

National Indicator for Local Authorities and Local Authority Partnerships

Title:

NI 62 Stability of placements of looked after children: number of placements

Existing Indicator:

Yes

Sourced from LA/Partner:

Yes

Rationale:

This indicator is an important measure of the stability of care that a child has experienced. On the whole stability is associated with better outcomes - placement instability was highlighted by the Social Exclusion Unit as a key barrier to improving educational outcomes. Proper assessment of a child's needs and an adequate choice of placements to meet the varied needs of different children are essential if appropriate stable placements are to be made. Inappropriate placements often break down and lead to frequent moves. The circumstances of some individual children will require 3 or more separate placements during a year if they and others are to be kept safe, but the variation between local authorities' performance in this area suggests that more can be done in many areas to reduce the number of moves.

Definition:

The percentage of children looked after at 31 March with three or more placements during the year.

Looked after children are defined in the [Children Act 1989 \(external link\)](#) (S22 1a).

All placements of 24 hours or more are counted, regardless of duration. Any placements that were already open on 1 April at the beginning of the year, and any which were open on 31 March at the end of the year are included.

All placements regarded as temporary are included, the only exceptions being the following special cases:

- temporary periods on holiday or in hospital;
- where a foster carer goes on holiday for 21 days or less and the child temporarily stays with another carer during this time (only two such breaks allowed in any one year);
- other temporary absences of seven consecutive days or less, where the child then returned as planned to the previous placement.

These exceptional categories of placement are likely to be infrequent; they are not automatically recorded on the SSDA 903, and for consistency, are not included in this count of looked after children. Where a child had placements during the year separated by periods of not being looked after, each placement is counted, even if they were with the same carer. Any placements that formed part of an agreed series of short term placements (under the provisions of Reg 13 of the [Arrangement for Placement of Children \(General\) Regulations \(external link\)](#), 1991) are not counted.

This indicator replaces PAF CF/A1, JAR/APA 2043SC, as was collected for 2007/08.

Formula:

$(X/Y) * 100$ where:

X = Of the children looked after in the denominator, the number who had three or more separate placements during the year.

Y = The total number of children who were looked after at 31 March, excluding any children who were looked after on that date under an agreed series of short term-placements (under the provisions of Reg. 13 of the Arrangement for Placement of Children (General) Regulations, 1991).

A child being placed for adoption with their existing foster carers is not included as a change of placement for the purposes of this indicator.

Appendix 2

Worked Example:

If 450 children are looked after at 31 March, 31 of whom have experienced 3 or more placements during the year, then the percentage is

$$(31/450) * 100 = 6.9\%$$

Good Performance:

Good performance is typified by a lower percentage.

However, Bandings for 2006-07 described performance as:

- 0 < 16.01 - Very Good
- 16.01 < 20 - Ask questions about performance
- 20 <= 100 - Investigate urgently

As a key threshold indicator, performance of > 20% has also limited overall performance judgements.

Collection interval:

Annually

Collection interval notes:

Collected on a financial year basis.

Data Source:

Statutory SSDA903 data collection from local authorities to DCSF

Return Format:

Percentage

Reporting Organisation:

Department for Children, Schools and Families based on data reported by local authorities.

Decimal Places:

One

Spatial Level:

Single tier and county council

Spatial level exception:

-

Further Guidance:

[Department for Children, Schools and Families: SSDA903 guidance \(external link\)](#)

AC FAQs:

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Clarifications and corrections:

-

Record of changes:

-

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