023/24.⁴ 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.⁵

There can be valid reasons for children being moved and this can be done in a child's best interests. But too often moves can be due to a lack of suitable homes being available, poor planning or unsuitable matching. This highlights a major issue in the system, a shortage of appropriate homes means that too often children are being moved to homes that are unable to meet all their needs or are far away from their communities and support networks.

In 2024, more than a fifth (22%) of all children in care were living more than 20 miles from home, and 45% were living outside of their local authority area.⁶

School moves

School moves for children in care are often linked to, or a result of, them moving homes, particularly when a child is moved out of area or far away. Statutory guidance and regulations seek to prevent older children from moving school and makes clear that children should only be moved in Key Stage 4 as a last resort.⁷ However, our research findings demonstrate that this is not what is happening in practice.

In addition to the instability of changing schools, moving home can often lead to children having an extended period where they are not in school, missing out on vital education, whilst a school move is arranged, or the relevant support is put in place.⁸ This can be more likely or pronounced where children are living out of area, far from home, or if they

have additional support or special educational needs.

There can be other reasons why children in care may be forced to change school, often linked to the adversity, complexity or trauma that they are experiencing at home. Care-experienced students are more likely to experience persistent absence from school, be excluded, and are more likely to have special educational needs or disability compared to non-care-experienced pupils.⁹



The impact of moves during exam years on children in care

“The main thing for me was going into school every day and acting like everything is okay. It was acting like all of my clothes aren't in bin bags, like I haven't just fished them out, or like I haven't been moving till 9pm to get where I need to be.”

- A child currently in care, aged 16

For care-experienced children, lack of stability during these critical periods can have severe and lasting consequences.

Young people we spoke to shared how moving home or schools often meant adapting to unfamiliar carers, environments, classmates, and routines, all while trying to stay on track academically under intense pressure.

All children face pressure during exam season, and for many, this can cause increased stress.¹⁰ For care-experienced young people, this pressure is often

compounded by the uncertainty and disruption of home or school moves, making an already stressful time even more difficult. Young people told us how the emotional toll of instability, the trauma of frequent moves, and the lack of certainty affected their mental health, sense of identity, and ability to concentrate at school.

“[The] unpredictability really messes with your mental health, especially when you don't have any stability and there's no transitional support. Your self-worth plummets, and I feel like I was forgetting who I was.”

- A care-experienced young person

Impact on education

Children in care are more likely than their peers to experience instability throughout their time in school.¹¹ Prior to GCSEs and A-Levels many have already faced changes in home, school

or even missed time in education. Those in residential care are particularly affected as they're more likely to have spent periods out of formal education altogether.¹²

When children move home, there can be long delays before a new school place is found, or appropriate education is arranged.¹³ In some cases, young people wait weeks or even months before returning to a classroom. During this time, they can miss crucial lessons, fall behind in coursework, and lose confidence in their abilities. This disruption not only affects academic progress but also damages routines, relationships, and their connection to learning.

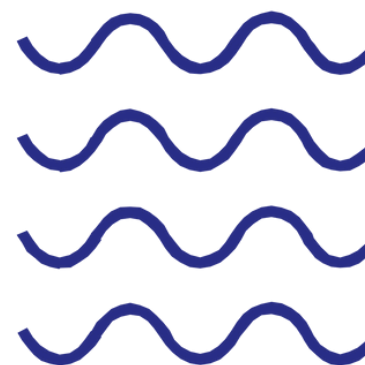
This is reflected in the significant education gap between children in care and their peers. Children in care had an average Attainment 8 score—an average achievement across eight GCSE subjects—of just 17.3 in 2023/24, compared with 45.9 for all pupils, almost three times lower. This was the lowest score for children in care

in the past five years, down 21% from 2020/21.¹⁴

The structural nature of the education system, such as mismatched school start dates, limited subject choices, and inconsistent quality of provision, can undermine a young person's progress. These challenges push young people out of mainstream education, with fewer opportunities through no fault of their own.

“I was out of school for three months and went from the top of the class to the bottom of the class when I first went into care.”

- A care-experienced young person



“ I failed my GCSEs because I moved schools in year 9 and moved back in year 11. The school I got moved to was really bad. ”

- A care-experienced young person

“ Moving during my exam years happened a lot. I was balancing multiple problems. I felt quite covetous, only watching other people have exams to stress about while I was thinking about who I’m going home to and what’s the next procedure. I didn’t get the experience of revision or meeting additional support groups for education—I was trying to figure out where I’m going. ”

- A child currently in care, aged 17

The compounding instability for children with SEND

For children in care with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)—who make up around 60% of the care population, compared to just 18% of children not in care—school moves can be even more destabilising.¹⁵ We have heard that many young people are not put on an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) because their neurodivergence or additional needs are not identified early on. Without the right support or learning environment, they are often unable to fully engage with their education. Young people told us how difficult it was to access specialist provision, how late or incomplete EHCPs delayed their support, and how schools sometimes viewed these plans as a reason to turn them away.

Even when EHCPs are in place or additional needs have been identified, there can still be significant delays in putting the right support in place. This can mean that children either face

long waits before starting at a new school or begin without the support they need to succeed. While any move can be unsettling for children in care, those with SEND often lose access to trusted professionals and services who understand their needs, preferences, and communication styles, these support networks can take years to build. Losing this continuity can have a particularly damaging impact on their emotional well-being, sense of stability, and ability to engage in learning.

“There’s such a barrier with having SEND in general and trying to find a specialist school, and that was another reason why when I was in care it took me extra long to get a school.”

- A care-experienced young person, aged 18

The role of teachers

Support from teachers can make a crucial difference for care-experienced young people navigating school moves. When these relationships are consistent, understanding, and affirming, they provide not only academic support but also a sense of stability and recognition.

“This one teacher helped me a lot and she was great. For two years straight we spoke to each other every Monday and she realised I was there.”

- A care-experienced young person, aged 17

Unfortunately, this doesn't always happen. Young people have told us how teachers at their schools often didn't understand why they were behind, leaving them feeling judged or unsupported to catch up on new information. Young people told us they want

“I had old teachers who used to email me... I'd log into my school emails and have emails from teachers—that genuinely meant the world to me. I log into those years later just to see them.”

- A care-experienced young person, aged 26

teachers to have a better understanding of what it means to be in care and the instability and trauma that often comes with it. This includes recognising how moves—both at home and at school—can affect their ability to engage with learning.

To ensure care-experienced young people are not left behind, schools and colleges must be better equipped to understand and respond to the impact of instability, through national trauma-informed training for staff and fairer, more flexible pathways into further and higher education.

“It’s wild how teachers can be like “here’s the stuff to catch up” and just give you books. I need support to learn these things. I don’t have time or energy.”

- A care-experienced young person, aged 18

“Teachers did not understand. They punished me for not having my homework. I said, “I’m sorry, I’ve just been moved.” They said that’s not an excuse. They didn’t understand what a placement move is.”

- A care-experienced young person, aged 22

Distance moves

The educational impact can be even worse when moves are far from home, research from our Gone Too Far report found that children moved more than 20 miles from home are significantly more likely to experience low well-being and emotional difficulties than those who remain closer to familiar surroundings.¹⁶

“As soon as I was at school I was local to friends and family. Seeing them was the only thing going through my head.”

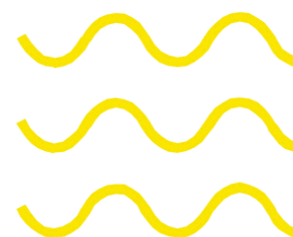
- A care-experienced young person, aged 23

Importantly, being moved far away from their home area can make it difficult for children to develop and maintain the trusting and loving relationships that they need. Distance moves can mean losing touch with friends, teachers, support workers, even siblings.



On average, 4 in 10 children who go into care are separated from their siblings. This number increases significantly for certain groups—including children with disabilities, those moved into children’s homes, and older children—with over 9 in 10 older children being separated from their siblings.¹⁷

Children and young people we spoke to told us how this makes it hard to trust people, to form lasting relationships, and to feel safe or settled.



“ I got kicked out of my placement at 1am and they had nowhere for me to go so I had to move to a hospital 30 miles away and call that my home for four months. ”

-A child currently in care, aged 16

For young people who are moved far from home this can intensify the sense of separation and disconnection that many children in care already experience. Along with being cut off from friends, family, and trusted support networks, children who are moved far from home often face additional upheaval, such as having to change schools or cope with long, exhausting commutes. Either outcome can disrupt their education and add to their emotional strain, making it even harder to feel settled or supported.

The care cliff

For some care-experienced young people, at 16 or 17, they are moved into supported accommodation—often with little preparation and minimal choice. These settings can be isolating and disruptive. Young people told us they were sometimes moved with older adults, or in environments where they felt unsafe or distracted by antisocial

behaviour, noise, or a lack of privacy. Even basics like a desk, quiet space, or reliable internet weren't guaranteed, yet they were still expected to focus on exams.

Then, at 18, when facing the care cliff, many young people are expected to manage rent, bills, food shopping, and tenancy agreements with very little ongoing support.

Relationships with trusted professionals often fall away. For any 18-year-old, this would be a huge challenge, but for someone who's already experienced significant trauma and disruption, it can be overwhelming.

These life-altering transitions come just as young people are trying to finish their education, apply to college or university, or step into work. For those who've already faced instability during school years, being forced into early independence without the right support can be the final blow to their educational progress.



16%

of children in care
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Long-term consequences

This kind of disruption can have long-term consequences. In 2024, 4 in 10 care leavers aged 19 - 21 weren't in employment, education, or training.¹⁸ That's more than three times the rate for non-care-experienced young people of the same age.¹⁹ Missed coursework, dropped subjects, or disrupted exam preparation can derail a young person's progress, delaying or even preventing access to college, university, training, or employment. Young people often struggle to stay on track, not because of a lack of effort, but because the system fails to provide the stability they need.

These delays can impact future plans, limit opportunities, and, in some cases, lead young people to give up on aspirations.

There needs to be greater recognition of the instability and barriers that care-experienced students face, and the impact this has on their attainment, with a stronger commitment to contextual admissions. No young person's future progression and opportunities should be limited because the system failed to support them through instability.

“Instability in the system prevents planning for educational journeys—not knowing where they might be when an apprenticeship might start. Being moved really far from opportunities often at short notice. Travel costs [and] bursaries often don't cover the travel to get to opportunities. This can stop young people from pursuing what it is they would like to do.”

“I moved a couple of times and ended up going to college four different times, and with A-Levels I was only able to do one option. I dropped out so many times because I didn't know what I wanted to do when I finished high school. Only two years ago, I went back to college to get my diploma. It would have been nice to do that in 2018, not 2025.”

- A care-experienced young person, aged 22

“ I had so many moves in Year 13. I went from being accepted into medical school to not passing my key subject, which was Chemistry. I had to resit in the end. I didn't even have a desk in my room at the time. During COVID especially, I had an incident which wasn't dealt with properly and my school didn't give me extenuating circumstances. I didn't know about learning initiatives. Ultimately, I didn't get a chance to get the grades I deserved. I was fully capable of getting A*s and As, but during my time in care the disruption was not dealt with appropriately. ”


- A care-experienced young person, aged 22

What needs to change

As this report has shown, there is an instability crisis affecting children in care. Thousands of children in care, each year, are being forced to move home, move school, or being moved miles away from their connections and communities, in the lead-up to and during critical GCSE and A-Level exams. These moves can happen abruptly and are uprooting children's lives and disrupting their education: creating trauma, negatively impacting relationships and mental health, and limiting their opportunities, aspirations and trajectories.

The Government must act now. We need the right homes in the right places for children in care and a proper safety net of support for care leavers, to break down their barriers to opportunity.

Become is calling on the Government to ensure that all children in care receive the stability they need, at home and in their education. We want to see:



1. No child moved during GCSE and A-Level years (unless in exceptional circumstances):

- The Department for Education undertakes or commissions a review into the reasons why so many children in care continue to experience school or college moves during their GCSE and A-Level years, before making the required changes to policy and practice.
- The collection and publication of data about the length and frequency of gaps in education for children in care, to provide greater accountability when children are between schools.²⁰
- The Ofsted inspection framework for local authority children's services be amended to include evaluation criteria about the number of children who move school during Key Stage 4 or their A-Levels, and the amount of time that children spend out of school whilst admissions or support packages are being arranged.

2. All children in care moved to homes that fully meet their needs and a national strategy to ensure the right type of homes in the right areas.



This should include:

- Sustained and sufficient long-term investment to increase capacity across foster care and residential care.
- The collection, recording and publication of data about the number of children in care who are living in settings that do not meet their care plans, or who are far from home due to a lack of appropriate local options.
- Legal requirements on local authorities to develop and publish sufficiency strategies based on an assessment of the extent to which sufficiency is being achieved, and the measures they will take to provide or commission enough of the right type of homes and carers locally.

3. An end to the care cliff, with no young person forced to leave care in the lead up to or during their exams:

- Reforms to policy and practice so that transitions are milestone-based rather than age-based, to prevent young people leaving home or care in the lead-up to or during their exams, or other key life-events.

4. Schools and colleges better equipped to support children in care who face instability, including through:

- The national roll-out of trauma-informed training for school and college staff to improve their understanding of care-experience and childhood trauma.
- The introduction and expansion of contextual admissions and entry requirements for further education, higher education and vocational courses for care-experienced students.

“ For the whole of Year 11, I was in a PRU—going from basically having GCSEs to basically having nothing. I was excluded because they didn’t care. To them, it felt like my education wasn’t important. I may be in a PRU but I still wanted to work and go to uni. I needed my GCSEs in Maths and English. They were purposefully setting up kids to fail. I was angry, let down, I wasn’t listened to. ”

- A care-experienced young person

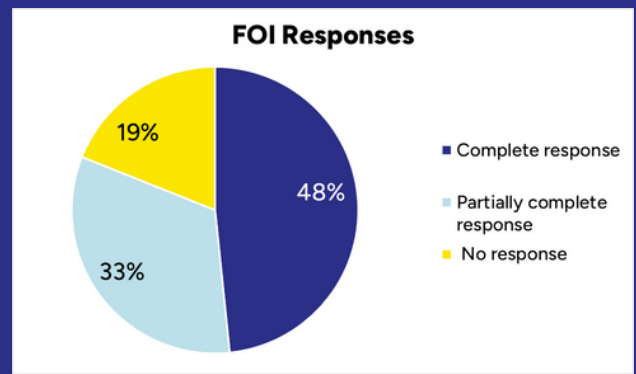
Appendix

Methodology

On 7 March 2025, we submitted Freedom of Information (FOI) requests to all 153 tier-one local authorities in England. These requests aimed to gather new information about the number of home or school moves experienced by children in care during their key GCSE and A-Level years, where disruption can significantly affect wellbeing and educational outcomes.

Through these FOI requests, we requested information about the number of children in care in academic Years 10 to 13 (between 1 September 2023 and 31 August 2024) who:

- Moved from one placement to another;
- Moved from one school to another;
- Moved to a placement located more than 20 miles from either their previous placement or home address.



We also asked local authorities to provide more specific information about the number of children in care in academic Years 11 and 13 during the three-month period between 1 April and 30 June 2024 who:

- Moved from one placement to another;
- Moved from one school to another;
- The number of Year 13 pupils who left care.

This data was requested to build a clearer picture of the frequency and timing of disruptions experienced by older children in care, particularly during critical periods such as exam years or transitions out of care.

We received responses from 124 of 153 local authorities, representing an 81% response rate.

Local data questions

On 7 March 2025, Become submitted a number of Freedom of Information requests to 153 local authorities in England with corporate parenting responsibilities relating to children in care in England. The following information was requested:

1. Between 1st September 2023 and 31st August 2024, how many Looked After Children in academic Year 10 for whom your Local Authority is the corporate parent:
 - a. Moved from one placement to another;
 - b. Moved from one school to another school;
 - c. Moved to a placement that was more than 20 miles from either their home or their last placement.
2. Between 1st September 2023 and 31st August 2024, how many Looked After Children in academic Year 11 for whom your Local Authority is the corporate parent:
 - a. Moved from one placement to another;
 - b. Moved from one school to another school;
 - c. Moved to a placement that was more than 20 miles from either their home or their last placement
3. Between 1st September 2023 and 31st August 2024, how many Looked After Children in academic Year 12 for whom your Local Authority is the corporate parent:
 - a. Moved from one placement to another;
 - b. Moved from one school to another school;
 - c. Moved to a placement that was more than 20 miles from either their home or their last placement
4. Between 1st September 2023 and 31st August 2024, how many Looked After Children in academic Year 13 for whom your Local Authority is the corporate parent:
 - a. Moved from one placement to another;
 - b. Moved from one school to another school;
 - c. Moved to a placement that was more than 20 miles from either their home or their last placement.

5. Between 1st April 2024 and 30th June 2024, how many Looked After Children:

- a. In academic Year 11, for whom your Local Authority is the corporate parent, moved from one placement to another;
- b. In academic Year 11, for whom your Local Authority is the corporate parent, moved from one school to another;
- c. In academic Year 13, for whom your Local Authority is the corporate parent, moved from one placement to another;
- d. In academic Year 13, for whom your Local Authority is the corporate parent, moved from one school to another school;
- e. In academic Year 13, for whom your Local Authority is the corporate parent, left care (ceased to be a Looked After Child).

National data questions

On 10 March 2025, we submitted a Freedom of Information request to the Department for Education, asking for data on the number of children in care in England who were in academic years 10, 11, 12 and 13 between 1st September 2023 and 31st August 2024. The Department advised that it does not hold data broken down by academic year but could provide figures by age instead. As a result, we submitted a new information request to the Department on 9th April to ask for the number of children in care in England who were aged 14, 15, 16, 17 and 18 on 31st March 2024.

The information provided by the Department for Education in relation to the number of children in care on 31st March 2024 can be found in the table below. Please note, we have added data about the number of care leavers aged 17 and 18 on 31st March 2024 from nationally available data.²¹

Age	Number of children in care in England on 31st March 2024	Number of care leavers in England on 31st March 2024	Total number of care-experienced children and young people in England on 31st March 2024
14	6,240	0	6,240
15	7,320	0	7,320
16	9,590	0	9,590
17	13,030	500	13,530
18	10	13,800	13,810

Key findings^{22 23}

Years 10 - 13

- 15,134 care-experienced children moved home²⁴ — that's 34% of all care-experienced children in these year groups.²⁵
- 5,447 care-experienced children moved school²⁶, representing 12% of care-experienced students in these year groups.

GCSE exam years

- 6,765 children in care moved home²⁷ — that's 40% of all children in care in these year groups.
- 2,817 children in care moved school²⁸, representing 17% of all care-experienced

students in these year groups.

A-level exam years

- 8,439 care-experienced children moved home²⁹ — that's 31% of all care-experienced students in these year groups.
- 3,068 care-experienced children moved school or college³⁰, representing 11% of care-experienced students in these year groups.

Exam period moves

- 1,279 (13%) children in care moved home during their GCSE exam period.³¹ That's 1 in 10 children in care taking their GCSEs.

- 4,077 (30%) children in care moved home or left care during their A-Level exam period.³² That's 3 in 10 children in care taking their A-Levels.

Distance moves

- 2,730 (16%) children in care were moved more than 20 miles from their home or previous placement during their GCSE years.³³
- 2,314 (9%) care-experienced young people were moved more than 20 miles from home or their previous placement during their A-Level years.³⁴

Note on calculations

We received responses from 124 of 153 local authorities, representing an 81% response rate. Of these, 74 provided complete datasets, while the remaining 50 submitted partial datasets. As a result of this, each data point had variations in response rates. To ensure comparability, we calculated averages for each question based on the responses of all

local authorities who provided data and then applied this to the full cohort of 153 local authorities. While the national figures presented are estimates and may be subject to a small margin of error, the high response rate gives us confidence that any such margin is likely to be negligible. The FOI data collection was cut off on 20 May 2025, meaning no submissions received after this date were included in the analysis.

Some local authorities provided figures as 'fewer than 5' or 'fewer than 10', citing concerns that disclosing exact numbers could risk identifying individual children. For the purposes of analysis, we interpreted these responses as 2 and 5 respectively, although the actual figures may be higher or lower.

Note on calculating proportions

As the Department for Education was unable to provide information about the number of children in care in each academic year, we have

used the number of care-experienced children and young people aged 15,16, 17 and 18, as a proxy to correspond to the numbers of care-experienced children and young people in academic year groups 10, 11, 12 and 13. This has enabled us to estimate the proportion of care-experienced children and young people who moved in each year group.

Although there is likely to be a small margin for error in our estimate of proportions, we expect that any such margin is likely to be negligible, as across England the number of children aged 15, 16, 17 and 18 is respectively higher than the number of children in the academic years 10, 11, 12 and 13.³⁵

Raw data

Notes on data table below:

- The table below sets out data received from local authorities up to and including 20th May 2025- any data received after that date has not been included.

- Several local authorities could not provide all or some of the information requested for a number of reasons. The most frequent reasons why some data was not provided were that: information was not held or recorded in the manner requested (particularly in relation to school moves); to protect the confidentiality of children (particularly where there were less than five children who had been placed in a particular type of care placement within a year and recording could lead to them being personally identified); or due to a section 12 exemption, where the expected cost of compliance exceeds the appropriate limit.

[Tables \(PDF\)](#)

Footnotes

1. Department for Education (2024), [Children looked after in England, including adoptions: Reporting year 2024](#). See permanent data table: [Reason for placement change during the year of CLA by characteristics - National](#)
2. Ibid
3. Department for Education (2024), [Children looked after in England, including adoptions: Reporting year 2024](#)
4. In total, 59,240 children either entered care (33,050) or experienced at least two placements (26,190) in the year to 31st March 2024. See Department for Education (2024), [Children looked after in England, including adoptions: Reporting year 2024](#)
5. Children's Commissioner (2020), [Stability index 2020: Technical report](#)
6. Department for Education (2024), [Children looked after in England, including adoptions: Reporting year 2024](#)
7. Department for Education (2021) [The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations: volume 2: Care planning, placement and case review](#). See paras 2.69, 2.77 and 3.18-3.20
8. Education Select Committee (2022), [Educational poverty: how children in residential care have been let down and what to do about it](#)
9. Department for Education (2025) [Outcomes for children in need, including children looked after by local authorities in England: reporting year 2024](#).
10. [In the past year, the charity NSPCC reported that there has been an increase in contacts to its Childline service about exam and revision-related stress](#). See NSPCC (2025), [Rise in calls to Childline about exam and revision stress during the exam period last year](#)
11. Department for Education (2025), [Stability measures for children looked after in England: Reporting year 2024](#)
12. Education Select Committee (2022), [Educational poverty: how children in residential care have been let down and what to do about it](#)
13. Ibid
14. Department for Education (2025) [Outcomes for children in need, including children looked after by local authorities in England: reporting year 2024](#)
15. Ibid.
16. Become (2023) [Gone Too Far: Preventing children in care being moved miles from the people and places that matter to them](#)
17. Children's Commissioner (2023), [Siblings in Care](#)
18. Department for Education (2024), [Children looked after in England, including adoptions: Reporting year 2024](#)
19. Ibid
20. Education Select Comm – children's homes inquiry
21. Department for Education (2024), [Children Looked After in England, including Adoptions: Reporting Year 2024](#)
22. All the key findings relate to the academic year 2023/24
23. See "Note on calculations" on page 22, which explains the approach we have taken in calculating national totals and proportions. Due to several local authorities only providing partial datasets, we calculated approximate national totals for comparability and consistency for each question. To do this we calculated averages for each question based on the responses of all local authorities who provided data and then applied this to the full cohort of 153 local authorities. While the national figures presented are estimates and may be subject to a small margin of error, the high response rate gives us confidence that any such margin is likely to be negligible.
24. We received responses from 120 local authorities who reported that during academic year 2023/24, 11,870 care-experienced young people in academic years 10-13 moved home at least once (an average of 99 per local authority).
25. Information about how we have calculated the proportion of children in care who experience moves in each academic year is included in the "Note on calculating proportions" section on page 22.

26. We received responses from 112 local authorities who reported that during academic year 2023/24, 3,987 care-experienced young people in academic years 10-13 moved school at least once (an average of 36 per local authority).

27. We received responses from 120 local authorities who reported that during academic year 2023/24, 5,306 children in care in academic years 10 or 11 moved home at least once (an average of 44 per local authority).

28. We received responses from 112 local authorities who reported that during academic year 2023/24, 2,062 children in care in academic years 10 or 11 moved school at least once (an average of 18 per local authority).

29. We received responses from 119 local authorities who reported that during academic year 2023/24, 6,564 care-experienced young people in academic years 12 or 13 moved home at least once (an average of 55 per local authority).

30. We received responses from 96 local authorities who reported that during academic year 2023/24, 1,925 care-experienced young people in academic years 12 or 13 moved school or college at least once (an average of 20 per local authority).

31. We received responses from 119 local authorities who reported that during the period of April-June 2024, 995 children in care in Year 11 moved home at least once (an average of 8 per local authority).

32. We received responses from 121 local authorities who reported that during the period April-June 2024, 3,224 care-experienced young people in academic year 13 moved home or left care (an average of 27 per local authority).

About us

Become: We're the national charity that's here to support every child and young person with experience of the care system. They tell us what's not working. Together, we fight to make change happen.



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