

18th November 2019

Agenda Item: 6

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR, CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

STABILITY INDEX 2019

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with a summary of the Stability Index 2019 recently released by the Children's Commissioner's Office and asks the Committee to consider whether there are any further actions it requires in relation to the performance information on the stability of the Council's services for looked after children contained in the report.

Information

2. The Children's Commissioner regularly hears from looked after children who have experienced instability in the place they live, their school or social workers – often against their wishes. To shed more light on this issue they have developed the Stability Index, an annual measure of the stability that looked after children experience. The 2018 data summarised in this report is the second year the Stability Index has been published.
3. All local authorities were invited to take part in this study and data on placement and social worker stability was requested. They have combined this with data the Department for Education (DfE) holds on educational stability to produce the Stability Index 2019.
4. In total 140 local authorities took part in the study (a significant improvement on the 78 who took part in 2018), so comparisons are based on this cohort, although some extrapolation has been undertaken to produce national comparator values.

Key National Findings

5. The national findings that Anne Longfield, the Children's Commissioner for England, has chosen to highlight are as follows:

'This year's findings repeat much of what we saw in 2018: around one in ten children are still 'pin-balling' around the care system. Despite important positive measures like the Department for Education's National Stability Forum and improvements by some councils,

there seems to be a persistent problem affecting the stability of around ten per cent of the kids in care.

We know too that they are more likely to be older children. Over the last five years, the overall profile of children in care has changed dramatically, driven by a growing share of older children and teenage care entrants, who have more complex needs. The number of teenagers aged 13 or over growing up in care rose by 21% between 2012/13 and 2017/18, while the number of 0-5 year olds fell by 15%. As a result, nearly 1 in 4 children in care – 23% – are aged 16 or over, while a further 2 in 5 are aged 10-15.

Compared to younger children, teenagers in care are significantly more likely to have:

- *experienced child sexual exploitation (6 times more likely)*
- *gone missing from home (7 times more likely)*
- *be involved in gangs (5 times more likely)*
- *be involved in trafficking (12 times more likely)*
- *be misusing drugs (4 times more likely).*

They are also around 80% more likely (compared to the national average) to have two or more changes of home within a year.

We should be alarmed that just over half of children in care moved home at least once in three years, while one in ten did so four or more times.'

Findings for Nottinghamshire

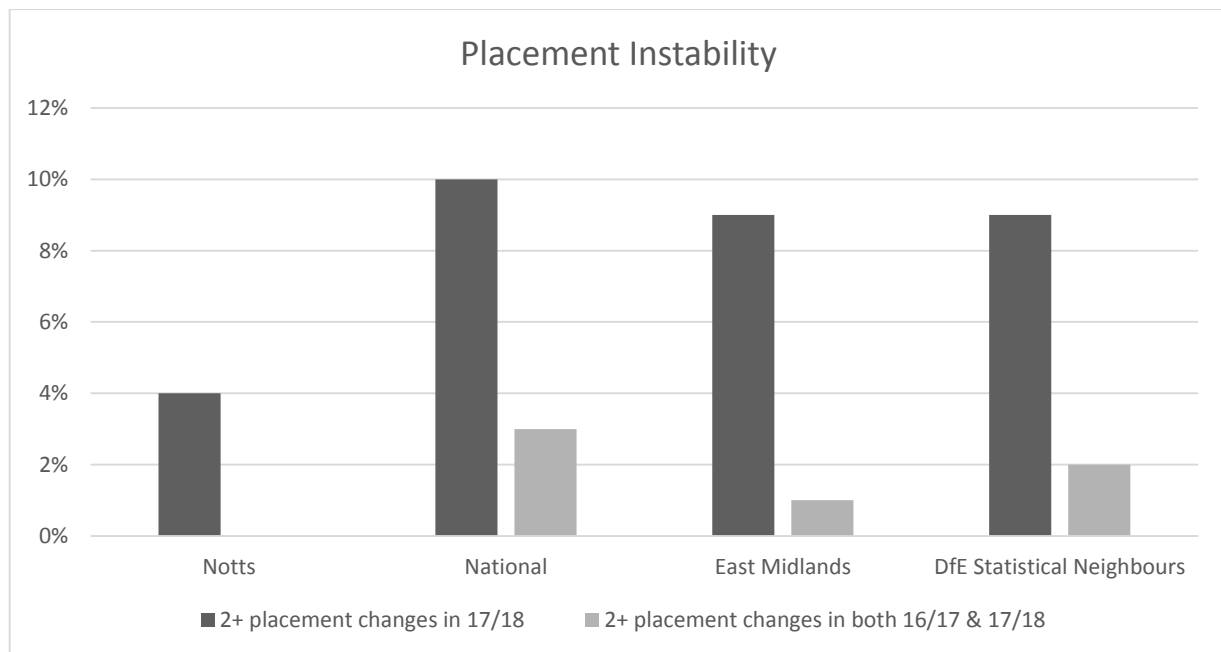
6. There were no detailed individual local authority reports provided this year but the underlying data was made available for a number of performance measures covering placement, school and social worker instability. This data enabled the Council to produce analysis comparing Nottinghamshire to national results. The format of the data provided this year has allowed for the calculation of some figures for East Midlands neighbours and DfE statistical neighbours but in some cases these are indicative only (marked with an * in the tables) so these comparisons need to be made with caution.
7. Charts show the latest performance against the comparator groups while the tables also include data for 2016/17.
8. The key findings from analysis of the underlying data are as follows:

Placement Instability

9. It should be noted that this data is based on a different definition of placement stability to our locally reported data. Locally a placement move is classed as any move regardless of placement provider. However, the DfE definition (as used in this data) only counts a move when it involves a change of placement provider.
10. The data in this report, based on the DfE definition, shows that Nottinghamshire continues to perform very well when it comes to stability of looked after children's (LAC) placements. Only 4% of LAC experienced 2 or more placement changes in 2017/18 (the same

proportion as 2016/17) which is less than half the level of all the comparative groups (statistical neighbours, East Midlands and national average).

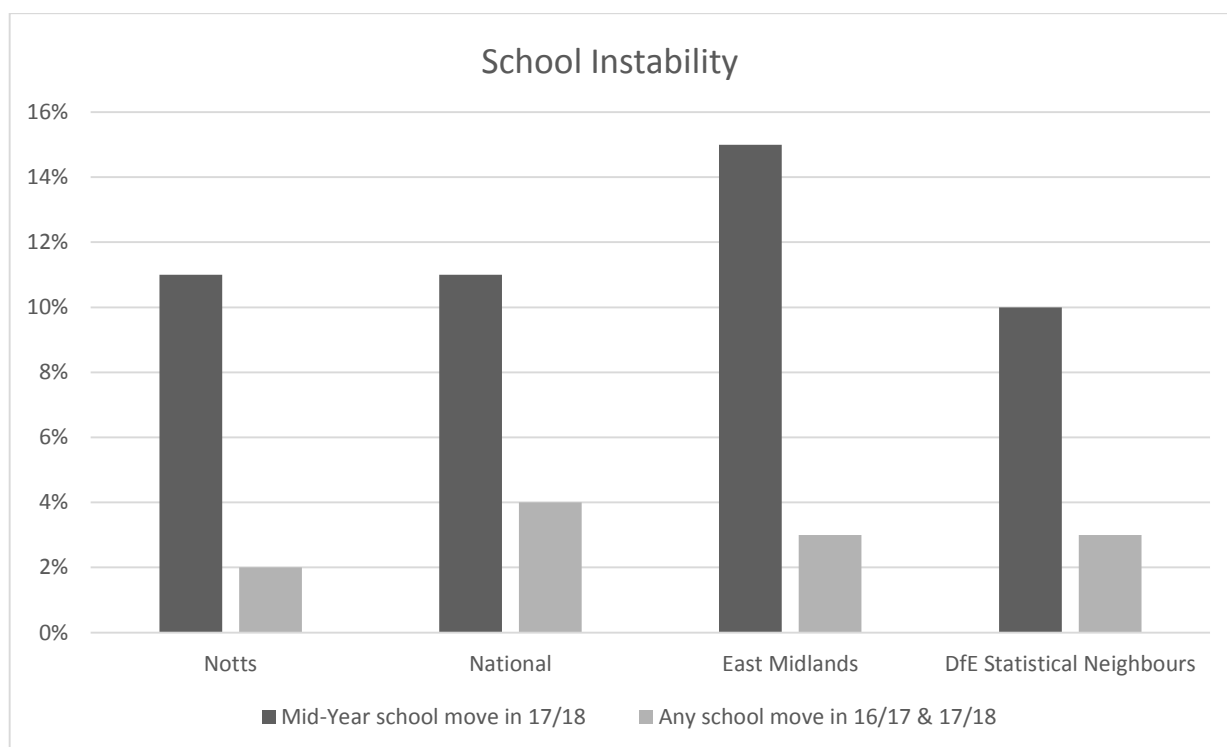
11. When considering repeated instability, the same excellent performance remains, with none of Nottinghamshire’s LAC population experiencing 2 or more placement changes in both 2016/17 and 2017/18. (There were 6 children in 2016/17 who had experienced 2 or more placement changes in both 2015/16 and 2016/17.) The figures for the comparative groups range between 1% and 3%.
12. Although the general rule of fewer placement moves leading to better outcomes for the child or young person prevails for the majority of cases, the computation of this measure does not take into account the otherwise very positive process of stepping down of 16/17 year old LAC into a number of discrete supported placements that provide this group of elder young people with the necessary life skills to equip them for independence into adulthood.



Placement Instability	Notts	National	East Midlands	DfE Statistical Neighbours
2+ placement changes in 2016/17	4%	11%	8%	9%
2+ placement changes in both 2015/16 & 2016/17	1%	3%	2%	2%
2+ placement changes in 2017/18	4%	10%	9%	9%
2+ placement changes in both 2016/17 & 2017/18	0%	3%	1%*	2%*

School Instability

13. Nottinghamshire's performance in this measure has fallen slightly since 2016/17, with the proportion of LAC experiencing mid-year school moves in 2017/18 at 11% (up from 9%). This is equal to the national average.
14. The repeated instability measure, which looks at school moves for the same looked after child in both 2016/17 and 2017/18 shows good performance, with Nottinghamshire at 2%, down from 3% last year. This is half the national average figure of 4%.

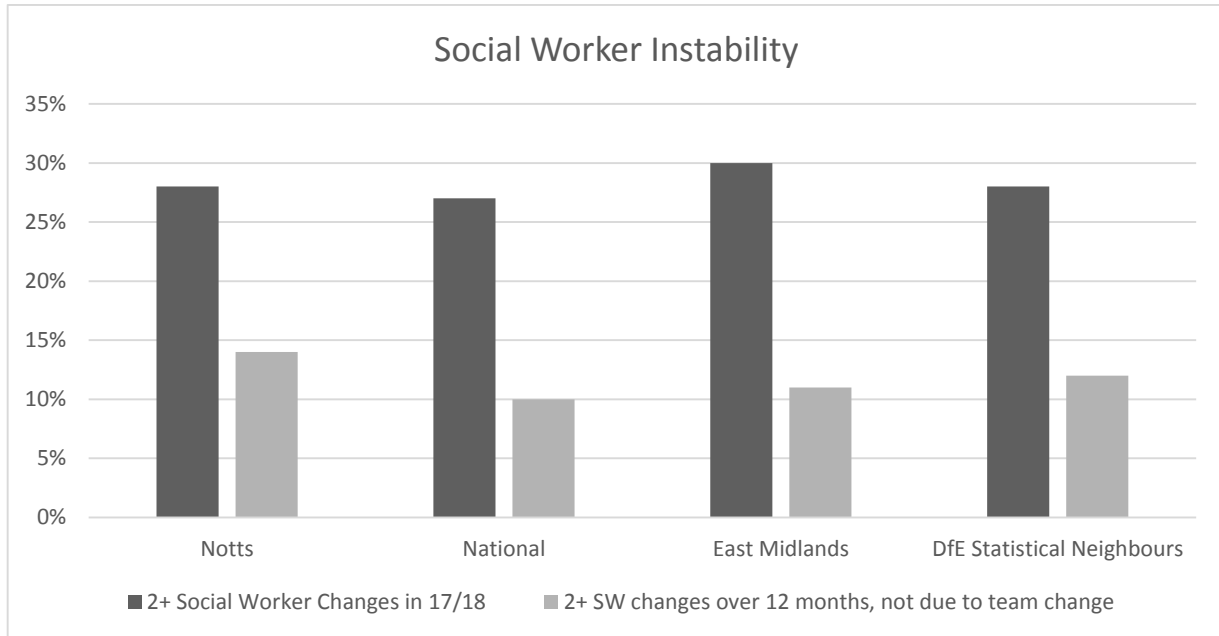


School Instability	Notts	National	East Midlands	DfE Statistical Neighbours
Mid-Year school move in 2016/17	9%	13%	11%	11%
Any school move in 2015/16 & 2016/17	3%	3%	5%	5%
Mid-Year school move in 2017/18	11%	11%	15%*	10%*
Any school move in 2016/17 & 2017/18	2%	4%	3%*	3%*

Social Worker Instability

15. The percentage of LAC experiencing 2 or more social worker changes has increased marginally from 27% in 2016/17 to 28% in 2017/18. This is in line with our statistical neighbour average (28%) and the national average (27%) but slightly better than the East Midlands average of 30%.

16. When changes in social worker due to a team change are removed from the calculation, Nottinghamshire appears to perform slightly worse than its comparators with 14% of LAC experiencing 2 or more social worker changes compared with 10% nationally, 11% across the East Midlands and 12% for statistical neighbours.

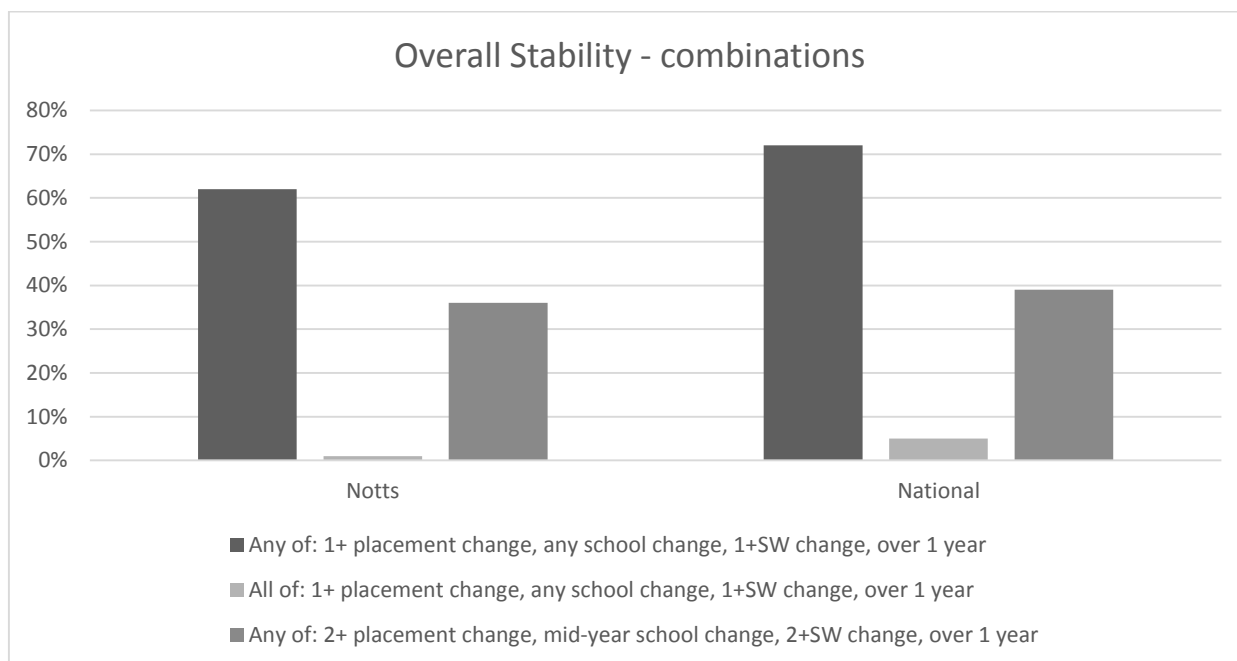


Social Worker Instability	Notts	National	East Midlands	DfE Statistical Neighbours
2+ Social Worker Changes in 2016/17	27%	26%	30%	NA
2+ Social Worker Changes in 2017/18	28%	27%	30%	28%
2+ SW changes over 12 months, not due to team change	14%	10%	11%	12%

Combination of Instability

17. This year's report provides data for combinations of stability measures. This shows Nottinghamshire performs better than the national average. No regional or statistical neighbour figures could be accurately calculated.
18. In Nottinghamshire, nearly 3 in 10 (28%) of LAC did not have any of: 1+ placement change, any school change, 1+ SW change in 2017/18. This means just over 6 out of every 10 LAC (62%) had **any one** of these three measures of instability. The national average was even higher at over 7 in 10 LAC (72%). Only 1% of LAC in Nottinghamshire experienced **all** of these three measures of instability, compared with 5% nationally.
19. A higher level of instability (any of: 2+ placement change, mid-year school change, 2+ SW change, in 2017/18) was experienced by over a third of Nottinghamshire LAC (36%), just

lower than the national average of 39%. Less than 5 Nottinghamshire LAC experienced **all** of these measures in 2017/18. This is lower than the national average of 1% of LAC.



Combinations	Notts	National
Any of: 1+ placement change, any school change, 1+SW change, over 1 year	62%	72%
All of: 1+ placement change, any school change, 1+SW change, over 1 year	1%	5%
Any of: 2+ placement change, mid-year school change, 2+SW change, over 1 year	36%	39%
All of: 2+ placement change, mid-year school change, 2+SW change, over 1 year	< 5 children	1%

Future Developments

20. Within Nottinghamshire the issue of stability for looked after children is taken extremely seriously. There are currently a range of improvement initiatives underway or planned to further strengthen performance in this area. These include:

- a drive to increase Nottinghamshire’s pool of in-house foster carers by a range of measures including creating a dedicated Fostering Recruitment and Assessment team, increased marketing and holding a fostering conference
- improving workforce stability through reducing caseloads and improving the emotional health of the workforce. This includes the development of a strengths-based practice model, improving the skill mix within teams and support mechanisms such as group reflective supervision and Schwartz Rounds.

- minimising school moves by ensuring that applications to a good or better school are recommended if a school move is required and continuing to work closely across teams to minimise unnecessary or inappropriate school moves.

Other Options Considered

21. No other options have been considered.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

22. The report provides an opportunity for the Committee to consider any further actions arising from the information contained within the report.

Statutory and Policy Implications

23. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Financial Implications

24. There are no financial implications arising from the report.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) That Committee considers whether there are any actions it requires in relation to the performance information on the stability of the Council's services for looked after children contained in the report.

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Constitutional Comments (EP 17/10/19)

25. The Children and Young People's Committee is the appropriate body to consider the content of the report. If Committee resolves that any actions are required, it must be satisfied that such actions are within the Committee's terms of reference.

Financial Comments (SAS 21/10/19)

26. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

[Stability Index 2019](#)

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

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