



## Former Care Leavers in Northern Ireland (2008/09) Statistical Bulletin

This statistical bulletin presents information on former care leavers who had been in the care of Northern Ireland Health and Social Care Trusts at 1st April 2006 and who reached their 19th birthday during the year ending 31st March 2009.

### Summary

- 201 former care leavers who had been looked after on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2006 had reached their 19<sup>th</sup> birthday during 2008/09; of these, 107 (53%) were boys and 94 (47%) were girls.
- Just over one in seven (15%) of these former care leavers were coping with disability; of whom just under two thirds (63%) had a learning disability.
- Just over a quarter (26%) of female former care leavers had become mothers on or before their 19th birthday, 13 percentage points less than the proportion in 2007/08.
- In 2008/09, the average length of time spent in the latest period of care was slightly longer (7 years 4 months) than in 2007/08 (6 years 10 months).
- Trusts were in contact with 195 (97%) of the 201 former care leavers in Northern Ireland, 8 percentage points higher than in 2005/06 (89%).
- Between 2007/08 and 2008/09, the proportion of all former care leavers in education, training or employment increased by 9 percentage points, from 43% in 2007/08 to 52% in 2008/09. However, this is similar to the proportion in 2005/06 (53%).
- Of those with whom Trusts had contact and for whom economic activity was known, 56% were in education, training or employment, 9 percentage points more than 2007/08 (47%), but 5 percentage points less than in 2005/06 (61%).
- Young men and young women differed in the types of accommodation in which they were most likely to be living; with a higher proportion (35%) of young women than young men (25%) living in independent accommodation. In contrast, 35% of young men were living with parents, relatives or friends, compared with 23% of young women.

**Theme:** Former Care Leavers in Northern Ireland

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## Reader Information

Document Purpose	For information
Authors	Nicola Fisher, Kieran Taggart
Publication Date	4 <sup>th</sup> December 2009
Target Audience	Social Services Directors, Directors of Children's services, Chief Executives of HSC Boards and Trusts in Northern Ireland, health care professionals, academics and social care stakeholders.
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Internet address	<a href="http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/stats_research/stats-cib/stats-cib_pubs.htm">http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/stats_research/stats-cib/stats-cib_pubs.htm</a>
Price	FREE

## About CIB

The purpose of Community Information Branch is to promote effective decision making in children and adult social services by providing quality information and analysis. We collect, analyse and disseminate a wide range of community information that is used to help monitor the delivery of personal social services policy. Information collected by CIB is used to assess Trust performance, for corporate monitoring, policy evaluation, and to respond to parliamentary / assembly questions. Information is widely disseminated through a number of regular key statistical publications and ad hoc reports, details of which are available by clicking on the link below.

[http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/stats\\_research/stats-cib/stats-cib\\_pubs.htm](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/stats_research/stats-cib/stats-cib_pubs.htm)

### Our Vision and Values

Community Information Branch aims to:

- provide up-to-date, quality information on children and adult social services and community health;
- disseminate findings widely with a view to stimulating debate, promoting effective decision-making and improvement in service provision; and
- be an expert voice on social care information.

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## Technical Notes

### Data Collection

1. The 2008/09 figures for former care leavers who had reached their 19<sup>th</sup> birthday are the latest in a regular series. This information is collected using the OC3 survey, which provides the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) with data on all former care leavers at their 19<sup>th</sup> birthday, who had been looked after on 1<sup>st</sup> April, 3 years previously.
2. All references made to 'Year' refer to the financial year, 1<sup>st</sup> April to 31 March, i.e. for the 2009 the reference period was 1<sup>st</sup> April 2008 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2009.
3. The figures presented for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2009 are based on information submitted by the 5 Health & Social Care (HSC) Trusts in Northern Ireland.
4. The survey used to collect this information is longitudinal with one record for each young person fitting the parameters of the collection. The survey is completed online by nominated HSC Trust staff using a secure web-based survey returns application. All records are anonymised to protect the confidentiality of these young people.
5. Guidance notes and other documents associated with the completion of the OC3 survey are available to view or download from the website below:

[http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/stats\\_research/stats-cib/statistics\\_and\\_research-cib-work\\_areas/statistics\\_and\\_research-cib-childsurveys.htm](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/stats_research/stats-cib/statistics_and_research-cib-work_areas/statistics_and_research-cib-childsurveys.htm)

### Rounding Conventions

6. Percentages have been rounded to whole numbers and as a consequence some percentages may not sum to 100.
7. It has been necessary to suppress other figures whenever it would be possible to calculate the value of a suppressed number by means of simple arithmetic. The rule applied in these circumstances has been to suppress the next smallest data item.

## Data Changes

8. In 2005/06, additional placement codes were included in the OC3 survey, i.e. secure accommodation, kinship and non-kinship foster care etc. Following validation over the last number of years, they have now been included in the report and will replace the historical list of placement codes used.

## Data Quality

9. All information submitted by HSC Trusts is validated at the point of entry, where Trust staff are required to correct or amend incorrect data, and provide appropriate explanations if the information is missing.

## A National Statistics Publication

10. National Statistics are produced to a high professional standard set out in the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs. They are produced free from any political interference. We want to engage with users of our statistics and we invite you to send your comments on the publication to:

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# Background

## The Survey

The OC3 survey of former care leavers in Northern Ireland is the third of three statistical collections designed to monitor and assess outcomes for looked after children. The other two statistical collections are: OC1 which collects information on the educational qualifications of care leavers aged 16 & over, and OC2 which collects information on the educational history, qualifications, and health of all children looked after continuously for 12 months or more at 30 September.

The OC3 survey was introduced in 2004, and this bulletin presents a summary of the results of the fourth collection for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2009. It collects data on the circumstances of former care leavers at the time of their 19th birthday.

The OC3 survey covers a range of information including contact with social services, economic activity and accommodation, as well as age, religion, ethnic group, disability, dependants, length of time in care, latest placement type and legal status.

This statistical bulletin also includes comparative information between looked after school children and the general school population where possible; although, these should be treated with caution, as they refer to two very different cohorts of children.

The results from the latest OC3 survey indicate that over the last number of years increased proportions of former care leavers remained 'In contact' with social services (97% in 2008/09). In terms of their economic activity, 10 percent more care leavers were known to be in education, training or employment in 2008/09 (56%) than in 2007/08 (47%).

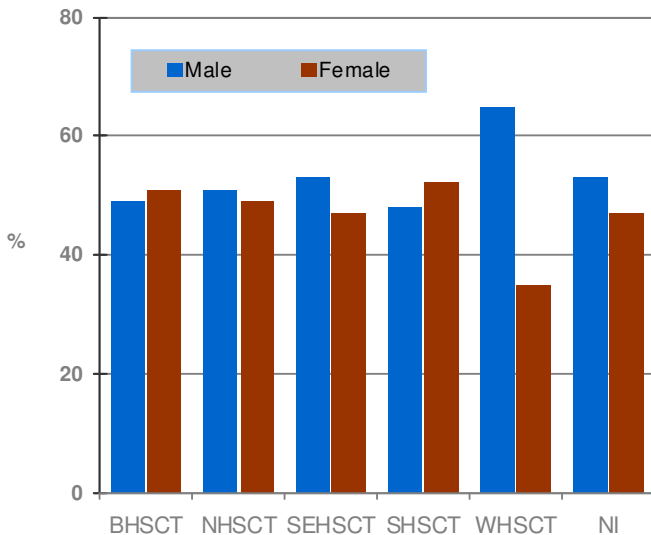
## Survey Findings

Information was provided by the 5 Health and Social Care Trusts on 201 young people who had been in their care at 1<sup>st</sup> April 2006, and who had reached their 19th birthday during the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2009.

### Gender

Of the 201 former care leavers, 107 (53%) were male and 94 (47%) were female. Across HSC Trusts, there were similar proportions of males and females, with the exception of the Western HSC Trust, where almost two thirds (65%) of former care leavers were males (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Gender Profile by HSC Trust



### Religion and Ethnicity

In terms of religion, the highest proportion of former care leavers were from a Catholic (56%) background, 41% from a Protestant background, and 3% were of 'Other' or 'Unknown' religion. All of these young people's ethnicity was white (100%).

### Disability

Just over one in seven (15%) of these young people were coping with a disability, slightly lower than the proportion in 2008 (18%). Of these, almost two thirds (63%) had a learning disability.

## Dependants

Findings from the 2008/09 survey indicate that almost a fifth (19%) of former care leavers were parents, 24 young women and 15 young men.

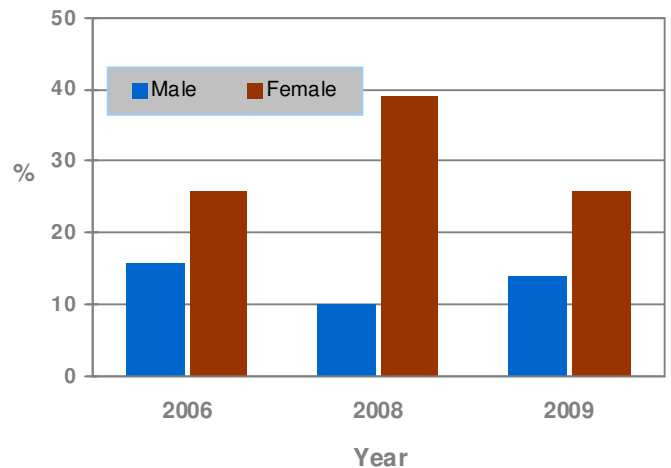
Between 2008 and 2009, the proportion of former care leavers who were parents decreased by 7 percentage points, from 26% in 2008 to 19% in 2009.

Almost half (46%) of the young people who had dependants had been looked after for less than five years, similar to the proportion in 2007/08 but 15 percentage points lower than the proportion in 2005/06.

One in 7 (14%) of all male former care leavers were fathers, slightly higher than the corresponding percentage in 2007/08 (10%).

Just over a quarter (26%) of female former care leavers were mothers, 13 percentage points less than the corresponding percentage in 2007/08 (39%)(Figure 2). However, this was over four times the proportion of births to teenage mothers<sup>1</sup> (6%) in the general population<sup>2</sup>.

Figure 2: Care Leavers with Dependants by Year and Gender



<sup>1</sup> Information on teenage mothers refers to those who have had a child before their 20th birthday.

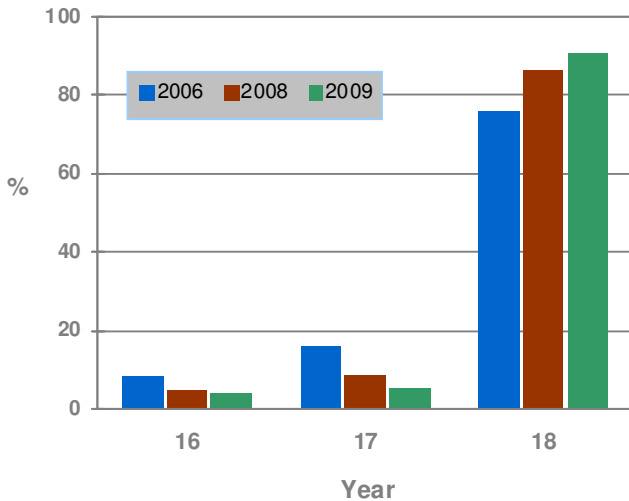
<sup>2</sup> Source: Births in Northern Ireland (2008), Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency 2008.

## Age Left Care

Over 9 in 10 (91%) former care leavers had left care at the age of 18, 6% at age 17, and 4% at age 16 (Figure 3).

Since 2005/06, the proportion of former care leavers who had left care at the age of 18 increased by 15 percentage points, from 76% in 2005/06 to 91% in 2009.

Figure 3: Age Left Care by Year



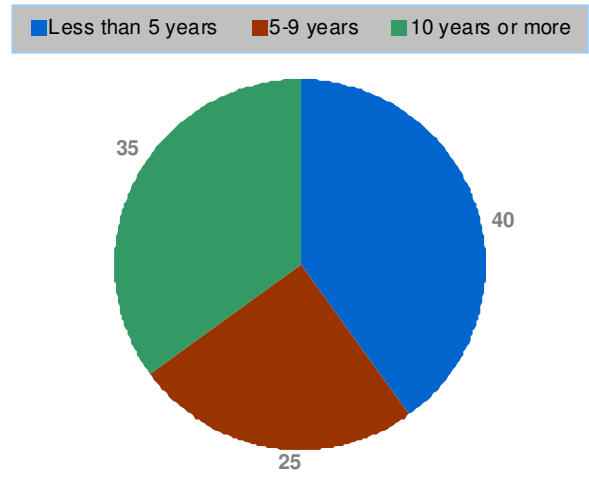
## Length of Time in Care

The average length of time spent in the latest period of care was 7 years and 4 months, slightly longer than the average in 2007/08 (6 years 10 months).

In 2009, the average length of time spent in the latest period of care was similar for young men and women (7 years and 3 months and 7 years 5 months respectively).

Two fifths (40%) of young people had been in care for less than five years immediately before leaving care, 35% had been looked after for 10 years or more, and 25% had spent between five and nine years in care (Figure 4).

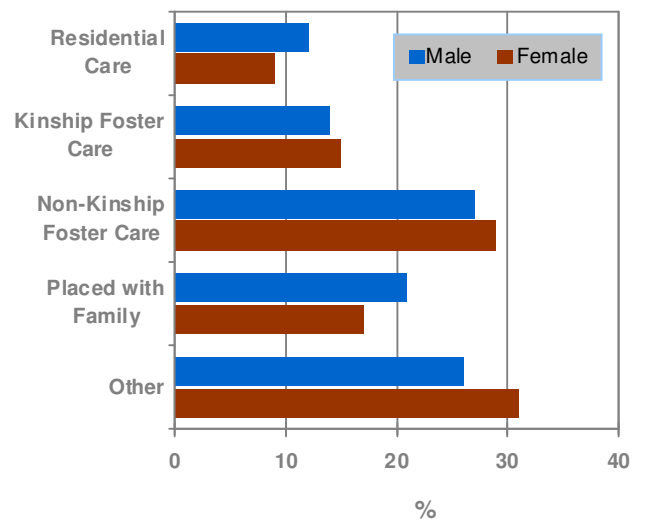
Figure 4: Length of Latest Period of Care



## Latest Placement Type

Before leaving care, over two fifths (42%) of former care leavers had been in foster care (28% in non-kinship and 14% in kinship foster placements), 19% had been placed with family, 10% in residential care, and 28% had been in other<sup>1</sup> placement types (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Latest Placement Prior to Leaving Care



Similar proportions of male and female former care leavers were placed in kinship and non-kinship foster care and with family; although, a slightly higher proportion of males (12%) than females (9%) were placed in residential accommodation.

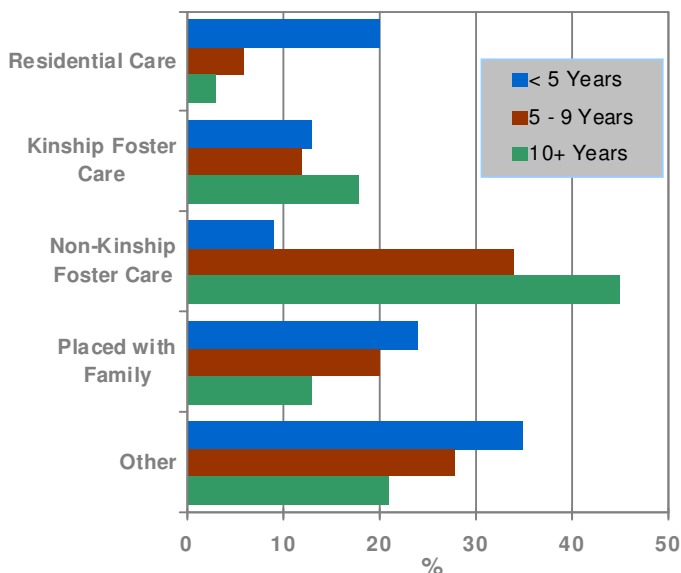
<sup>1</sup> Other placement types include; bed and breakfast accommodation, supported lodgings, hostels, and private rented houses.

## Length of Period of Care and Placement Type

The relationship between length of time in care and placement is apparent; the highest proportion (45%) of care leavers looked after for 10 years or more had been in non-kinship foster care during their latest placement, as opposed to 9% of those looked after for less than 5 years.

By contrast, 20% of those looked after for less than 5 years had been in residential care, compared with only 3% of those who had been in care for 10 years or more (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Length of Period of Care and Placement Type



## Legal Status

Almost three fifths (58%) of former care leavers had been looked after under a Care Order, with 25% accommodated under Article 21 of the Children Order, 15% under a Deemed Care Order, and a further 2% under other arrangements.

A higher proportion of young men (27%) than young women (23%) had been accommodated under Article 21, whereas a higher proportion of young men (17%) than young women (14%) had been accommodated under a Deemed Care Order.

## Length of Period in Care and Legal Status

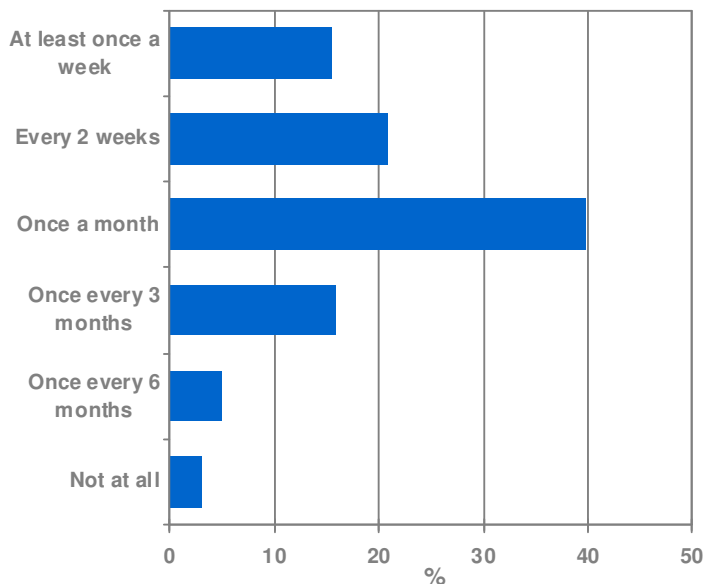
In terms of the length of time spent in the last period of care, over two fifths (43%) of those who had been looked after for less than 5 years had been accommodated under Article 21, compared with only 9% of those who had been in care for 10 years or more.

One in 20 (5%) young people looked after under a Deemed Care Order had been in care for less than 5 years, as opposed to 34% of those in care for 10 years or more.

## Contact with Social Services

The 'Children (Leaving Care) Act (Northern Ireland) 2002' requires Trusts to take reasonable steps to maintain contact with care leavers. For the 2008/09 survey, HSC Trusts were in contact with 195 (97%) of the 201 former care leavers; although, for 10 (5%) of these young people this contact was once every six months or less (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Contact Rates by Frequency of Contact



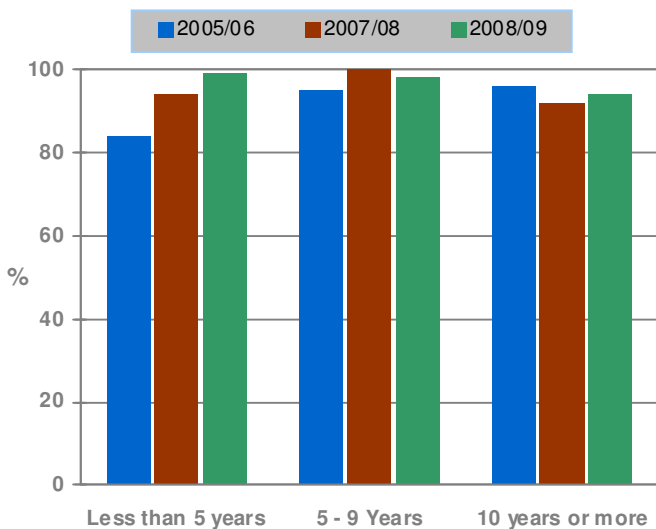
Overall, contact rates for former care leavers has increased by 8 percentage points, from 89% in 2005/06, to 97% in 2008/09.

This contact rate for former care leavers in Northern Ireland (97%) was higher than the 'in-touch' rates in England (94%), Wales (90%), and Scotland (82%)<sup>1</sup>.

Since 2005/06, contact rates for young people who had been looked after for less than 5 years has increased by 15 percentage points, from 84% in 2005/06 to 99% in 2008/09.

In 2008/09, young people who had been looked after for less than 5 years (99%) had a slightly higher contact rate than those looked after for 10 years or more (94%)(Figure 8).

Figure 8: Contact Rates by Length of Time in Care

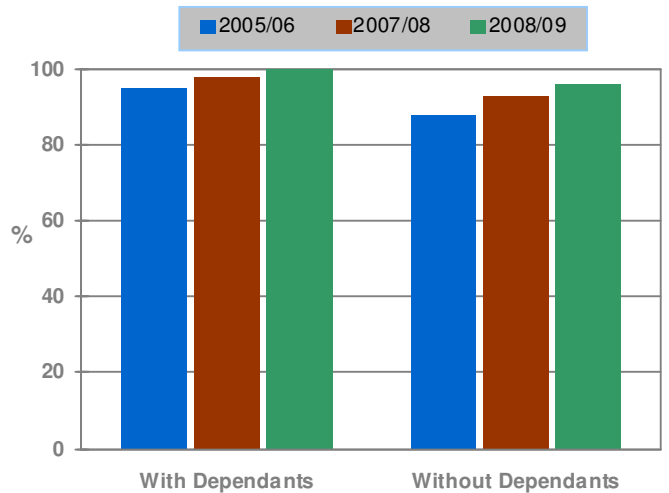


Those with dependants (100%) were more likely to have been contacted by their Trust than those with no dependants (96%).

Between 2005/06 and 2008/09, contact rates for both young people with dependants and without dependants increased by 5 and 8 percentage points respectively.

<sup>1</sup> Children Looked After by Local Authorities, Year Ending 31 March 2009, DCSF 2009; Local Government Data Unit – Wales 2009; Looked After Children 2007-08, Scottish Executive 2008

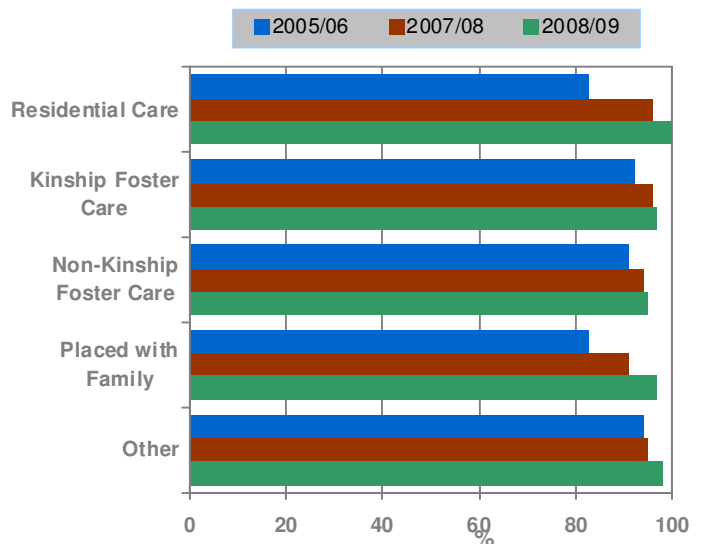
Figure 9: Contact Rates by Dependants and Year



In 2008/09, all former care leavers whose last placement was residential care (100%) had been in contact with social services at the age of 19, compared with 98% of those in other<sup>2</sup> placement types, 97% in kinship foster care, 97% placed with family, and 95% in non-kinship foster care (Figure 10).

Between 2005/06 and 2008/09, the contact rates of young care leavers formerly in residential accommodation and placed with family increased by 17 and 14 percentage points respectively (Figure 10).

Figure 10: Contact Rates by Latest Placement in Care



<sup>2</sup> Other placement types include; bed and breakfast accommodation, supported lodgings, hostels, and privately rented houses.

## Economic Activity

The proportion of former care leavers in 2008/09 known to be in education, training or employment (52%) was lower than the rate for their counterparts in England (63%)<sup>1</sup>; it also compares poorly with that for all 16-18 year olds (90%) in Northern Ireland in 2008<sup>2</sup>.

All information referring to the economic activity of former care leavers refers to care leavers who had been in contact with social services during the 12 months up to 31 March 2009 and whose economic activity was known, unless stated otherwise.

In 2008/09, over half (56%) of care leavers in contact with HSC Trusts whose economic activity was known were in education, training or employment, lower than the corresponding percentage in England (67%) but higher than Wales (48%) and Scotland (42%).<sup>3</sup>

In Northern Ireland, the proportion of former care leavers in education, training or employment increased from 47% in 2007/08 to 56% in 2008/09.

A higher proportion of females (61%) than males (51%) were in education, training or employment (Figure 11).

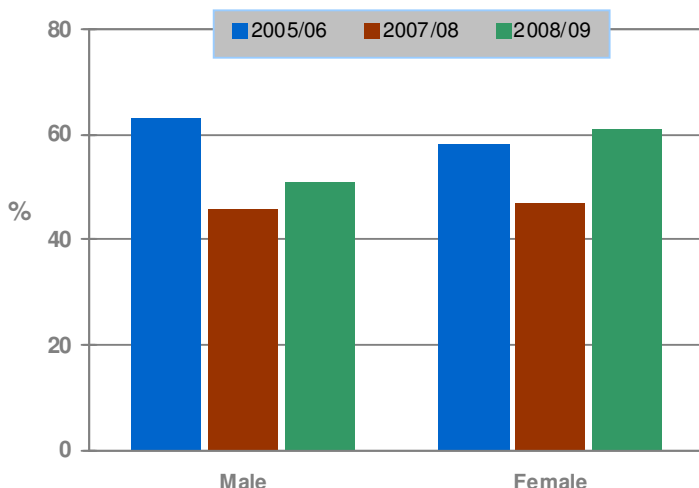
Between 2005/06 and 2007/08, the proportions of young men and women in education, training and employment decreased markedly (64% to 46% for males and 58% to 47% for females); although, since 2007/08, the proportions of young men and women has increased by 5 and 14 percentage points respectively (Figure 11).

<sup>1</sup> Children Looked After by Local Authorities, Year Ending 31 March 2009, DCSF 2009

<sup>2</sup> Figures from Northern Ireland Labour Force Survey 2008, DETI

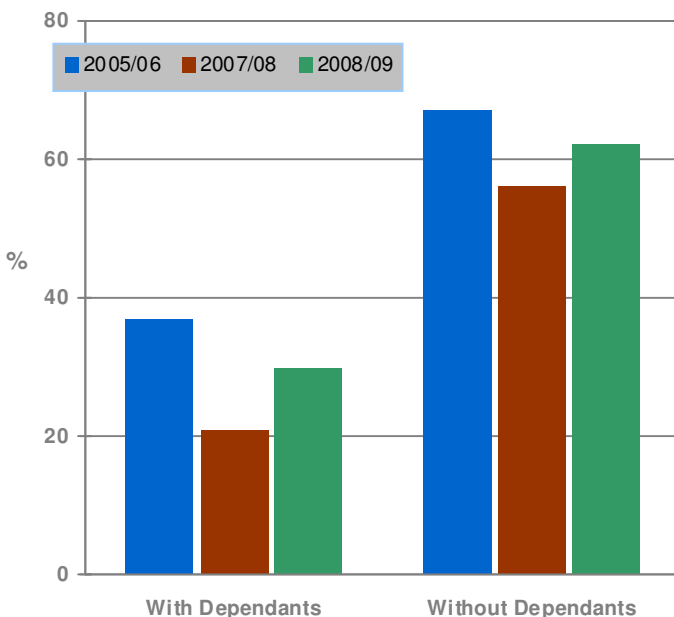
<sup>3</sup> Children Looked After by Local Authorities, Year Ending 31 March 2008, DCSF 2008; Social Services Statistics Wales 2007-08, Local Government Data Unit – Wales 2008; Looked After Children 2007-08, Scottish Executive 2008

Figure 11: Care Leavers in Education, Training and Employment by Gender



Three in ten (30%) former care leavers with dependants were in education, training or employment, 9 percentage points higher than the proportion in 2007/08 (21%)(Figure 12).

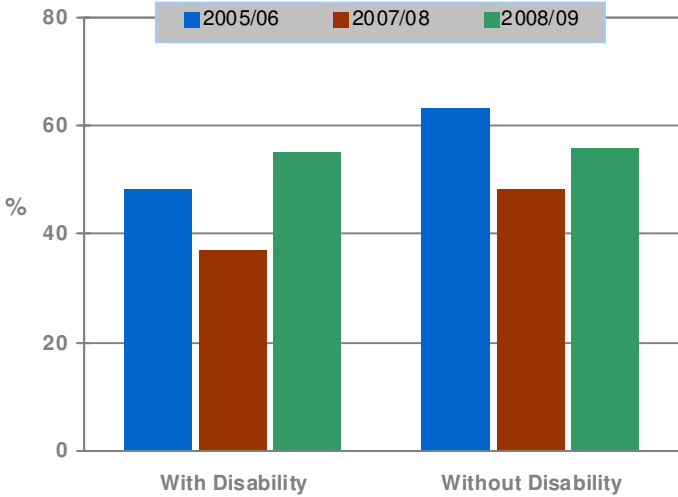
Figure 12: Care Leavers in Education, Training and Employment by Dependants



Since 2007/08, the proportion of disabled young people participating in education, training or employment has increased by 18 percentage points, from 37% in 2007/08 to 55% in 2008/09.

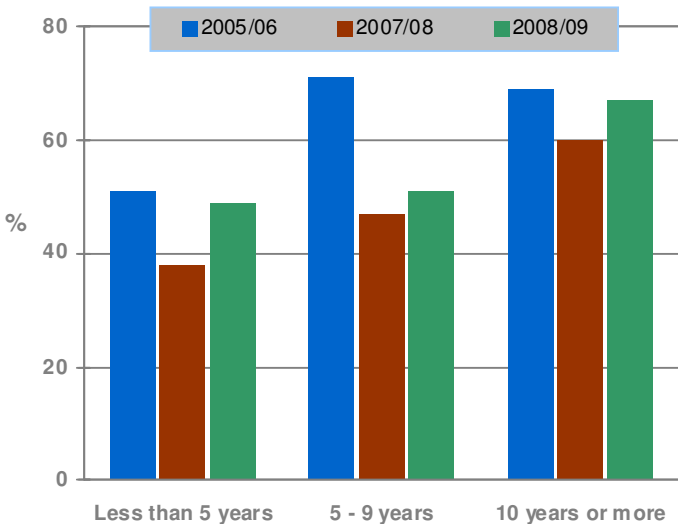
Similar proportions of former care leavers with a disability (55%) and without a disability (56%) were participating in education, training or employment (Figure 13).

Figure 13: Care Leavers in Education, Training and Employment by Disability



Activity rates appeared to be related to length of time in care: two thirds (67%) of those who had been looked after for more than 10 years were in education, training or employment, compared with 51% of those who had been looked after for 5 – 9 years and 49% for less than 5 years (Figure 14).

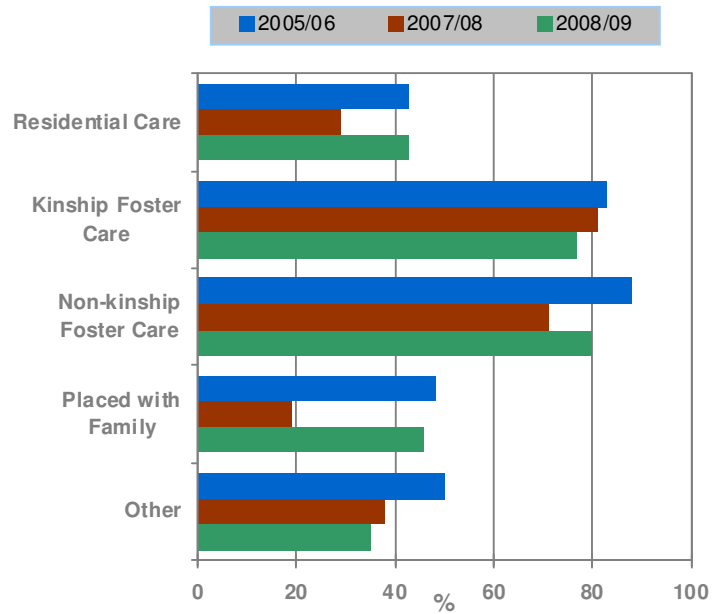
Figure 14: Care Leavers in Education, Training and Employment by Length of Time in Care



Former care leavers in care for longer periods were more likely to have been in foster care in their final placement (Figure 15).

Activity rates appeared to be related to latest placement in care, with 4 in 5 (80%) young people whose final placement had been in foster care in education, training or employment (80% in non-kinship care and 77% in kinship care), compared with 46% of those placed with family, 43% of those in residential care and 35% of those in other<sup>1</sup> placement types.

Figure 15: Care Leavers in Education, Training and Employment by Last Placement

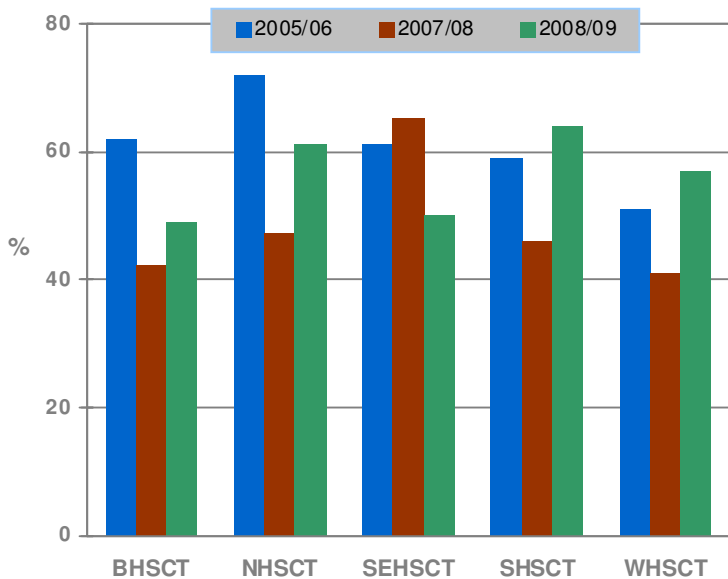


Care leavers who had been looked after by the Southern (65%) and Northern (60%) HSC Trusts had the highest proportions in education, training and employment, compared to those in the Western (57%), South Eastern (50%), and Belfast (49%) HSC Trusts (Figure 16).

There were also differences in economic activity rates according to legal status: of those looked after under a Care Order, 63% were in education, training or employment, compared with 60% subject to a Deemed Care Order and 40% accommodated under Article 21.

<sup>1</sup> Other placement types include; bed and breakfast accommodation, supported lodgings, hostels, and private rented houses.

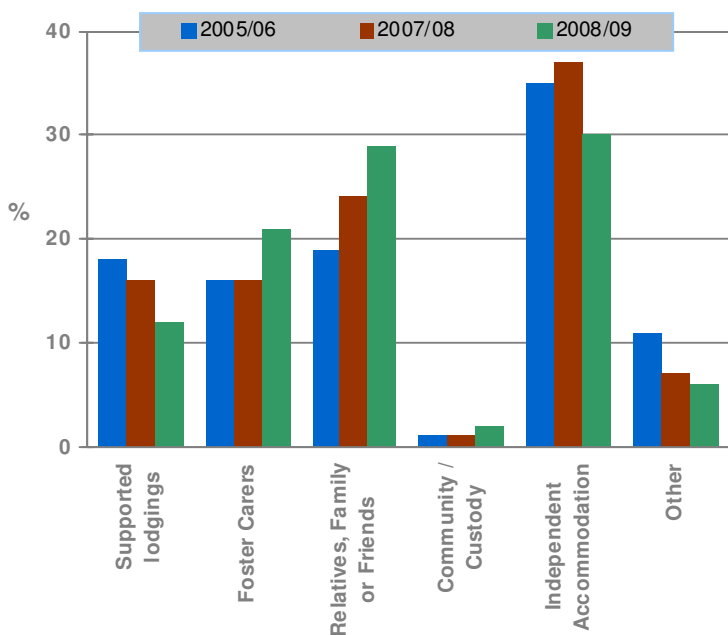
Figure 16: Care Leavers in Education, Training and Employment by HSC Trust



### Accommodation

Of former care leavers with whom Trusts were still in touch, 30% were in independent accommodation, 29% were living with parents, relatives or friends, 21% were living with foster carers (kinship / non-kinship), 12% were in supported lodgings, 2% in were in community homes / custody, and 6% were in other types of accommodation at their 19th birthday (Figure 17).

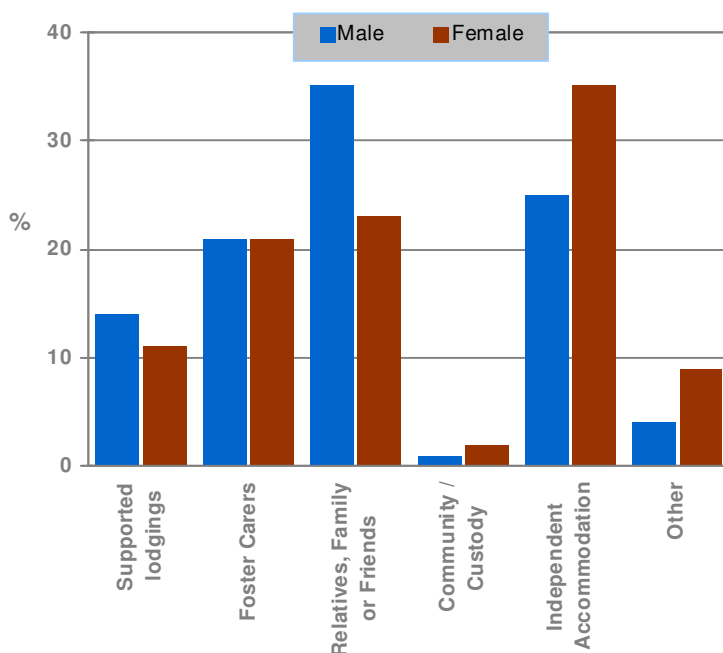
Figure 17: Type of Accommodation



Since 2005/06, the proportion of former care leavers living with parents, relatives or friends and with foster carers increased by 10 and 5 percentage points respectively.

Young men and young women differed in the types of accommodation in which they were most likely to be living: a higher proportion (35%) of young women than young men (25%) were in independent accommodation. In contrast, 35% of young men were living with parents, relatives or friends, compared with 23% of young women (Figure 18).

Figure 18: Type of Accommodation by Gender



### Suitability of Accommodation

According to social services staff, 96% of former care leavers with whom they still had contact were living in suitable accommodation, 10 percentage points higher than the proportion in 2005/06 (86%).

A slightly higher proportion of young women (97%) than young men (95%) were reported as being in suitable accommodation.

Of those whose accommodation was reported as unsuitable, almost all (6) were living with parents, relatives or friends.



Care Leavers on their 19<sup>th</sup> birthday

**Complete this form for each young care leaver who at 1/4/06 was looked after by your Trust and whose date of birth falls between 1/4/89 and 31/3/90 inclusive.**

1. Trust name: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. SOSCARE number

--	--	--	--	--	--

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Sex

Male

Female


\_\_\_\_\_

4. Date of birth

d	d	m	m	y	y	y	y

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Date of start of latest period of care

d	d	m	m	y	y	y	y

\_\_\_\_\_

6. Date ceased to be looked after

d	d	m	m	y	y	y	y

\_\_\_\_\_

**7. What is the young person's religion?**  
 (see guidance notes, please tick as appropriate)

- Catholic
- Protestant
- Other religion
- No denomination
- Not known

<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>

**8. Is the young person disabled according to the definition for the register of children with a disability, i.e. has an illness or difficulty and needs extra help to take part in activities around them in the way they would like and in the way other children of the same age do, respecting individual culture and circumstances?**

(see guidance notes for fuller, formal definition)

- Yes
- No

<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>

**If 'Yes', please state main disability type**

- Visually disabled
- Hearing impaired
- Physically disabled
- Learning disabled
- Mental health disability
- Other (*please specify below*)
- Not known

<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>

*If 'other', please specify* .....

.....

**9. To which ethnic group does the young person belong?**

- White (excluding Traveller)
- Chinese
- Irish Traveller
- Indian
- Pakistani
- Bangladeshi
- Black Caribbean
- Black African
- Black Other
- Mixed ethnic group
- Please specify*

<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>

.....

Other ethnic group  
*Please specify*

<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------

.....

Don't know

<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------

10. Does the young person have any dependants? Yes   
No   
 If 'Yes', please enter the number of dependants

11. What was the last placement arrangement for the young person prior to him/her leaving care?

Secure accommodation	<input type="text"/>
Other residential accommodation	<input type="text"/>
Placed for adoption with former foster carers	<input type="text"/>
Placed for adoption with others	<input type="text"/>
Foster care with relatives/friends (emergency)	<input type="text"/>
Foster care with relatives/friends (approved)	<input type="text"/>
Foster care with others	<input type="text"/>
Placed with parents (or persons with parental responsibility)	<input type="text"/>
Independent living with formal support	<input type="text"/>
Independent living without formal support	<input type="text"/>
Other accommodation	<input type="text"/>

If 'Other accommodation', please specify below  
 .....

12. What was the young person's legal status immediately before leaving care?

Police protection in Board/Trust accommodation (Article 23)	<input type="text"/>
Child assessment Order (Article 62)	<input type="text"/>
Emergency Protection Order (Article 63)	<input type="text"/>
Accommodated under Article 21	<input type="text"/>
Interim Care Order (Article 57)	<input type="text"/>
Care Order (Article 50 or 59)	<input type="text"/>
Deemed Care Order (Paras 11 and 30 of Sch 8)	<input type="text"/>
Freed for adoption and looked after by Board/Trust	<input type="text"/>
Other (please specify below)	<input type="text"/>

13. How often were you in touch with the young person around his/her 19 <sup>th</sup> birthday? (see guidance notes for definition)	More than once a week Once a week Once every two weeks Once a month Once every three months	<input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>
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*emergency hostel)*

Bed and breakfast

In custody

Other accommodation (*please specify below*)

.....

Homeless

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13c. Do you consider this accommodation to be suitable for the young person? Yes   
No

**This is the end of the questionnaire. Thank you for your cooperation.**

## Additional Information

**Further information** on Former Care Leavers in Northern Ireland, is available from:

### Office Information Manager

Community Information Branch

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Annexe 2

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Stormont

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Alternatively, this statistical bulletin and other statistical bulletins published by Community Information Branch (CIB) are available to download from the internet at:

Internet address: [http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/stats\\_research/stats-cib/stats-cib\\_pubs.htm](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/stats_research/stats-cib/stats-cib_pubs.htm)