Children's COMMISSIONER

Stability Index 2018

Overview and Findings

June 2018

Contents

Foreword from the Children's Commissioner, Anne Longfield

My ambition, since my first day in this role, has been to build the aspirations of those who have had a difficult start in life. I believe every child growing up in care should have the same chances to live a happy, healthy and rewarding life as any other child.

Care does work well for many children, but for some there are significant challenges. Every day I hear from a child in care who is pinging around the system – pushed from pillar to post when all they want is to be settled, to build lasting friendships and relationships, and to get on with normal school life.

The one word that always comes up in conversations we have with children in care is "stability". Many of the calls we receive at Help at Hand – our advice service for children in care – are from children upset about unplanned and unwanted placement moves or school changes, and the disruption that these moves bring. Children in care tell us that they want consistent, high quality relationships that provide security and support. For them, just like every other child, stable relationships and a secure environment provide a sense of belonging and identity. Where there is instability, relationships with trusted adults and other children suffer, succeeding at school becomes more difficult and vulnerability increases. This leads some children to fall through the gaps – vulnerable to exclusion, exploitation and abuse.

That is why we created an annual Stability Index last year – to encourage councils to hold themselves to account for children moving around the system and to work towards improving the system and ultimately the lives of children in care. The Index measures the stability of the lives of children in care by looking at the number of home moves, school moves and social worker changes in their lives.

This is our second annual Stability Index report. We are grateful to the councils who have shared their data with us and we will be sending them detailed analysis for their local area to help them understand what is going on locally.

An additional year of data enables us to look at stability over a longer period, which gives us a broader and deeper picture of the lives of children in care. The overall annual figures have hardly changed but looking over two years or more, it becomes even more evident that not enough children are getting the chance to settle in properly. This instability does not have to be an inevitable part of the care system.

We recognise that sometimes these changes cannot be avoided. We also know that how these changes take place matters, along with the quality of children's environment and relationships. True stability is more than just staying put. The Stability Index looks at the number of changes that happen and does not say whether they are good or bad, or well managed. But we also know that repeated disruption and upheaval, especially over the long term, cannot be a good experience.

The need for improvement is even more urgent as the number of children entering the care system rises. I want every one of those children to do well. I hope the long-term work we are producing with the Stability Index will help councils to monitor trends and, most importantly, to drive improvements so that every child in care in England has the opportunity to thrive and succeed.

Anne Longfield OBE
Children's Commissioner for England

About The Children's Commissioner for England

Anne Longfield, OBE, is the Children's Commissioner for England. The role was established under the Children Act 2004 which gave the Commissioner responsibility for promoting awareness of the views and interests of children. Her remit includes understanding what children think about things that affect them and encouraging decision makers to take their best interests into account. She has unique data gathering powers and powers of entry to talk with children to gain evidence to support improvement for them. The Children and Families Act 2014 further strengthened the remit, powers and independence of the Commissioner.

The Children's Commissioner helps to bring about long-term change and improvements for children, in particular the most vulnerable children including those who are in care. She is the 'eyes and ears' of children in the system and is expected to carry out her duties 'without fear or favour' of Government, children's agencies, nor the voluntary or private sector.

Executive summary

About the 2018 Stability Index

This is the 2018 Stability Index, an annual measure of the stability of the lives of children in care. The Index was launched by the Children's Commissioner in 2017[1] to report on the stability that these children experience. It aims to shed a light on the issue of stability, provide data that allows stability to be monitored over time, and ultimately drive improvements in stability for children in care.

The 2018 analysis involves a number of developments over last year's. We can now report longer-term measures of instability, as well as richer findings based on better analysis of these measures. We have also dramatically improved our data on social worker stability, which now covers a majority of local authorities.

This report provides the national overview of the 2018 analysis and findings. An accompanying Technical Report, available on our website, provides the full details behind this work.

2018 Headlines

> **Most children in care experience some kind of instability in one form or another throughout the course of a year.** Only 1 in 4 children in care experienced no placement move, no school move and no social worker change within a year. Only 1 in 10 children experienced none of these changes over two years.

> **Some children experience several different types of instability all within the same year.** Nearly 2,400 children (6% of children in care attending school) experienced a placement move, a school move and a change in social worker all in 2016/17. Furthermore, over 350 children (1% of those in care attending school) experienced multiple placement moves, a mid-year school move and multiple social worker changes all within the same year.

> **Some children experience repeated instability over two years.** Over 3,000 children (6% of those in care in both 2015/16 and 2016/17) experienced four or more placement moves over two years, including 1,300 children (3% of those in care in both 2015/16 and 2016/17) who experienced multiple placement moves in both years. Among children in care who were enrolled at school, around 1,600 (4%) experienced a school move two years in a row. Elsewhere, nearly 4,400 children (6% of all children in care) experienced multiple social worker changes two years in a row.

> **Over the longer term, most children in care experience a placement move.** Less than half of children (among those in care in both 2014/15 and 2016/17) experienced no placement changes over three years; 3 in 10 children experienced two or more changes, and nearly 2,500 children (6%) experienced five or more changes. Looking over four years among children in care in both 2012/13 and 2016/17, we find that only 2 in 5 experienced no placement changes; more than 1 in 3 experienced two or more changes, and 2,700 children (9%) experienced five or more changes.

> **Children who experience instability are at risk of having it compounded by more instability in future.** Those experiencing multiple placement moves this year are three times more likely to

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experience it again next year. Children who experience a mid-year school move this year are 50% more likely to experience it again next year.

> **At a national level, rates of instability are broadly unchanged.** We find similar rates of instability for 2016/17 as those we found last year for 2015/16. Around 1 in 10 children in care – 7,500 children – experienced multiple placement moves in 2016/17, while just under 7 in 10 children experienced no placement moves. Among children in care who are also enrolled at school, just over 1 in 10 (4,300 children) experienced a mid-year school move.

> **Social worker changes remain significantly more common than placement or school changes.** Nearly 19,000 children experienced two or more social worker changes in 2016/17. This works out to around 1 in 4 children in care – broadly the same rate as in 2015/16.

> **There remains wide variation in rates of instability across the country.** The proportion of children experiencing multiple placement moves ranged from 3% to 19% across local authorities, while the proportion of children experiencing a mid-year school move ranged from 2% to 24%.

> **More analysis is needed to understand this variation.** The variation we see can only be partly explained by the factors that we have national data on. Many local authorities who appear to be similar in term of these factors have different rates of instability, and vice versa.

> **Looking across local authorities, there is no clear link between participating in Department for Education programmes and higher rates of stability.** The average rates of instability among the Opportunity Areas or areas involved in the Innovation Programme are around the national average. The same is true for local areas involved in the Partners in Practice Programme – although those whose programme relates to looked after children seem to have rates of instability that are very slightly slower than the national average.

> **Some children are at significantly higher risk of experiencing instability and may need additional support.** Older children, children who enter care at the beginning of adolescence, children with additional behavioural or emotional needs, and children whose legal status indicates more vulnerability, are all more likely to experience multiple placement moves.

> **Children in better-performing schools experience more stability.** Children in schools rated as "Outstanding" by Ofsted are half as likely to experience a mid-year school move compared to children in schools rated "Inadequate". Furthermore, even if children in schools with a better Ofsted rating do move, it is more likely to be another school with a better Ofsted rating.

> **Local authority workforce issues affect the stability that children experience.** Children in care are significantly more likely to experience social worker changes in local authorities with higher social worker turnover rates and vacancy rates.

> **We will share our findings with local authorities to help them identify where they can improve stability.** With data on placement and school instability for every local authority, we will write to every Director of Children's Services and Lead Member for Children's Services in England providing the figures for their local area. We will also be asking them to adopt the Stability Index as a tool for identifying any areas of concern and measuring progress and improvement.

> **We want to see the Stability Index informing Ofsted's inspections of local authority children's services.** We will be asking Ofsted to require evidence from local authorities on the on stability of

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their looked after children, referring to Stability Index data and reports where available, as part of Ofsted's inspections and quality assessments.

1. Why the Stability Index matters

> There are over 70,000 children currently in the care of local authorities in England. Many have experienced significant adversity in their home lives before arriving into care. A stable home environment that nurtures children provides the bedrock for them to form healthy, positive relationships that enable them to flourish.[2] On top of that, an effective, supportive school and consistent support from professionals can help these children feel supported, valued and ambitious.

> Stability can be the difference between children flourishing in their environment, or having the difficulties they have already had to endure further compounded. Instability makes it harder for a child to form positive trusting relationships with their carers, teachers and social workers, and makes them feel less safe.[3]

> Statutory guidance for children looked after emphasises that placements should provide the stability and security that enable children to flourish, minimising disruption as much as possible. Local authorities have a duty to ensure that each placement offers the most appropriate way to safeguard and promote the child's welfare, but must also ensure that placements do not disrupt the child's education. When a child has to move home or school throughout the year, it can disrupt the friendships they are building, or cause them to fall behind in their studies.

> Children regularly speak to the Children's Commissioner about why stability is important for them.[4] Our Help at Hand helpline frequently takes calls from children in care who are facing significant upheaval – including a placement or school move – without being consulted, knowing why, or wanting it. Children also tell us about the problems of having a new social worker every few months, including having to tell their story all over again.

> The Stability Index aims to shed a light on these issues and drive improvements to stability. It provides data that enables levels of stability to be assessed locally and nationally, and over time allows progress towards improved stability to be measured.

> The Stability Index also provides an opportunity for local authorities and practitioners committed to promoting the wellbeing of children in care to consider how well they are doing – especially for children with additional or more complex needs – and what they might do differently to improve outcomes.

> We hope policymakers will use the Stability Index to measure their success in helping children in care thrive and fulfil their aspirations. We want local authorities, virtual school heads, social workers and other practitioners to use the Index to shine a light on the issue of stability, and ultimately to make stability their top priority when working with children in care.

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[2] See, for example, Boddy, J. (2013), *Understanding of Permanence for Looked After Children: A Review of Research for the Care Inquiry*.

[3] See, for example, https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/publication/state-of-the-nation-children-in-care/.

[4] More evidence on children's views and voices about the importance of stability, and how instability makes them feel, can be found in our first Stability Index report: https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/publication/stability-index-initial-findings-and-technical-report/.

2. Our methods

> The Stability Index considers three domains of stability that we know matter for the wellbeing and welfare of children in care:

> > Stability at home
> > Stability at school
> > Stability in professional support

> To measure these, we use datasets that contain information on:

> > o Whether a child experiences a placement change
> > o Whether a child moves school
> > o Whether a child's allocated social worker changes

> For each child in care, we measure the number of times that any of these changes happened during the 2016/17 financial year. For placement moves, our headline findings focus on whether children experienced multiple – two or more – placement moves within a year. This is equivalent to having three or more placements. Similarly, for social worker changes, our headline findings focus on whether a child in care experienced multiple changes of social worker within a year, equivalent to having three or more social workers. For school moves, our headline findings focus on whether a child experienced a mid-year school move, i.e. a move during the academic year, although we also look at school moves in general.

> Last year's report considered these measures within a time period of one year (2015/16). However, we know from speaking to children that the effects of instability are often felt cumulatively over several years. This year we have strengthened our analysis by reporting two-year measures of all three types of instability, tracking children through 2015/16 and 2016/17. We present for the first time estimates of the extent of repeated instability: children experiencing instability in both 2015/16 and 2016/17. Furthermore, for placement moves, we can also provide estimates of how many changes children experience over three or four years.

> As before, we use child-level records from the Department for Education (DfE) Children Looked After Census dataset for our analysis of placement changes, and link this to records from the DfE National Pupil Database for our analysis of school changes. Our analysis of social worker changes is based on data we gathered from 78 local authorities on the social worker histories and changes experienced by their children looked after. Further details on the data, samples and methods are available in the accompanying Technical Report.

3. Our findings

Key findings

> **At a national level, rates of instability were broadly the same in 2016/17 as those we found last year for 2015/16.** Around 1 in 10 of the children in care on 31 March 2017 – 7,500 children – experienced multiple placement moves in 2016/17, while just under 7 in 10 children experienced no placement moves. These are the same rates as in 2015/16. Among children also enrolled at school, just over 1 in 10 (4,300 children) experienced a mid-year school in move in 2016/17. This is similar to the rate in 2015/16. Experiencing social worker changes remains significantly more common than experiencing placement or school changes: nearly 19,000 children in care experienced multiple social

worker changes in 2016/17. This works out to around 1 in 4 of the children in care on 31 March 2017 – similar to the rate we found for 2015/16.

> **Most children in care experience some kind of instability in one form or another – only a minority experience no changes at all.** We find that around 1 in 4 children in care experienced no placement move, no school move and no social worker change within a year. Over a two-year period, only 1 in 10 children experienced none of these changes.

> **Conversely, significant numbers of children in care experienced instability on multiple fronts within the same year.** We find that nearly 2,400 children in care (6% of those attending school) experienced a placement move, a school move and a change in social worker all in 2016/17; a further 9,000 children experienced two of these changes. Furthermore, over 350 children in care (1% of those attending school) experienced multiple placement moves, a mid-year school move and multiple social worker changes all within the same year; a further 2,400 children experienced two of these changes.

> **This year, for the first time, we are also able report all three measures of instability over a two-year period.** Around half of children in care in 2015/16 and 2016/17 saw no placement moves over two years, while 1 in 5 of these (around 10,000 children) experienced two or more placement moves over this period. That includes over 3,000 children who experienced four or more placement moves over two years. Around 1,300 children experienced multiple placement moves two years in a row – in both 2015/16 and 2016/17. Around 600 children at school experienced a mid-year school in both years, while around 1,600 children experienced any type of school move (mid-year or otherwise) in both years. Nearly 4,400 children experienced multiple social worker changes two years in a row.

> **We also show that over the longer term, most children in care experience some degree of placement instability.** Among the children in care in both 2014/15 and 2016/17, less than half (45%) experienced no placement changes over that three-year period, while 3 in 10 experienced two or more changes and 1 in 10 (over 4,000 children) experienced four or more changes. Furthermore, nearly 2,500 children (6% of this group) experienced five or more changes over three years. Among children in care in both care in both 2012/13 and 2016/17, only 40% experienced no placement changes over that four-year period, while more than 1 in 3 experienced two or more changes and around 1 in 7 (4,200 children) experienced four or more changes. Nearly 2,700 children (9% of this group) experienced five or more changes.

> **Children who experience placement or school instability now are at greater risk of experiencing it again in future.** Those who experience multiple placement moves in one year are three times more likely to experience it again the following year. Children who experience a mid-year school move in one year are 50% more likely to experience it again the following year. By contrast, children face a similar risk of experiencing multiple social worker changes regardless of whether they have experienced it previously.

> **There is wide variation between local authorities in the proportions of their children in care experiencing instability.** The percentage of children experiencing multiple placement moves in 2016/17 ranged from 3% to 19%. The percentage of children experiencing this in both years ranged from less than 1% to 9%. The percentage of children experiencing mid-year school moves in 2016/17 ranged from 2% to 24%. The percentage of children experiencing multiple social worker changes ranged from 0% to 49% across the local authorities who shared data with us, while the percentage experiencing multiple social worker changes two years in a row varied from 0% to 27%.

> **However, it is generally not the case that the same local areas have persistently high or low rates of instability over time.** At the local authority level, there is only a weak relationship between rates of instability from one year to the next. Many local authorities have higher rates followed by lower rates, and vice versa. This could be because trends are more difficult to identify over only two years – they may emerge more clearly over a longer period.

> **Children with behavioural needs face noticeably more instability than children with other types of needs.** Children whose primary need relates to their behaviour are significantly more likely to experience multiple placement moves and mid-year school moves, compared to children with other types of needs. Among children in care with the most common type of need – abuse and neglect – rates of placement and school instability are in line with the national average.

> **The wide local variations that we see can be partly, but not fully, explained by these factors.** Taking into account the characteristics of children in care and local areas that we can measure in national data explains some of these differences, but by no means all of them. Many local areas who appear similar in these terms have different rates of instability, and vice versa. This could reflect variations in local practice and systems, but it could also reflect the limitations in the quality and richness of the data available nationally, or variations in how that data is recorded.

Additional findings: placement instability

> **There are some factors that help to explain the wide variation in levels of placement instability; these are mostly indicators of children having additional or more complex needs.** The key factors we have identified are listed below, but these findings are limited by what is available in the national datasets to which we have access. These cannot be taken as complete and exhaustive review of all the factors that may be associated with higher or lower placement instability. Qualitative evidence, surveys or internal data held by local authorities may reveal other factors linked to higher or lower stability.

> **Teenage children are the most likely of all age groups to experience placement instability.** Around 1 in 7 children aged 16 or over experienced multiple placement moves in a year, while 1 in 20 experienced it two years in a row. By contrast, children aged 5-11 are age group least likely to experience these changes.

> **Children whose earliest known period of care was at age 12-15 are at particular risk of experiencing instability.** Nearly one in five children in this group experienced multiple placement moves within the year, and 7% experienced multiple placement moves two years in a row. By contrast, children aged under four at their earliest known period of care experienced much more stability: only 7% had multiple placement moves in a year, and only 1% experienced that instability two years in a row.

> **Children whose special educational needs and disability (SEND) are around social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) are around 50% more likely to experience multiple placement moves, compared to children with other types of SEND or no identified SEND needs.** Entering care at a younger age can mitigate this risk for the child, while entering care aged 12-15 can exacerbate it.

> **Children whose initial legal status was a police protection order, an emergency protection order or a criminal justice order were significantly more likely to experience multiple placement moves (compared to children with other legal statuses).** Nearly 1 in 5 children whose legal status was a

police protection order, an emergency protection order or a criminal justice order experienced multiple placement moves in 2016/17. By contrast, less than 1 in 10 children on placement orders or full care orders experienced multiple placement moves.

> **We did not find direct links between local authority factors – such as rates of looked after children, Ofsted ratings, deprivation levels, or social worker turnover and vacancy rates – and the risk of experiencing placement instability. However, some children with additional needs may experience slightly higher placement instability in areas where resources are constrained.** Lower budget per looked after child appears to exacerbate the risk of placement instability faced by children with SEMH SEND, but this effect is small. In a local authority with an average level of budget per looked after child, a child with SEMH SEND is 45% more likely to experience multiple placement moves (compared to a child with no identified SEND). In a local authority with a 10% lower budget per looked after child, that child would be 50% more likely to experience multiple placement moves.

> **In around 30 local authorities, rates of placement instability are significantly different from what might be expected after taking into account their case mix (in terms of child and placement characteristics).** Around 1 in 10 local authorities have a statistically significantly lower rate of multiple placement moves than average once their case mix accounted for; a similar proportion of local authorities (10%) have statistically significant higher rates than average

Additional findings: school instability

> **School moves can extremely disruptive for children in care.** In around 400 cases, children in care missed an entire term of school because of a school move. The distance involved can also be a source of disruption: when children in care have a mid-year school move, on average their next school is 24 miles away from their previous one.

> **There is a strong link between placement instability and school stability.** Children who experience multiple placement moves are three times more likely to experience a mid-year school move, and five times more likely to experience a school move two years in a row (compared to children who do not experience multiple placement moves). In most but not all cases, the placement move precedes the school move.

> **Children whose initial legal status was a police protection order, interim care order, emergency protection order or a criminal justice order were significantly more likely to experience a mid-year school move (compared to children with other legal statuses).** Around 1 in 5 children on interim care orders, police protection orders or emergency protection orders experienced a mid-year school move in 2016/17; by contrast, only 7% of children on full care orders experienced this.

> **While most children in care are in good schools, many are not – despite statutory guidance.** Of the children in care attending school, nearly 1 in 5 (7,000) are in schools judged by Ofsted to be 'Inadequate' or 'Requires Improvement'.

> **Children in schools with a worse Ofsted rating are more likely to experience a mid-year school move and repeated school moves in two consecutive years.** Nearly 1 in 5 children in schools rated as "Inadequate" experienced a mid-year school move – more than twice the rate for children in schools rated 'Outstanding. Furthermore, when children in schools with worse Ofsted ratings change school, it is more likely to that their next school will also have a worse Ofsted rating.

> **Children attending a pupil referral unit (PRU) are significantly more likely to experience school instability.** Just over 500 children started the academic year in a PRU. Of these, 1 in 4 experienced a mid-year school move in 2016/17 – more than twice the rate for children in mainstream schools. While this might not be surprising if their enrolment at a PRU was a temporary measure, we also find that these children are significantly more likely to experience two consecutive years of mid-year school moves.

> **In around 25 local authorities, rates of school instability are significantly different from what might be expected after taking into account their case mix (in terms of child and placement characteristics).** Around 6% of local authorities have a statistically significantly lower rate of mid-year school moves than average once their case mix accounted for. Conversely, around 1 in 10 local authorities have statistically significant higher rates than average.

> **Thousands of children in care do not appear to be enrolled at school at both the start and end of the academic year**, **and the reasons why are unclear.** We find that around 6,500 5-15 year olds are in care but cannot be found in in our schools data in both the autumn and summer terms. These children may be temporarily out of school (perhaps because of a placement or school move) and re-entering school mid-year, or they might have previously been in school but now left state education, or they might have never been enrolled in school, or their unique pupil number might be missing or incorrectly recorded.

Additional findings: social worker instability

> **The risk of experiencing social worker instability has less of a relationship with child and placement factors, compared to school and placement instability.** Child and placement characteristics do not appear to influence the risk of experiencing social worker instability as much as they influence the risks of experiencing placement or school instability. Children's behavioural needs, contact time with a PRU and age at earliest period of care still play a role in the risk of experiencing social worker changes – but their effects are less pronounced.

> **Children whose initial legal status was an interim care order, a police protection order, an emergency protection order or criminal justice legal status are at higher risk of experiencing social worker instability.** As much as 2 out 5 of these children experienced multiple social changes in a year, while around 1 in 10 experienced this two years in a row.

> **The key factors that we find affect the risks of experiencing social worker changes relate to local authority workforces, namely social worker turnover and vacancy rates.** Around 1 in 4 children in a local authority with a 10% social worker turnover rate experience multiple social worker changes, whereas it is closer to 1 in 3 children in a local authority with a 20% turnover rate. Higher social worker vacancy rates are also associated with higher rates of social worker instability, but this effect is smaller.

> **There remains a large amount of variation in levels of social worker instability which cannot be explained by the above factors.** Some of this may reflect local variations in practice and in how changes are recorded. It will also reflect the fact that the national data available to us does not capture everything that matters for social worker stability.

Limitations of our work

> **This report features a number of improvements over our first report.** In response to children's views that stability matters over the longer term, we now report all measures over two years; for placement moves, we can also report on changes over three or four years. We also have a much richer picture of the patterns of social worker changes. Having collected social worker data from more than half of local authorities in England, we can for the first time form a reliable national picture of social worker stability rates.

> **The key limitation is how close we can get to measuring what really matters.** We recognise that some change can be inevitable or even a positive step, especially when a child's needs change or when better placement or school options become available. Our analysis counts the number of changes but the data we have does not allow us to say whether these changes are good or bad, or whether they are well managed or badly managed.

> **We are also limited by the quality of national data on factors that might lead to instability.** While this report identifies many factors recorded in national data that we know increase the risk of experiencing instability, their total explanatory power is limited. There may be other important drivers of stability not captured in our data, such as a child's background of traumatic experiences, the quality of the relationship between a child and their carer, the quality and amount of professional support around a child, and how much contact a child has with friends and siblings.

4. Next steps

> We have data on placement and school stability for every local authority in England. We will be writing to every Director of Children's Services and every Lead Member for Children's Services to notify them of their local area's rates of instability, and will ask them to adopt the Stability Index as a tool for identifying areas of concern but also measuring progress and improvement.

> We will also prepare and distribute tailor-made reports to each of the 78 local authorities who shared their social worker data for us. These reports will provide an in-depth examination of the stability experienced by that local authority's looked after children, identifying groups with higher (or higher than expected) instability and allowing the local authority to benchmark its outcomes for these children. We will also share our findings and analysis with local authorities who have been judged by Ofsted as 'Inadequate' in relation to children looked after and achieving permanence.

> In return for providing these reports, we will be asking these local authorities to demonstrate how they will use our analysis to drive up outcomes and stability for children in care.

> We want to see children in care placed in good or outstanding schools only. We will be writing to local authorities where a low proportion of children in care are in these schools, seeking both an explanation and a commitment from the local authority to secure better school places for its children in care.

> We will work with the new What Works Centre for Children's Social Care to ensure that evidence on what works to improve stability for children in care can be shared with, and adopted by, local authorities and practitioners. We will also help local authorities wishing to use Stability Index data for their local authority to evaluate the impact of new initiatives and programmes targeted at stability.

> We want to see the Stability Index informing Ofsted's inspections of local authority children's services. We will be asking Ofsted to require evidence from local authorities on the on stability of their looked after children, referring to Stability Index data and reports where available, as part of Ofsted's inspections and quality assessments.

> We will be asking DfE if it can report our measures of placement and school stability – which are produced from DfE's own data – in its statistical publications on looked after children, such as the children in care and adoption performance tables. We will also ask DfE to explore including information on social worker changes experienced by children in care as part of its data collections from local authorities.

> We are carrying out further work this year to better understand the causes and consequences of instability, to get closer to understanding the actual experiences and outcomes for children. This includes further data analysis later this year exploring the interplay between different types of instability, and the effects of instability on children's educational outcomes such as attainment and exclusion.

> We are also planning a deep dive which will investigate the sequences of events, views of children and practitioners, and outcomes for children in specific cases where children experienced high levels of instability, in order to better understand what actually happened, what caused it, and what effect it had on the child.

> Finally, we will continue to push for better and more meaningful data to be collected nationally on the lives, experiences, wellbeing and outcomes of looked after children, so that we can better shed light on these issues and hold services to account.