Children's COMMISSIONER

Stability Index 2018

Technical Report

Contents

Acknowledgements

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Introduction

Instability in care has repeatedly been shown to be detrimental to outcomes for looked after children (see Munro 2006, Rubin et al 2007, Schofield and Beek 2005). The Children's Commissioner for England launched the Stability Index in 2017[1] in order to shed more light on the issue, measure at the local and national level the instability[2] that children in care experience, and drive improvements to stability. Last year's Stability Index report highlighted that this instability was a repeated issue of concern for children in care in England and demonstrated for the 2015/16 cohort of looked after children:

- Around 1 in 10 children in care experienced multiple placement moves during the year. A similar proportion experienced a mid-year school move.
- Around 1 in 4 experienced multiple social worker changes during the year
- Around 1 in 20 experienced any form of multiple instability during the year: any combination of multiple placement moves, a mid-year school move or multiple social worker moves.

That report provided initial and preliminary findings based on a first look at the data on the transitions experienced by children in care. However the Stability Index is a long-term project, and this report provides an annual update of our analysis in order to continue to shine a light on the important issues of placement, school and social worker instability for looked after children.

Aims of this update

As well as updating our analysis, this year we have also developed our analysis in three key ways. Firstly, in response to feedback from looked after children and young people, we have expanded our analysis to examine children's instability over 2 years as well as a single year. This allows us to identify children experiencing repeated instability over a longer period of time. Secondly, we are also able to compare our single-year figures to last year's results to examine how instability has changed in the past 12 months. Thirdly, we have expanded our data collection from local authorities on social worker changes to include much richer data from significantly more local authorities.

This analysis also aims to investigate how these national pictures of instability (both single year and over two years) vary by local authority (LA) and what factors might explain this variation. Specifically it asks:

- Are there particular groups of children at greater risk of experiencing instability?
- Are there placement/school characteristics that make a child more likely to experience instability?
- Are there local authority characteristics that make children more likely to experience instability?

[1] See Stability Index: Initial Findings and Technical Report.

[2] Note: By instability we are referring to changes in a child's home (placement), school or social worker. This can therefore include beneficial changes (such as a move to a better school or placement) as well as detrimental changes.

Importantly, our wider aim is to provide a set of measures and tools for local authorities to support internal discussion and monitor levels of placement, school and social worker instability affecting their looked after children. This will allow local authorities to identify groups that are more at risk and in need of further support so that their wellbeing and welfare can be promoted.

Data sources and measures of instability

The measures of instability used in this report combine data from three sources: the Children Looked After Census and School Census collected and provided by the Department for Education, along with a bespoke dataset of social worker histories which we have collected from local authorities.

Children Looked After (CLA) Census extract

This dataset provides our core sample of all children looked after in England on 31 March 2017 and information on their placement histories back to 2012/13. This includes details on their placements – for example their legal statuses during the year and where they are placed – as well as demographic information.

As with our previous analysis and in line with national statistics, we have excluded from this sample any episodes of respite care, as well as a small number of children with similar patterns of placement moves to those in respite care. Table 1 demonstrates this sample's profile (final sample size after cleaning = 72,670):

Table 1 - Profile of children in CLA Census extract

Variable	Category	Proportion (%)	Number of children
Age at earliest period of care since 2012/13[3]	0-4	34	24,700
	5-11	40	29,390
	12-15	20	14,590
	16+	5	3,990
In care in both 2015/16 & 2016/17[4]		70	50,980
Region	East Midlands	7	5,400
	East of England	9	6,460
	London	14	9,910
	North East	7	4,840
	North West	18	13,230
	South East	14	9,830
	South West	8	5,790
	West Midlands	13	9,500
	Yorkshire and The Humber	11	7,720

[3] Note: This refers to a child's age at the start of their first period of care either overlapping 2012/13 or (if not in care in 2012/13) later. This is limited by the fact we only have care histories back to the 2012/13 financial year and so will not capture periods of care that ended before 1st April 2012.

[4] Note: a child with one period of care spanning both years would still be counted in this.

Age on 31/03/2017	0-4	18	12,990
	5-11	30	21,880
	12-15	29	20,760
	16+	23	17,040
Primary need code[5]	Abuse + Neglect	61	44,570
	Child Disability	3	2,290
	Parent disability	3	2,310
	Family Stress	8	6,010
	Family dysfunction	15	11,130
	Child behaviour	1	1,080
	Low income	<1	100
	Absent parenting	7	5,100
	Multiple	<1	90
Ethnicity	Black and minority ethnic (BME)	24	17,750
	White	75	54,290
	Missing	1	630
Gender	Female	44	31,710
	Male	56	40,960
Initial legal status[6]	Criminal Justice legal status	<1	270
	Emergency protection order	1	480
	Full care order	45	32,850
	Interim care order	18	12,970
	Placement order	3	2,450
	Police protection	3	1,970
	Section 20 (S20 - those taken into care voluntarily without court orders)	30	21,670
	Other	<1	20
Initial placement type[7]	Fostered not with relatives	67	48,510
	Fostered with relatives	12	8,930
	Hospital (or other institution providing health care)	1	760
	Independent Living	2	1,720

[5] 99% of children in our extract had only one category of need code during 2016/17. Where multiple categories of need are present (most likely due to a child ceasing to be classed as in need and then returning) these are recorded in the multiple category.

[6] Note: by initial legal status we refer to the child's legal status at their first placement overlapping the 2016/17 financial year. For analysis looking over 2 years this will be the child's legal status at their first placement overlapping 2015/16.

[7] Note: by initial placement type we refer to the child's placement type at their first placement overlapping the 2016/17 financial year. For analysis looking over 2 years this will be the child's placement type at their first placement overlapping 2015/16.

	Other institution	1	850
	Placed for adoption	1	370
	Placed with parents	5	3,920
	Residential	10	7,260
	Other	<1	350

A key point to note is that our sample consists only of children in care at the end of the 2016/17 financial year. This is in line with published national statistics and is useful in reducing the burden of social worker data extraction for LAs. However, it has two impacts:

1. Not all children in our sample are in care for the whole of 2016/17. Around 17% only entered care in the second half of 2016/17: these children therefore have less time in care during which they can experience placement moves. To mitigate the effect of this, our findings on single year placement instability are only presented where they are robust to controlling for a proxy measure for how long children are able to experience placement moves for during the year[8].

2. Similarly when looking at two year instability, 30% of those looked after on 31 March 2017 had no periods of care in 2015/16 and so a two-year measure of placement instability cannot be defined for them. As such all analysis examining placement instability over two years is restricted to subset of children who had periods of care in both 2015/16 and 2016/17 (n= 50,980)[9].

School Census sample

The CLA Census extract is matched to the School Census[10] in order to provide information on school enrolments and moves. Furthermore, this provides other useful information on the characteristics of these children, such as any special educational needs or disability (SEND) or any contact with a pupil referral unit (PRU).

Matching to the School Census by definition excludes looked after children who have not yet entered or who have left school. This means that many looked after children aged under 5 or over 16 are automatically excluded from analysis on this matched sample. The analysis will also miss children not currently enrolled in school or whose pupil matching reference has not yet been recorded.

As with last year, this sample only includes those in both the autumn and summer term school censuses. This is to exclude those that enter the school system mid-year rather than through moves between schools. Children in nursery classes are also excluded from this analysis due to their high propensity for school changes as with last year.

Matched sample profile

The match rate between the CLA Census extract and the School Census was 56% overall, while it was 85% amongst children aged 5-15. The overall matched sample size = 40,765.

[8] This is operationalised with a categorical variable indicating whether their first period of care overlapping the 2016/17 financial year starts more than 6 months, between 3 and 6 months or less than 3 months before the 31 March 2017.

[9] Note: These are therefore a specific subset of those in care on 31 March 2017 and so may not be representative of the full looked after children population.

[10] This is possible via the National Pupil Database, supplied and owned by the Department for Education https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-pupil-database

There are some small differences between the characteristics of children in this matched sample and the characteristics of children in our CLA Census extract (aged 5-15). In the matched sample, children on full care orders are over-represented compared to the full CLA sample, while the proportion with at least one period in care in both 2015/16 and 2016/17 is slightly lower (Table 2). Children in the matched sample are also slightly less likely to be in residential care placements. The two samples are however similar in terms of other characteristics, including children's primary need code (an indicator of why children are felt to be in need of social service support).

Table 2 - Comparison of profiles between CLA Census extract and matched School Census sample

Variable	Category	CLA Census extract (aged 5-15) (%)	Matched NPD sample (aged 5-15) (%)
Age at earliest period of care	0-4	25	24
	5-11	16	14
	12-15	59	62
In care in both 2015/16 & 2016/17		77	79
Age on 31/03/2017	5-11	49	46
	12-15	51	54
Primary need code	Abuse + Neglect	65	66
	Child Disability	3	3
	Parent disability	3	3
	Family Stress	9	8
	Family dysfunction	16	16
	Child behaviour	1	1
	Low income	<1	<1
	Absent parenting	3	2
	Multiple	<1	<1
Ethnicity	BME	22	21
	White	78	79
	Missing	<1	<1
Gender	Female	44	46
	Male	56	54
Initial legal status	Criminal Justice legal status	<1	<1
	Emergency protection order	1	<1
	Full care order	57	60
	Interim care order	14	14
	Placement order	4	4
	Police protection	3	2
	S20	22	19
	Other	<1	<1

Initial placement type	Fostered not with relatives	72	75
	Fostered with relatives	13	14
	Hospital	<1	<1
	Independent Living	<1	<1
	Other institution	<1	<1
	Placed for adoption	1	1
	Placed with parents	5	5
	Residential	7	4
	Other	<1	<1

These differences suggest that the matched sample is slightly more likely to be in more long term and stable (based on findings below) placements than the full cohort of looked after children. This means any estimates of placement and social worker instability based on this matched sample are likely underestimate the 'true' amount of instability among the CLA population – although the bias should be small.

Our overall match rate between the CLA Census sample and the School Census sample is 56% – that is, we are able to match in an autumn term and summer term School Census record for 56% of the children in the CLA sample. Clearly, many of these children may not be of school age (e.g. under-5s). Table 3, below, clarifies this further by showing how the match rate varies by age of child. We find that around 6,500 children aged 5-15 and 12,500 children aged 16-18 were in our CLA Census sample but not our School Census sample. There may be a variety of reasons for this, including children: being temporarily out of school (perhaps due to a placement or school move); having left the state school system; being in a further education or sixth form college (particularly for 16-18 year olds); being a new arrival in the state school system; having never been previously enrolled in school; and having a unique pupil number that is missing or incorrect. We cannot differentiate between all of these potential explanations.

Table 3 – Numbers of children in CLA Census sample not matched to School Census, by age. Asterisks denote numbers that have been suppressed because of small cell counts.

Age at 31st March 2017	Total number in full CLA Census sample	Number not in school matched sample	% not matched	Number without any matching reference recorded	% without any matching reference recorded
0	3,820	3,820	100%	3,820	100%
1	2,730	2,730	100%	2,730	100%
2	2,210	2,210	100%	2,180	99%
3	2,090	2,090	100%	1,860	89%
4	2,130	2,130	100%	1,070	50%
5	2,260	1,330	59%	190	8%
6	2,450	180	7%	90	4%
7	2,780	130	5%	40	1%
8	3,140	170	5%	30	1%
9	3,460	160	5%	30	1%
10	3,880	250	6%	40	1%

11	3,900	290	7%	30	1%
12	4,300	430	10%	30	1%
13	4,750	720	15%	70	1%
14	5,390	1,080	20%	150	3%
15	6,320	1,730	27%	390	6%
16	7,910	4,360	55%	1,010	13%
17	9,110	8,070	88%	2,000	22%
18	20	20	82%	*	*
19	*	*	*	*	*

Social worker history data collection

As with last year, we requested information from local authorities on the numbers of changes of primary social worker experienced by children looked after on 31 March 2017. Participation was voluntary and we received responses from 78 local authorities[11], over three times the number that responded last year (22).

This year's social worker data collection provides additional data not available last year:

- Every local authority provided details on children's social worker history over at least two years. This allows us to examine longer-term social worker instability amongst children in care.
- All bar one local authority provided data indicating whether a child's case had moved between social worker teams when the child's primary social worker changed. As these changes of team are more likely to be planned changes in relation to changing needs of the child, it is useful to separate these team changes of social worker from those that result in the case being held within the same social worker team (for example a primary social worker leaving).

Local authorities were provided with guidance on how to determine when a child's primary social worker had changed (see Appendix C). However, it is not a statutory requirement for local authorities to record social worker changes and as a result there are no national statistics guidelines for how these should be recorded in local authority management information systems. Therefore the data we collected could reflect different recording practices between local authorities and this could lead to differences in measured social worker instability.

Some care must also be taken with comparisons between the estimates of social worker instability rates in this report and those we produced previously:

- Firstly, only 14 local authorities submitted data for both collections.
- Secondly, in last year's collection local authorities only submitted total counts of social worker changes for each child. After consultation with local authorities, this year we requested detail on each social worker spell for a child in order to give greater detail on their patterns of instability. While theoretically this should not affect totals submitted, some caution in comparing between these different collection approaches is sensible.

As a result comparisons to last year are limited to headline findings and presented both at an overall sample level and amongst the 14 local authorities submitting in both years.

[11] A list of all the local authorities who provided us with social worker data is in Appendix A.

Data cleaning

Local authorities provided detail on all primary social worker spells for children looked after on the 31 March 2017 covering at least two years up to 31 March 2017. As with all bespoke collections, some cleaning of this data was necessary. Our data cleaning removed:

- Duplicated spells (based on child and local authority and, social worker identifiers and spell start and end date)
- Spells without a valid start date
- Children without an open social worker spell on 31 March 2017
- Spells where multiple primary social workers overlap entirely – for example where a primary worker may have been on leave for a short period of time and this has been recorded as a change in social worker. In these cases, this analysis includes the spell with the earliest start date
- Children not matched with the CLA Census - children are matched on their unique CLA Census identifier or their Unique Pupil Number. Non-matching identifiers were also checked with their nearest equivalents in the CLA Census to ensure matching failures were not due to simple typos.

After this cleaning, social worker histories of two years or more were available for 97% of the children looked after on 31 March 2017 in these 78 local authorities. The final sample size after cleaning and matching was 38,905 children.

Sample profile

The children from this sample of 78 local authorities have very similar characteristics to the full looked after children population. They have similar distributions of age, initial legal status, primary need code and initial placement type (Table 4).

The key difference compared to the full CLA Census sample is that this social worker data sample involves an over-representation of children in the South East region and an under-representation of children in London. London has on average higher social worker turnover and vacancy rates than England as a whole (London's vacancy rate = 24.1 compared to national average of 16.3[12]). Therefore the local authorities in the sample have on average slightly lower social worker turnover and vacancy rates than the national averages (sample average turnover rate = 14.3, national average = 15.2).

To correct for this, we have weighted our social worker sample to account for this regional disparity. However, this may not completely account for differences between the local authorities that submitted data and those that did not.

The weights have been calculated via iterative proportional fitting ('raking')[13] to population totals from our CLA Census extract. The scale of this weighting is small (largest weight = 2.54) and there are no children removed from the analysis as a result (smallest weight = 0.5). The effect of this weighting is demonstrated in Table 4.

[12] Calculated from DfE 'Children's social work workforce statistics 2017' https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/childrens-social-work-workforce-2017

[13] See Lomax (2016) for more detail.

Table 4 - Comparison between CLA extract and weighted and unweighted social worker histories data

Variable	Category	Full CLA extract (%)	Social worker histories sample (unweighted) (%)	Social worker histories sample (weighted) (%)
Age at earliest period of care	0-4	34	33	34
	5-11	40	41	41
	12-15	20	20	20
	16+	5	5	5
In care in both 2015/16 & 2016/17		70	71	71
Region	East Midlands	7	11	7
	East of England	9	5	9
	London	14	10	14
	North East	7	6	7
	North West	18	15	18
	South East	14	21	14
	South West	8	5	8
	West Midlands	13	17	13
	Yorkshire and The Humber	11	11	11
Age on 31/03/2017	0-4	18	17	18
	5-11	30	30	30
	12-15	29	29	29
	16+	23	24	23
Primary need code	Abuse + Neglect	61	61	61
	Child Disability	3	3	3
	Parent disability	3	3	3
	Family Stress	8	8	8
	Family dysfunction	15	15	15
	Child behaviour	1	1	1
	Low income	<1	<1	<1
	Absent parenting	7	8	7
	Multiple	<1	<1	<1
Ethnicity	BME	24	24	24
	White	75	75	75
	Missing	1	1	1
Gender	Female	44	43	43
	Male	56	57	57
Initial legal status	Criminal Justice legal status	<1	<1	<1
	Emergency protection order	1	1	1
	Full care order	45	45	45

	Interim care order	18	17	18
	Placement order	3	3	3
	Police protection	3	3	3
	S20	30	31	30
	Other	<1	<1	<1
Initial placement type	Fostered not with relatives	67	68	67
	Fostered with relatives	12	12	12
	Hospital	1	1	1
	Independent Living	2	2	2
	Other institution	1	1	1
	Placed for adoption	1	1	1
	Placed with parents	5	5	5
	Residential	10	10	10
	Other	<1	<1	<1

Other data sources

Our analysis also incorporates published statistics from other government agencies to provide detail on local authority and school characteristics. Table 5 provides details of the data sources used and the variables taken from them.

Table 5 – Variables taken from already published data sources

Variable	Data source	Notes
School inspection judgements	Ofsted management information	Most recent available inspection report used up to 31 March 2017. Where schools have recently converted most recent inspection reports for predecessor school is used
Local authority children's services	Ofsted management information	Most recent available inspection report used
Rank of Income deprivation affecting children in local authority	Indices of multiple deprivation 2015	
Local authority budget per looked after child	Local authority revenue and financing statistics 2017	
Social worker turnover rates	Children's social workforce statistics 2017	Small rates are imputed – see below
Social worker vacancy rates	Children's social workforce statistics 2017	Small rates are imputed – see below
LA rate of looked after children per 10,000 children	Looked after children statistics 2017	Small counts imputed – see below

Looked after children turnover rate – number ceasing to be looked after in the year/number beginning to be looked after	Looked after children statistics 2017	Small counts imputed – see below
Number of unaccompanied asylum seekers looked after	Looked after children statistics 2017	Small counts imputed – see below
School size	School level census 2017	
School type	School level census 2017	
School postcode	School level census 2017	Geocoded using the 2017 postcode CSV file
Income deprivation affecting children of school postcode	School level census 2017	

Key measures of instability

For each area of instability, this analysis focuses on a single year metric of instability and a metric of instability over two years. These are all binary in nature and summarised by Table 6.

Table 6 – Key measures of instability used in this report

Area of instability	Single year/two year	Measure	What it counts	What it excludes
Placement instability	Single year	Child experienced 2 or more placement moves in 2016/17	• Changes in placement where a different carer assumes responsibility for the child during the financial year • Re-entries into care during the financial year	• 1st entries into care during the financial year • Carers moving house • Placement changes due to change in legal status where carer stays the same • Placements begun before the 01/04/2016 • Respite care episodes
	Two year	Child experienced 2 or more placement moves in both 2015/16 & 2016/17	• placement where a different carer assumes responsibility for the child during the financial year • Re-entries into care during the 2 financial years	• 1st entries into care during the 2 financial years • Carers moving house • Placement changes due to change in legal status where carer stays the same

				• Placements begun before the 01/04/2015 • Respite care episodes
School instability	Single year	Child experienced any mid-year school moves in the 2017 academic year	• School entry dates between the 3rd week of September and the end of May 2017	• Looked after children not matched with the NPD
	Two year	Child experienced any sort of school move (both start of year and mid-year) in the 2016 and 2017 academic years	• Unique school entry dates at any point during the 2016 and 2017 academic years	• Looked after children not matched with the NPD • Children moving from primary to secondary school
Social worker instability	Single year	Child experienced 2 or more primary social worker changes in 2016/17	> Changes in primary social worker during the financial year	
	Two year	Child experienced 2 or more primary social worker changes in both 2015/16 & 2016/17	> Changes in primary social worker during the 2 financial years	
Multiple instability	Single year	Children experiencing any combination	As above	As above

		of the above forms of instability		
	Two year	See below		

Measuring multiple instability over two years

We have also constructed a summary measure of instability over two years. This provides an overall picture of the placement, school and social worker instability experienced by children over two years in each local authority. However, there are multiple ways this measure could be defined by a researcher and no clear justification for one over the other.

A useful solution to this is to take a data led approach, examining which forms of instability tend to co-occur over two years and grouping children together based on similar patterns of instability. This has the added benefit of highlighting the most commonly occurring patterns of instability amongst children in our sample.

Latent class analysis (Lazarsfeld & Henry 1968) is a useful way of forming these groups, particularly as it uses a model-based technique to group children together. As a result, it can be formally validated on other samples if required and used to predict group membership on new samples. This method compares results for different numbers of groups. The results of this analysis (see below) suggest that four groups are adequate to summarise the observed patterns of correlation in our combined sample:

- A stable group – low rates on all forms of instability
- A stable group except for Social Worker team – low rates of placement instability but notably higher rates of moves between social worker teams
- 1st year instability – children with high rates of placement and school instability in 2015/16 but lower rates in 2016/17
- High instability – above average rates of all forms of stability in both 2015/16 and 2016/17.

Analysis methods

As well as reporting overall levels of instability at national and local authority level, this analysis also aims to highlight links between child and local authority factors and higher levels of instability.

Descriptive analysis

Bivariate cross tabulations and correlations are useful in identifying single characteristics associated with a higher likelihood of instability. Where characteristics are categorical (such as primary SEND type) these associations with our binary measures of instability are tested using the Rao and Scott (1984) adjusted chi square test. This modifies the traditional chi square test to account for clustering by local authority and any weights applied. Where bases are low (less than 50), proportions are marked with asterisks. All findings reported on are significant at a 95% confidence level except where mentioned.

Associations between stability and characteristics measured by continuous variables (such as social worker turnover rates in a local authority) are tested using logistic regression without controls, incorporating weights and with standard errors adjusted to account for any clustering by local authority. Again all findings reported on are significant at a 95% confidence level except where mentioned.

Published local authority statistics that incorporate low counts (between 1 and 5) are suppressed in national statistics for disclosure control reasons. To avoid having to drop observations in these local authorities, suppressed values are instead imputed using a form of multiple imputation. This creates five copies of the dataset, randomly selecting a count between 1 and 5 for these suppressed counts in each copy. The analysis is then run on each of these five copies and the results pooled across these replications with standard errors further widened to take account of this additional element of uncertainty.

Multiple Regression analysis

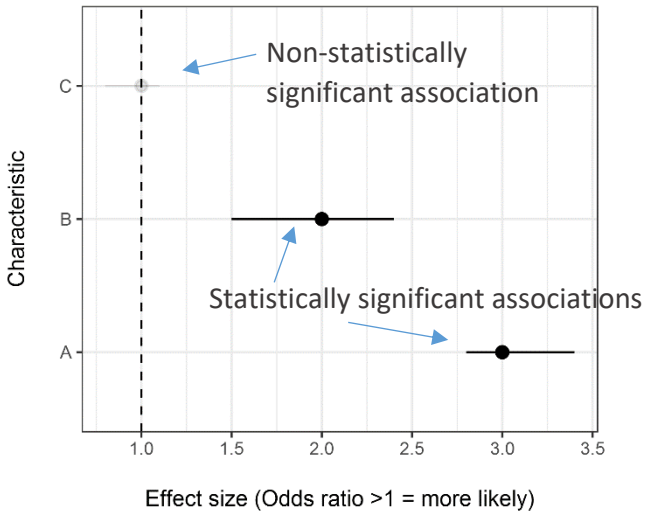
However, these bivariate links do not take into account wider correlations between factors and it may be that differences between groups are explained entirely by these other correlations. For example, children with any contact with a PRU may be more likely to experience placement instability. However, it may also be that this link is explained by their higher rate of social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) SEND code.

These links are therefore further tested for robustness using logistic regression incorporating other relevant factors as controls (again with standard errors adjusted for clustering by local authority and incorporating any weighting)[14]. This tests whether the relationship between a characteristic and the probability of a child experiencing each form instability remains statistically significant (at a 95% confidence level) once correlations with other factors are taken into account.

Results from regressions are displayed using coefficient plots like Figure 1 below. The points represent the coefficient estimate (transformed to an odds ratio for easier interpretation) and the horizontal lines represent 95% confidence intervals. Statistically significant associations are left non-transparent while those that are not statistically significantly associated with the outcome of interest are greyed out.

[14] Regression models fitted using the Survey package in R (Lumley, 2004).

Figure 1 - example results from a logistic regression



However, some care must be taken with significance testing on large samples like this, as it becomes more likely that small relationships will emerge as statistically significant even though the associated effect indicates only a small relationship with the outcome of interest in practical terms. Therefore it is important to also look at the size of the effects as well as their statistical significance.

Variable explanatory power

Measures of variable explanatory power[15] also useful in mitigating this problem of small but significant relationships. These measure how well a variable discriminates between children experiencing each form of instability and those not once it is incorporated into the model. These have the added benefits of being easily comparable between continuous and categorical predictors and summarising the effect of variables with multiple categories.

There are many ways of assessing variable's explanatory power. Logistic regression models predict a probability of children experiencing a type of instability with a more predictive model predicting probabilities closer to 1 for those actually experiencing the form of instability. One possible solution to this would be to pick a threshold for these probabilities, above which a child would be classified as having experienced the outcome. For example, all children with a predicted probability above 50% could be classified as having experienced instability. The proportion of people classified correctly – i.e. whose predicted outcome was the same as their actual outcome – would give a measure of the explanatory power of the model. However, results based on picking a discrete threshold are very sensitive to the cut-off chosen.

An approach that avoids this is to add together a model's predicted probabilities to give a predicted estimate of the number of children experiencing the form of instability. If a model perfectly discriminated between those experiencing instability and those not, then everyone who had experienced instability would have a predicted probability of 1 and so the sum of these predicted probabilities would be equal to the total number of children experiencing that form of instability. The ratio of the two totals would be 1 in this case. As a result, higher ratios of the summed probabilities to the observed population size indicate a variable with greater explanatory power.

[15] This is often termed 'variable importance' in machine learning applications.

Variables for which the regression coefficients are small (but still significant) will only increase predicted probabilities slightly and will therefore still score poorly in comparison to other variables with a larger effect size on the outcome of interest. This same method can also be used to show which groups of factors best discriminate between children experiencing instability and those not. For example, whether local authority or child factors are more predictive of each form of instability. Finally, when this ratio is calculated for a model including all factors, it also demonstrates how well these discriminate between those experiencing each form of instability and those not when taken together. This provides us with an idea of how much unexplained variation in levels of instability remains after all factors considered are taken into account.

Latent class analysis

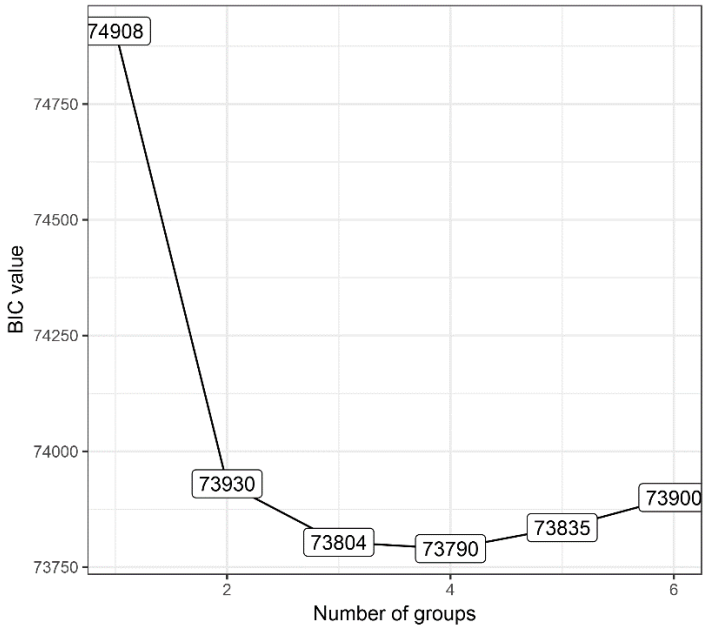
The final section of this report presents the results of a latent class analysis, which groups children together based on similar patterns of instability over two years. As this incorporates repeated measures, a random effect is also included in this model (Qu et al 1996). This relaxes the assumption of conditional independence that would be clearly violated with repeated measurements over two years. The effect of adding this random effect on the parameters is small and serves to account for correlation between items due to this repeated measurement. Standard errors on the class loadings are widened to account for any clustering within local authority. Analysis is rerun on 50 random starting values to check for replication of the best likelihood solution.

As this is a data-led method, various measures of model fit are needed to compare between solutions with different numbers of groups. These models require the number of groups to be specified in advance and the number of groups is varied, with metrics of model fit used to determine which number of groups provides the best fit to the observed patterns of instability. This fit is assessed using a combination of indicators:

- the Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC, Schwartz 1978),
- a chi squared test of difference between predicted and observed response combinations (the G-squared statistic)
- residual bivariate correlations.

Figure 2 demonstrates that a four-group model minimises the value of the BIC, which is often highlighted as an efficient indicator of the correct number of groups (Nylund et al 2007).

Figure 2 - BIC values for latent class models with differing numbers of groups



This four-group result also has a non-significant G-squared statistic (p-value = 0.89) indicating no significant difference between the model-predicted counts of the various combinations of instability and the actual counts. Residuals are also low (all residual bivariate correlations between pairs of indicators below 2), which further indicates a good model fit.

Entropy provides a measure of whether there is a large overlap between groups. A value of 1 would indicate perfect separation between groups and 0 indicates no separation. Though not a measure of model fit as such, this separation does provide an indication of the certainty with which children are classified into a particular group. Entropy values for this 4-group fit are also reasonably high (entropy = 0.77) suggesting that the groups are reasonably well separated.

However, as this entropy value is not very close to 1, it is useful to preserve this uncertainty in our national estimates of group size and characteristics. To this end, all descriptive analysis of correlations with categorical variables and group sizes is based on the summed probabilities of children being in each group. Similarly, correlations with continuous characteristics are assessed through multinomial regression using Vermunt's 3-step procedure (Vermunt 2010)[16] which also carries through the uncertainty of classification.

[16] All latent class models and multinomial regressions are fitted in MPlus version 8 (Muthen and Muthen, 2017).

Findings: placement instability

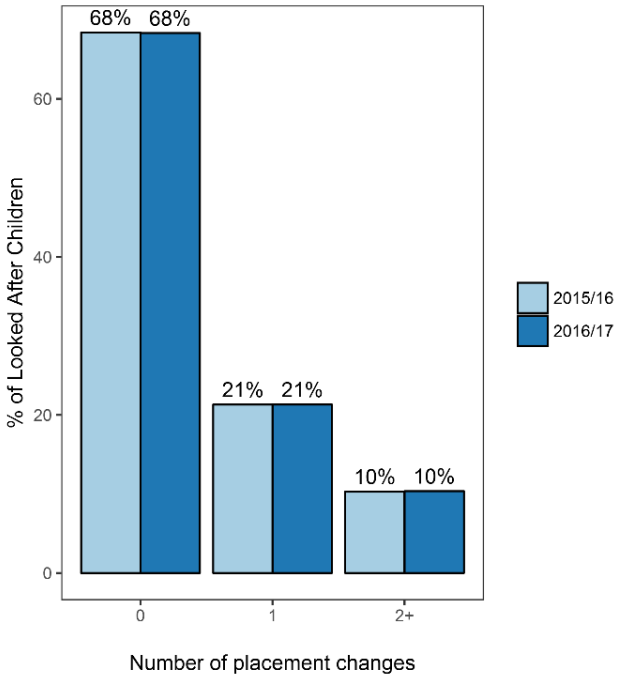
What is the national picture of placement instability in 2016/17?

Key findings:

1. **At a national level, there has been little change in rates of placement instability between 2015/16 and 2016/17. Around 1 in 10 children in care (7,530) experienced multiple placement moves in 2016/17.**
2. **This year we are able to measure the number of children experiencing multiple placement changes in two consecutive years. Of the children in care in both 2015/16 and 2016/17, around 3% (1,320 children) experienced multiple placement moves in both years.**
3. **Experiencing placement instability in one year puts children at heightened risk of experiencing it in the following year.**

At a national level there has been very little change in the levels of placement instability compared to 2015/16 (Figure 3). The majority of children looked after (68%) experienced no placement changes in 2016/17[17]. However, a notable minority (10%, 7,530 children) experienced 2 or more placement changes in 2016/17. These are similar proportions to 2015/16.

Figure 3 - Rates of placement changes in 2015/16 and 2016/17



22% of looked after children with a period in care in both 2015/16 and 2016/17 had two or more placement changes over two years (Table 7). However, repeated instability over two years is notably rarer than instability within a single year. Around 1 in 50 (1.8%) of those in care at the 31 March 2017 (1,320 children) had experienced 2 or more placement moves in both 2015/16 and 2016/17. This proportion increases slightly when restricted to those that have at least one placement in each year (2.6%)[18].

Table 7, below, shows the discrete distributions of the number of placement changes observed when looking over a range of time periods (one to four years). It shows that while in the short term, the majority of children in care experience no placement changes, this reverses when looking over a longer time frame. Over three or four years, more than half of looked after children experience at least one placement move. The proportion of children experiencing exactly one placement move is similar regardless of the time frame considered.

[17] Note: the figure from 2015/16 differs slightly from that reported last year. This is due to an improvement in our method for counting placement changes.

[18] Note: all subsequent analysis of repeated placement moves is based on children who have at least one period in care in both 2015/16 and 2016/17.

Table 7 - Distribution of placement changes over 1-4 years for children looked after on 31 March 2017. Totals differ as children are only counted if they are in care on 31 March 2017 and at any time during the first year of the relevant period. For example, the 3 year column includes all children looked after on 31 March 2017 and with a care period during 2014/15 – this is to exclude those who have only entered care after 2014/15 and so were unable to have placement changes over 3 years.

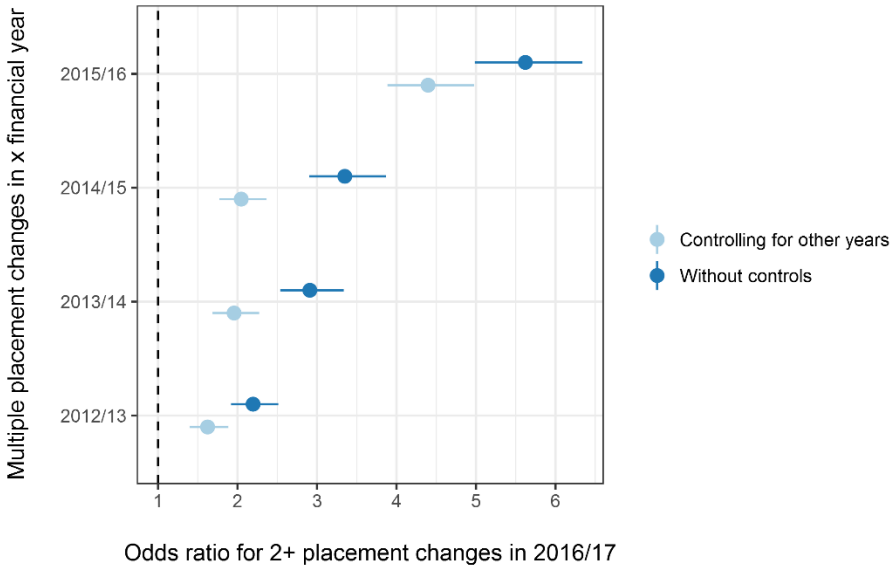
	Distribution over a single year (2016/17)		Distribution over 2 years (2015/16-2016/17)		Distribution over 3 years (2014/15-2016/17)		Distribution over 4 years (2013/14-2016/17)	
Number of placement changes	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**
0	49,650	68	27,360	54	17,750	45	12,320	40
1	15,490	21	12,240	24	9,300	24	7,280	24
2	4,590	6	5,660	11	5,190	13	4,320	14
3	1,610	2	2,640	5	2,830	7	2,460	8
4	700	1	1,330	3	1,590	4	1,520	5
5	310	<1	720	1	900	2	910	3
6	140	<1	410	1	540	1	570	2
7+	180	<1	630	1	1,030	3	1,210	4
Total	**72,670**	**100**	**50,980**	**100**	**39,130**	**100**	**30,570**	**100**

Placement changes tend to concentrate around a child's entry into care. This is most clear amongst those entering care during the 2 year period from 2015/16 to 2016/17. Amongst care entrants with any placement changes over this period, 76% of these changes occur within 6 months of their entry into care. Even for those with 3 or more placement changes, 64% of their placement changes occur within this 6 month window.

Yet for a small proportion of children, placement instability is not just confined to these short periods of time and experiencing placement instability in one year puts children at a heightened risk of experiencing it in the next year. One quarter of those experiencing multiple placement changes in 2015/16 experienced it again in 2016/17. By comparison, only 8% of those who did not experience it in 2015/16 went on to experience multiple placement moves in 2016/17. So experiencing placement instability in one year seems to increase the likelihood of experiencing it again in the following year by a factor of three.

Figure 4 provides further evidence of the link between experiencing current instability risk of experiencing future instability. While the link is strongest from one year to the next, the increased risk is still present several years later (albeit attenuated). We find a small and statistically significant link between experiencing instability in 2012/13 and the risk of experiencing in 2016/17, even after controlling for placement instability in the intervening years (although the link is smaller once that is controlled for). Even once instability in the intervening years is taken into account, those experiencing multiple placement changes in 2012/13 and in care at the 31 March 2017 are still 62% more likely to experience multiple placement moves four years later, compared to those who did not experience multiple placement moves in 2012/13. However, it should be stressed that this finding is based on a limited sample (those with at least one period of care in 2012/13 and looked after on 31 March 2017, n = 23,770) and therefore these findings are in need of further confirmation.

Figure 4 - odds ratios for association of multiple placement moves in 2016/17 with multiple placement moves in previous years. Results are shown for associations without any controls (dark blue) and with dummy variable controls for multiple placement moves in other years (light blue).



How does this picture vary by local authority?

Key findings:

1. **There is notable variation between local authorities in rates of single-year and repeated placement instability.**
2. **There is no strong relationship between a local authority's rate of placement instability in 2015/16 and its rate in 2016/17.**

Looking at a local level, Figure 6 demonstrates there is wide variation between local authorities in the likelihood of a child experiencing placement instability in 2016/17. Rates of multiple placement moves in 2016/17 range from 3% to 19% across local authorities[19]. This is again similar to the range in placement instability rates for 2015/16.

[19] Note: this range excludes one outlier that has a notably higher rate (26%) than all other local authorities as intelligence suggests that this is due to differences in recording practices. All findings mentioned below are robust to a dummy control for this outlier.

Figure 5 - Rates of multiple placement changes by local authority in 2015/16 and 2016/17

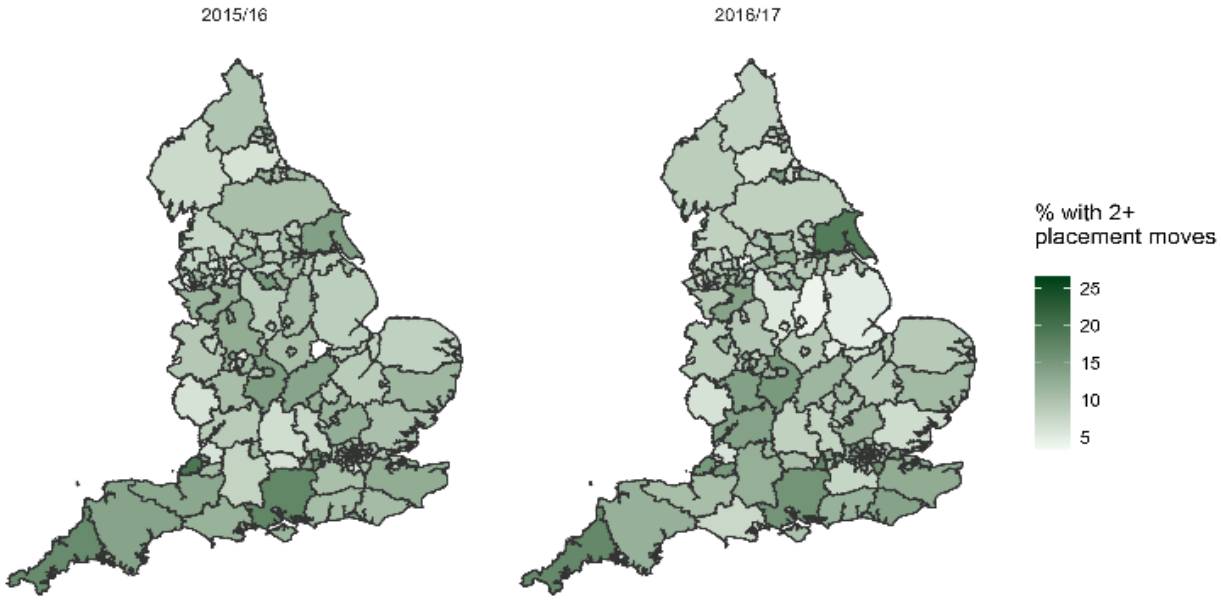


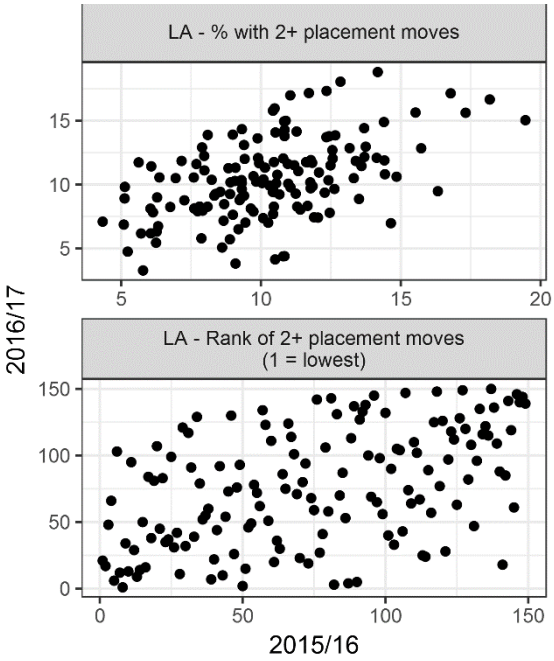
Table 8 – Average placement instability rates by region

Region	Number of Looked after children with 2+ placement moves in 2016/17	% with 2+ placement moves in 2016/17
East Midlands	410	8
East of England	640	10
London	1140	12
North East	390	8
North West	1220	9
South East	1150	12
South West	690	12
West Midlands	1060	11
Yorkshire and The Humber	830	11

There is similarly wide variation in rates of repeated placement instability by local authority. Amongst children with at least one placement in 2015/16 and 2016/17, the likelihood of experiencing multiple placement changes in two consecutive years varies from less than 1% to 9% across local authorities. Table 8, above, shows that there is less variation by region, indicating that much of the variation may be within-in region.

However, differences between local authorities are not consistent year on year. There is a weak relationship between current and past instability rates at the local authority level: a local authority's ranked rate in 2015/16 explains only a quarter of its ranked rate in 2016/17. Figure 7 demonstrates visually that there is a large amount of variation still to be explained.

Figure 6 - associations between rate of multiple placement moves by LA in 2015/16 and 2016/17. Top plot shows LA % with multiple placement moves, bottom plot shows LA rank in each year



What factors help explain this variation?

Given this wide variation between local authorities, it is helpful to look at what factors might account for the different probabilities of a child experiencing placement instability (both over one year and repeatedly over two years). This section looks at the child, placement and local authority characteristics available in the data.

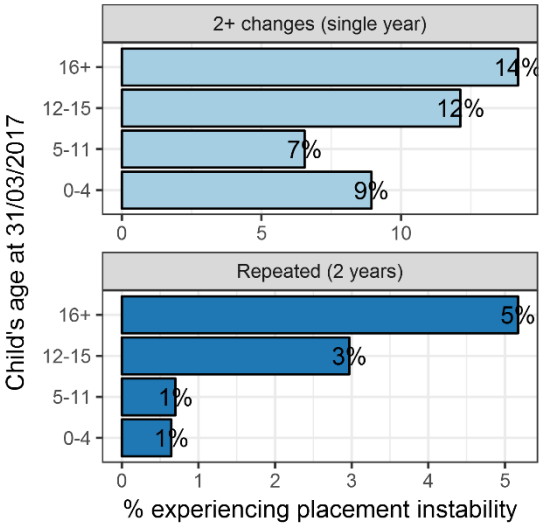
Which groups of children are more likely to experience placement instability?

Key findings:

1. **The following child characteristics are associated with the risk of experiencing single-year and repeated placement instability:**
    a. **Age (both on 31 March 2017 and at their earliest period of care)**
    b. **SEND status**
    c. **Primary category of need**
    d. **Having any contact time with a PRU**

There are notable differences between different groups of children in their risk of placement instability. Most notably, older children (both in terms of age on 31 March 2017 and age at their earliest period of care in our extract) and those recorded as having behavioural or social, emotional and mental health difficulties are most likely to experience placement instability.

Figure 7 - rates of single year and two year placement instability by age at 31 March 2017

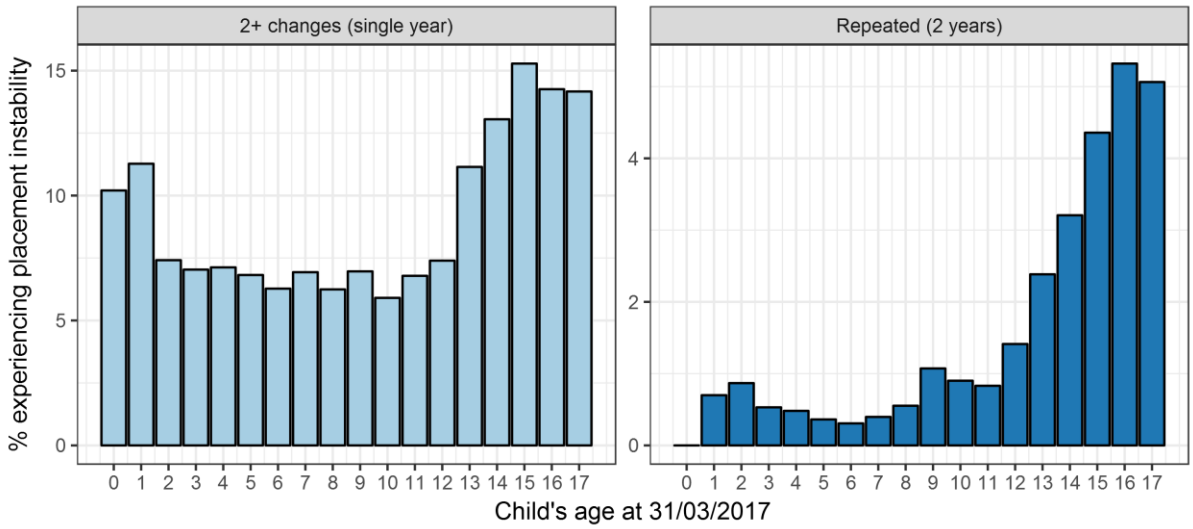


Child's age on 31 March 2017

Older children are more at risk of experiencing both single-year and repeated placement instability. Children aged 16 or over are twice as likely to experience multiple placement changes in a single year as those aged 5–11, and five times more likely to experience repeated placement instability (Figure 8). Children aged 0-4 are also slightly more at risk of single year placement instability compared to those aged 5-11. Figure 8 demonstrates that this is largely driven by high rates amongst those aged under 1. This is likely because there are a number of placement changes that are often necessary in taking a child into care at such a young age (for example the hospital will

often be counted as a placement for those taken into care at birth). This is further supported by the fact that those under 4 and in care in both 2015/16 and 2016/17 are at comparatively low risk of repeated placement instability two years in a row (Figure 8).

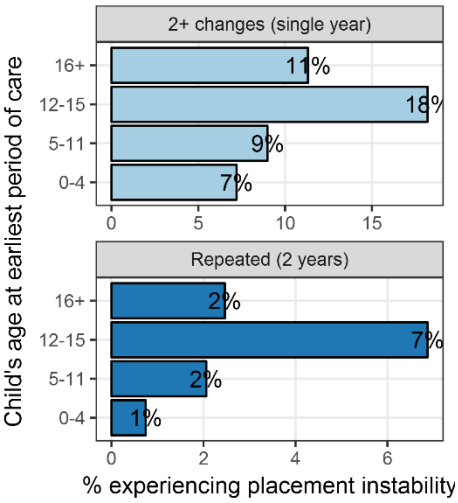
Figure 8 - Rates of single-year and two-year placement instability by single year age band (age at 31 March 2017)



Child's age at earliest period of care

Children aged 12-15 at their earliest period of care[20] are at notably higher risk of experiencing both single-year and repeated placement instability compared to all other age groups (Figure 10). For example, they are twice as likely to experience multiple placement changes in a single year as those aged 5-11 at their earliest care entry, and three times as likely to experience repeated placement instability over two years.

Figure 9 - Rates of single year and two year placement instability by child's age at earliest period of care



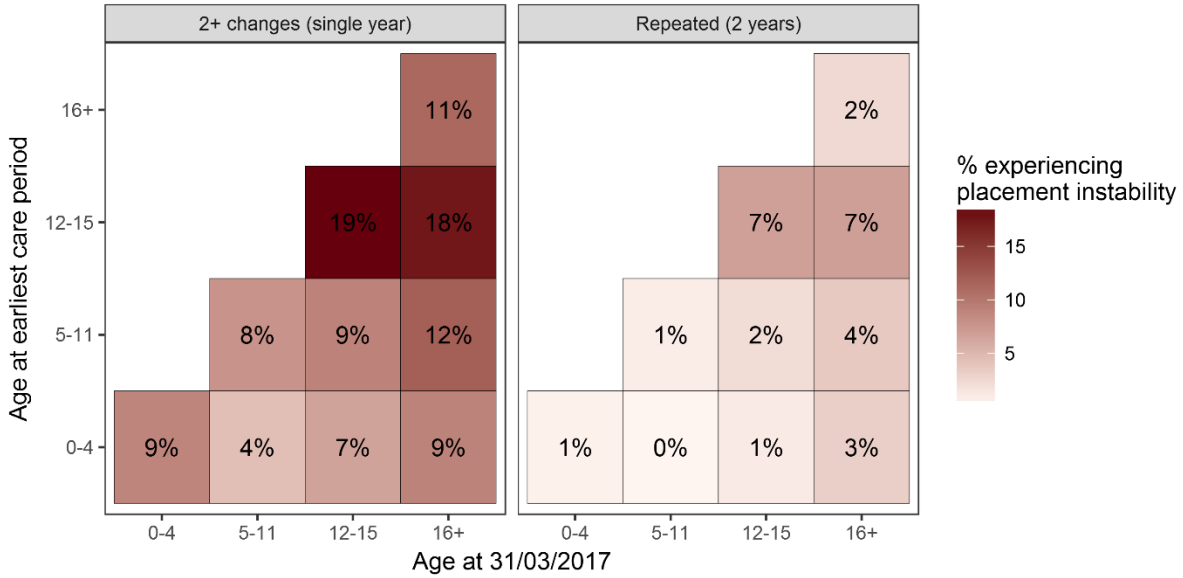
The effect of age at earliest care period exacerbates the effects of calendar age. For example, those aged 12-15 are notably more at risk of both single-year and repeated placement instability if they are recent care entrants, than if they have experience with the care system dating back to when they were younger (Figure 10). Nearly 1 in 5 12-15 year olds who have recently entered care experienced multiple placement changes in 2016/17, twice the rate for other age groups who have recently entered care.

However, it is not necessarily older recent care entrants that experience greater levels of placement instability. For example those aged 16+ at both their earliest period of care and 31 March 2017 actually have lower rates of both single-year (11%) and two-year (2%) placement instability than those aged 16+ and 12-15 at their earliest period of care (18% and 7% respectively). This difference is likely explained by the fact that over-16s who have recently entered care are more likely to have Absent Parenting as their primary need code (48% vs an

[20] Note: earliest periods of care are calculated used age at the start date of the earliest period of care overlapping the 2012/13 financial year (or later).

average rate of 7%), which is a need category associated with higher levels of placement stability (see below).

Figure 10 - Rates of placement instability for the cross tabulation of children's calendar age (on 31 March 2017) and age at their earliest entry into care. Percentages are the proportion experiencing placement instability. For example 9% of those aged 0-4 on 31 March 2017 and aged 0-4 at their earliest care period experienced multiple placement changes in a single year



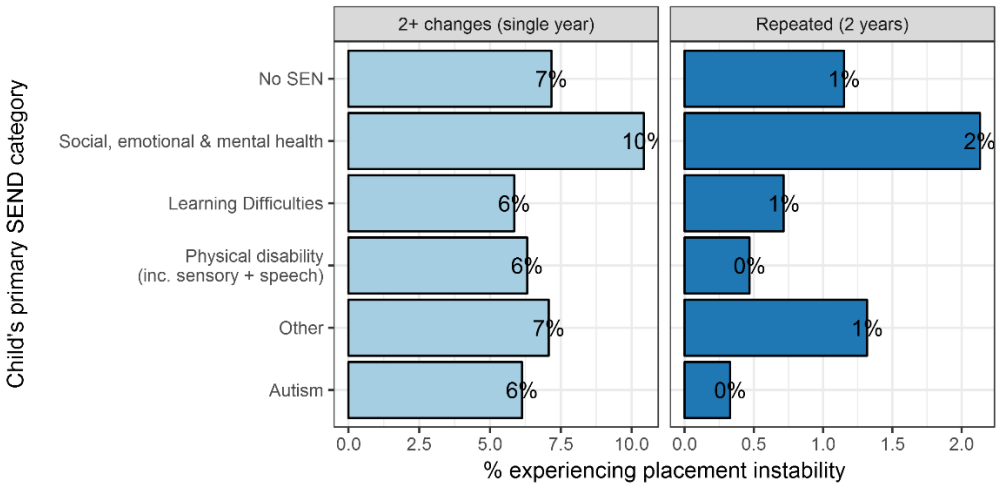
Child's SEND status[21]

Whether or not a looked after child has an identified SEND does not significantly affect their risk of experiencing placement instability. For example, 7% of those with an identified SEND code experienced multiple placement changes in 2016/17, compared to 8% of children without SEND. There are also very few differences in rates of instability between children who have a SEND statement and children who have SEND without a statement. Amongst those with any identified SEN, 9% of children with a statement experienced multiple placement moves in 2016/17 compared to 7% of those without. There are no differences between rates of repeated placement moves over two years (1% for those with and without a statement).

However, this broad category of SEND hides some notable differences between those with different types of SEND (Figure 11). For example, those recorded as having social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) difficulties as their primary SEND code are 40% more likely to experience single-year placement instability compared to those with no identified SEND.

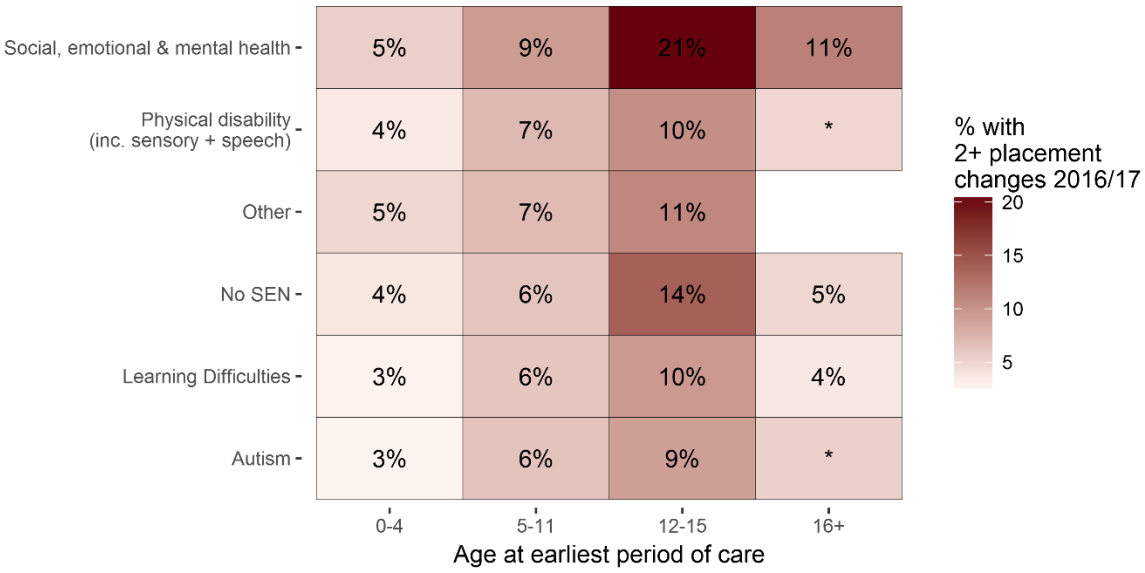
[21] Note: this analysis is based on the sample matched with the School Census. SEND status is their primary SEND category at spring term 2016/17 (for analysis of single-year placement instability in 2016/17) and primary SEND category at spring term 2015/16 (for analysis of repeated placement instability in both 2015/16 and 2016/17).

Figure 11 - rates of placement instability by child's primary SEND category. Note: this information is only available for the school matched sample and so average rates of instability are slightly lower than reported above



These dfferences are also exacerbated by age at earliest care period. One in five of those entering care at age 12-15 with the SEMH SEN code experienced multiple placement changes in 2016/17, compared to an average of 1 in 10 for all children with a SEMH SEND code (Figure 12).

*Figure 12 - single year placement instability for the cross tabulation of primary SEND code and a child's age at earliest period of care. * = base less than 50*



Child's primary category of need code

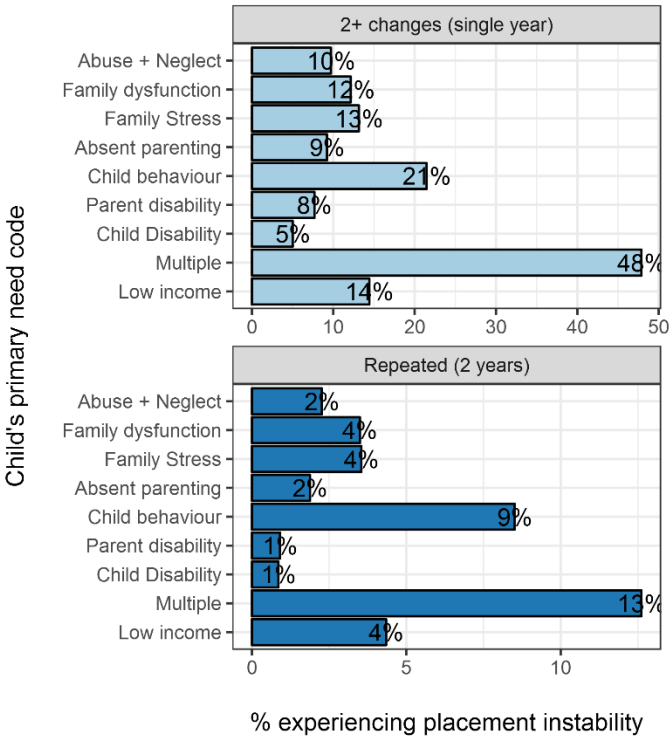
A child's category of need code provides an indication of the main reason that a child is considered to be in need of social services' support. Only one category of need is recorded for each period in care, corresponding to the highest in a hierarchy of categories of need present at the child's entry into care. As a result these provide only a partial picture of the number of children in care with particular forms of need.

Despite these limitations there are differences in both single-year and repeated instability rates across children with different categories of need. In cases where children's behaviour is recorded as their primary need, these children are twice as likely to experience single-year placement instability, and four times as likely to experience repeated placement instability, compared to children with the most common need code (abuse and neglect); see Figure 14.

Children for whom disability is recorded as their primary need code are the least at risk of both single-year and repeated instability.

The most at risk are children with multiple primary need codes (i.e. children whose need code is not the same throughout the financial year). As a child can only have one code during a period of care, this is likely picking up children who leave care but then return with a different primary need code. As a result it is unsurprising that these children have the highest rates of placement instability over both a single year and two years.

Figure 13 - Rates of single year and two year placement instability by child's primary category of need code



Children with any contact with a PRU

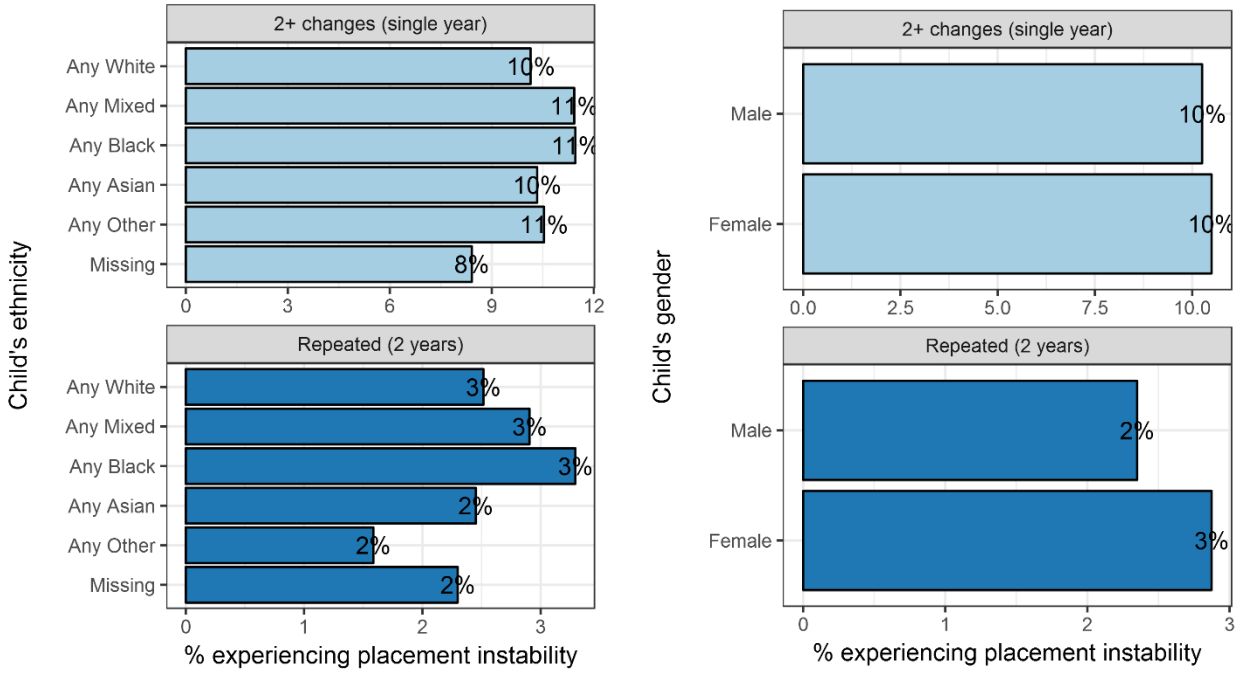
Children with any contact time with a PRU are also notably more likely to experience both single-year (24%) and repeated (8%) placement instability compared to those did not have contact time with a PRU (7% and 1% respectively). [22] This could reflect the primary need code finding above that children with behavioural needs are more at risk of placement instability, especially as children with any contact in a PRU are six times more likely to have behaviour primary need code compared to children not in a PRU. That said, we acknowledge children can have contact with a PRU for a variety of other reasons as well.

Gender and ethnicity

There are also no meaningful differences between genders or ethnicities in terms of placement stability (Figure 14).

[22] Note: This analysis is based on the school matched sample.

Figure 14 - Rates of single year and two year placement instability by gender and ethnicity



Are there characteristics of a child's initial placement that make them more likely to experience placement instability?

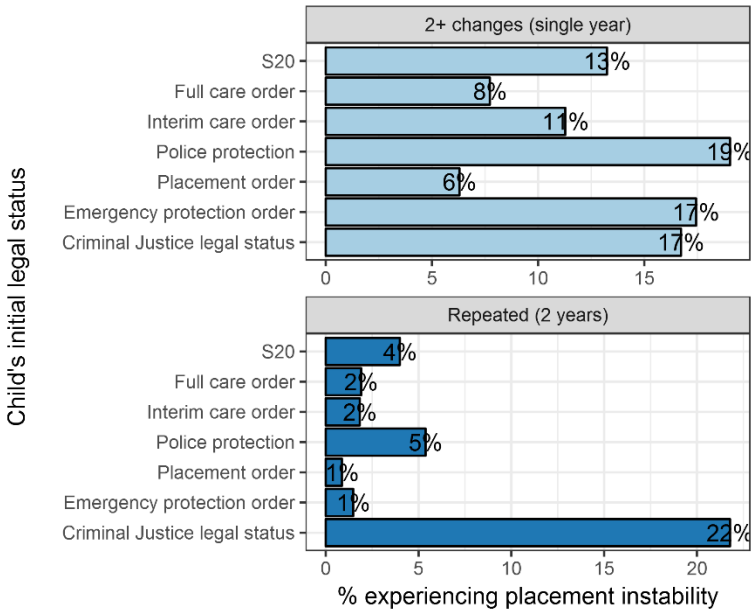
Key findings:

1. **A child's initial legal status has a strong bearing on the levels of placement instability they experience**
2. **There are differences based on a child's initial placement type. However, these differences are for the most part explained by the characteristics of the children placed in each placement**

Child's initial legal status[23]

There are large differences in rates of placement instability between children starting their periods of care on different initial legal statuses (Figure 15). Children initially looked after as part of their involvement in criminal justice proceedings (either under investigation or on remand), and those looked after under Section 20 of the Children's Act (those taken into care voluntarily without court orders) are the most likely to experience both single year and repeated placement instability. These high levels of single-year instability are perhaps unsurprising given that placements under Section 20 or as part of criminal justice proceedings are often intended as short term. However, the fact that children on these legal statuses are also more likely to experience repeated placement instability in both 2015/16 and 2016/17 suggests that for some of these children the effect is not only confined to a short period of time.

Figure 15 - Rates of single year and two year placement instability by child's initial legal status



Section 20 and unplanned placement changes

Placement instability among children in Section 20 placements seems to largely be driven by movements between placements rather than those returning home. Rates of home returns are low: 6% of S20 placements in 2016/17 ended in a return home. Most commonly, placements that ended resulted in a move to another placement (91% of placements).

However, rates of unplanned returns home are higher amongst those with multiple placement moves – though these rates are still low. Amongst children initially placed under S20 who went on to experience two or more placement moves in 2016/17, 3% of these initial placements ended with an unplanned return home. This compares to 1% amongst those only experiencing one placement move. These unplanned returns home may simply reflect a greater tendency for those experiencing placement instability to have experienced an unplanned move. For example, amongst those experiencing two or more placements in 2016/17, a lower proportion of initial placements changed due to a change in the care plan compared to children who on experiencing one placement change (29% and 39% respectively). By contrast, a higher proportion of placements changed at the request of the carer due to the child's behaviour (18%, compared to 9% among children with one placement).

[23] Initial legal status refers to the looked after child's legal status at first placement during 2016/17 in the analysis of single-year placement instability, or at first placement during 2015/16 in the analysis of repeated instability.

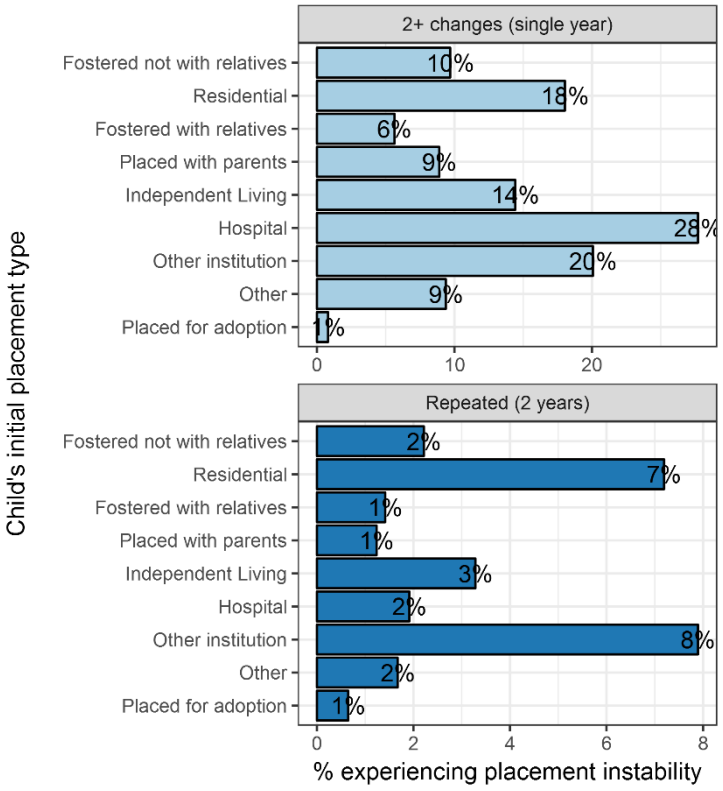
Child's initial placement type[24]

There are large differences in placement instability rates between children on different initial placement types, however, for the most part these are explained by the characteristics of the children in those placements.

Those initially placed in a hospital or other institution, residential and independent living are at increased risk of single-year instability (Figure 16). While there are smaller differences for repeated instability, children in residential and other institutions (prison and other health institutions) are still at higher risk of this.

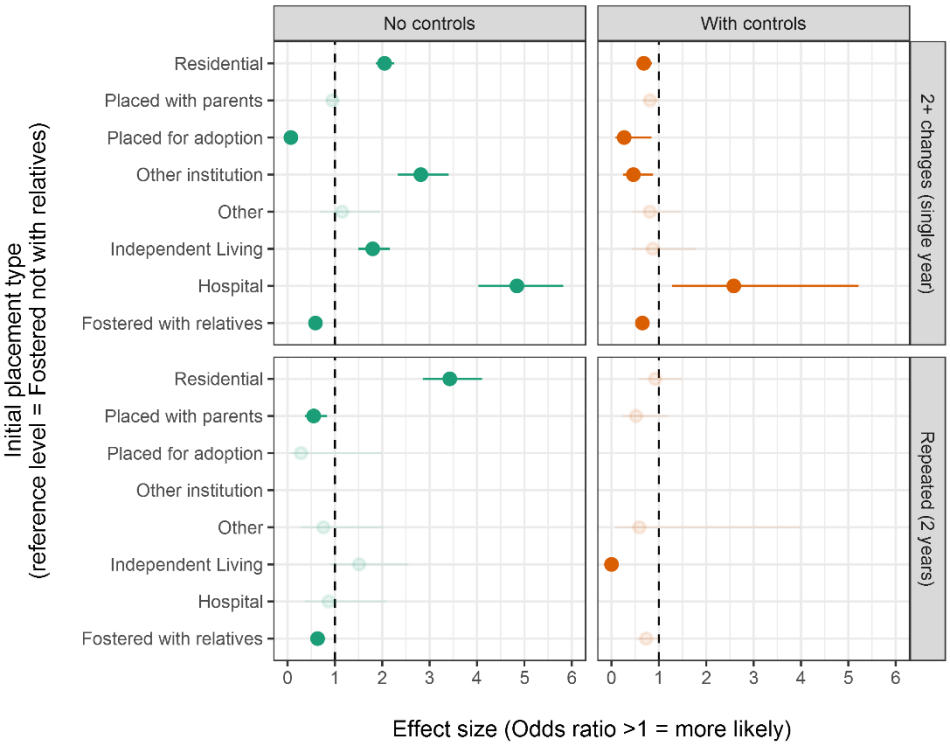
There are also differences between children in different forms of residential care. For example children initially placed in secure children's homes have notably higher rates of both single-year and repeated placement instability (51% and 31% respectively) than children placed in non-secure children's homes (18% and 7%).

Figure 16 - Rates of single-year and two-year placement instability by child's initial placement type



However, many of these differences are explained by the characteristics of the children in different placement types. Figure 17 demonstrates that most of these differences disappear and lose statistical significance (or reverse entirely) once we control for children's other characteristics. This suggests that it is the children's characteristics account for these differences in instability, rather than the placement type per

Figure 17 - Odds ratios (with and without child + placement characteristic controls) for association between child's initial placement type and placement instability.



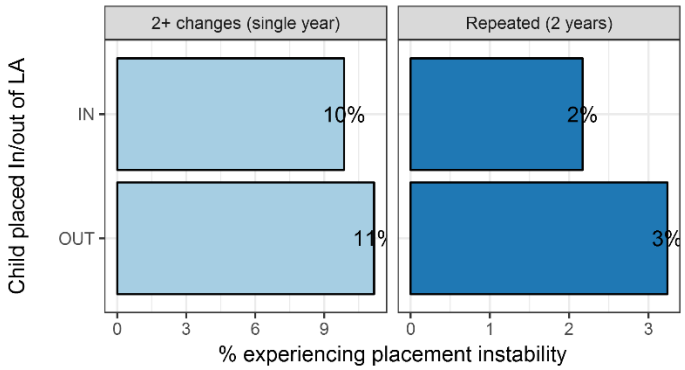
[24] Initial placement type refers to the looked after child's placement type at first placement during 2016/17 or 2015/16 in the case of repeated instability.

se. The exception is that children fostered with relatives are 35% less likely to experience single-year placement instability than children fostered with non-relatives, even once child characteristics are taken into account. However, there is no difference over two years, suggesting that this difference may be confined to the short term.

Children placed in or out of LA

There are no meaningful differences in levels of placement instability between those placed inside or outside of their home local authority at their first placement in 2016/17 (or in 2015/16, for repeated instability) (Figure 18).

Figure 18 - Rates of single year and two-year placement instability by whether child is placed in or out of LA



What influence do local authority characteristics have on placement instability?

Key findings:

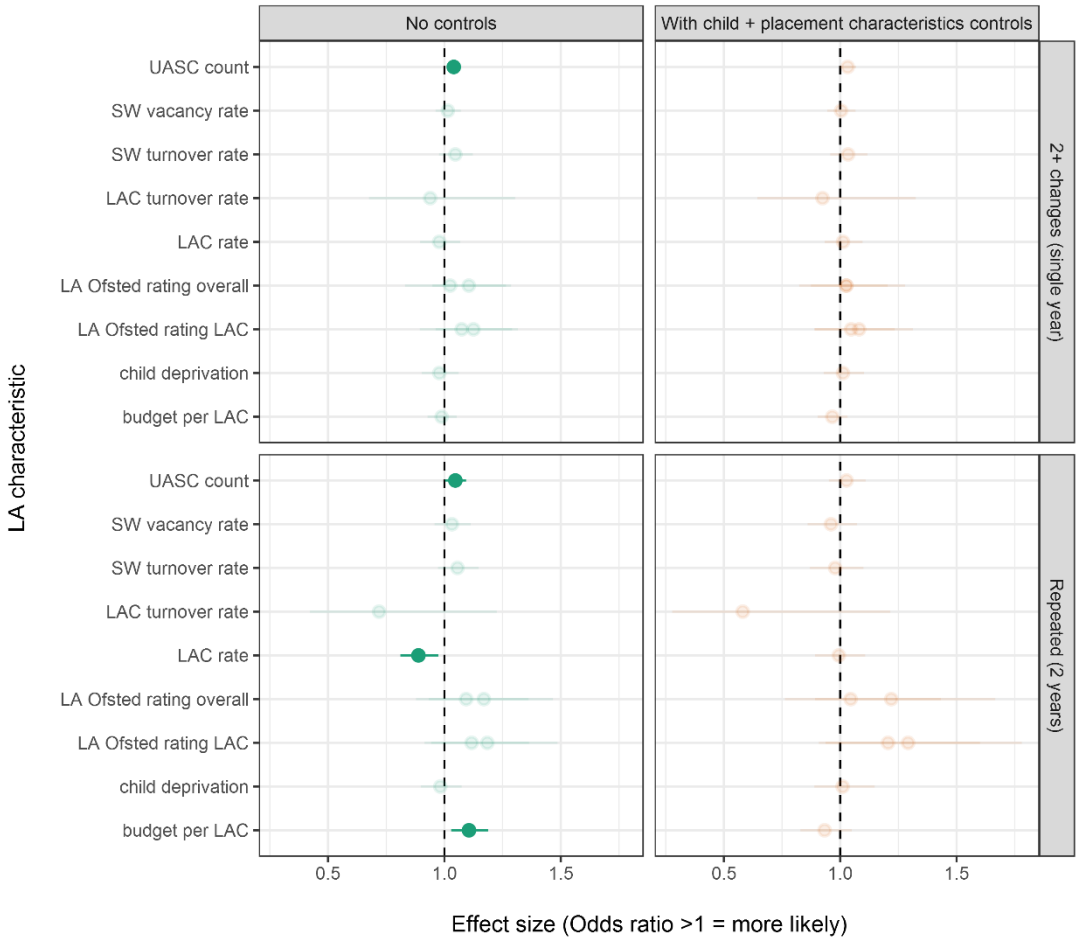
1. **We did not find statistically significant links between local authority level factors and overall rates of placement instability**
2. **However, budget per looked after child might affect instability for some groups of children looked after. Some children with more complex needs, as indicated by their SEND code, face a slightly higher risk of placement instability in local authorities where the budget per looked after child is lower**

This analysis also examines whether there are any links between local authority factors and rates of placement instability. We tested the following factors:

- LA budget per looked after child
- LA's rank of deprivation affecting children
- LA's count of unaccompanied asylum seeking looked after children
- LA's social worker turnover and vacancy rates
- LA's rate of looked after children (per 10,000 children overall)
- LA's turnover of looked after children (ratio of those ceasing to be looked after to those entering care)
- LA's most recent children's services Ofsted rating and Ofsted Looked After Children inspection rating

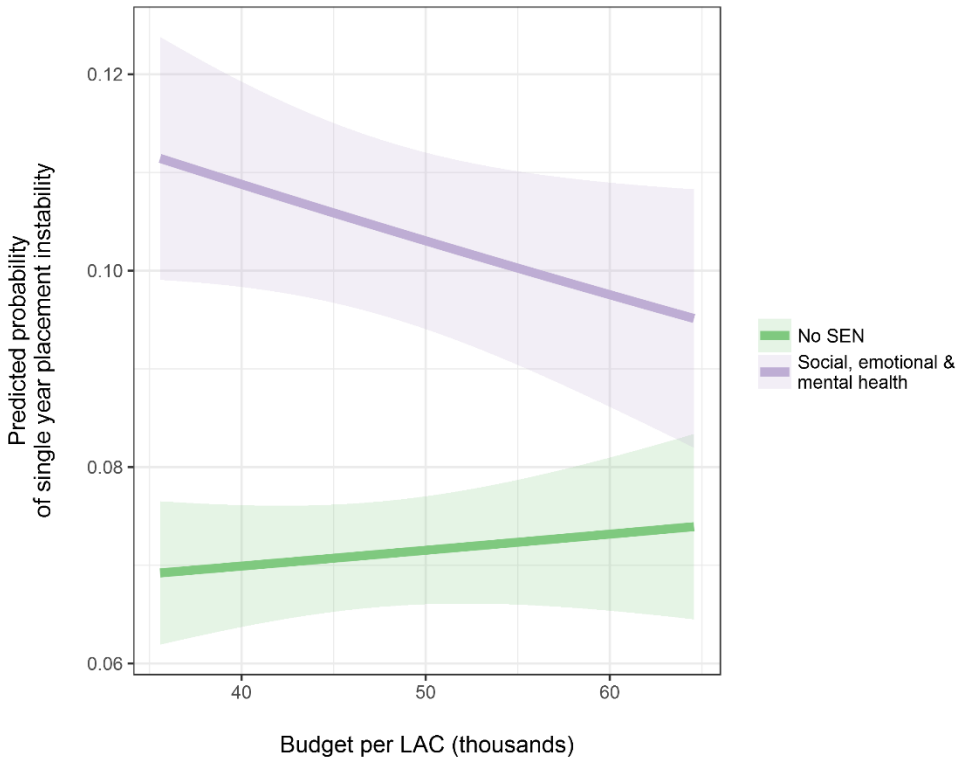
Figure 19 demonstrates that there are few statistically significant links between these local authority characteristics and overall rates placement instability, and no statistically significant links once child characteristics have been accounted for. This is true for both single-year and repeated placement instability.

Figure 19 - Odds ratios for associations between local authority factors and placement instability (with and without controls for child and placement characteristics). Note: coefficients represent change associated with a one standard deviation increase in local authority factor



However, when looking at single-year instability rates, there is a small and statistically significant interaction effect between budget per looked after child and the presence of SEMH SEND. Figure 20 demonstrates that children with SEMH SEND code are more likely to experience single year placement instability if they live in a local authority with a low budget per looked after child (LAC) than if they live in an area with higher budgets per LAC.

Figure 20 - Interaction effect between local authority budget per LAC and SEMH SEND[25]



It should be stressed that this effect is small. A child with SEMH SEND in a local authority with the average level of budget per LAC is 45% more likely to experience single year placement instability than a child with no identified SEND. A child with SEMH SEND in a local authority where budget per LAC is 10% lower budget per LAC would be 50% more likely to experience single year placement instability. So according to our figures a 10% reduction in budget per LAC would have a minor exacerbating effect on instability among children with SEMH SEND. Effectively, we find evidence that reduced budget per LAC widens the gap in instability rates between children with the most complex needs and those without.[26]

How well do these factors explain variation by local authority in placement instability rates?

Key messages:

1. **Child characteristics and initial legal status are the factors which most predictive of the risk of experiencing placement instability**
2. **Even when all factors are taken into account, there remains a large amount of unexplained variation both within and between local authorities.**

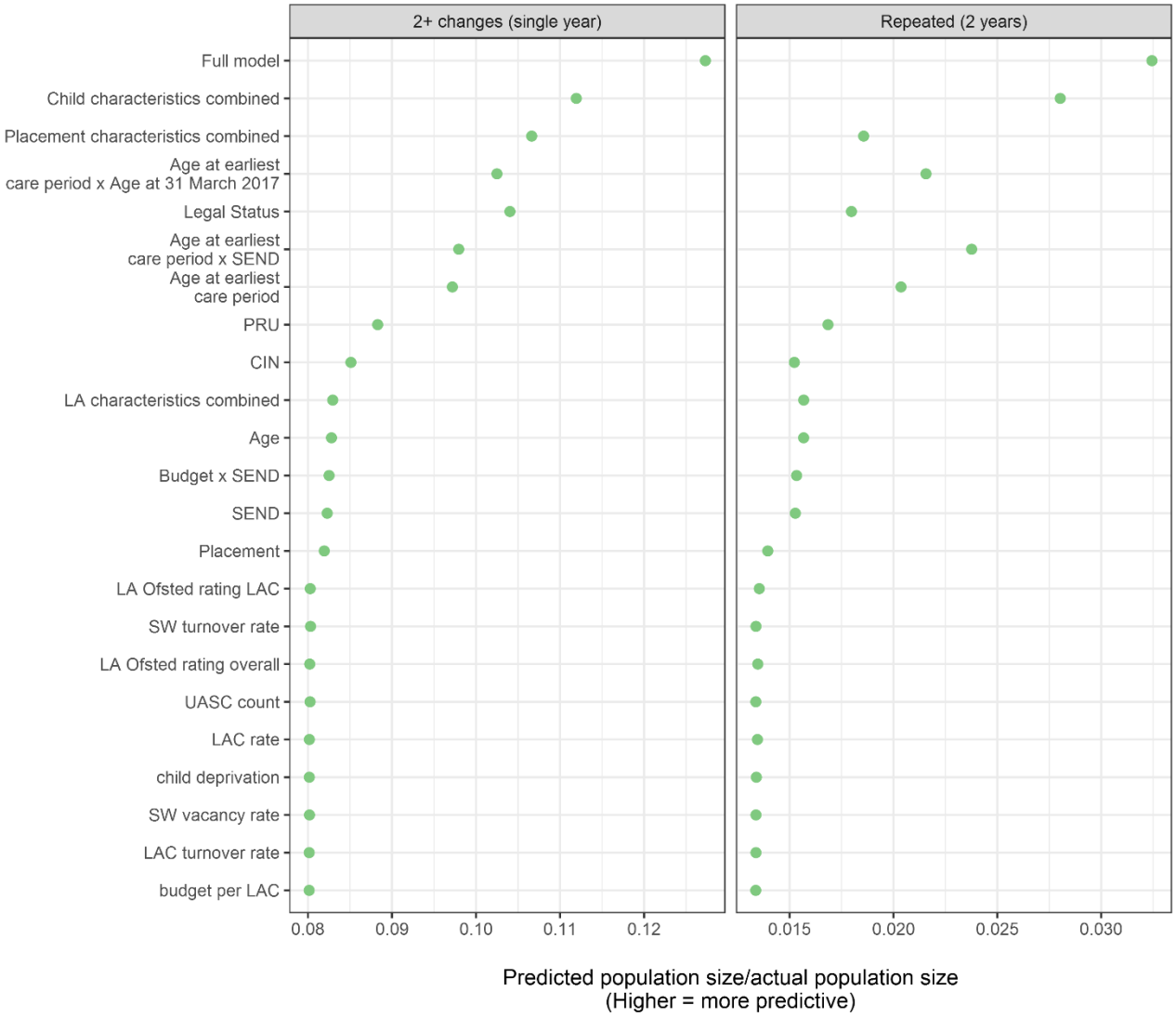
[25] Note: This analysis is based on the school matched sample, hence why the levels of instability shown in Figure 21 are not as high as might be expected if looking at the overall CLA sample.

[26] Note: no link was found with high needs funding a t a local authority level, though this simply reflects the number of children with identified SEND in an LA and so its interpretation is not clear.

Figure 21 demonstrates that child characteristics and placement characteristics are the most predictive factors of both single year and repeated placement instability[27]. Local authority factors are the least predictive confirming the above findings.

Importantly, the overall ratios of predicted to actual population size are low, even when all variables are incorporated into a full model. This suggests that there remains a large amount of unexplained variation.

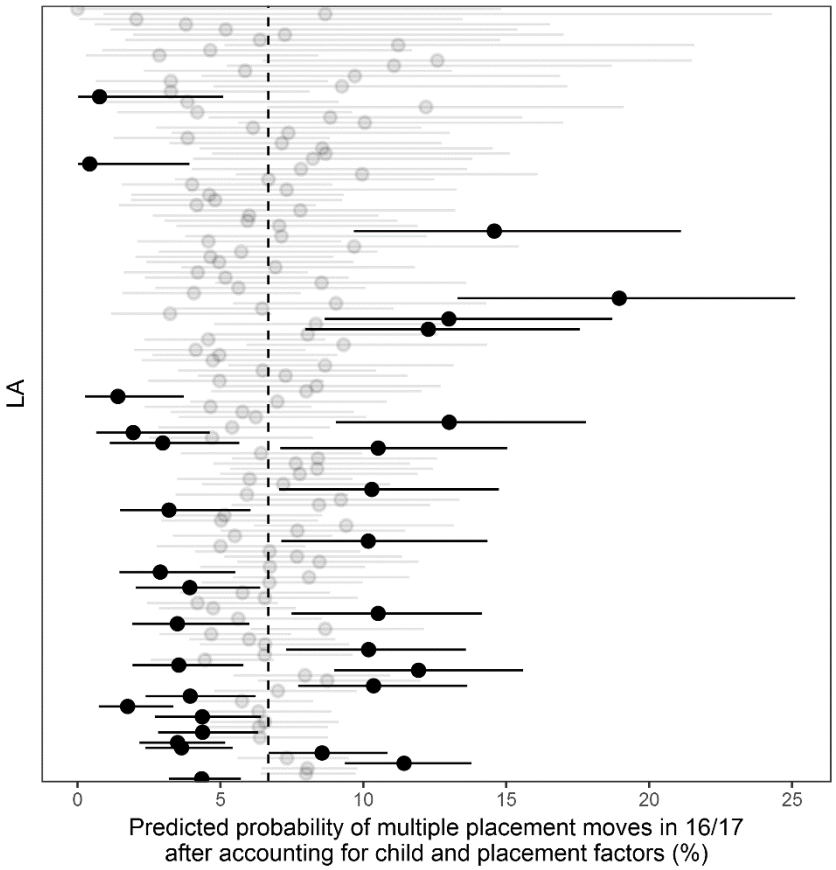
Figure 21 – Ratios of predicted population size to actual population size (variable importance) for each variable tested, selected combinations of variables and all variables together. Higher values (points further to the right) indicate more predictive variables/groups of variables



Controlling for a local authority's case mix – the placement and child characteristics among its LAC – cannot explain all of the variation between local authorities in rates of instability. Figure 22 demonstrates that there remains variation in levels of placement instability even once this is taken into account. Around 1 in 10 (11%) 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 (9%) have statistically significant higher rates than average.

[27] Note: all models are fitted on the matched NPD sample for comparability. This is to include variables relating to SEND status and PRU contact.

Figure 22 - Predicted probability of multiple placement moves in each LA after child and placement characteristics are controlled for. Horizontal bars are binomial 95% confidence intervals. Dashed line is intercept for null model (note this is based on the school matched sample to incorporate SEND and PRU characteristics). LAs with a predicted probability significantly greater than this null intercept are black, those with no significant difference are greyed out.



Findings: school instability

What is the national picture of school instability?

Key messages:

1. **1 in 10 looked after children attending school (4,300 children) experienced a mid-year school move in the 2016/17 academic year. This is the same rate as in 2015/16.**
2. **1 in 25 of those in school in both 2015/16 and 2016/17 (1,600 children) experienced any sort of school moves in 2 consecutive years**

We find that 10.5% of those looked after on 31 March 2017 experienced a mid-year school move in the 2016/17 academic year, similar to the previous year's level of 10%[28] [29]. This suggests the majority of children experience school stability within a year and that school instability is concentrated among a significant minority of children. Nevertheless, that minority amounts to 4,300 children and is over twice the rate of mid-year school moves amongst the full school population (4%).

There are also indications as to quite how disruptive a mid-year school move can be. On average looked after children move 24 miles between schools at their first mid-year school move – this is higher than the average distance for all children experiencing a mid-year school move (16 miles)[30]. By contrast, children move on average 8 miles for a school move taking place at the start of the year.

These differences are likely exacerbated by available school provision for those with complex needs. For example, looked after children with autism identified as their primary SEND code move on average 38 miles at a mid-year school move (note that this is based on small sample of less than 50 children). Those with physical disability recorded as their primary SEND code also move on average 30 miles.

The average distance involved in a mid-year school move is slightly higher for primary age pupils than for secondary age pupils (26 miles and 22 miles respectively). This suggests that it is not simply the smaller number of secondary schools that is creating this difference.
Furthermore 2% (400 children) of looked after children experiencing any sort of school move were out of school for an entire term or more[31]. While a small percentage, this represents a significant disruption for 1 in 50 children experiencing a school move.

Mid-year school moves in two consecutive years are comparatively rare. Only 1.5% of children experienced a mid-year school move in both the 2015/16 and 2016/17 academic years. Around 1 in 5 (19%) experienced a mid-year school move in either 2015/16 or 2016/17. However, as with placement instability, a mid-year school move is more likely if the child experienced it in the

[28] Multiple mid-year school moves in a single year are rare and experienced by less than 1% of looked after children.
[29] Note: all analysis in this section is based on the school matched sample.
[30] This distance is calculated as the great circle distance between schools' postcodes (assuming a spherical Earth).
[31] This is defined as those without a school start date during (or before) the start of a term

previous year. Among those who experienced a mid-year school move in 2015/16, 15% also experienced one in 2016/17, compared to 10% among the children who did not experience a mid-year school move in 2015/16. So experiencing a mid-year school move in one year appears to increase the risk of experiencing it again in the following year by 50%.

Around 1 in 25 (4%) of children looked after on 31 March 2017 (and in school during 2015/16 and 2016/17) experienced any type of school move in both 2015/16 and 2016/17[32]. This amounts to approximately 1,600 children, which suggests that while consecutive mid-year school moves are quite rare, there is still a group of looked after children which experiences repeated school instability.

How does this picture vary by local authority?

Key messages:

As with placement instability, there is large variation between local authorities in rates of school instability. These rates vary year on year and it is not necessarily the same local authorities who have higher or lower rates of school instability.

Figure 23 - Rates of mid-year school moves by LA in 2015/16 and 2016/17

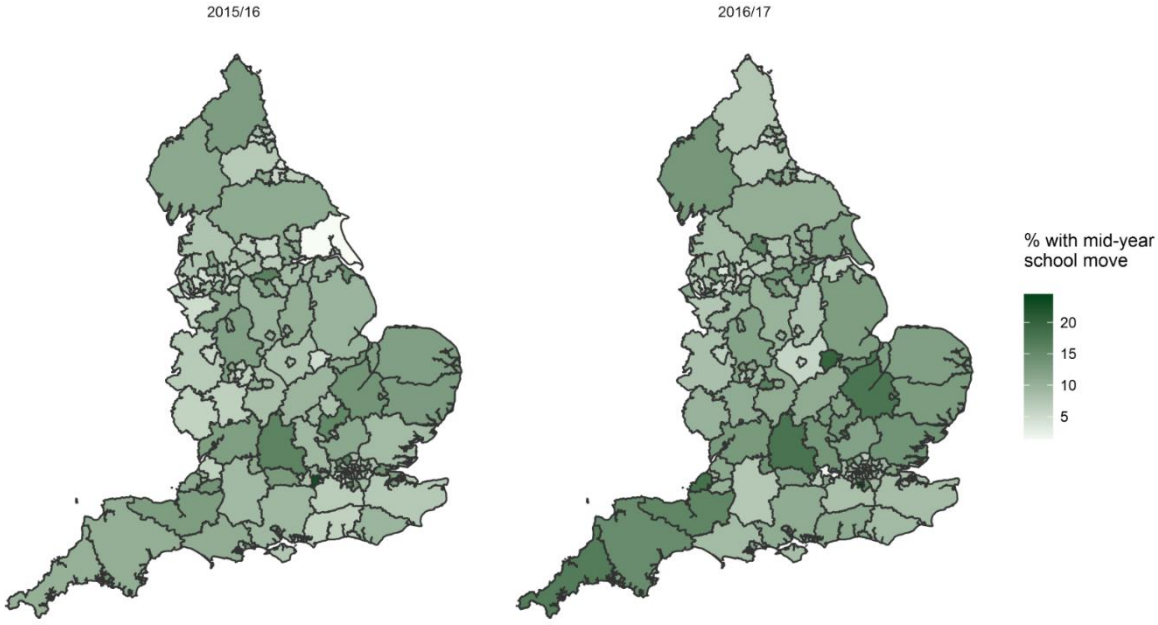


Table 9 – Average school instability rates by region

Region	Number of Looked after children with a mid-year school move in 2016/17	% with a mid-year school move in 2016/17
East Midlands	330	11%
East of England	490	14%
London	520	11%
North East	260	9%
North West	640	8%
South East	590	11%
South West	400	12%

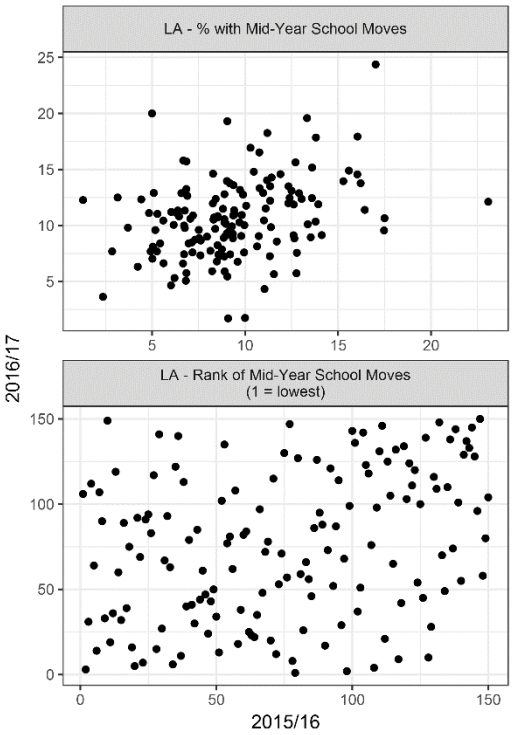
[32] Note this excludes those moving from primary to secondary school

West Midlands	580	11%
Yorkshire and The Humber	480	11%

As with placement instability there is large variation in the rates of mid-year school moves across local authorities. These rates varied between 2% and 24% in the 2016/17 academic year. There is also large variation in rates year on year. Figure 25 demonstrates that it is not necessarily the same local authorities experiencing high rates of mid-year school moves in 2016/17 and not necessarily the same as those that experienced it in 2015/16. While there is a small correlation with the previous year's level, this is even lower than for placement instability – a local authority's previous rank in 2015/16 explains only 10% of their rank in 2016/17.

Table 9 shows that there is some regional variation in average school instability rates, but as before it is less than the variation across local authorities. However there appears to be slightly more inter-regional variation for school instability than for placement instability.

Figure 24 - associations between rate of mid-year school moves by LA in 2015/16 and 2016/17. Top plot shows LA % with mid-year school moves, bottom plot shows LA rank in each year



What factors might explain this variation?

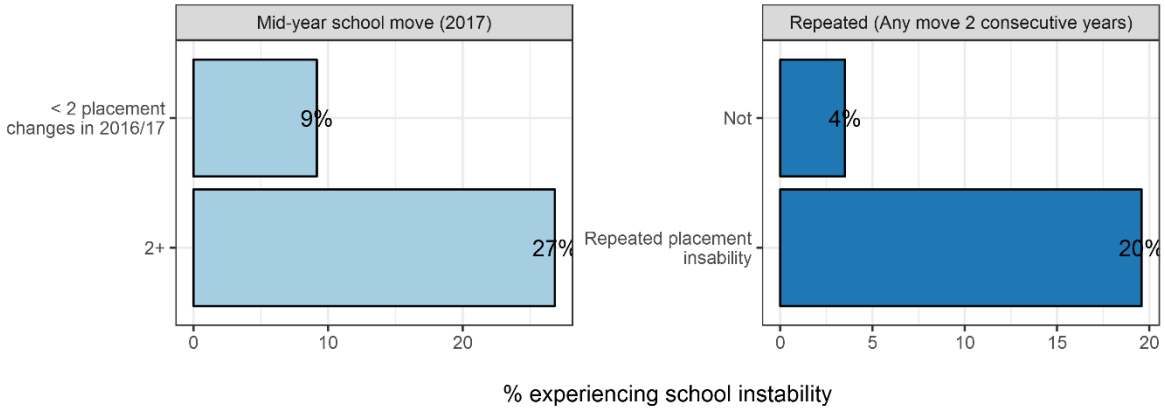
Which groups of children are more likely to experience school instability?

Key messages

1. **There is a strong link between experiencing placement instability and school stability**
2. **Even once this is taken into account, there are particular groups of children who are more likely than others to experience school instability**

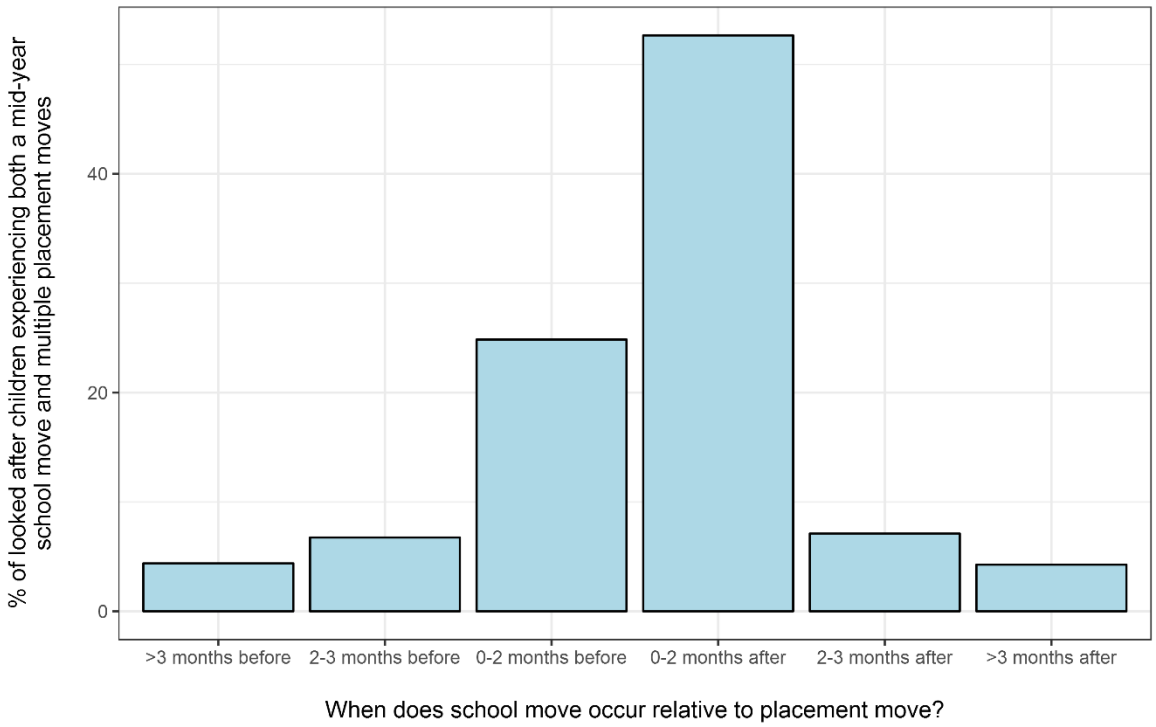
There is a strong link between placement and school instability. Figure 25 demonstrates that those experiencing placement instability are nearly three times more likely to experience a mid-year school move, and nearly five times more likely to experience repeated school instability, than children who do not experience placement stability.

Figure 25 - Rates of single year and repeated school instability for those experiencing placement instability compared to those not



There is also a strong ordering effect, whereby placement instability tends to drive school instability (rather than the other way round). Figure 26 shows the time between the closest placement and mid-year school move for those experiencing both placement and school instability in 2016/17. This suggests that two thirds of these mid-year school moves occur after a placement move and most commonly (52%) less than two months after a placement change.

Figure 26 - Length of time between closest placement move and mid-year school move

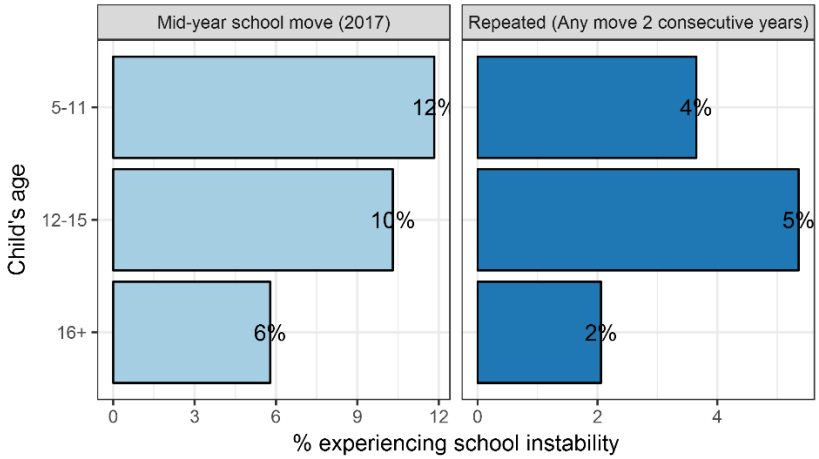


However, placement instability is not the only relevant factor. Differences in school instability remain between groups of looked after children even once their placement instability is taken into account.

Child's age on 31 March 2017

Unlike with placement instability, younger looked after children are more at risk of experiencing school instability. Those aged 5-11 are twice as likely as those over 16 to experience a mid-year school move or repeated school moves (Figure 27). This is a similar pattern to the general population (4% of 5-11 year olds experienced a mid-year school move compared to 1% of 16+ year olds), suggesting this may just reflect a general pattern of younger children having a greater propensity to experience school moves.

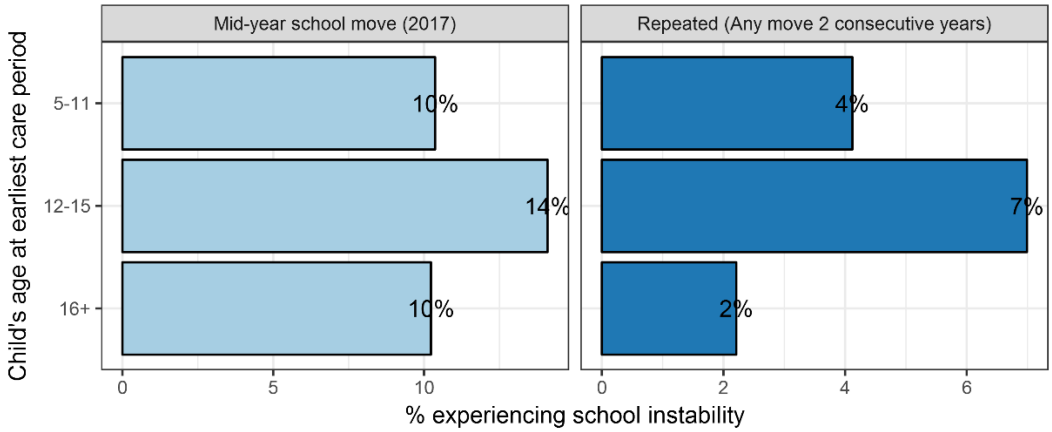
Figure 27 - Single year and repeated school instability by child's age at 31 March 2017



Child's age at earliest period of care

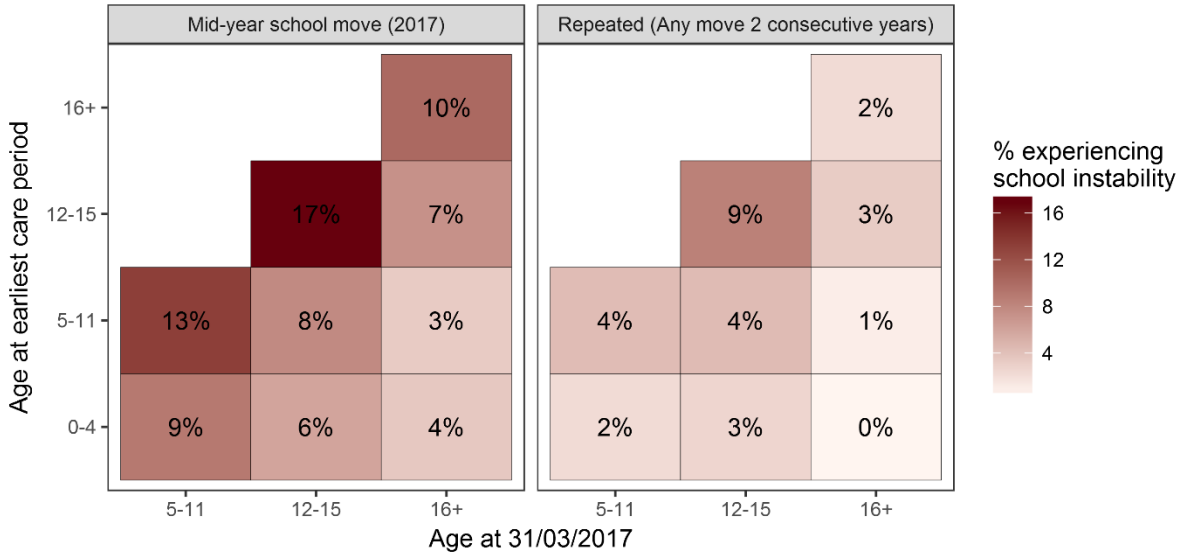
There is a similar relationship between school instability and age at earliest period of care as with placement stability. Children who are aged 12-15 at their earliest period of care have slightly higher rates of mid-year school moves (14%) and repeated school moves (7%) than average (Figure 28).

Figure 28 - Single year and repeated school instability by child's age at earliest period of care



The interaction between age at 31 March 2017 and age at earliest care period is also important in relation to school instability. For example those aged 12-15 at 31 March 2017 are three times more likely to experience a mid-year school move if they are also aged 12-15 at their earliest care period than those aged 0-4 at their earliest care period (Figure 29).

Figure 29 - Rates of school instability for the cross tabulation of children's calendar age (on 31 March 2017) and age at their earliest entry into care. Percentages are the proportion experiencing school instability.

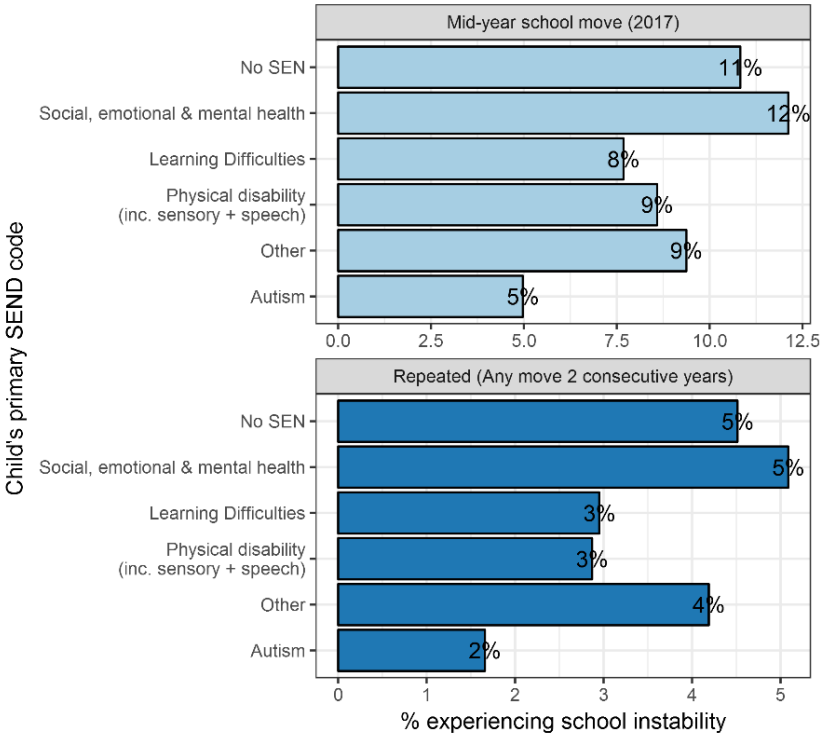


Child's SEND status

As with placement instability, as a broad category SEND itself does not predict higher school instability. Eleven percent of those without an identified SEND need experienced school instability compared to ten percent of those with an identified need.

However, unlike with placement instability, those with a statement are slightly less likely to experience a mid-year school move (7%) compared to those without a statement (12%). This could be due to the fact that extra funding is available for children with statements and so there is more of an incentive to retain these children, though this may also be due to other unmeasured factors.

Figure 30 - Single year and repeated school instability by child's primary SEND code



Yet even once these different rates of statementing are taken into account there remain differences in school stability rates between those with different primary SEND codes. These patterns are similar to those for placement instability: children with SEMH SEND are the most at risk of both single-year and repeated school instability (Figure 30).

Child's primary category of need code

There is a similar relationship between school instability and children's primary need code as with placement stability (Figure 31). For example children whose behaviour is identified as their

primary need are at greater risk of single-year (14%) and repeated (7%) school instability than average (11% and 4% respectively). However, differences in single-year school instability are for the most part explained by these groups' placement instability. Figure 32 demonstrates the only difference remaining statistically significant after placement instability is accounted for is the lower rate amongst those with a primary need code of child disability (though differences persist for two-year school instability).

Figure 31 - Single year and repeated school instability by child's primary need code

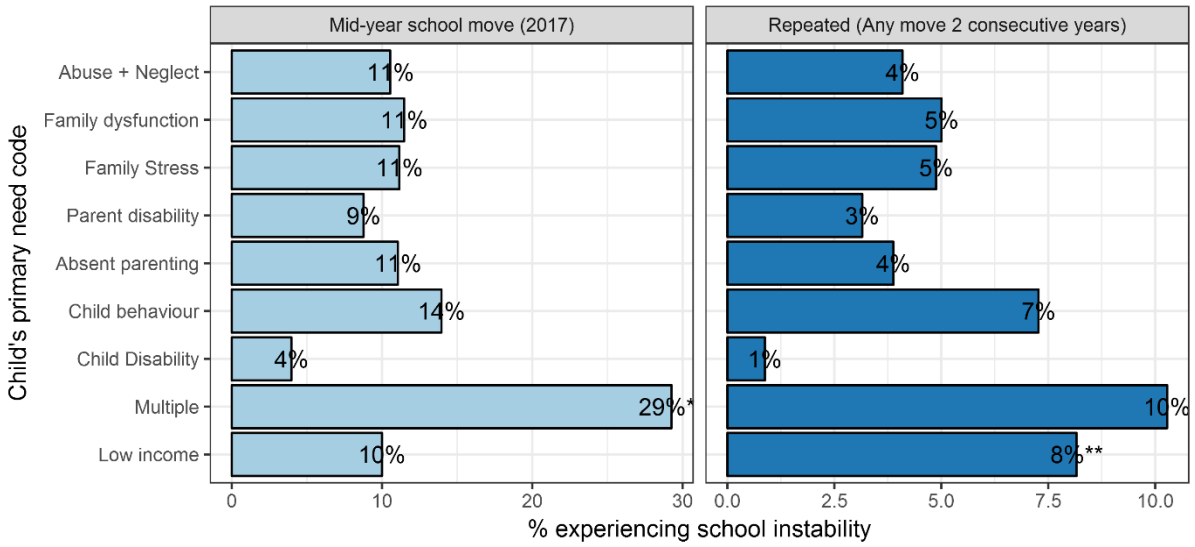
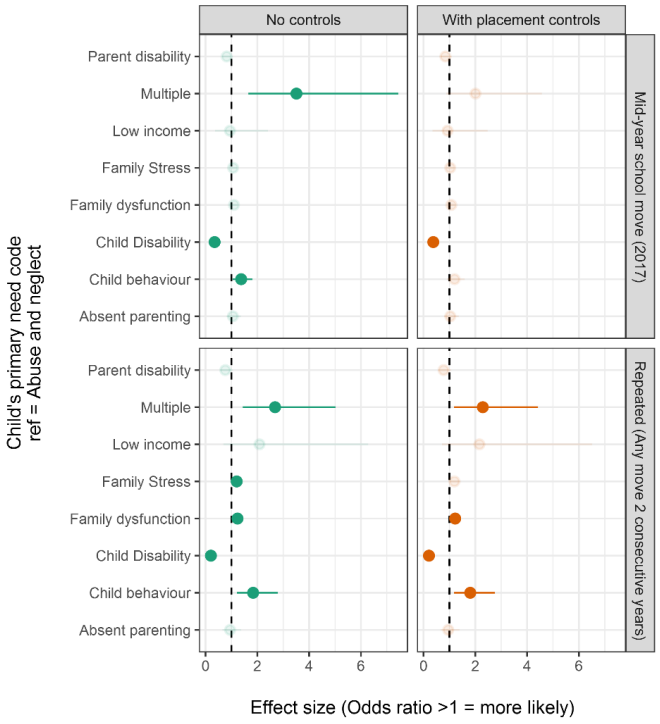


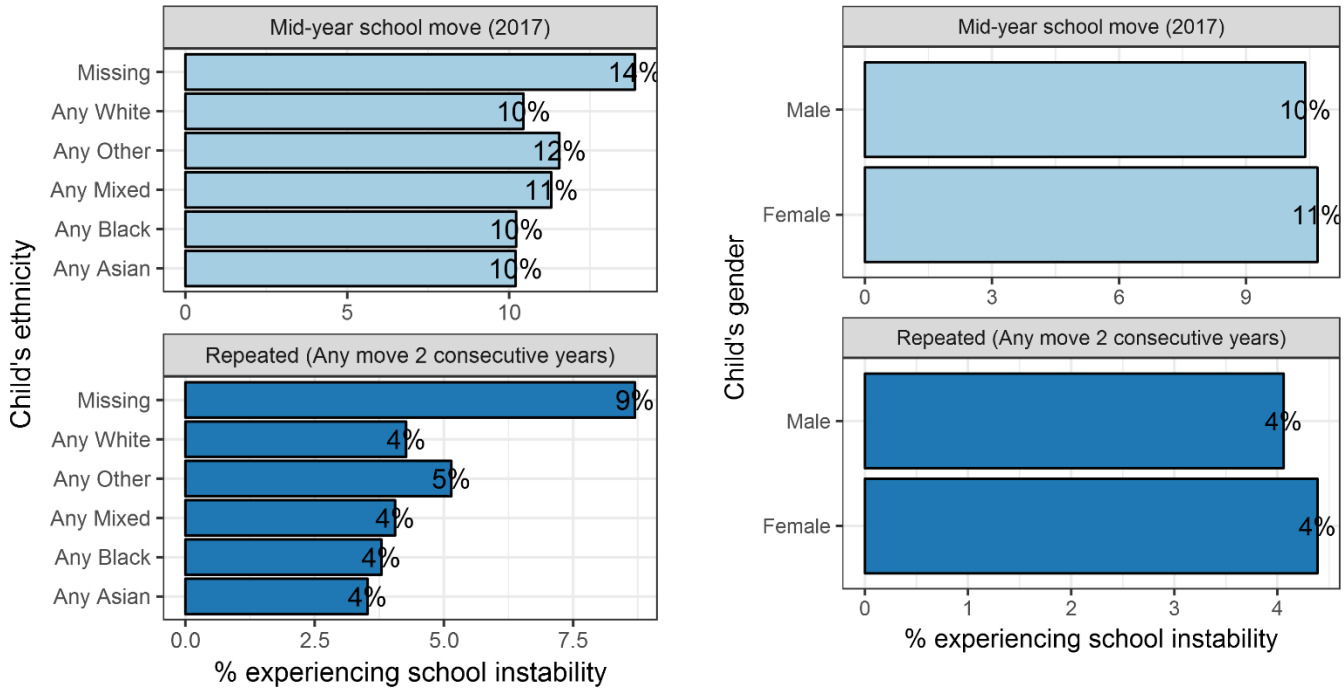
Figure 32- Regression results for association between child's primary need code and school instability with and without controls for placement instability



Gender and ethnicity

There are no meaningful links between a child's gender or ethnicity and their school instability (Figure 33). There are higher rates of school instability amongst those without a recorded ethnicity, though the interpretation of this is unclear.

Figure 33 - Single year and repeated school instability by child's gender and ethnicity



Are there characteristics of a placement that make children more likely to experience school instability?

Key messages:

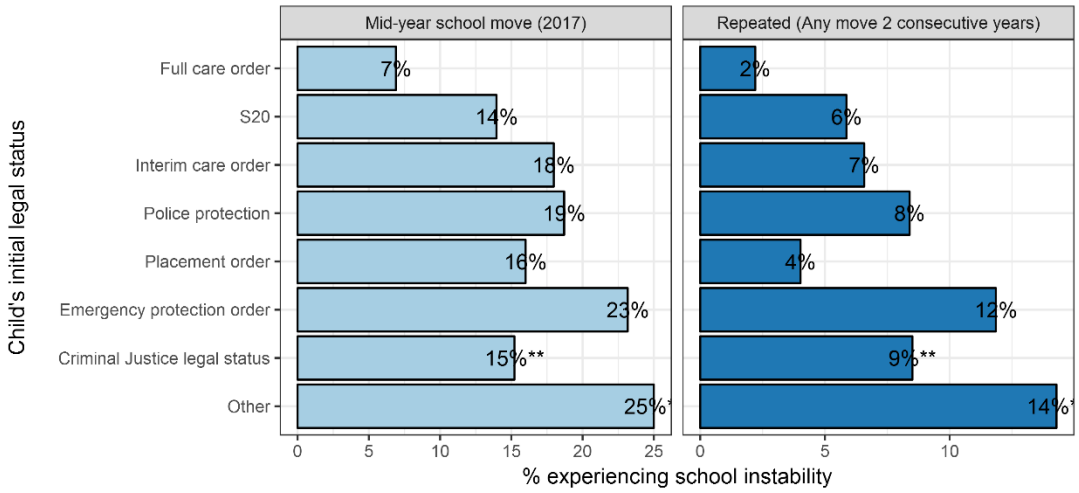
1. **School instability is strongly linked to a child's initial legal status though different groups are more at risk than with placement instability**
2. **There is again a small link with initial placement type, though this is largely explained by placement instability and other child characteristics**

Child's initial legal status

As with placement instability, school instability has a strong link to a child's initial legal status, which persists even when their placement instability is accounted for. For example, there are high rates of school instability amongst those on emergency protection orders (23% have a mid-year school move), police protection (19% have a mid-year school move) and Section 20 (14% have a mid-year school move).

However, other groups are also at high risk. Children on interim care orders are one of the most at-risk groups when it comes to both single-year and repeated school instability, with nearly double the average rates for all looked after children. These children had approximately average rates of placement instability, suggesting a much stronger link with school instability that cannot be explained by placement moves.

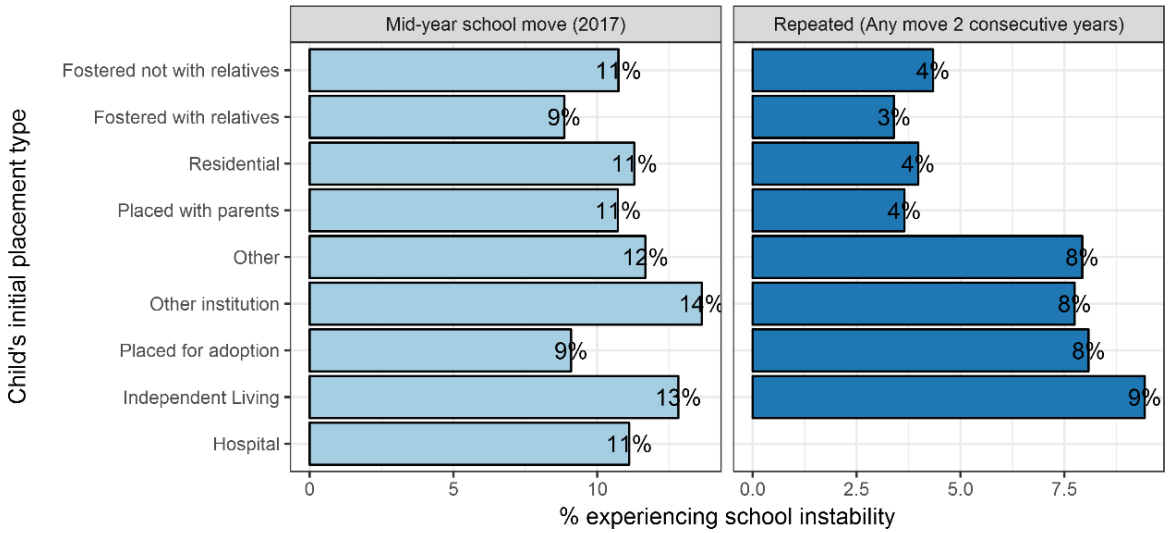
*Figure 34 - Rates of single-year and repeated school instability by child's initial legal status. ** = base less than 50*



Child's initial placement type

A child's initial placement type has a much smaller bearing on their school stability than on their placement stability. Figure 35 demonstrates much smaller differences in school instability rates between initial placement types than those seen for placement instability, suggesting a much weaker link.

Figure 35 - Rates of single year and repeated school instability by child's initial placement type



Are there characteristics of a school that make children more likely to experience school instability?

Key messages:

1. **Children are more likely to experience school instability if they begin the year in a school with a low Ofsted rating**
2. **Children starting the year in a PRU are also more likely to experience school instability**

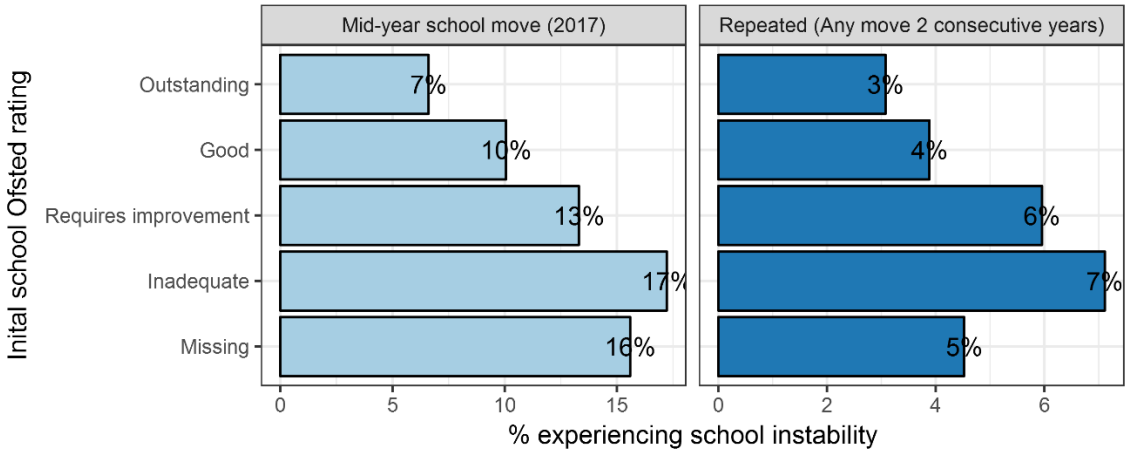
School factors can play a role in whether a child faces the risk of experiencing school instability[33].

[33] Note: school characteristics are taken from the first school the child attends in the relevant academic year.

School Ofsted rating

Children in lower rated schools (as judged by Ofsted) at the start of the academic year are more likely to experience a mid-year school move (Figure 36). Children in inadequate rated Ofsted schools are more than twice as likely to experience a mid-year and repeated school move as those in an outstanding school.

Figure 36 - Rates of single year and repeated school instability by child's initial school Ofsted rating



There are also high rates of school instability amongst children in schools that have not been matched in published Ofsted inspection data. These are most likely to be schools that have recently academised and not yet been inspected.

Where children move school in the middle of the year, it is not always the case that they are moving from a school with a lower Ofsted rating to a school with a higher one. While the majority of mid-year movers do move to schools rated 'Good' or 'Outstanding', 24% (202 children) of those in schools rated 'Inadequate' or 'Requires Improvement' move to a second school that is also rated 'Inadequate' or 'Requires Improvement' (Figure 37).[34] When children in schools rated 'Good' or 'Outstanding' have a mid-year move, only 12% of them move to a school rated 'Inadequate' or 'Requires Improvement' .

[34] Note: rates of looked after children in different Ofsted rated schools are broadly in line with rates for the full population. At the start of 2017, 18% were in Outstanding schools (21% in full population), 59% were in Good schools (58% in full population), 13% were in requires improvement (17% in full population) and 4% were in inadequate (3% in full population). Population figures are taken from Ofsted management information at 31 March 2016 - https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/522543/External_MI_-_Schools_-_21042016_republished_-_110516.xlsx.

Figure 37 – Changes in school Ofsted rating at first mid-year school move. Percentages indicate proportion of children moving – for example 81% of children who experienced a mid-year school move and began the year in a school rated 'Outstanding' moved to a second school that was also rated 'Outstanding'

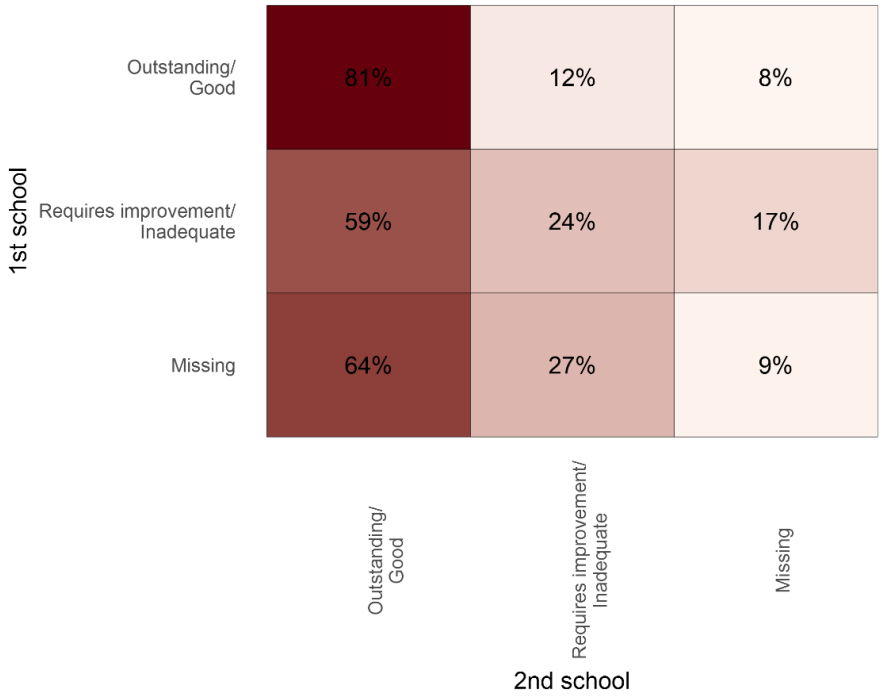
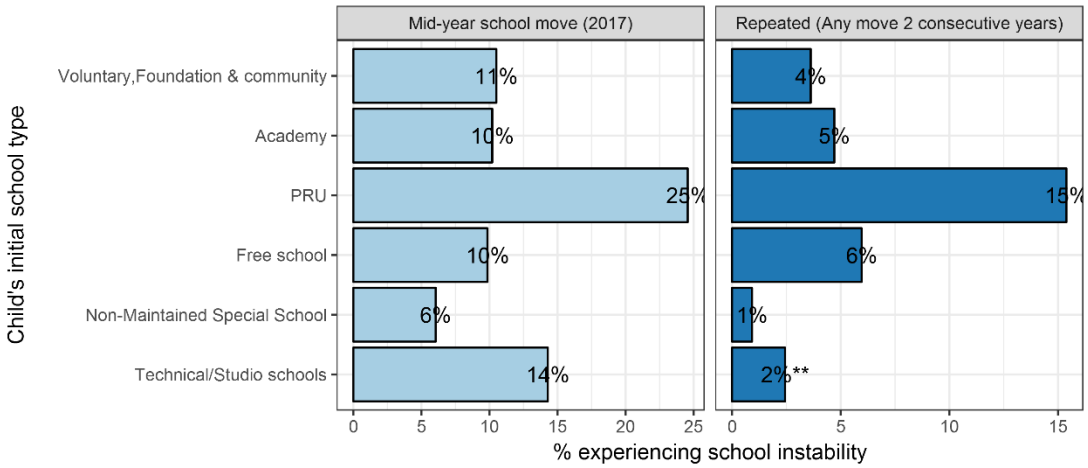


*Figure 38 - Rates of single year and repeated school instability by child's initial school type. *s = base less than 50*



Initial type of school

Children starting the year in a PRU are more likely to experience a mid-year school move and school instability over two years than children in other schools. This is unsurprising as PRUs can be used as a short-term measure.

There is little difference in school instability rates between other types of school including between academies and maintained schools.

Deprivation of a school's surrounding area

There is also a small link with the deprivation level (as measured by Income Deprivation Affecting Children – IDACI - scores[35]) of the neighbourhood surrounding the child's initial school. Children attending schools in the 10% most deprived areas are 34% more likely to experience a mid-year school move than the rest of the sample. This is stronger than the link between local authority level deprivation and single-year school instability, and suggests that deprivation matter more when measured across by the school's immediate surroundings rather than the general context of a local authority.

What influence do local authority characteristics have on school instability rates?

Key message:

1. **We found few links between local authority factors and single-year school instability rates. Those that were found are small and at the margins of statistical significance**
2. **There are some small links between local authority factors and rates of repeated school instability, but again these are on the margins of statistical significance**

This analysis also examines whether there are any links between local authority factors and rates of school instability. Factors tested include:

- LA budget per looked after child
- LA's rank of deprivation affecting children
- LA's count of unaccompanied asylum seeking looked after children
- LA's social worker turnover and vacancy rates
- LA's rate of looked after children (per 10,000 children overall)
- LA's turnover of looked after children (ratio of those ceasing to be looked after to those entering care)
- LA's most recent children's services Ofsted rating and Ofsted Looked After Children inspection rating

There are few links between local authority level factors and school instability; those that exist are small and at the margins of statistical significance. For example, a one standard deviation increase in the deprivation level of a local authority (approximately moving a child from an average local authority to one in the 20% most deprived) seems to translate into an 11% increase in the likelihood of a child experiencing repeated school instability. There is a similar effect for single-year school instability (Figure 39).[36]

Similarly the rate of looked after children in a local authority has a small negative relationship with school instability, in that children in local authorities with larger rates of looked after children are slightly more likely to experience school instability. However, again this is at the margins of significance and its interpretation is unclear.

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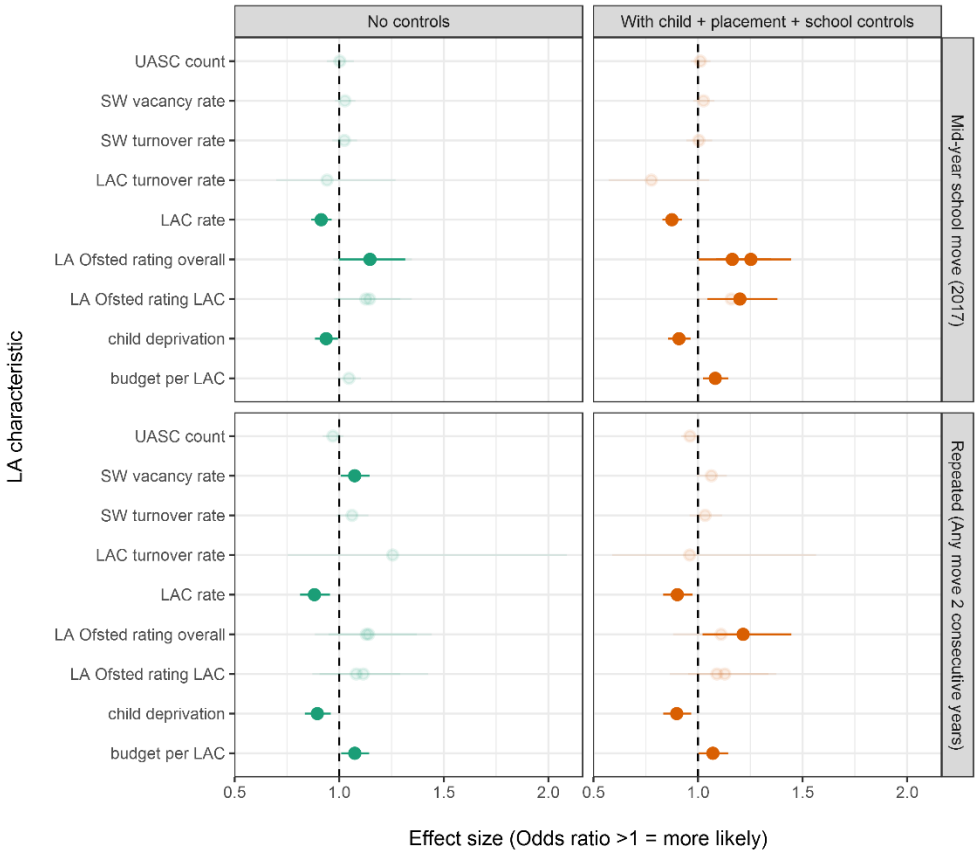
[35] See The English Indices of Deprivation 2015: technical report for more information on the construction of this indicator.

[36] Note that the effect of the local authority's Ofsted ratings shows that children in local authorities rated 'Good' or 'Outstanding' are actually slightly more likely to experience a mid-year school move. This finding should be interpreted with caution as not all local authorities have been inspected under the new framework and it is only on the margins of significance.

For comparability with school area deprivation, those children attending school in the 10% most deprived areas are only 6% (non-significant) more likely to experience a mid-year school move than the rest of the sample. This suggests the effect is much smaller for local authority level deprivation than school level.

Figure 39 - Odds ratios for associations between local authority factors and school instability (with and without controls for child, school and placement characteristics)



How well do these factors explain variation by local authority in school instability rates?

Key messages:

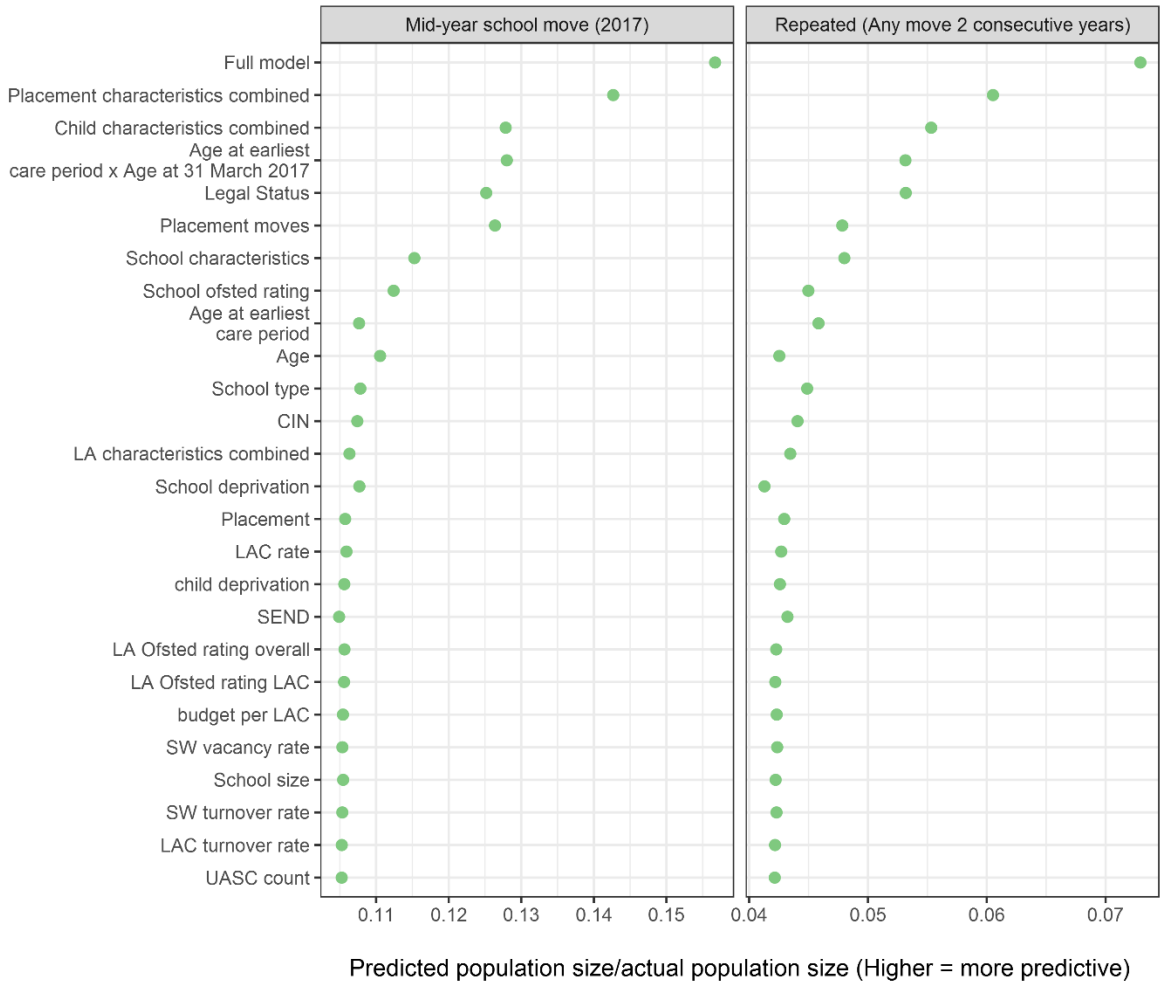
1. **Placement characteristics are more predictive of the risk of school instability than other factors. School and child factors also play a role but to a lesser extent**
2. **Local authority factors have very little influence on school instability rates**
3. **There is a large amount of unexplained variation even after taking these factors into account**

Figure 40 demonstrates that placement characteristics have the strongest bearing on the risk of school instability. This is mainly driven by the strong link between experiencing multiple placement moves and experiencing school instability, though a child's initial legal status also plays a notable role for both single-year and repeated school instability.

Child and school characteristics play a smaller role. Age (both on 31 March 2017 and at the earliest period of care) and primary need category play the largest roles; school type and a school's Ofsted rating also have an effect but it is relatively small. Local authority level factors are not very predictive of single-year school instability and play a relatively minor role in predicting repeated school instability.

Overall ratios of predicted to actual population size are low, even when all variables are incorporated into a full model. Hence there remains a large amount of unexplained variation even when we take all factors into account.

Figure 40 - Ratios of predicted population size to actual population size (variable explanatory power) for each variable tested, selected combinations of variables and all variables together. Higher values (points further to the right) indicate more predictive variables/groups of variables



As with placement instability, there remains variation between local authorities in their rates of school instability even once child, placement and school factors are accounted for (Figure 41). Around 6% of local authorities have statistically significantly lower rates of mid-year school moves than average once child, placement and school characteristics are taken into account. Conversely, 9% of local authorities have statistically significantly higher rates.

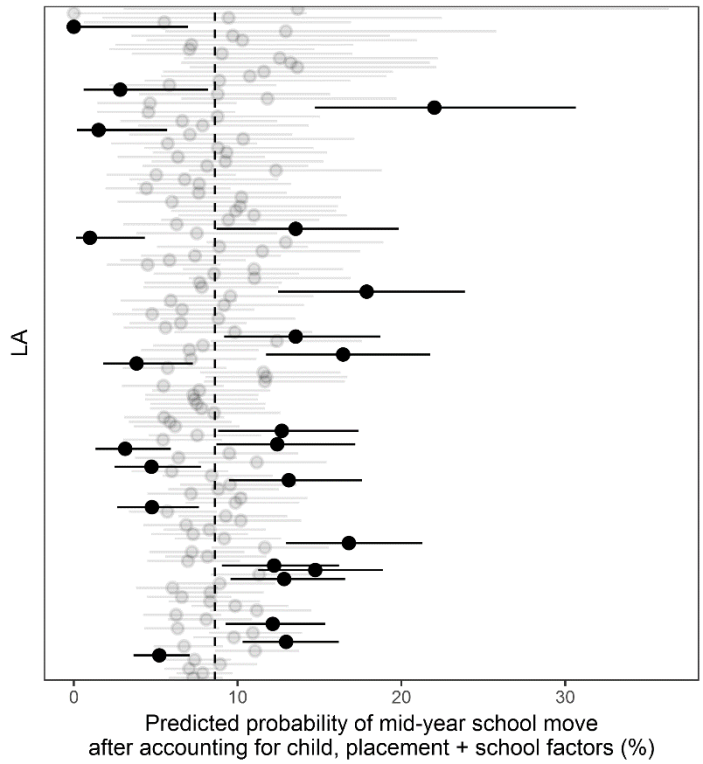


Figure 41 - Predicted probability of mid-year school moves in each LA after child, school and placement characteristics are controlled for. Horizontal bars are binomial 95% confidence intervals. Dashed line is intercept for null model. LAs with a predicted probability significantly greater than this null intercept are black, those with no significant difference are greyed out.

Findings: social worker instability

What is the national picture of social worker instability?

Key messages:

1. **Social worker instability is more common than school or placement instability. Around 1 in 4 children looked after on 31 March 2017 experienced multiple social worker changes in 2016/17 (18,900 children). This is similar to the rate for 2015/16.**
2. **Repeated social worker instability is rarer: 6% of children looked after (4,360 children) experienced multiple social worker changes in both 2015/16 and 2016/17.**
3. **There is a weaker link between social worker instability and child and placement characteristics than other forms of instability or**

We estimate that 26% of children looked after at 31 March experienced multiple social worker changes in 2016/17. This is equivalent to 18,900 children[37]. This is notably higher than the rates for placement and school instability (10%), suggesting changes in social worker are much more common. Indeed, a majority of children (59%) experienced at least one change in their social worker during 2016/17.

These rates are similar to those found last year. Some care is needed in this comparison, given that our data collection is different to last year's data collection, and a much wider set of local authorities submitted data this year. However, rates are also the same amongst the 14 local authorities that submitted data for both data collections.

Moves between social worker teams are as common as moves within the social worker team. We find that 36% of children looked after at the 31 March 2017 experienced at least one move between social worker teams, the same as the proportion of children experiencing a move within the same social worker team.

However, multiple social worker changes are more common within a social worker team than across social worker teams. We find that 12% (8,720) of this cohort of looked after children experienced multiple within-team moves, whereas 8% (5,810) experienced multiple moves across social worker teams.[38] However, it must be noted that local authorities have different team structures and systems, which may contribute to this finding.

Looking over two years, we find that 6% of children experienced multiple social worker changes in both 2015/16 and 2016/17. Scaled up to the full population of looked after children, this is equivalent to 4,360 children.

Unlike with placement and school stability, experiencing social worker instability in one year does not appear to significantly increase the risk of experiencing it in subsequent years. For example, 29% of those experiencing multiple social worker changes in 2015/16 also experienced it in 2016/17. Among children who did not experience multiple social worker changes in 2015/16, 26% of them did experienced it in 2016/17.

[37] Note: percentages are calculated based on our weighted social worker sample. These percentages are then applied to the full looked after children census extract population size to estimate headcounts

[38] Note: these figures exclude cases where information on the social worker team was not available.

There appears to be less relationship between social worker instability and placement or school instability. We find that 34% of those experiencing multiple placement moves in 2016/17 also experienced multiple social worker changes, compared to 25% of those who did not experience multiple placement moves. Similarly, 30% of those experiencing a mid-year school move in 2016/17 also experienced multiple social worker moves in 2016/17, compared to 23% of those who did not experience a mid-year school move.

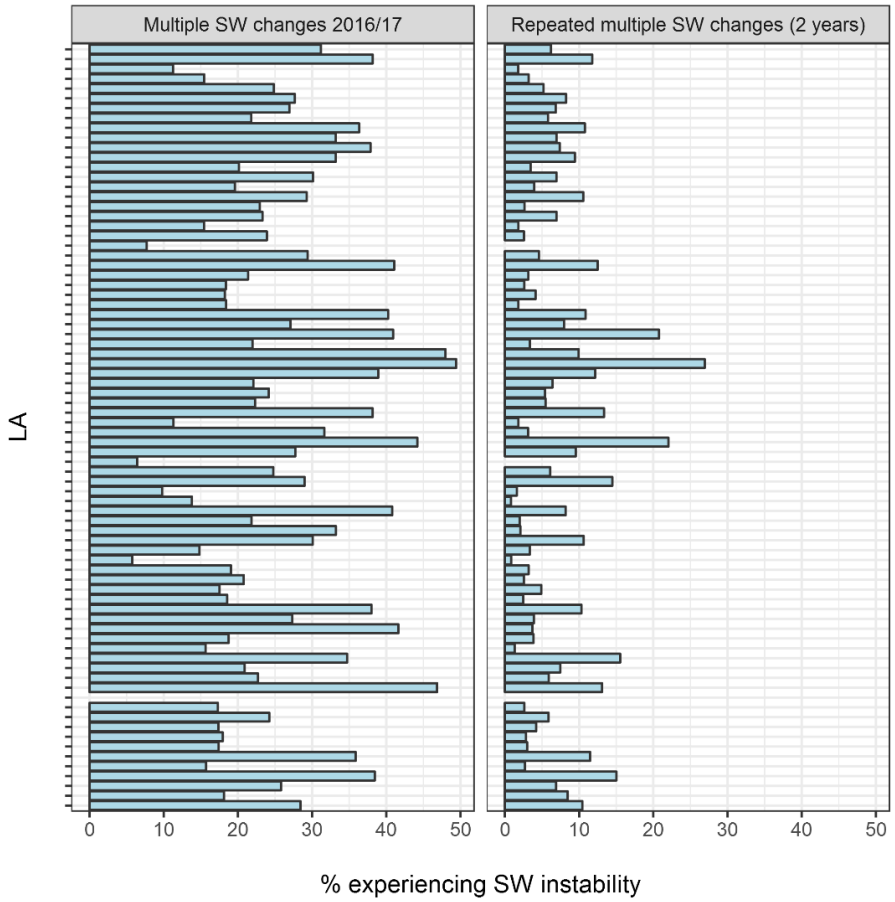
How does this picture vary by local authority?

Key messages

1. **As with last year, there is wide variation between local authorities in rates of multiple social worker changes**

Figure 42 demonstrates there is wide variation between local authorities in terms of both single-year and repeated social worker instability. Rates of multiple social worker changes in 2016/17 ranged from 0% to 49% across local authorities. Rates of repeated social worker instability ranged from 0% to 27%.

Figure 42 - Rates of single-year and repeated social worker instability by local authority



What factors might explain this variation?

Which groups of children are more likely to experience social worker instability?

Key messages:

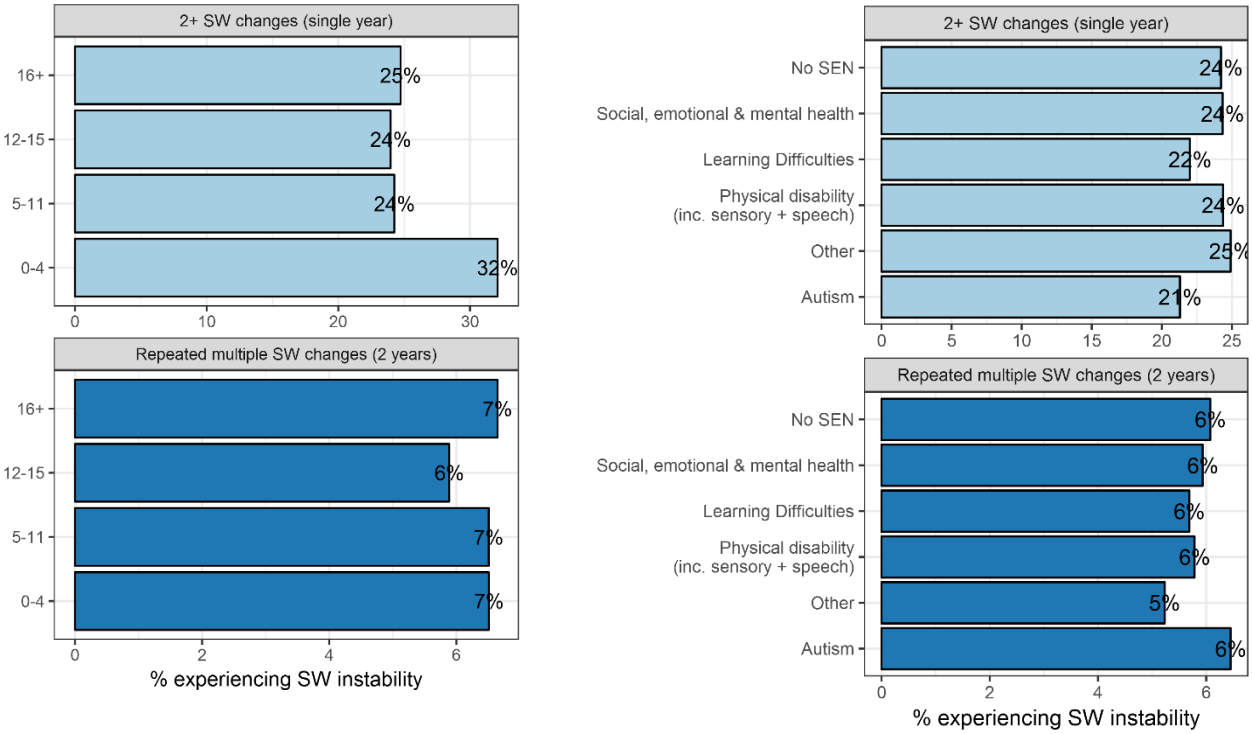
1. **Child factors are less predictive of social worker instability than they are for placement and school stability**

2. **There are still links with a child's primary need code, contact time with a PRU and age at earliest period of care, but these are notably less pronounced than for other forms of instability**

Child's age on 31 March 2017 and primary SEND code[39]

Child factors play less of a role in predicting children's social worker instability. For example, there is little relationship with child's age or their primary SEND code (Figure 43). This is a marked distinction from our findings for school and placement instability.

Figure 43 - Rates of single-year and repeated social worker instability by age and primary SEND code

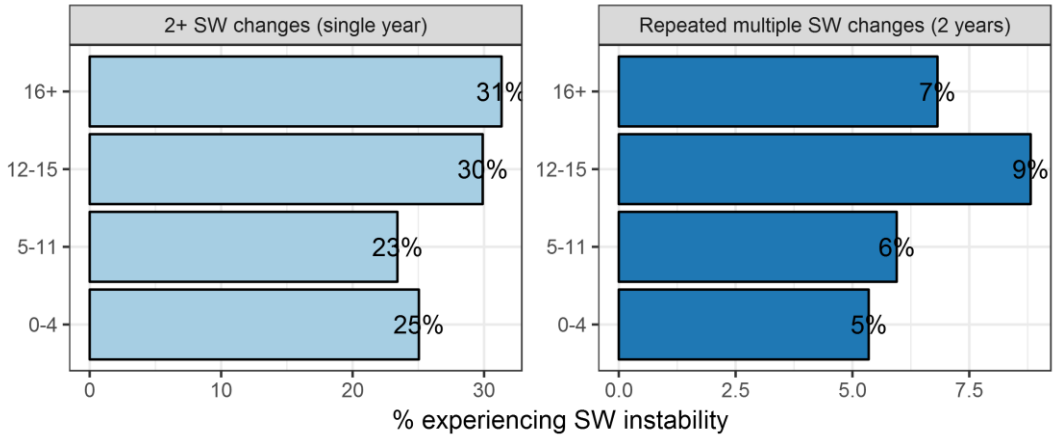


Child's age at earliest period of care

There remains a link with children's age at earliest care period, though this is notably less pronounced than for placement instability (Figure 44). Similarly to what we have found for placement and school instability, children in care aged 12-15 at their earliest care period are more likely to experience single year and repeated social worker instability.

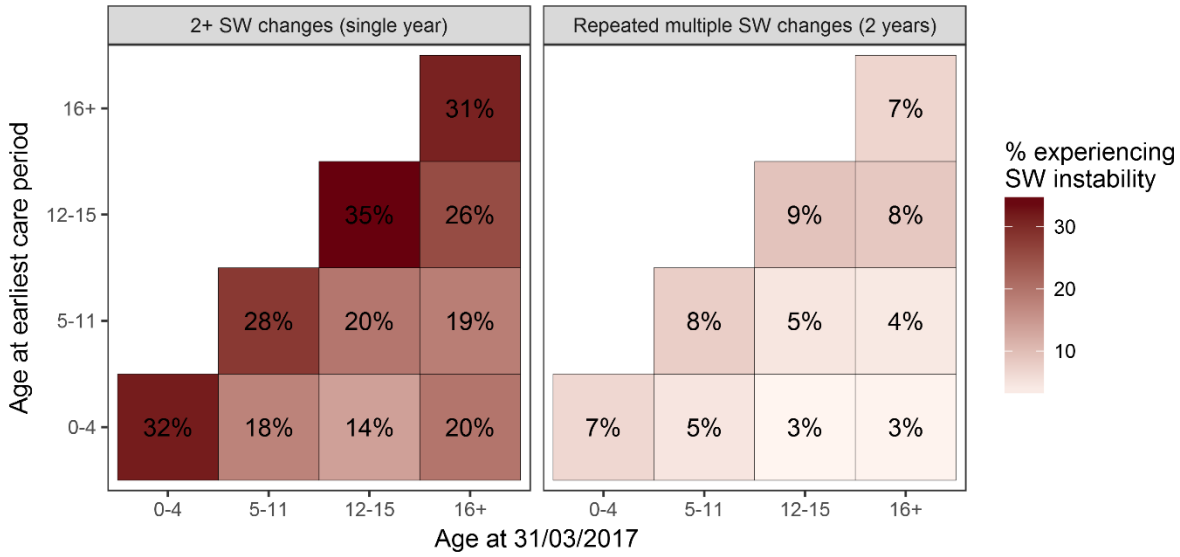
[39] Note: analysis of the relationship with primary SEND code is based on those in the 78 LAs that were matched with the school census.

Figure 44 - Rates of single-year and two-year social worker instability by age at earliest period of care



The interaction of age at 31 March 2017 and age at earliest period of care is also an important factor for social worker instability. For example, those aged 12-15 at 31 March 2017 are twice as likely to experience multiple social worker changes in 2016/17 if they are also aged 12-15 at their earliest care period compared to those aged 0-4 at their earliest care period (Figure 45).

Figure 45 - Rates of social worker instability for the cross tabulation of children's calendar age (on 31 March 2017) and age at their earliest entry into care. Percentages are the proportion experiencing social worker instability.

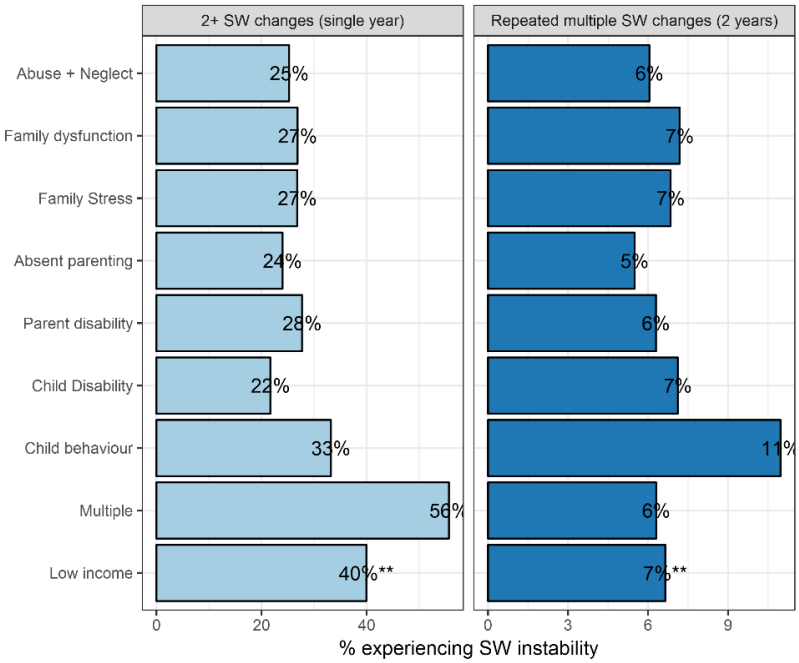


Child's primary need code

Differences in the risk of experiencing social worker instability remain between children with different primary need codes; however, the scale of these differences is notably smaller compared with those seen in our analysis of placement and school instability. The key findings are that:

1. Children whose behaviour is recorded as their primary need code who are more at risk of repeated social worker instability.

Figure 46 - Rates of single year and two year social worker instability by primary need code

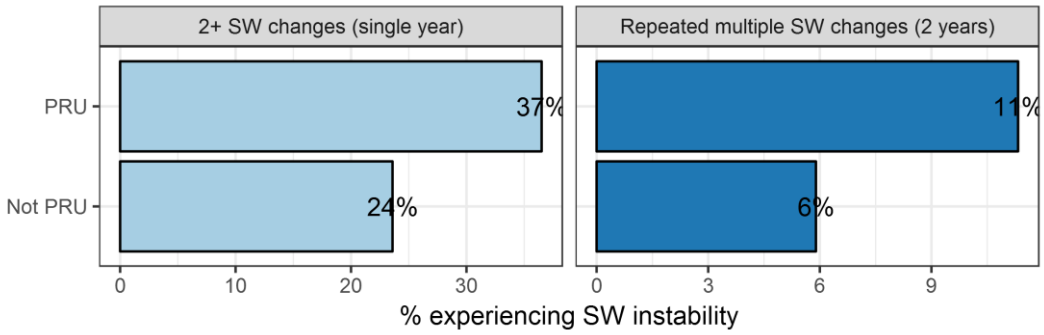


2. Children with multiple primary need codes across the year are notably more at risk of single-year social worker instability (though as stated above this likely reflects multiple entries into care).

Child's contact with a PRU[40]

Similarly, there are significant links between having any contact time with a PRU and the risk of experiencing social worker instability, though again these are less strong than for placement and school instability (Figure 47). Overall, our results suggest that behavioural factors may still play a role in predicting whether a child is at greater risk of experiencing social worker instability.

Figure 47 - Rates of single year and two-year social worker instability by any contact time with a PRU

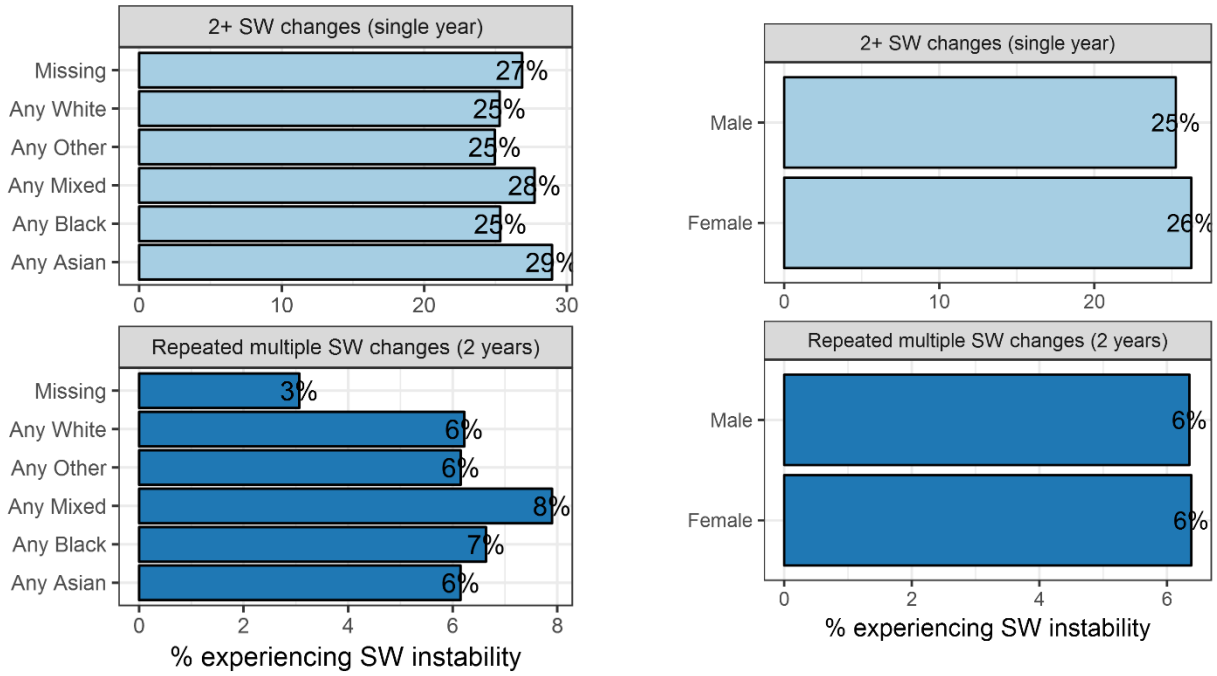


Gender and ethnicity

There are no meaningful differences in social worker instability between children of different genders or ethnicities (Figure 48).

[40] Note: analysis of the relationship with PRU contact is based on those in the 78 LAs that were matched with the school census.

Figure 48 - Rates of single year and two-year social worker instability by gender and ethnicity



Are there characteristics of a placement that make children more likely to experience social worker instability?

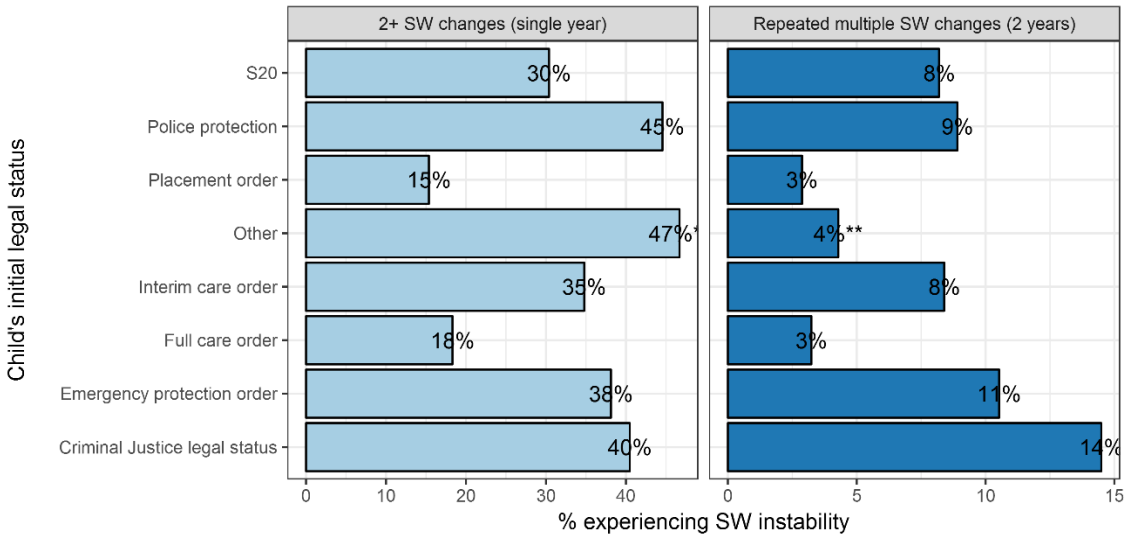
Key messages:

1. **There is a strong link between a child's initial legal status and their risk of experiencing social worker instability**
2. **There is little link with between initial placement type and social worker instability**

Child's initial legal status

As with school and placement instability, children's initial legal status is a strong predictor of social worker instability. Children on Section 20, interim care order, police protection, emergency or criminal justice legal statuses are all at higher risk of both single-year and repeated social worker instability (Figure 49). These cases are often short term and so may involve an exit from care or progressing through the family court or criminal justice system; the children might therefore move between social worker teams as part of these processes. However, these cases are twice as likely to experience repeated social worker instability in two consecutive years compared to an average looked after child – so this is not always confined to a single period of instability.

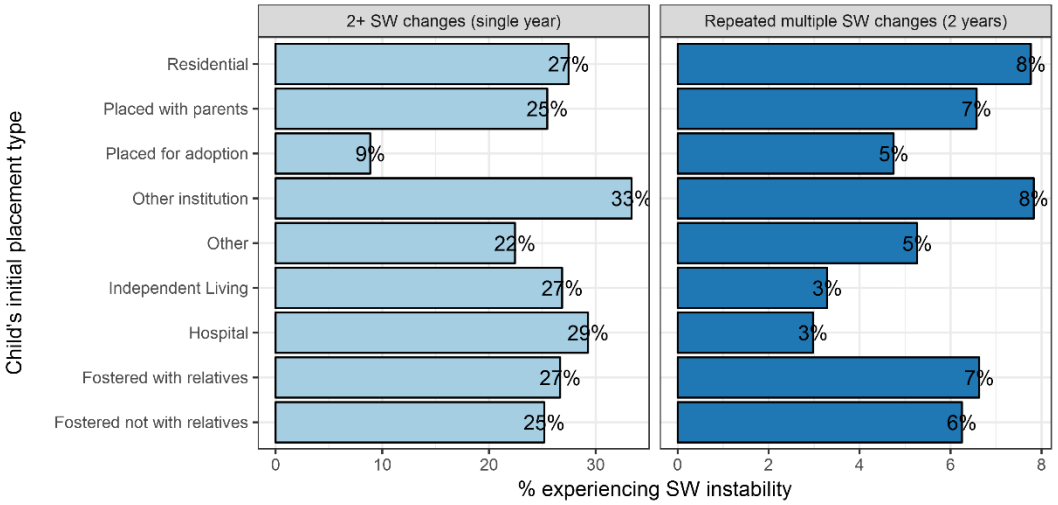
*Figure 49 - Rates of single-year and two-year social worker instability by child's initial legal status. *s = base less than 50*



Child's initial placement type

There is comparatively little difference in children's risk of experiencing social worker instability based on their initial placement type. The exception is possibly those placed for adoption that have a notably lower rate than average over a single year (9%), although these children experience similar rates of repeated social worker instability over two years (Figure 50).

Figure 50 - Rates of single-year and two-year social worker instability by child's initial placement type



What influence do local authority characteristics have on social worker instability rates?

Key messages:

1. **Local authority factors play more of a role in predicting social worker instability than they do in predicting placement or school instability**
2. **The key driving factors relate to the social care workforce, particularly turnover and vacancy rates**

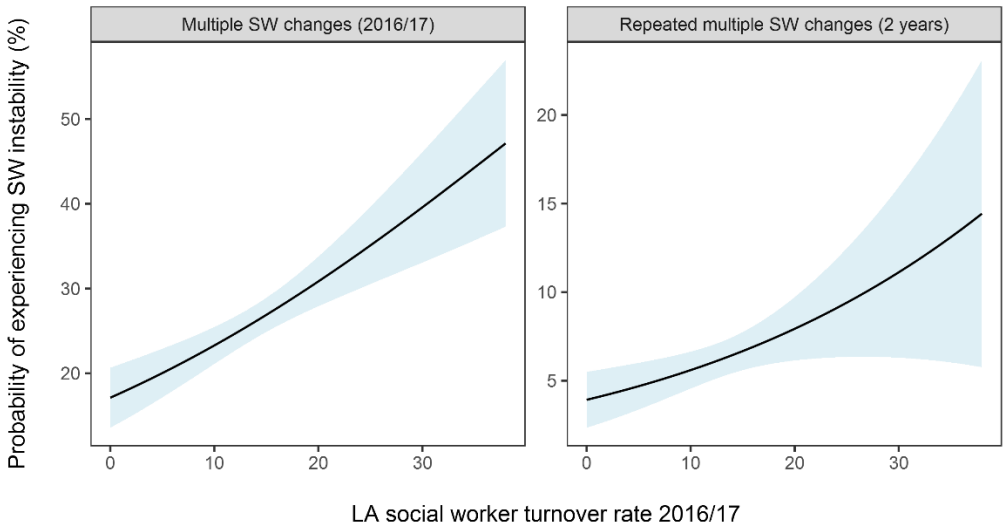
We included in our regression models the following local authority factors:

- LA budget per looked after child
- LA's rank of deprivation affecting children
- LA's count of unaccompanied asylum seeking looked after children

- LA's social worker turnover and vacancy rates
- LA's rate of looked after children (per 10,000 children overall)
- LA's turnover of looked after children (ratio of those ceasing to be looked after to those entering care)
- LA's most recent children's services Ofsted rating and Ofsted Looked After Children inspection rating

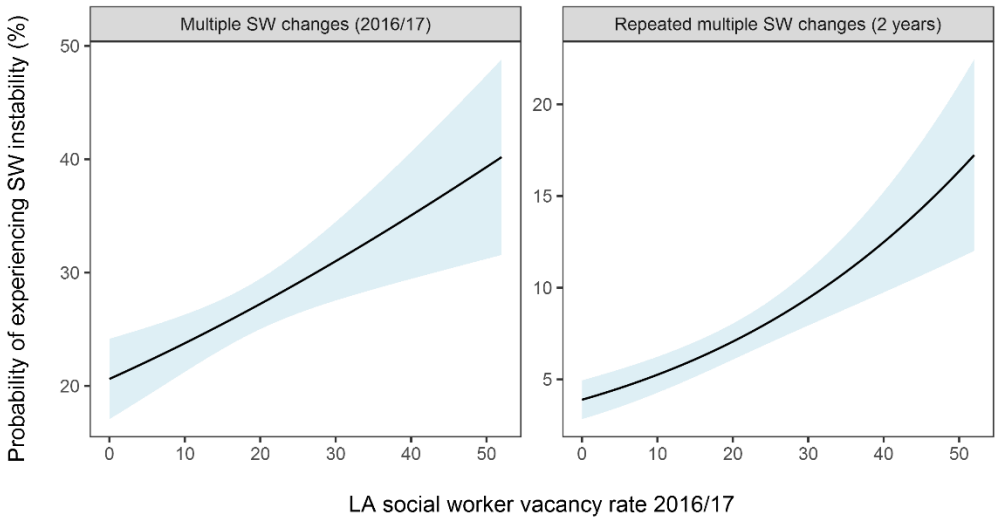
Unlike with school and placement instability, there are strong and statistically significant links between certain local authority factors and a child's probability of experiencing social worker instability. In particular, a local authority's social worker vacancy and turnover rates are strong predictors of social worker instability (Figure 51 and Figure 52). A child in a local authority with a 10% social worker turnover rate has a 23% chance of experiencing multiple social worker changes in 2016/17, whereas a child in a local authority with a 20% turnover rate has a 31% chance.[41] Similarly, a child in a local authority with a 10% social worker vacancy rate has a 24% chance of experiencing multiple social worker changes in 2016/17, whereas a child in a local authority with a 20% vacancy rate has a 27% chance.

Figure 51 – Relationship between local authority social worker turnover rates and social worker instability rates. Black line indicates predicted probability with increasing social worker turnover rate. Blue shading indicates 95% confidence interval of this prediction.



[41] A local authority's rate of agency staff use also has a statistically significant link to social worker instability, but it is fully explained by higher social worker vacancy and turnover rates.

Figure 52 - Correlation between LA social worker vacancy rates and social worker instability



Interestingly, there are few other statistically significant links with the local authority factors tested. We found no statistically significant link with local authority deprivation, the rate of looked after children, the turnover rate of looked after children (the ratio of the number ceasing to be looked after to the number entering care), or local authority budget per looked after child.

How well do these factors explain variation by local authority in rates of social worker instability?

Key messages:

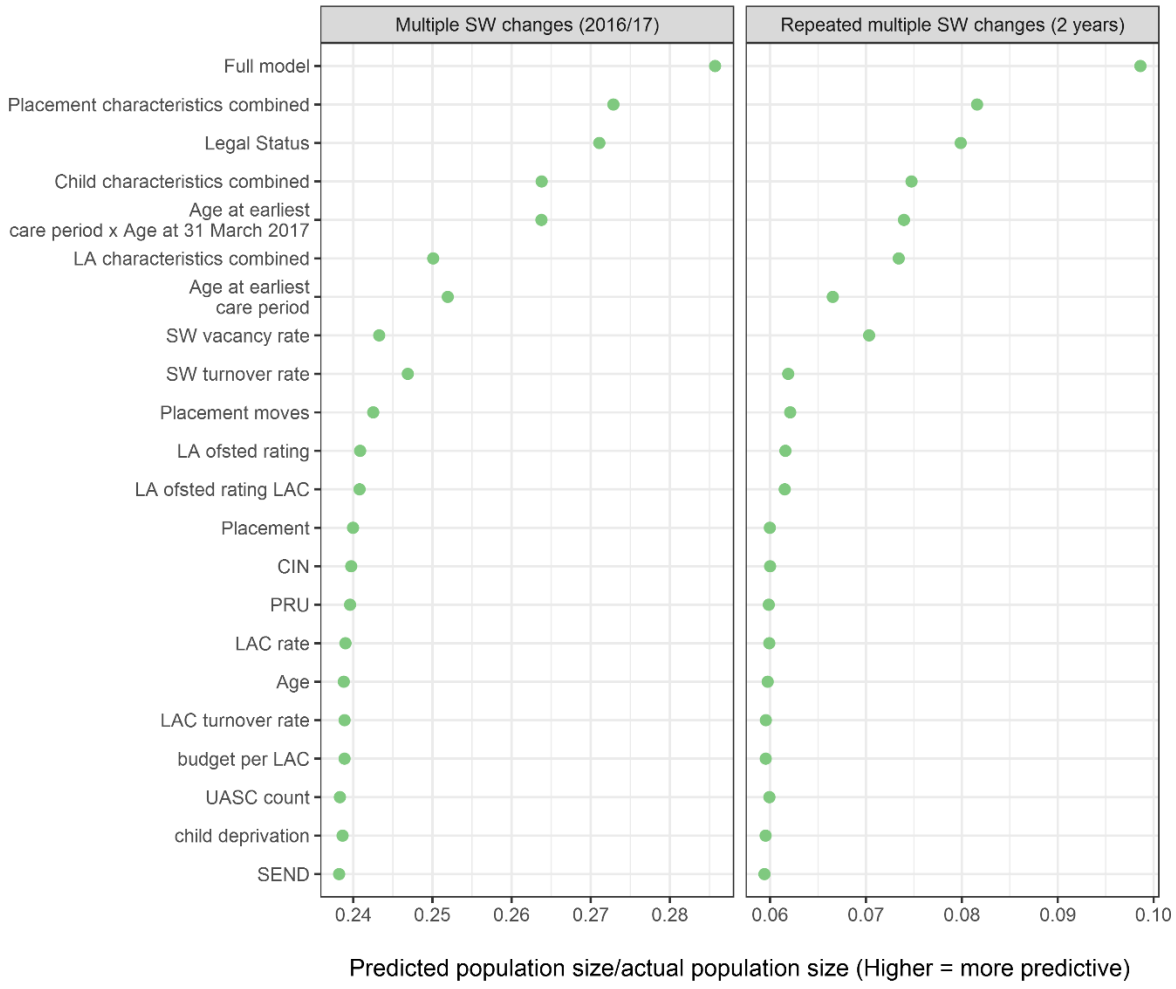
1. **Placement and local authority characteristics are the most predictive of social worker instability**
2. **There remains a large amount of variation unexplained**

Unlike with school and placement instability, it is a combination of placement, child and local authority factors that are most predictive of social worker instability (

Figure 53). Key factors are a child's initial legal status, their age at earliest care period and the local authority's social worker vacancy and turnover rates.

Apart from children's age at their earliest care period, there is very little predictive contribution from other child factors. This suggests a much smaller explanatory role for other child factors compared with our analysis of placement and school instability.
However, overall ratios of predicted to actual population size remain low, even when all variables are incorporated into a full model suggesting that there remains a large amount of unexplained variation.

Figure 53 - Ratios of predicted population size to actual population size (variable importance) for each variable tested, selected combinations of variables and all variables together. Higher values (points further to the right) indicate more predictive variables/groups of variables. For comparability, all models are fitted on children from the 78 local authorities matched with the School Census.



Findings: multiple instability

What is the national picture of multiple instability?

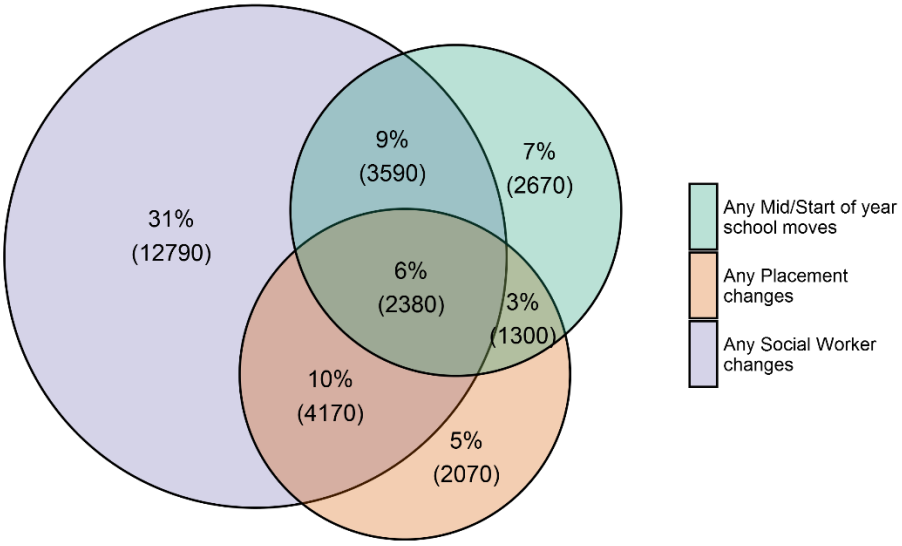
Single year multiple instability

We estimate that the majority of looked after children – 74% – experienced some form of change during 2016/17: a placement move, a school move or change of worker. This is equivalent to 53,500 children.

Among the subset of children for whom we have data on placement, school and social worker instability, only a minority of children experienced no change during 2016/17. Two-thirds (66%) of children in this sample experienced at least one change of any sort in 2016/17 [42].

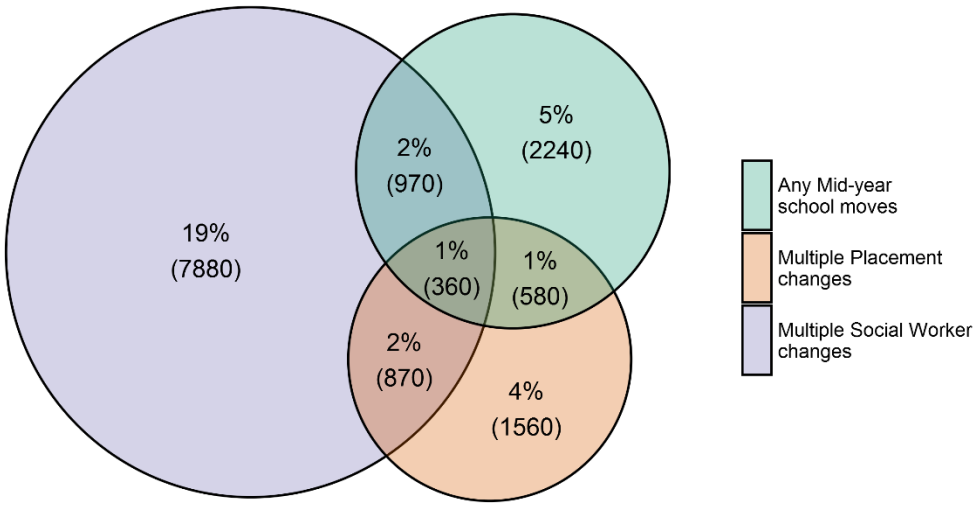
[42] Note this section is based on the subset of children with available placement, school and social worker data from the 78 local authorities that supplied social worker data (n = 16,865). These are by definition of school age and so the proportions experiencing any changes will differ.

Figure 54 - Combinations of any placement, school or social worker changes experienced in the previous year by children looked after at 31 March 2017 for whom we have placement, school and social worker data. Note that school changes here include both mid-year and start of year changes



Multiple changes or mid-year moves are obviously less common. Around 1 in 3 children in this sample experienced multiple placement moves, a mid-year school move or multiple social worker changes during 2016/17. Nearly 1 in 5 (19%) of these experienced multiple social worker changes only and not the other types of instability (Figure 55). Specific combinations of instability are comparatively rare with all sharing between 1% and 2% of the total in this sample.

Figure 55 - Combinations of multiple placement changes, mid-year school moves or multiple social worker changes experienced in the previous year by children looked after at 31 March 2017 for whom we have placement, school and social worker data



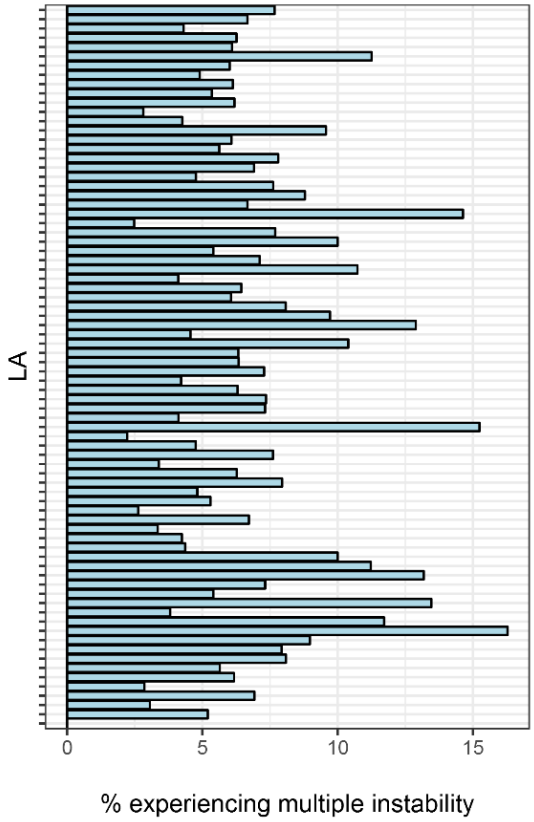
Across this sample, 7% or 2,850 looked after children experienced multiple forms of instability in 2016/17 – defined as at least two of mid-year school moves, multiple placement changes or multiple social worker changes. We find that 1% of children (around 400 children) experienced all three of these types of instability in 2016/17.

Looking over a longer time period suggests that repeated multiple instability is fairly rare – 1% experienced multiple forms of instability in both 2015/16 and 2016/17. However, multiple instability is notably more likely in 2016/17 if children experienced it the previous year: 12% of those experiencing multiple forms of instability in 2015/16 also experienced it in 2016/17, compared to only 7% of those who did not experiencing it in 2015/16. This is perhaps unsurprising given the earlier findings that both placement and school instability in one year can lead to more in the following year.

How does this picture of multiple instability vary across local authorities?

Figure 56 demonstrates that there is wide variation in rates of multiple instability (across local authorities. This ranges from 0% to 16% across the 78 local authorities represented in this sample. Again this is unsurprising given that wide variation was found across all three constituent measures at local authority level.

Figure 56 - rates of single year multiple instability by LA



A typology of instability

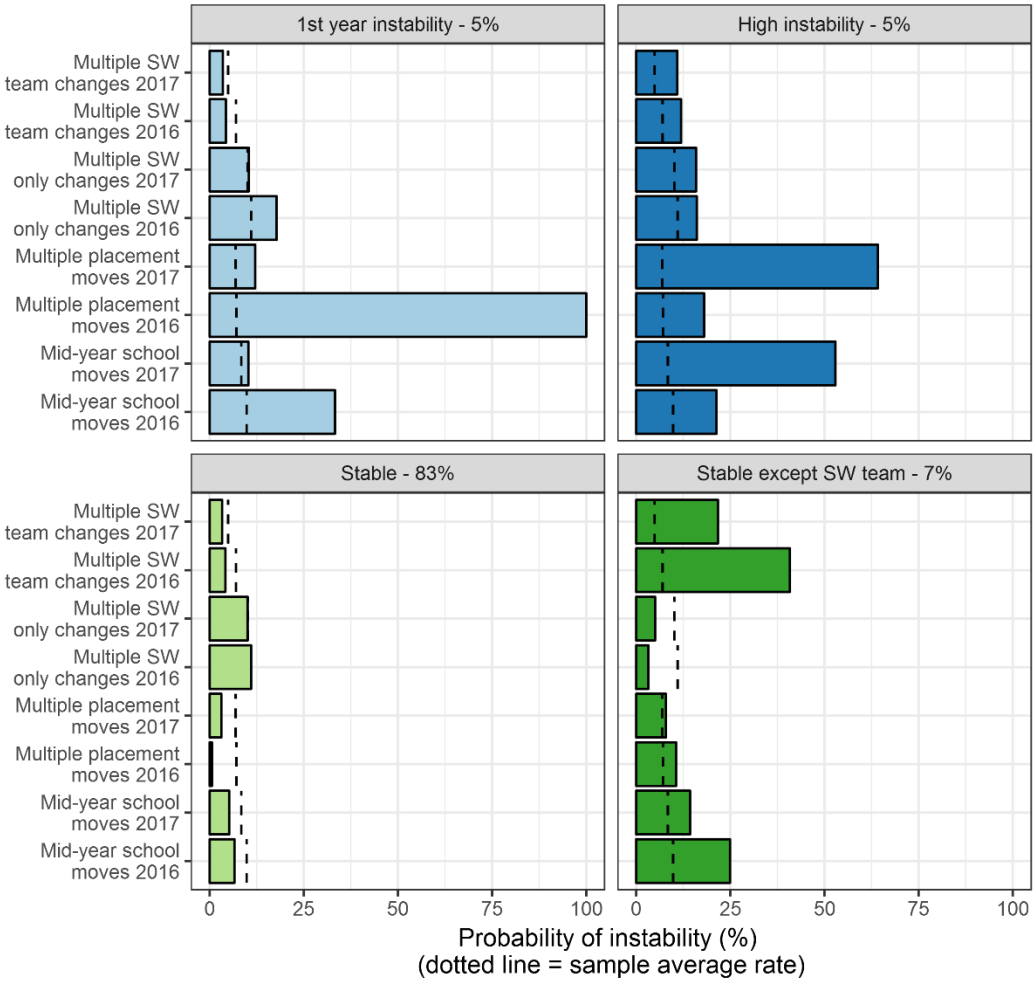
Looking over two years, our analysis suggests that broadly children fall into four 'types' based on their combined instability (Figure 57)[43]. This is determined by clustering together children with similar patterns of instability over two years (see 'Analysis methods' section for details). These groups can be summarised as:

- Stable – the largest group (83% of the sample) with below average rates of instability across all measures

[43] Note that this analysis is restricted to those with at least one period in care in both 2015/16 and 2016/17 and where information on placement, school and social worker changes are available (n=16,728)

- Stable except moves between social worker teams – low rates of placement instability but notably higher rates of moves between social worker teams (7% of the sample).
- 1st year instability – High rates of instability across all measures in 2015/16 but much lower rates in 2016/17 (5% of the sample).
- High instability – above average levels of instability across all measures in both 2015/16 and 2016/17 (5% of the sample).

Figure 57 - Percentage of each group experiencing each form of instability. For example, this shows that nearly all of the 1st year instability group experienced multiple placement moves in 2015/16. Dashed line equals the sample average rate of each form of instability

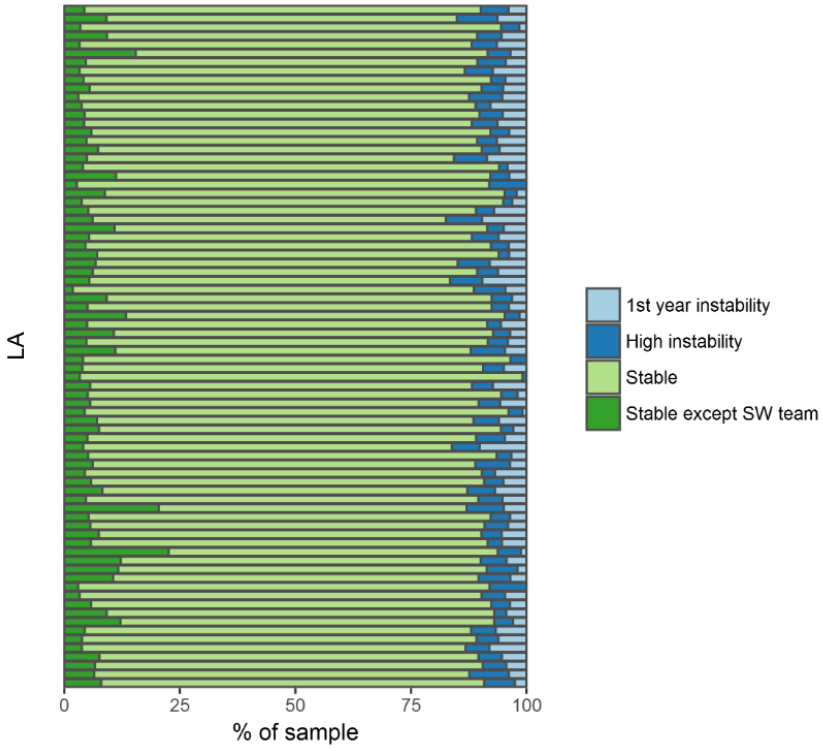


How does this proportion of children in each instability group vary by local authority?

As might be expected given previous results, Figure 59 demonstrates there is notable variation between local authorities based on the proportions in each of these four groups. For example rates of high instability group range from 9% to 1% across LAs.

However, it should be noted that in every local authority, the majority of children in the 'Stable' group. This proportion ranges from 67% to 96% across LAs.

Figure 58 - Distribution of 4 instability groups by local authority



Which children make up these groups?

Given the variation above, it is useful to outline which types of children or placements are more likely associated with each of these groups. Table 10 below summarises this.

Table 10 – Key characteristics of four stability groups

Group	Size	Key characteristics of children in this group
Stable	83%	Full care orders Fostered with relatives
Stable except SW teams	7%	Emergency protection orders, interim care orders, police protection Fewer relationships with child factors
1st year instability	5%	12-15 at earliest care period Behavioural difficulties & Social, emotional and mental health SEND Emergency, criminal justice and interim care orders Initially placed with parents – suggests placement breakdown
High instability	5%	12-15 at earliest care period Behavioural difficulties & Social, emotional and mental health SEND Criminal justice and S20 legal status

Child characteristics

Key messages:

Child characteristics are key factors differentiating these groups. Most predictive are:

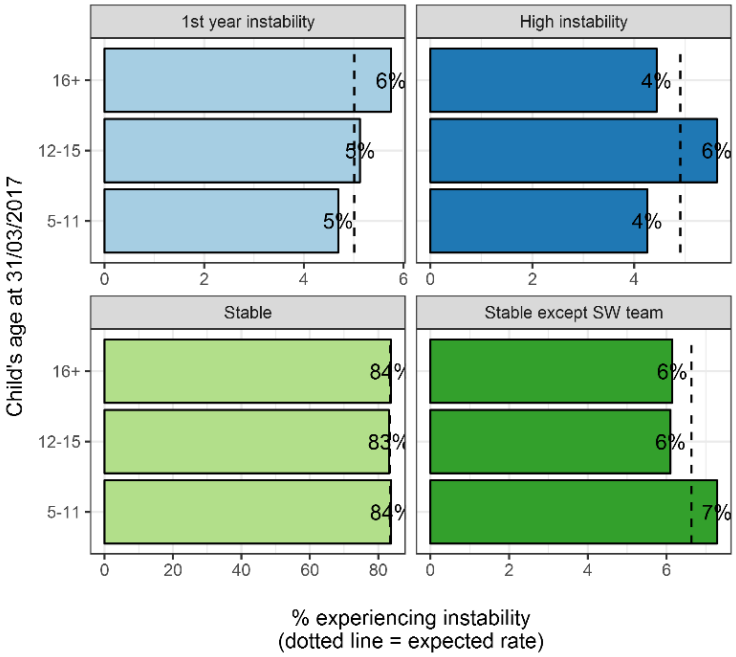
- **Age at earliest period of care**

- **Primary SEND code**
- **Behavioural factors**

Child's age at 31 March 2017

Children are reasonably evenly spread across these groups by their age on 31 March 2017. For example, 6% of 16+ year olds are in the 1st year instability group compared to an expected rate of 5% (represented by the dashed line in the chart). 12-15 year olds are slightly over-represented in the 'High instability' group (6% of 12-15 year olds are in this group compared to an expected rate of 5%), though this difference is small.

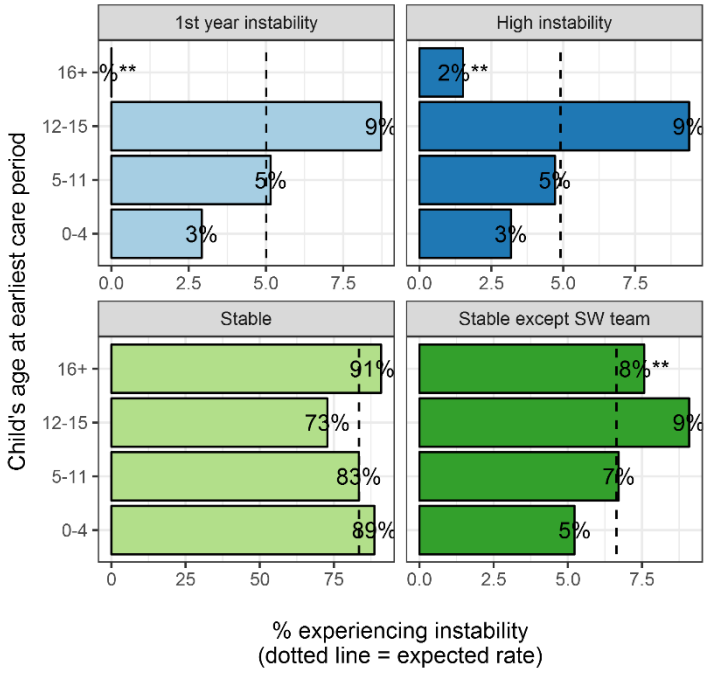
Figure 59 - Proportion of looked after children in each age group (on 31/03/2017) in each of the four stability groups. Dashed line shows the expected proportion in each stability group



Child's age at earliest period of care

There are larger differences based on children's age at their earliest period of care. Those aged 12-15 are over-represented in both the 1st year instability and High Instability groups: both of these groups each have 9% of those aged 12-15 at their earliest period of care (compared to expected rates of 5%).

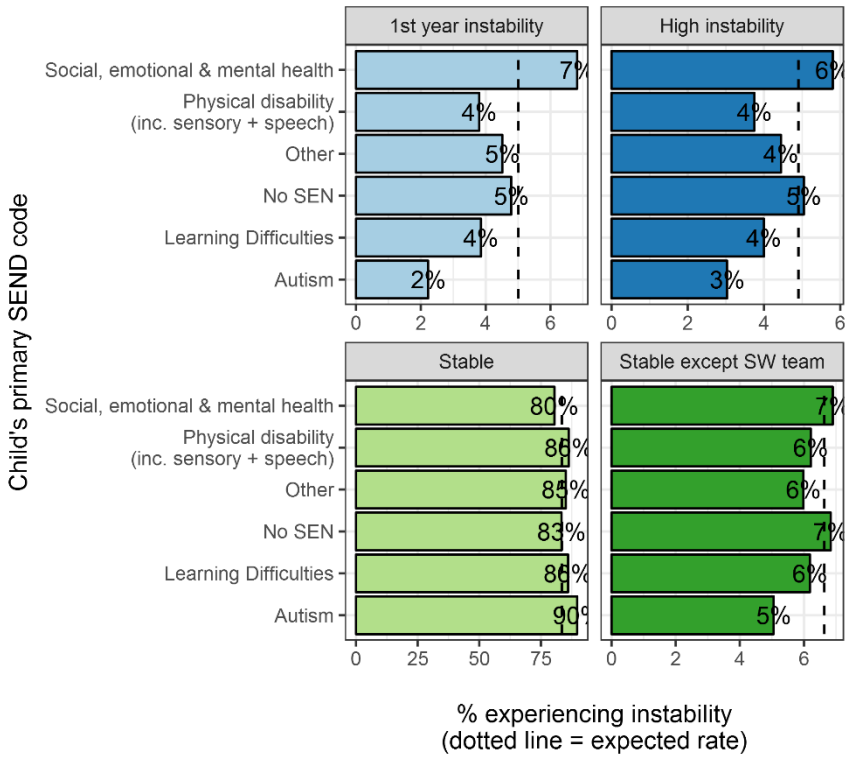
Figure 60 - Proportion of looked after children in each age group (at earliest period of care) in each of the four stability groups. Dashed line shows the expected proportion in each stability group



Child's SEND category

The type of SEND also differentiates between the groups. Children with SEMH SEND are slightly over-represented in the two higher instability groups (Figure 61): 7% of those with SEMH SEND are in the first year instability group while 6% are in the high instability group (compared to expected rates of 5% respectively).

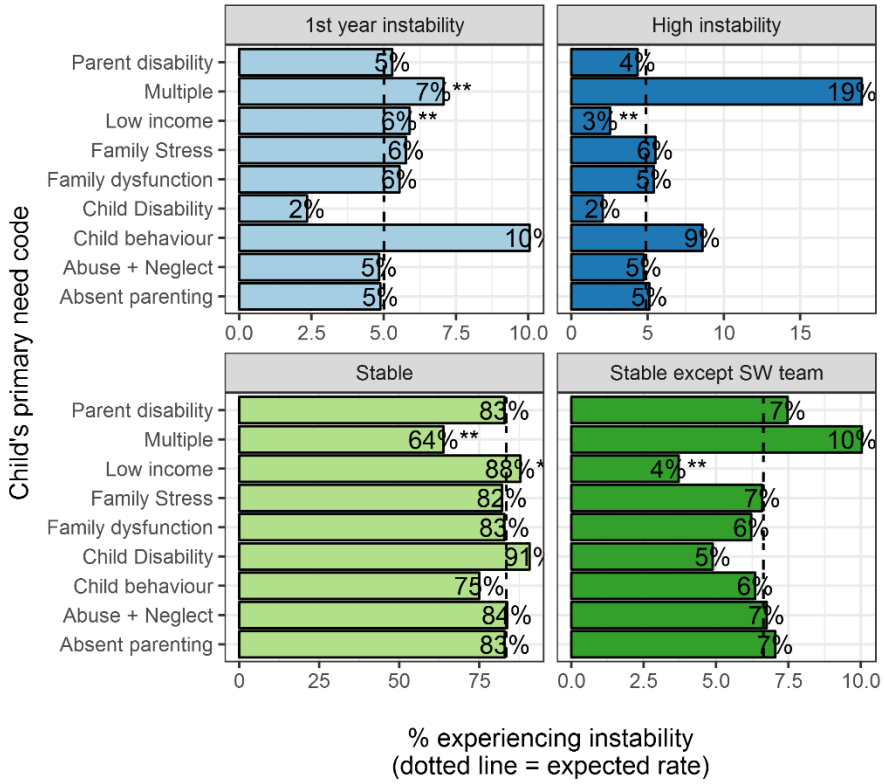
Figure 61 - Proportion of looked after children with each SEND primary category in each of the four stability groups. Dashed line shows the expected proportion in each stability group



Child's primary need code

Similarly children whose behaviour is recorded as their primary need are also over-represented in the two groups experiencing instability, and under-represented in the stable group (Figure 62). One in ten of these children are in the 1st year instability group and 9% are in the high instability group (both compared to an expected rate of 5%).

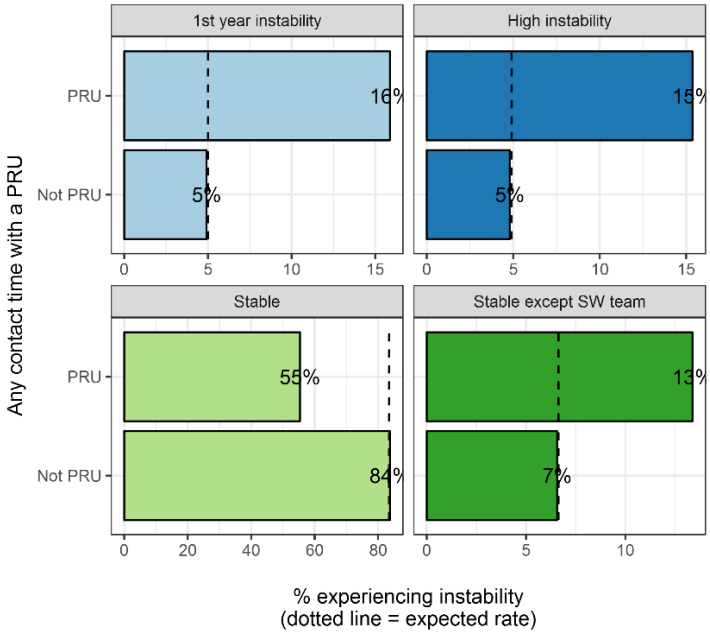
Figure 62 - Proportion of looked after children with each primary need category in each of the four stability groups. Dashed line shows the expected proportion in each stability group



Child's contact with a PRU

In both unstable groups, children with any contact time with a PRU are over-represented. We find that 15% of those with any contact with a PRU are in the high instability group, while 16% of them are in the 1st year instability group. The expected rate, by contrast, is only 5%.

Figure 63 - Proportion of looked after children in contact with a PRU in each of the four stability groups. Dashed line shows expected proportion in each stability group



Placement characteristics

Key messages:

- **Initial legal status is a key differentiator between all four groups**
- **Initial placement type is also a key differentiator, particularly in highlighting differences between the high and 1st year instability groups**

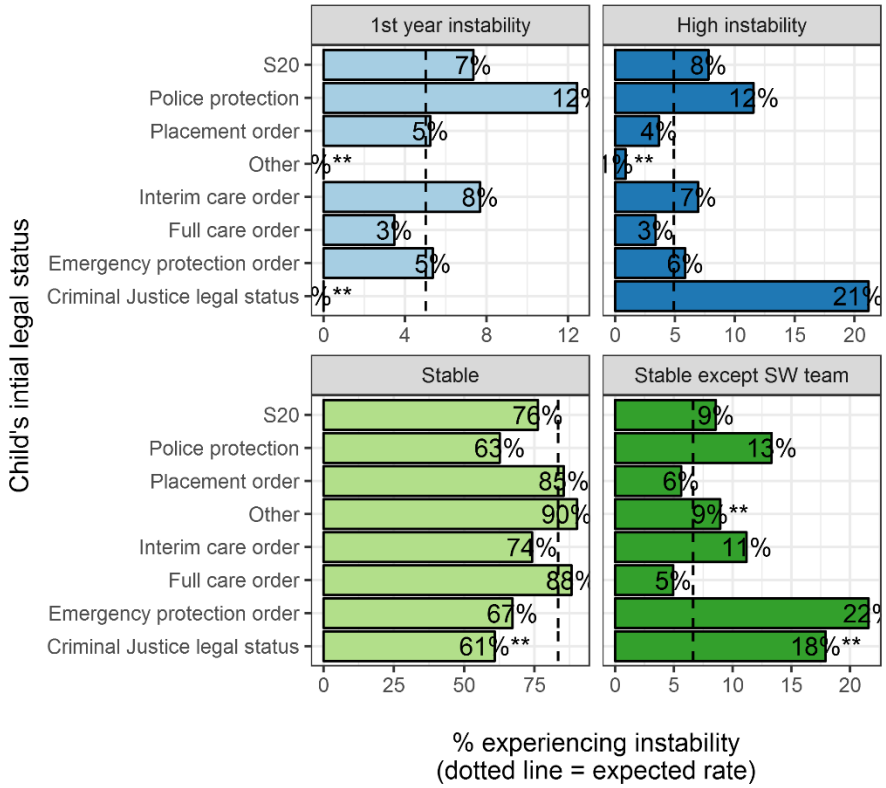
Children's initial legal status

The child's initial legal status provides the biggest differentiating factor between these groups. The key differences compared with expected rates for each group are summarised in Table 11.

Table 11 - Key legal statuses differentiating the four stability groups

Group	Key legal statuses differentiating each group
Stable	Full-care orders (88%) – expected rate = 83%
Stable except SW team	Emergency placement orders (22%) – expected rate = 7%
1st year instability	Police protection (12%), Section 20 (7%) & interim care order (8%) legal statuses – expected rate = 5%
High instability	S20 (8%), police protection (12%) and criminal justice legal statuses (21% though small base) – expected rate = 5%

Figure 64 - Proportion of looked after children with each initial legal status in each of the four stability groups. Dashed line shows the expected proportion in each stability group

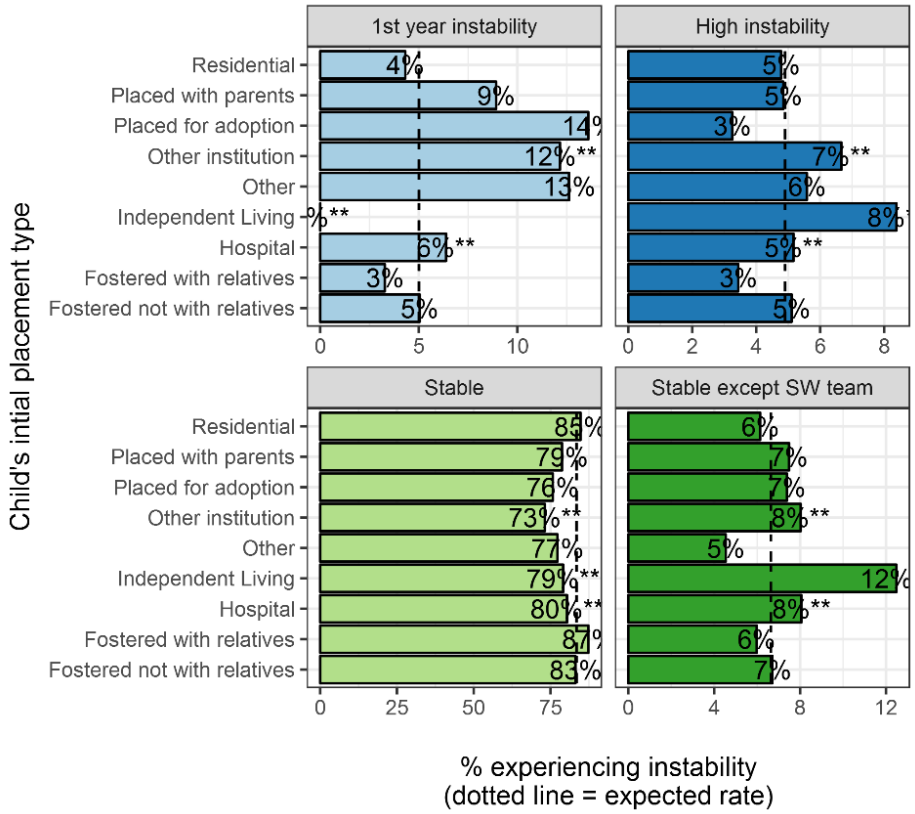


Children's initial placement type

A key difference separating the two unstable groups is the child's initial placement type. In the single year instability group, children initially placed with their parents are over-represented (the group contains 9% of such children compared to an expected rate of 5%). Also over-represented are children initially placed for adoption (the group contains 14% of such children compared to

an expected rate of 5%). These placement types were found to be associated with lower levels of instability in the population overall (see above), so if such children are over-represented in this group it may reflect cases where this initial placement has broken down.

Figure 65 - Proportion of looked after children with each initial placement type in each of the four stability groups. Dashed line shows the expected proportion in each stability group



What role do local authority factors play in predicting two-year instability?

Key messages:

There are small correlations with local authority factors. Social worker workforce factors (vacancy and turnover rates) and deprivation affecting children both have significant but small differentiating effects.

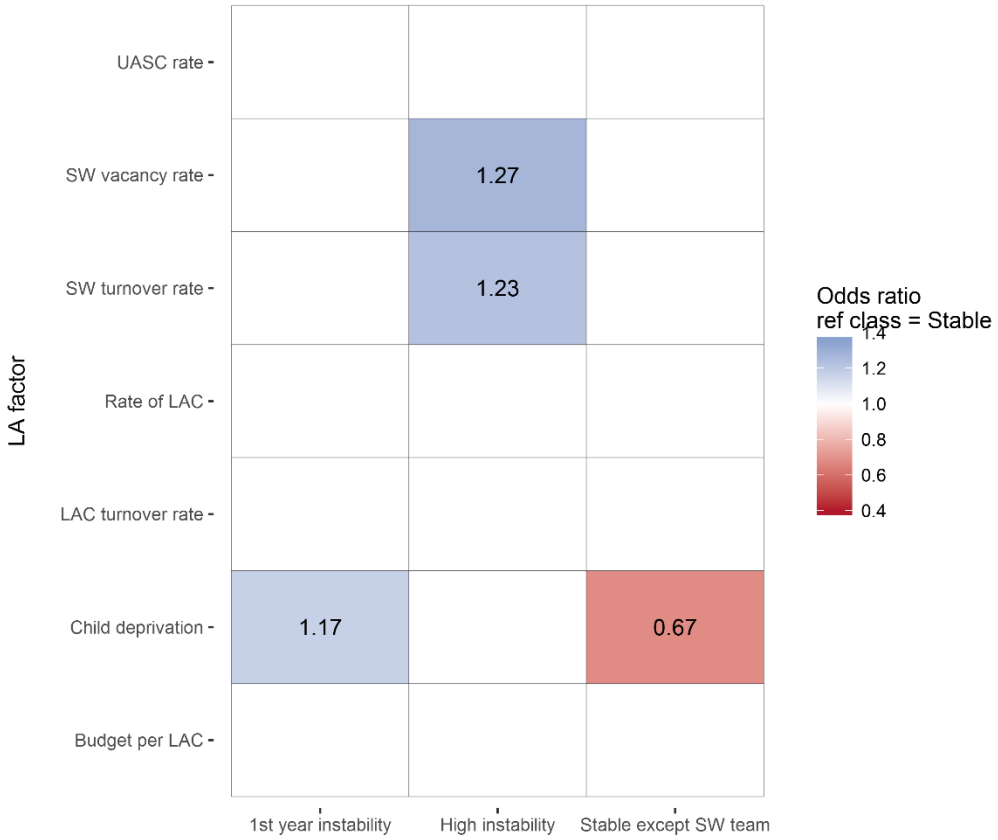
Alongside the above child and placement factors, there are also links between local authority level characteristics and membership of these four groups. These correlations are interesting given the lack of relationships found for the constituent parts of instability.

There are small correlations with social workforce and local authority level deprivation. Figure 66 demonstrates 3 points:

1) Higher social worker vacancy and turnover rates in a local authority are associated with a greater probability of being in the high instability group. For example a 1 standard deviation increase in the social worker vacancy rate (move from approximately the average rate to a rate in the top 20%) is associated with a 27% increase in the odds of a child being in the high instability group.

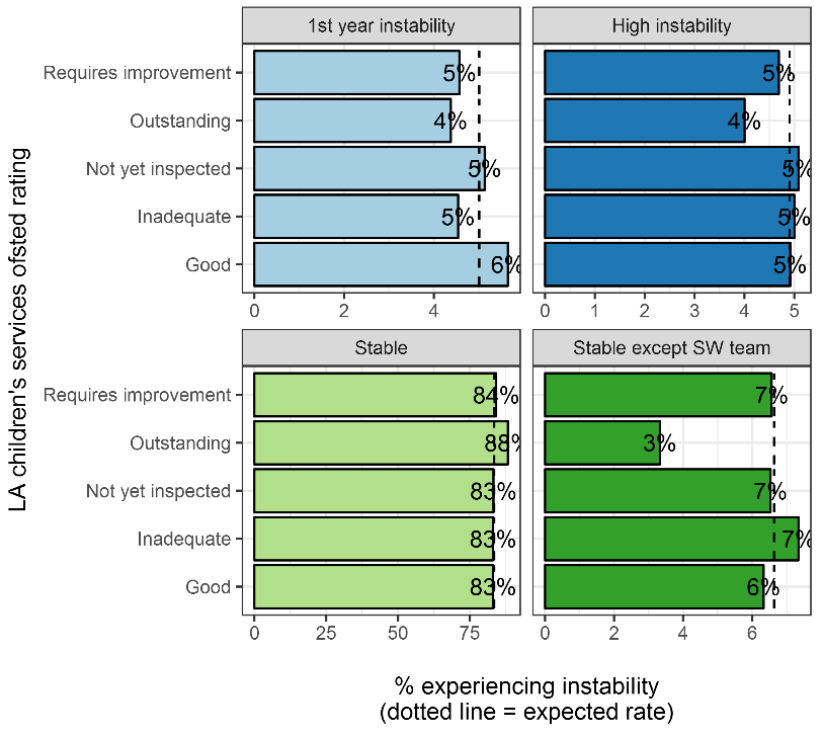
2) Children in more deprived local authorities are more likely to be in the 1st year instability group than the stable groups. A one standard deviation increase in the level of deprivation affecting children is associated with a 17% increase in the odds of being in the 1st year instability group compared to the stable group.

Figure 66 – Odds ratios for the probability of being in each group (compared to the stable group) calculated via multinomial regression of class membership on local authority level factors. For example, a one standard deviation increase in social worker turnover rate is equivalent to a 27% increase in the odds of being in the high instability group compared to the stable group. Blank squares indicate where the odds-ratio is not statistically significantly different from 1.



3) There are also small correlations with a local authority's children services Ofsted rating (Figure 67). Those in the high instability and social worker team instability groups are slightly less likely to be in local authorities rated 'Outstanding', but these correlations are small.

Figure 67 - Proportion of looked after children in local authorities with each Ofsted children's services rating in each of the four stability groups. Dashed line shows the expected proportion in each stability group



Summary and next steps

Taken together this analysis demonstrates:

1. At a national level, rates of instability in 2016/17 are very similar to those seen in 2015/16. This is true across placement, school and social worker instability.

2. There is wide variation between LAs across all forms of instability. This even remains after controlling for differences in case mix – however when we do so, for most local authorities the remaining differences are not statistically significant.

3. At the local authority level, there is only a weak relationship between rates of instability from one year to the next: a local authority's rate of instability in 2016/17 is not clearly related to its rate in 2015/16.

4. A new feature of our analysis is the ability to look over two years for all three measures of instability. We find that while this is rare, some children do experienced repeated placement instability, school instability or social worker instability. For placement stability we also present data on the numbers of changes over three years or four years. This shows that over the longer term, it becomes less likely for children to experience no placement changes at all, and more likely for them to experience several changes.

5. We also find that experiencing placement instability or school instability in the past can lead to being more likely to experience it again in future. The effect is particularly strong for placement instability, which can cast a shadow over several years.

6. Placement and child characteristics have the largest influence on the risks of experiencing placement and school instability (both single year and repeated). Children who enter care during adolescence, and who have particular behavioural or emotional needs, are repeatedly shown to be at higher risk of experiencing instability. While some instability may be a natural part of the care process (for example moving from an interim court order to a full care order), the fact that it is the same groups at risk of both single year and repeated instability suggests these may benefit from targeted support to reduce instability.

7. School Ofsted ratings appear to have an effect on the risk of experiencing school instability, which suggests that efforts to place children looked after in schools with higher Ofsted ratings may lead to improved school stability for children in care.

8. Local authority factors play a very small role in determining levels of school and placement instability, and a more significant role in influencing social worker instability. Social worker turnover and vacancy rates appear to be important here.

These conclusions must be caveated with the fact that there is a large amount of unexplained (by our models) variation in rates of instability, even after we control for all the available child, placement and local authority factors. This means that there cases where children with who appears to have similar characteristics in similar local areas experience different levels of instability, and vice versa. To some extent this may reflect random events, or local variations in policy and practice. In some cases (perhaps when looking at social worker instability), it might also reflect local variation in data reporting norms. However, another explanation is that the national data available to us simply do not capture most of the factors and underlying drivers that contribute to instability. For example, our data does not include information on the quality of the placement, or the quality of the relationships the child has with carers, teachers, professionals and friends. There is therefore further research needed to examine what other factors that may be more influential, and how these can be recorded at scale in a consistent way.

As with last year, our analysis has also not attempted to distinguish between good or bad changes. We remain unable to say whether the changes we see are a positive or negative experience for the child; there is no information in the data available to us that would allow changes to be categorised as such. In future work planned for later this year, we will make progress on this by attempting to link these changes and instability to the child's outcomes and wellbeing – in school and outside of school.

Appendix A: List of local authorities participating in social worker data collection

We are very grateful to the following local authorities for sharing their social worker data with us. Our analysis of social worker and multiple instability would not have been possible without their co-operation and participation.

Barnsley
Bath and North East Somerset
Birmingham
Blackpool
Bracknell Forest
Brent
Brighton and Hove
Bury
Calderdale
Central Bedfordshire
Cheshire East
City of London
Coventry
Croydon
Cumbria
Derby City Council
Derbyshire
Doncaster
Dorset
Durham County Council
Ealing
East Riding of Yorkshire
East Sussex
Essex County Council
Gateshead
Hackney
Hammersmith and Fulham
Hampshire
Harrow
Hartlepool
Havering
Hounslow
Isle of White
Islington
Kensington and Chelsea
Kent
Kingston-Upon-Hull
Kingston-Upon-Thames
Kirklees
Leeds
Leicester
Lincolnshire
London Borough of Bexley
Manchester City Council
Medway
Milton Keynes
North Tyneside
North Yorkshire
Northamptonshire
Nottinghamshire
Oldham
Oxfordshire
Plymouth
Poole
Redcar & Cleveland
Richmond-Upon-Thames
Rochdale
Rutland
Salford
Shropshire
Solihull
South Tyneside
Southampton
St Helens
Staffordshire
Suffolk
Surrey
Swindon
Telford and Wrekin
Warrington
Warwickshire
West Berkshire
West Sussex
Westminster
Wigan
Wiltshire
Wolverhampton
Worcestershire

Appendix B: Full regression model results

Note: These tables provide results for those labelled 'Full model' in the charts of the main report. These tables are intended for information only as they take no account of factors that may be endogenous to each other and so we do not recommend using these for inference about the effect of a factor on instability. Results are based on the school-matched sample to include variables relating to SEND and PRU contact time.

Outcome: Single year placement instability (2+ placement moves in 2016/17)

Variable	Category	Logit Estimate	SE	Lower 95% confidence interval	Upper 95% confidence interval	Odds ratio for logit estimate
Intercept		-3.43	0.13	-3.69	-3.18	0.03
Outlier dummy control		1.13	0.13	0.88	1.38	3.11
Control for length of time in care during 2016/17 ref: < 3 months	3-6 months	-0.29	0.08	-0.45	-0.12	0.75
	6 months+	-1.55	0.13	-1.80	-1.30	0.21
LA Income deprivation affecting children		0.00	0.05	-0.09	0.10	1.00
LA children's services Ofsted rating for Looked after Children ref: Requires improvement/inadequate	Not inspected yet	-0.02	0.09	-0.19	0.15	0.98
	Outstanding/Good	0.10	0.09	-0.09	0.28	1.10
2017 SW vacancy rate		0.01	0.04	-0.06	0.08	1.01
2017 SW turnover rate		0.04	0.04	-0.04	0.12	1.04
UASC count 2017		0.03	0.03	-0.03	0.09	1.03
LAC turnover rate 2017 (number ceasing to be looked after/number entering care)		-0.05	0.04	-0.13	0.03	0.95
LAC rate (per number of children) 2017		0.01	0.05	-0.08	0.11	1.01
Initial legal status ref: Full care order	S20	0.83	0.07	0.70	0.96	2.29
	Interim care order	0.69	0.07	0.56	0.83	2.00
	Placement order	0.50	0.14	0.23	0.77	1.66

	Police protection	1.72	0.11	1.50	1.94	5.58
	Emergency protection order	1.52	0.28	0.98	2.07	4.59
	Criminal Justice legal status	0.34	0.51	-0.67	1.34	1.40
	Other	-9.37	0.62	-10.57	-8.16	0.00
Initial placement type ref: Fostered not with relatives	Fostered with relatives	-0.45	0.08	-0.62	-0.29	0.64
	Residential	-0.44	0.11	-0.66	-0.22	0.65
	Placed with parents	-0.07	0.11	-0.29	0.15	0.93
	Independent Living	-0.04	0.35	-0.72	0.64	0.96
	Other institution	-0.68	0.34	-1.35	-0.01	0.51
	Hospital	0.77	0.36	0.07	1.47	2.16
	Placed for adoption	-1.57	0.60	-2.76	-0.39	0.21
	Other	-0.26	0.31	-0.87	0.35	0.77
Age at 31st march 2017		-0.02	0.01	-0.05	0.00	0.98
Age at earliest period of care 31 March 2017		0.09	0.01	0.07	0.12	1.10
CIN primary need code ref: Abuse & neglect	Family dysfunction	0.07	0.06	-0.06	0.19	1.07
	Family stress	0.07	0.08	-0.08	0.22	1.07
	Absent parenting	-0.63	0.14	-0.91	-0.35	0.53
	Parent disability	-0.28	0.13	-0.54	-0.02	0.75
	Chid disability	-1.16	0.20	-1.56	-0.77	0.31
	Child behaviour	0.38	0.15	0.10	0.67	1.46
	Low income	0.13	0.58	-1.00	1.26	1.14
	Multiple	1.61	0.44	0.74	2.47	4.99
Any contact time with a PRU		0.79	0.11	0.58	0.99	2.19
Age at 31 March 2017 x Age at earliest care period		0.30	0.08	0.16	0.45	1.36
Primary SEND code ref: No SEN	Social, emotional & mental health	0.46	0.06	0.34	0.57	1.58
	Learning Difficulties	0.02	0.08	-0.14	0.19	1.02
	Physical disability (inc. sensory + speech)	0.10	0.09	-0.08	0.28	1.10
	Other	0.20	0.13	-0.05	0.45	1.22

	Autism	0.18	0.16	-0.14	0.50	1.20
Budget per LAC 2017		-0.07	0.05	-0.17	0.03	0.93
Age at earliest care entry x Primary SEND code	12-15/16+ at earliest care period x Social, emotional & mental health	-0.19	0.10	-0.38	0.01	0.83
	12-15/16+ at earliest care period x Learning difficulties	-0.29	0.14	-0.56	-0.02	0.75
	12-15/16+ at earliest care period x Physical disability	-0.32	0.21	-0.73	0.09	0.72
	12-15/16+ at earliest care period x Other	-0.58	0.29	-1.15	0.00	0.56
	12-15/16+ at earliest care period x Autism	-0.16	0.26	-0.68	0.35	0.85
Primary SEND code x Budget per LAC 2017	Budget per LAC 2017 x Social, emotional & mental health	-0.05	0.05	-0.16	0.05	0.95
	Budget per LAC 2017 x Learning difficulties	-0.02	0.06	-0.14	0.10	0.98
	Budget per LAC 2017 x Physical disability	0.00	0.09	-0.17	0.17	1.00
	Budget per LAC 2017 x Other	-0.20	0.11	-0.42	0.02	0.82
	Budget per LAC 2017 x Autism	-0.01	0.14	-0.28	0.26	0.99

Outcome: repeated placement instability (multiple placement moves in both 2015/16 and 2016/17)

Variable	**Category**	**Logit Estimate**	**SE**	**Lower 95% confidence interval**	**Upper 95% confidence interval**	**Odds ratio for logit estimate**
Intercept		-6.65	0.31	-7.27	-6.03	0.00
Outlier dummy control		1.71	0.25	1.22	2.21	5.56
LA Income deprivation affecting children		0.01	0.08	-0.15	0.18	1.01
LA children's services Ofsted rating for Looked after Children ref: Requires improvement/inadequate	Not inspected yet	0.28	0.18	-0.07	0.63	1.32
	Outstanding/Good	0.15	0.16	-0.16	0.46	1.16
2017 SW vacancy rate		0.00	0.06	-0.12	0.11	1.00
2017 SW turnover rate		-0.02	0.07	-0.15	0.11	0.98
UASC count 2017		0.05	0.05	-0.04	0.15	1.06
LAC turnover rate 2017 (number ceasing to be looked after/number entering care)		-0.14	0.07	-0.27	-0.01	0.87

LAC rate (per number of children) 2017		-0.05	0.09	-0.22	0.13	0.95
Initial legal status ref: Full care order	S20	0.86	0.16	0.55	1.16	2.35
	Interim care order	0.81	0.19	0.44	1.19	2.25
	Police protection	1.33	0.28	0.79	1.88	3.79
	Placement order	0.20	0.37	-0.51	0.92	1.23
	Emergency protection order	-0.18	0.97	-2.09	1.73	0.84
	Criminal Justice legal status	-13.68	0.55	-14.77	-12.59	0.00
	Other	-11.24	0.68	-12.56	-9.91	0.00
Initial placement type ref: Fostered not with relatives	Fostered with relatives	-0.37	0.19	-0.73	0.00	0.69
	Residential	-0.16	0.25	-0.66	0.34	0.85
	Placed with parents	-0.62	0.44	-1.48	0.23	0.54
	Independent Living	-13.45	0.59	-14.61	-12.28	0.00
	Hospital	1.72	0.96	-0.15	3.60	5.60
	Other institution	0.25	0.83	-1.37	1.87	1.28
	Other	-0.52	0.98	-2.45	1.41	0.60
	Placed for adoption	0.71	1.07	-1.39	2.81	2.03
Age at 31st march 2017		0.09	0.03	0.03	0.14	1.09
Age at earliest period of care 31 March 2017		0.07	0.03	0.00	0.13	1.07
CIN primary need code ref: Abuse & neglect	Family dysfunction	0.13	0.16	-0.19	0.45	1.14
	Family stress	-0.03	0.16	-0.33	0.28	0.97
	Absent parenting	-1.50	0.55	-2.58	-0.43	0.22
	Parent disability	-0.65	0.40	-1.43	0.13	0.52
	Chid disability	-1.34	0.56	-2.44	-0.25	0.26
	Child behaviour	0.20	0.41	-0.59	1.00	1.23
	Multiple	1.02	0.44	0.15	1.88	2.77
	Low income	-12.08	0.31	-12.68	-11.47	0.00
Any contact time with a PRU		0.95	0.24	0.48	1.41	2.58
Age at 31 March 2017 x Age at earliest care period		0.42	0.21	0.01	0.83	1.52
Primary SEND code ref: No SEN	Social, emotional & mental health	0.63	0.14	0.35	0.91	1.87
	Learning Difficulties	-0.37	0.21	-0.77	0.04	0.69

	Physical disability (inc. sensory + speech)	-0.43	0.35	-1.11	0.25	0.65
	Other	0.47	0.33	-0.17	1.11	1.60
	Autism	-1.90	0.88	-3.63	-0.18	0.15
Budget per LAC 2017		-0.11	0.09	-0.30	0.07	0.89
Age at earliest care entry x Primary SEND code	12-15/16+ at earliest care period x Social, emotional & mental health	-0.19	0.25	-0.68	0.31	0.83
	12-15/16+ at earliest care period x Learning difficulties	0.05	0.40	-0.73	0.83	1.05
	12-15/16+ at earliest care period x Physical disability	-1.06	1.09	-3.20	1.08	0.35
	12-15/16+ at earliest care period x Other	-1.20	0.80	-2.77	0.37	0.30
	12-15/16+ at earliest care period x Autism	1.18	0.79	-0.38	2.73	3.24
Primary SEND code x Budget per LAC 2017	Budget per LAC 2017 x Social, emotional & mental health	-0.07	0.12	-0.30	0.17	0.94
	Budget per LAC 2017 x Learning difficulties	-0.10	0.18	-0.46	0.26	0.91
	Budget per LAC 2017 x Physical disability	0.09	0.27	-0.45	0.62	1.09
	Budget per LAC 2017 x Other	-0.09	0.32	-0.72	0.54	0.91
	Budget per LAC 2017 x Autism	-0.89	0.38	-1.63	-0.15	0.41

Outcome: single year school instability (any mid-year school moves in 2017)

Variable	Category	Logit Estimate	SE	Lower 95% confidence interval	Upper 95% confidence interval	Odds ratio for logit estimate
Intercept		-1.64	0.13	-1.90	-1.39	0.19
Age at earliest period of care 31 March 2017		0.09	0.01	0.06	0.11	1.09
LA Income deprivation affecting children		-0.04	0.04	-0.11	0.03	0.96

LA children's services Ofsted rating for Looked after Children ref: Requires improvement/inadequate	Not inspected yet	0.16	0.08	-0.01	0.32	1.17
	Outstanding/Good	0.14	0.07	0.00	0.28	1.15
2017 SW vacancy rate		0.04	0.03	-0.02	0.10	1.04
2017 SW turnover rate		-0.01	0.03	-0.07	0.06	0.99
Budget per LAC 2017		0.01	0.04	-0.05	0.08	1.01
UASC count 2017		-0.04	0.02	-0.09	0.00	0.96
LAC rate (per number of children) 2017		-0.09	0.04	-0.16	-0.01	0.92
LAC turnover rate 2017 (number ceasing to be looked after/number entering care)		-0.03	0.03	-0.09	0.04	0.97
School type ref: Academy	Free school	-0.05	0.22	-0.48	0.38	0.95
	Non-maintained special school	0.23	0.29	-0.33	0.80	1.26
	PRU	0.68	0.17	0.35	1.01	1.98
	Technical/Studio school	0.55	0.33	-0.10	1.19	1.73
	Voluntary, Foundation & community	0.01	0.05	-0.09	0.12	1.01
Initial school Ofsted rating ref: Outstanding	Good	0.28	0.06	0.17	0.39	1.32
	Requires improvement	0.63	0.10	0.44	0.82	1.88
	Inadequate	0.96	0.14	0.68	1.24	2.61
	Missing	0.80	0.11	0.58	1.02	2.22
School size (total number of pupils)		0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00
Initial legal status ref: Full care order	S20	0.36	0.06	0.23	0.48	1.43
	Interim care order	0.51	0.08	0.36	0.66	1.67
	Placement order	0.66	0.10	0.45	0.86	1.93
	Police protection	0.24	0.13	-0.01	0.49	1.28
	Emergency protection order	0.49	0.28	-0.05	1.03	1.63
	Criminal Justice legal status	-0.38	0.51	-1.38	0.63	0.69
	Other	1.44	0.51	0.44	2.44	4.22
Initial placement type ref: Fostered not with relatives	Fostered with relatives	-0.37	0.06	-0.50	-0.24	0.69

	Residential	0.26	0.09	0.09	0.43	1.30
	Placed with parents	-0.17	0.11	-0.40	0.05	0.84
	Placed for adoption	-0.66	0.25	-1.16	-0.16	0.52
	Other	0.05	0.22	-0.38	0.48	1.05
	Other institution	0.34	0.24	-0.13	0.81	1.40
	Independent Living	-0.10	0.42	-0.93	0.73	0.90
	Hospital	-0.54	0.53	-1.57	0.49	0.58
Placement moves ref: Not	2+	1.06	0.06	0.95	1.17	2.89
Age at 31st march 2017		-0.18	0.01	-0.21	-0.16	0.83
Age at 31 March 2017 x Age at earliest care period		0.10	0.06	-0.01	0.22	1.11
CIN primary need code ref: Abuse & neglect	Family dysfunction	0.00	0.06	-0.11	0.11	1.00
	Family stress	-0.03	0.07	-0.16	0.10	0.97
	Chid disability	-0.71	0.17	-1.05	-0.37	0.49
	Parent disability	-0.12	0.13	-0.38	0.14	0.88
	Absent parenting	-0.10	0.12	-0.35	0.14	0.90
	Child behaviour	-0.02	0.15	-0.32	0.28	0.98
	Low income	0.08	0.50	-0.90	1.06	1.08
	Multiple	0.45	0.44	-0.41	1.30	1.56
Primary SEND code ref: No SEN	Social, emotional & mental health	0.11	0.05	0.01	0.21	1.12
	Learning Difficulties	-0.20	0.05	-0.30	-0.10	0.82
	Physical disability (inc. sensory + speech)	-0.35	0.07	-0.50	-0.21	0.70
	Other	-0.11	0.11	-0.32	0.09	0.89
	Autism	-0.51	0.18	-0.86	-0.16	0.60
IDACI of school postcode		-0.08	0.02	-0.12	-0.04	0.93

Outcome: repeated school instability (Any school move in both 2016 and 2017 academic years)

Variable	Category	Logit Estimate	SE	Lower 95% confidence interval	Upper 95% confidence interval	Odds ratio for logit estimate
Intercept		-2.65	0.20	-3.04	-2.25	0.07
Age at earliest period of care 31 March 2017		0.08	0.02	0.04	0.12	1.08
LA Income deprivation affecting children		-0.10	0.05	-0.19	-0.01	0.91
LA children's services Ofsted rating for Looked after Children ref: Requires improvement/inadequate	Not inspected yet	0.19	0.11	-0.03	0.41	1.21
	Outstanding/Good	0.13	0.09	-0.04	0.30	1.14
2017 SW vacancy rate		0.08	0.04	0.00	0.16	1.09
2017 SW turnover rate		0.00	0.04	-0.08	0.07	1.00
Budget per LAC 2017		0.06	0.04	-0.02	0.13	1.06
UASC count 2017		-0.09	0.03	-0.15	-0.04	0.91
LAC rate (per number of children) 2017		-0.01	0.06	-0.12	0.10	0.99
LAC turnover rate 2017 (number ceasing to be looked after/number entering care)		0.01	0.04	-0.07	0.10	1.01
School type ref: Academy	Free school	0.63	0.31	0.03	1.23	1.87
	Non-maintained special school	-0.48	0.74	-1.94	0.98	0.62
	PRU	1.55	0.25	1.06	2.04	4.72
	Technical/Studio school	-0.13	1.02	-2.12	1.87	0.88
	Voluntary, Foundation & community	-0.14	0.07	-0.27	0.00	0.87
Initial school Ofsted rating ref: Outstanding	Good	0.18	0.09	0.01	0.35	1.20
	Requires improvement	0.57	0.11	0.35	0.79	1.77
	Inadequate	0.91	0.14	0.63	1.19	2.48
	Missing	0.44	0.13	0.18	0.71	1.56
School size (total number of pupils)		0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00

Initial legal status ref: Full care order	S20	0.57	0.11	0.36	0.78	1.78
	Interim care order	0.72	0.12	0.49	0.95	2.05
	Placement order	0.45	0.16	0.13	0.76	1.56
	Police protection	0.79	0.16	0.49	1.10	2.21
	Emergency protection order	1.08	0.25	0.59	1.57	2.94
	Criminal Justice legal status	0.32	0.65	-0.96	1.60	1.38
	Other	-10.50	0.60	-11.68	-9.32	0.00
Initial placement type ref: Fostered not with relatives	Fostered with relatives	-0.41	0.09	-0.58	-0.24	0.66
	Residential	-0.01	0.14	-0.30	0.27	0.99
	Placed with parents	-0.35	0.17	-0.68	-0.01	0.71
	Other	0.67	0.22	0.25	1.10	1.96
	Other institution	0.45	0.35	-0.24	1.14	1.57
	Placed for adoption	0.50	0.44	-0.37	1.37	1.65
	Hospital	-11.48	0.21	-11.89	-11.07	0.00
	Independent Living	0.48	0.63	-0.76	1.72	1.62
Repeated placement instability ref: Not	2+ placement moves in 15/16 and 16/17	1.53	0.16	1.21	1.85	4.62
Age at 31 March 2017 x Age at earliest care period		0.22	0.11	0.01	0.43	1.25
Age at 31st march 2017		-0.20	0.02	-0.24	-0.16	0.82
CIN primary need code ref: Abuse & neglect	Family dysfunction	0.11	0.08	-0.04	0.26	1.12
	Family stress	0.09	0.09	-0.09	0.26	1.09
	Chid disability	-1.15	0.30	-1.74	-0.56	0.32
	Parent disability	-0.26	0.16	-0.58	0.06	0.77
	Absent parenting	-0.28	0.22	-0.71	0.15	0.76
	Child behaviour	0.22	0.22	-0.21	0.65	1.25
	Multiple	0.42	0.34	-0.24	1.09	1.53
	Low income	0.76	0.61	-0.44	1.96	2.14
Primary SEND code ref: No SEN	Social, emotional & mental health	0.20	0.07	0.05	0.34	1.22

	Learning Difficulties	-0.16	0.08	-0.32	0.00	0.85
	Physical disability (inc. sensory + speech)	-0.40	0.12	-0.65	-0.16	0.67
	Other	0.00	0.17	-0.33	0.32	1.00
	Autism	-0.42	0.26	-0.92	0.08	0.66
IDACI of school postcode		0.07	0.03	0.01	0.14	1.08

Outcome: single year social worker instability (multiple social worker changes in 2016/17)

Variable	**Category**	**Logit Estimate**	**SE**	**Lower 95% confidence interval**	**Upper 95% confidence interval**	**Odds ratio for logit estimate**
Intercept		-1.38	0.18	-1.73	-1.04	0.25
Age at 31st march 2017		-0.05	0.01	-0.08	-0.03	0.95
CIN primary need code ref: Abuse & neglect	Family dysfunction	0.01	0.07	-0.12	0.14	1.01
	Absent parenting	-0.34	0.23	-0.79	0.11	0.71
	Family stress	-0.02	0.08	-0.18	0.13	0.98
	Chid disability	-0.33	0.17	-0.65	0.00	0.72
	Parent disability	0.18	0.10	-0.02	0.37	1.19
	Child behaviour	0.12	0.17	-0.20	0.44	1.13
	Multiple	1.00	0.49	0.04	1.97	2.73
	Low income	0.39	0.59	-0.76	1.54	1.48
Any contact time with a PRU		0.17	0.09	-0.01	0.35	1.19
Primary SEND code ref: No SEN	Social, emotional & mental health	0.04	0.05	-0.05	0.13	1.04
	Learning Difficulties	-0.03	0.06	-0.14	0.09	0.98

	Physical disability (inc. sensory + speech)	0.06	0.07	-0.08	0.20	1.06
	Autism	-0.04	0.11	-0.26	0.18	0.96
	Other	0.08	0.12	-0.15	0.30	1.08
Initial legal status ref: Full care order	S20	0.54	0.09	0.35	0.72	1.71
	Interim care order	0.69	0.09	0.51	0.87	1.99
	Placement order	-0.23	0.15	-0.52	0.05	0.79
	Police protection	0.99	0.16	0.69	1.30	2.70
	Emergency protection order	0.91	0.33	0.26	1.57	2.49
	Criminal Justice legal status	1.03	0.76	-0.47	2.53	2.79
	Other	2.33	0.82	0.71	3.94	10.25
Initial placement type ref: Fostered not with relatives	Fostered with relatives	0.02	0.07	-0.13	0.16	1.02
	Residential	-0.10	0.10	-0.29	0.09	0.90
	Placed with parents	-0.11	0.12	-0.34	0.13	0.90
	Independent Living	0.02	0.37	-0.71	0.75	1.02
	Hospital	0.25	0.46	-0.65	1.15	1.28
	Other institution	-0.02	0.31	-0.64	0.60	0.98
	Placed for adoption	-1.26	0.49	-2.22	-0.30	0.28
	Other	-0.43	0.44	-1.30	0.44	0.65
Placement moves ref: Not	2+	0.24	0.08	0.08	0.40	1.27
LA children's services Ofsted rating for Looked after Children ref: Requires improvement/inadequate	Not inspected yet	-0.09	0.23	-0.54	0.36	0.92
	Outstanding/Good	-0.10	0.16	-0.41	0.21	0.91
LAC turnover rate 2017 (number ceasing to be looked after/number entering care)		-0.07	0.08	-0.22	0.08	0.93
LAC rate (per number of children) 2017		-0.03	0.09	-0.20	0.14	0.97
LA Income deprivation affecting children		0.02	0.10	-0.16	0.21	1.02
2017 SW vacancy rate		0.11	0.07	-0.02	0.24	1.12

2017 SW turnover rate	0.20	0.06	0.08	0.33	1.23
Budget per LAC 2017	-0.12	0.08	-0.28	0.03	0.88
UASC count 2017	-0.03	0.07	-0.16	0.10	0.97
Age at earliest period of care 31 March 2017	0.07	0.01	0.05	0.09	1.07
Age at 31 March 2017 x Age at earliest care period	0.07	0.06	-0.06	0.19	1.07

Outcome: repeated social worker instability (multiple social worker changes in both 2015/16 and 2016/17)

Variable	**Category**	**Logit Estimate**	**SE**	**Lower 95% confidence interval**	**Upper 95% confidence interval**	**Odds ratio for logit estimate**
Intercept		-2.36	0.27	-2.89	-1.83	0.09
Age at 31st march 2017		-0.06	0.03	-0.11	-0.01	0.94
CIN primary need code ref: Abuse & neglect	Family dysfunction	-0.02	0.11	-0.24	0.20	0.98
	Absent parenting	-0.08	0.35	-0.77	0.61	0.92
	Family stress	-0.05	0.13	-0.31	0.21	0.95
	Chid disability	-0.09	0.29	-0.66	0.47	0.91
	Parent disability	0.22	0.20	-0.17	0.61	1.25
	Child behaviour	-0.05	0.34	-0.71	0.62	0.96
	Multiple	-0.71	0.56	-1.80	0.38	0.49
	Low income	-0.48	1.10	-2.63	1.67	0.62
Any contact time with a PRU		0.34	0.22	-0.09	0.77	1.41
Primary SEND code ref: No SEN	Social, emotional & mental health	0.10	0.10	-0.10	0.30	1.10
	Learning Difficulties	0.08	0.10	-0.13	0.28	1.08
	Physical disability (inc. sensory + speech)	0.07	0.14	-0.21	0.34	1.07
	Autism	0.29	0.21	-0.12	0.69	1.34
	Other	-0.07	0.20	-0.46	0.32	0.93
Initial legal status ref: S20	Full care order	-0.91	0.16	-1.23	-0.58	0.40

	Interim care order	0.07	0.11	-0.14	0.29	1.08
	Police protection	-0.08	0.17	-0.41	0.25	0.92
	Placement order	-1.04	0.31	-1.65	-0.42	0.35
	Emergency protection order	0.94	0.34	0.29	1.60	2.57
	Criminal Justice legal status	0.29	1.09	-1.84	2.42	1.34
	Other	-9.87	0.65	-11.14	-8.60	0.00
Initial placement type ref: Fostered not with relatives	Fostered with relatives	0.03	0.13	-0.22	0.27	1.03
	Residential	-0.26	0.15	-0.55	0.03	0.77
	Placed with parents	-0.06	0.18	-0.42	0.30	0.94
	Independent Living	0.03	0.86	-1.66	1.72	1.03
	Hospital	-0.08	0.54	-1.14	0.98	0.93
	Other institution	0.36	0.52	-0.66	1.37	1.43
	Other	-1.25	0.60	-2.42	-0.07	0.29
	Placed for adoption	0.33	0.58	-0.81	1.47	1.39
Placement moves ref: Not	2+	0.30	0.07	0.16	0.45	1.36
LA children's services Ofsted rating for Looked after Children ref: Requires improvement/inadequate	Not inspected yet	-0.03	0.30	-0.62	0.56	0.97
	Outstanding/Good	-0.12	0.21	-0.53	0.29	0.89
LAC turnover rate 2017 (number ceasing to be looked after/number entering care)		-0.11	0.08	-0.27	0.05	0.90
LAC rate (per number of children) 2017		0.20	0.13	-0.05	0.46	1.22
LA Income deprivation affecting children		-0.12	0.12	-0.35	0.12	0.89
2017 SW vacancy rate		0.31	0.08	0.17	0.46	1.37
2017 SW turnover rate		0.10	0.10	-0.10	0.29	1.10
Budget per LAC 2017		0.02	0.09	-0.16	0.21	1.02
UASC count 2017		0.05	0.10	-0.14	0.24	1.05
Age at earliest period of care 31 March 2017		0.07	0.02	0.03	0.11	1.07
Age at 31 March 2017 x Age at earliest care period		0.01	0.10	-0.19	0.21	1.01

Appendix C: Guidance sent to LAs for social worker data collection

Specification of data request

The sections below contain extracts from the social worker data request document that was sent to local authorities in December 2017.

Summary of this data request

- Children included
  - Children looked after on 31 March 2017 (as specified in SSDA903)
- Reporting period
  - 24-36 months up to 31 March 2017
- Dataset structure
  - One line per child per social worker episode (multiple lines per child)
- Data items (spreadsheet columns):
  - Child ID
  - Child UPN
  - Child gender
  - Child year of Birth
  - Start date of social worker episode
  - End date of social worker episode
  - Anonymous social worker code
  - Social worker team code

Key concepts and definitions for this data request

1. Children in scope

We require information in relation to each individual child that was looked after by your LA on 31/03/2017.

As outlined in the SSDA903 guidance, the following groups of children are in scope:

- Children who receive a pattern of short breaks or short term placements, under the terms of an agreement, but who otherwise live at home. These are sometimes called 'Family Link' or 'Shared Care' schemes

- Children who are placed for adoption by the local authority. This is a separate placement status and must be recorded as such. The child does not cease to be looked after until an adoption order has been made

- Children aged 16 or 17 who are in semi-independent accommodation or other transitional settings in preparation for leaving care.

- Unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) aged under 18 for whom the local authority concludes, as part of a formal decision-making process, that in order to safeguard

and promote the child's welfare they should be looked after. These children are regarded as being "accommodated" by voluntary agreement under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989; they are normally placed in foster or residential care

- Children in an emergency foster placement with a relative or friend under Regulation 11. This kind of placement can last a maximum of 42 days

- Children remanded to local authority accommodation as a result of an order imposed by the youth court in criminal proceedings. (This is not the same as a Children Act Supervision Order, which is not a looked after status)

- (Since 3 December 2012, when the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 (LASPOA) came into force) children similarly remanded to youth detention accommodation.

As outlined in the SSDA903 guidance, the following groups of children **are not** in scope:

- Children who are receiving a service, or some other means of support, from social services under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989, but are not being accommodated. A number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC), whose assistance from the local authority falls short of being looked after, will fall in this category;

- Young people who have left care and are receiving support under section 24 of the Children Act 1989;

- Children subject to Children Act 1989 Supervision Orders;

- Children subject to Children Act 1989 Residence Orders (used until 22 April 2015);

- Children subject to a child arrangements order;

- Children who have left care because of a special guardianship order;

- Children who have appeared in court and have been 'bailed to reside where the local authority directs', but who are not accommodated by the local authority itself;

- Children who are privately fostered who should instead be recorded on the PF1 return;

- Children who are not looked after by the local authority but who are to be adopted. These applications are usually from step-parents or relatives;

- Children in a long stay hospital if the local authority is not accommodating them, even if they were previously looked after. If they return to foster care/children's home on discharge they will resume being looked after. The following are also not looked after (and therefore do not appear on the SSDA903), except when subject to a concurrent care order.

- Children subject to a Detention and Training Orders, S 73 Crime and Disorder Act 1998;

- Children detained under Sections 90 to 92 of the Powers of the Criminal Courts Act 2000, even if they are placed in local authority accommodation.

2. Primary social worker

As before, we are mainly interested in changes of primary social worker. The box below defines what we mean by this.

Definition: Primary social worker

The 'primary social worker' is the primary member of local authority staff responsible for managing the child's case. This may be known across authorities as 'allocated case worker', 'key worker' or 'lead practitioner'.

Many local authorities allocate a team of social workers to each of their looked after children. In those instances, the primary social worker is the individual who has the key responsibility of the child's case.

3. Social worker episodes

In order to simplify the structure of this data and harmonise it with the structure of the SSDA903 collection, we would like you to provide episode-level information. This is different from last year's data collection, where we only requested the number of social worker changes.

This year, we require information on every social worker episode for the child. We define what this means in the box below.

Definition: Social worker episode

For the purposes of this exercise, a 'social worker episode' is the period of time during which the same primary social worker is allocated to a child. The episode ends when that social worker is no longer allocated to the child. A new episode begins when another social worker is allocated as the primary social worker for that child.

If the primary social worker is temporarily absent (e.g. sick leave, annual leave, etc.), this should not be recorded as the end of that social worker episode unless a new primary social worker has been assigned to the child.

If there is any period of time where no primary social worker is assigned to the child, that would count as a gap between episodes. In situations where a team leader is temporarily holding a child's case between different primary social workers, that should be counted as an episode itself.

4. Reporting period

Last year's data request only asked for information over a 12-month period (from 01/04/2015 to 31/03/2016). This year we would like to produce longer-term measures of social worker stability, so we are requesting data over a longer reporting period.

Ideally we would like you to provide all known social worker episodes that took place during a **36-month period (01/04/2014 to 31/03/2017).**

We recognise that some areas may be unable to provide this information for the full 36 months due to technical issues such as changes to IT or case management systems. If so, please provide data over the longest period that is feasible (ending on 31/03/2017).

The minimum reporting period is 24 months (01/04/2015 to 31/03/2017). Please ensure that the data you provide covers at least this period.

As part of the data submission process, you will be asked to specify the start date of the reporting period that your data covers.

5. Social worker changes that are in scope

For last year's data collection exercise, we only requested information on social worker changes that occurred while the child was in an episode of care. However, changes in social worker which occur at other times – such as on entry to care, on exit from care, or while not in care – may also represent significant changes and transition points for a child. We believe these changes should be measured as well. As a result, we are now requesting information on all changes in primary social worker that occur during the reporting period.

For every child in your LA's data return, please provide every social worker episode that occurred within the reporting period – regardless of whether the child was looked after during that episode.

The next section provides additional detail on the specific pieces of information that we are requesting for each child and each social worker episode.

Data items requested

For each child and social worker episode, we are requesting the following data items. These should be the columns in the spreadsheet that you provide:

1. Child ID
2. Child UPN
3. Child gender
4. Child year of birth
5. Start date of social worker episode
6. End date of social worker episode
7. Anonymous social worker code
8. Social worker team name/code

Data items 1-4 (in black) are the same as in last year's data request. Data items 5-8 (in red) are new items that we have added for this year.

1. **Child ID**

This is the unique ID for each child that your local authority uses for the SSDA903 return, and should not include any leading zeros. We require this ID in order to link the data you provide to other information in DfE's Children Looked After dataset.

As stated in the SSDA903 guidance, "This must be a unique ID for each child (no longer than 10 characters) and should be retained from year to year. It can include alphabetic and numeric characters. Do not use non-numeric or non-alphabetic characters."

2. **Child UPN**

We would like the child's current Unique Pupil Number (UPN). This is to link children with the DfE's School Census database so that we can identify school moves.

As stated in the SSDA903 guidance, "The UPN must be 13 characters long. The first character is a letter (but cannot be I, O or S). The remaining characters are numeric. For example, H801200001001.

The codeset to be used for unknown UPNs are listed below, as outlined in the SSDA903 guidance.

Codeset for unknown UPN	
UN1	Child looked after is not of school age and has not yet been assigned a UPN.
UN2	Child looked after has never attended a maintained school in England (eg some UASC).
UN3	Child looked after is educated outside England.
UN4	UN4 Child is newly looked after (from one week before end of collection period) and the UPN is not yet known.
UN5	Sources collating UPNs reflect discrepancy (ies) for the child's name and/or surname and/or date of birth therefore preventing reliable matching (eg dedicated UPN).

We do not expect the UPN to have changed between the 31st March 2017 and the date this request was issued, apart from for children who were originally allocated a code for an unknown UPN. For example, we do not expect any children in this return to be allocated a UN4 code due to the deadline

of this return being well after the original SSDA903 collection period.

3. Child gender

For each child we would like information on the gender. We will use this information to verify the matching between the data you provide, the School Census and Children Looked After dataset.

Please use the same coding on the SSDA903 return. This is shown below.

Codeset for gender	
1	Male
2	Female

4. Child year of birth

For each child, we would like information on their year of birth. This should be reported in "YYYY" format (e.g. 2008). We will use this information to verify the matching between the data you provide, the School Census and Children Looked After dataset.

5. Start date of social worker episode

This item records the date on which each new social worker episode began, reported in "**DD/MM/YYYY**" format. Please use "X" if the date is not known.

6. End date of social worker episode

This item records the date on which each social worker episode ended, reported in "**DD/MM/YYYY**" format. Please use "X" if the date is not known. Leave this date blank if the episode in question was still ongoing at the end of the reporting period (31/03/2017).

7. Anonymous social worker code

We would also like you to provide an anonymous code that identifies the same social worker and can be used to link social workers across episodes**.** This code will allow us to distinguish between:

- episodes where the same primary social worker is repeatedly assigned to a child;
- episodes where many different primary social workers are assigned to a child.

There is no specific format that you should use for this ID code. It can use letters or numbers, and can be simple or complex. The only requirements are that the code is:

- Anonymous – it does not identify staff
- Consistent – the same code is used for the same social worker in your LA

You may find it easier to generate the anonymous social worker code from another piece of information such as a staff number or staff username.

8. Social worker team code

For each episode, if the assigned primary social worker is part of a team then we would also like information on the team in which the primary social worker is based. This will enable us to distinguish between:

- social worker episodes that change because a child's case progresses to another team;
- social worker episodes that change for other reasons (e.g. because the primary social worker is no longer available).

We therefore request that you provide a code that refers to the team in which the primary social worker is based. As above, there is no specific format that you should use for this code. It can use letters or numbers, and can be simple or complex. You can use the team name or an abbreviation of it. The only requirement is the same code is used consistently for each team in your LA.

Completing the data collection

Please return your data as a spreadsheet, using the following column headings:

- CHILDID (Child ID)
- UPN (Child UPN)
- GENDER (Child gender)
- YOB (Child year of birth)
- SWSTARTDATE (Start date of social worker episode)
- SWENDDATE (End date of social worker episode)
- SWCODE (Anonymous social worker code)
- TEAM (Social worker team code)

Please note that each social worker episode should be listed on a separate row, not in separate column. The image below provides an example, using hypothetical data, of the format that your data return should follow.

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