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THE CHARITY FOR CHILDREN IN CARE AND YOUNG CARE LEAVERS

# *Stability and consistency: getting it right for children in & leaving care*

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# Become: our approach

- National charity for care-experienced children & young people
- Supported 800 young people last year
- Training & consultancy for professionals
- Use learning to address systemic issues
- Consultation and co-production with young people

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# Why stability matters

- Parenting: routine, consistency > relationship with child.
- Identity & belonging, security, certainty
- Children who have had unstable lives > begin to heal from trauma
- Stability about more than where you live
- Care system provides stability for some. But not for many.
- Children Commissioner annual stability index:
  - 7 in 10 faced one significant change last year (45000)
  - 1 in 10 moved home 2 or more times
- Frequent moves, unplanned endings and emergency moves
  - 6000 foster home unplanned endings. Many moved in 24 hrs

# Consequences of instability

- Impacts all areas of life.
  - reinforces & replicates instability before care
  - impacts relationships siblings and family, friends and carers
  - leaves children isolated & vulnerable. Worst case at risk of exploitation. Lack of trusted adults to turn to
  - ultimately hampers children's chances in lives > education and well being

- What we hear from young people
  - don't talk about the physical spaces they are leaving but about relationships
  - talk about trust: building trust with new people when have been through trauma and when adults have let you down
  - having to build new relationships, to trust new people is exhausting

# What's driving instability?

- Profile of who comes into care
  - Rise overall. Growing number of teenagers. More complex needs
  - System hasn't adapted: rise unregulated placements, out-of-area placements.
  - Teenagers face higher levels of instability

- Not every decision taken in child's best interest
  - Decisions made on costs or availability not always focus long-term stability.
  - YP tell us: don't have voice in decisions, overwhelmed by systems and processes, too little effort put into matching, getting it right first time.

- Wider & long standing systemic issues including
  - Emphasise adoption as route to permanence at expense of others.
  - Children still face cliff edge in support when leave care: at 18 or 21
  - YP tell us: they don't leave care – care leaves them

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# The ‘lucky ones’: what needs to change

- Changes in practice: variation across country shows practice matters
  - Children meaningfully involved: IROs have role to ensure child’s voice is included but structures often fail to deliver this.
  - More work ‘up front’: creativity & investment in right match; planning for moves & information in advance
  - Relationships priority in all decisions: family, siblings & previous carers where possible
- Wider systemic changes: long-term stability goal for every child in care
  - increased capacity across care system
  - better support for kinship carers and birth families.
  - Improved support for those leaving care
- Relationships = Golden thread. Have to be at heart of how we design & deliver care.
  - Comprehensive, independent review listens to care experienced people
  - Lessons from Scotland, manifestos

- What would we want for our own children? Supportive, loving, stable relationships which form a solid platform on which to build their futures

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# Thank you

**https://becomecharity.org.uk/**

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