

From: Roger Gough, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education
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To: Corporate Parenting Panel – 29 January 2019

Subject: **Life Stability Report for Children in Care**

Classification: Unrestricted

<p>Summary: This report provides members with an overview of life stability for Kent children in care. It covers key areas of their lives which are impacted upon including placement stability, permanent arrangements for their care including fostering and adoption, education stability and social work retention.</p> <p>Recommendation: The members of the Corporate Parenting Panel are asked to NOTE the Life Stability report and actions being taken to improve placement stability for Kent children in care.</p>
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1. Introduction.

1.1 In April 2017, the Children’s Commissioner published the first **Stability Index for Children in Care**. This study focused on the importance of stability within children’s lives including their education, changes within their social worker and their overall experience and impact upon them of placement moves. The study found a clear link between instability in a placement, being associated with instability within school. The initial analysis of the data, also suggested that those children experiencing a change of placement or school, also had a higher likelihood of experiencing a change in Social Worker. Kent alongside other Local Authorities provided data for the report, to enable national and local comparison including with our statistical neighbours.

2. Background

2.1 In October 2018, following the Stability Index update in April 2018, the Children’s Commissioner provided a more detailed analysis on Kent’s specific data, compared to national and statistical neighbours. In summary the data provided focused on three areas:

2.2 Placement changes

- 13% of children had 2 or more placement changes in 2016/17; (10% nationally)
- 3% of children had 2 or more placement changes in both 2015/16 and 2016/17; (3% nationally)
- 27% of children had 2 or more placement changes over two years (2015/16 - 2016/17); (22% nationally)

- 30% of children had 2 or more placement changes over three years (2014/15 - 2016/17); (30% nationally)

2.3 School changes

- 9% of children had a mid-year school move in 2016/17; (10% nationally)
- 3% of children had at least one school move in both 2015/16 and 2016/17; (4% nationally)

2.4 Social Worker changes

- 29% of children experienced 2 or more social worker changes in 2016/17; (26% nationally)
- 10% of children experienced 2 or more social worker changes in both 2015/16 and 2016/17 (6% nationally)

3. Life Stability for Children in Care

3.1 The report outlines the Kent position for placement stability and the work of the Corporate Parenting services to improve the life stability of our children and young people in care. It covers placement stability, Fostering and Adoption, Education and social worker recruitment and retention.

4. Conclusions

4.1 There has been an overall improvement in placement stability over the last year, with some of the additional support starting to have an impact. Kent are performing well within reducing education moves, being under the national average. However, Kent are above the national average for over 2 placement moves for children and this will be the area of focus for improvement during 2019. There are plans to expand the Sense of Belonging Service, to be able to reach more foster carers and children and continue to improve our placement stability through additional support and with the aim to reduce placement moves.

Recommendations

Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel are asked to **NOTE** the **Life Stability report for Children in Care** and the actions to improve placement stability in Kent.

5. Background documents

<https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Childrens-Commissioners-2018-Stability-Index-Technical-Report.pdf>

6. Contact details

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