



Placement Stability

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**Chart 2: Average number of moves
by age at placement,
BYFC 2002-2008**

DISCUSSION

Children in out-of-home care change placements on average 2.2 times. At first blush, children's placements appear to be relatively stable, especially in comparison to anecdotal reports that describe much higher rates of placement changes. The rate of placement changes reported here is comparable to rates reported in a number of other studies. Average placement changes however, only provide part of the story. A fifth (21%) of children in our cohort experienced 4 or more placement changes within 36 months. It is also surprising to note the number of placement changes experienced by toddlers aged 1 or

**Chart 3: Average number of moves
by reason for investigation,
BYFC 2002-2008**

While the overall rate of placements appears to be relatively low, further analysis shows that there is an important sub-group of children who experience significantly more placement changes than average. Children who are still in out-of-home care 36 months after their initial placement (N=330) experienced an average of 3.4 placement changes, nearly double the rate compared to children who were reunited (N=926). Of particular concern was the finding that 38.5% of the children in long-term care (N=127) had experienced 4 or more placement changes within 36 months. If we were to follow these children for a longer period of time, for instance for 4 or 5 years, we would likely find a higher rate of placement changes.



