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THE CENTRE FOR
SOCIAL
JUSTICE

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PRESS RELEASE FROM THE CENTRE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

One thousand children in care repeatedly forced to move school

One thousand children in care have attended three or more schools within a single academic year, according to new figures obtained by the Centre for Social Justice.

The data, taken from the academic year 2013/14, shows shocking instability for hundreds of vulnerable young people across England. In some local authorities, nearly one in ten children in care moved schools on average once a term or more, with some students attending five schools or more in one academic year.

Among students in their critical GCSE year, more than 10 per cent of students in the worst five local authority areas moved schools on average once a term or more.

Alex Burghart, Policy Director of the CSJ, commented: “These figures are truly shocking and reveal an unacceptable level of disruption to the lives of vulnerable children in care.

“Children are taken into care in order to give them a second chance. Too often they have had a dysfunctional family life and so the care they receive should be the absolute best possible.

“Care leaders should want the same outcomes for children in care as they would want for their own children. No parent would like to see their children moving schools three or four times in a year. This will inevitably have a terrible impact on their education and their chances of finding work when they leave.”

As laid out in its January report, *Finding Their Feet*, the CSJ recommends the wider adoption of ‘scorecards’ to clearly set out outcomes for children in care in each local authority.

The indicators laid out in the report include prevalence of early and repeat parenthood; the number able to ‘stay put’ with foster carers after their 18th birthdays, the number going on to apprenticeships and higher education, the number

of schools children have been to (particularly in crucial exam years), the number of foster carers they have had, and the number of social workers.

By reporting outcomes in a clear, transparent way, the CSJ argues that councillors in these local authorities can build up an accurate picture about whether care leaders are meeting the needs of these vulnerable, young people.

A disrupted education adds to the series of challenges faced by children in care. Despite representing less than one per cent of young people, care leavers make up one quarter (24 per cent) of the adult prison population, 11 per cent of young homeless people and 70 per cent of sex workers.

Those leaving the care system are now twice as likely not to be in education, employment or training (NEET) at the age of 19 than the rest of the population, while more than half of care leavers struggle to secure somewhere safe to live when they leave care.

Care teams in some authorities are often too overstretched to build relationships - the average caseload of a personal adviser for care leavers in some areas is 49 young people.

Data from Freedom of Information Requests

The CSJ surveyed 152 local authorities to collect the data. Eighteen local authorities did not produce usable data, while 13 did not reply at all, giving a large sample size of 124 local authorities.

Table 1:

List of ten local authorities where the percentage of children in care attending three or more schools in an academic year is highest:

<i>Local Authority</i>	<i>Number of Students</i>	<i>Proportion of Students</i>
East Riding	33	13.1%
Milton Keynes	27	10.8%
Waltham Forest	13	8.6%
Lewisham	35	8.6%
Tower Hamlets	15	7.9%
North East Lincolnshire	19	7.5%
Islington	12	6.3%
Reading	15	6.0%
Cornwall	18	6.0%
Devon	36	5.7%
National Average		2.3%

Table 2:

List of five local authorities where the percentage of children in care attending five or more schools in an academic year is highest:

<i>Local Authority</i>	<i>Number of Students</i>	<i>Proportion of Students</i>
East Riding	12	4.78%
West Berkshire	4	2.82%
Cheshire East	3	1.01%
Barnet	2	0.98%
Newham	2	0.87%
National Average		0.14%

Table 3:

List of five local authorities where the percentage of children in care in Year 11 attending three or more schools in an academic year is highest:

<i>Local Authority</i>	<i>Number of Students</i>	<i>Proportion of Students</i>
East Riding	11	31.43%
Wandsworth	4	18.18%
Tower Hamlets	6	15.79%
Kirklees	4	12.50%
Lewisham	8	11.27%
National Average		2.2%

Table 4:

List of five local authorities where the percentage of children in care in year 11 attending 2 or more schools in an academic year is highest:

<i>Local Authority</i>	<i>Number of Students</i>	<i>Proportion of Students</i>
Darlington	10	55.56%
Tower Hamlets	16	42.11%
West Berkshire	9	40.91%
Stoke	21	37.5%
Telford and Wrekin	13	34.21%
National Average		13.91%

Table 5:

List of ten local authorities where the percentage of children in care attending 2 or more schools in an academic year is highest:

<i>Local Authority</i>	<i>Number of Students</i>	<i>Proportion of Students</i>
Milton Keynes	111	44.40%
Herefordshire	51	39.23%
Tower Hamlets	74	39.15%
Reading	95	38.31%
West Berkshire	53	37.32%
Isle of Wight	40	35.09%
Waltham Forest	52	34.44%
Bedford	61	33.89%
Lincolnshire	156	32.23%
North East Lincolnshire	74	29.37%
National Average		18.38%

Table 6:

Total number and proportion of children in care by the number of schools they attended in one academic year:

Ends

For media inquiries, please contact:

	<i>1 School</i>	<i>2 Schools</i>	<i>3 Schools</i>	<i>4 Schools</i>	<i>5 or more Schools</i>	<i>Total</i>
Total Number of children	31482	6086	827	125	53	38573
Proportion of children	81.6%	15.8%	2.1%	.32%	.14%	

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NOTES TO EDITORS

The Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) is an independent think tank established in 2004 to put social justice at the heart of British politics. In June, the CSJ was awarded UK Social Policy Think Tank of the Year 2013 at Prospect magazine's Think Tank Awards.

In 2007 the CSJ published its landmark report, Breakthrough Britain. This publication, which set out 190 evidence-based policy recommendations to tackle poverty in Britain, transformed the social policy and political landscape and was awarded Publication of the Year by Prospect Magazine in 2008.

Since Breakthrough Britain the CSJ has published over 40 reports which have shaped government policy and influenced opposition parties. These have included the seminal papers Dying to Belong and Dynamic Benefits, which has led the Coalition Government's welfare reforms.

Further to this, the CSJ manages an Alliance of over 300 of the most effective grass roots, poverty-fighting organisations. The CSJ is able to draw upon the expertise and experience of Alliance charities for research work and media inquiries. Journalists wishing to conduct grass-roots research into social problems can be put in touch with front-line charity directors and staff.