

Youth summary

The independent review of children's social care is a team of people answering the question:

HOW DO WE ENSURE CHILDREN GROW UP IN LOVING, STABLE AND SAFE FAMILIES AND, WHERE THAT IS NOT POSSIBLE, CARE PROVIDES THE SAME FOUNDATIONS?

We published the [Case for Change](#) in June 2021 and since then Josh, who is the chair of the review, and the team have been listening to feedback from people with care experience, families, carers, people who work in children's social care and researchers.

At this point of the review, it is important to share the feedback we have been given to make sure we haven't missed anything that is important to you. The review published a report showing what adults said about the Case for Change in a survey. We heard different opinions and ideas - not everyone agrees with each other on what is best for the future of children's social care. You can read it [here](#).

We have also been listening to what children, young people and care leavers have to say about things that are important to them and that the review should consider. You can find a full report on our website. We have heard that whilst some people have a positive experience, others have a poorer experience.

On top of our own engagement activities with children we asked [A National Voice](#) to help gather young people's opinions. The young people who are ambassadors at ANV designed and coordinated this engagement for children in care councils across the country. They have sent all the responses to the review and have written a report describing the main messages. You can read that on their [website](#).

What follows is a brief description of the things children and young people have said to us. We have used quotes from children with care experience and are careful to keep these anonymous and unidentifiable. Thank you to everyone who shared their thoughts and experiences, we are grateful and value your openness.

HELPING FAMILIES

Children & young people told us family support is important. There can be challenges finding it and getting it.

"They talk to mummy and look after her too"

"Work with child with the family if possible. Have a better understanding of culture and community match children with carers from a similar culture."

"There is such a negative view on social service from the family, we need to change this so families feel they can access support. We need to flip the script."

"Too often children's social care don't act quick enough and stop kids coming into care."

"There's loads of help out there – it's just there's loads of hoops to go through, criteria to meet so it's hard to get it and that's if it's the right support for what they need."

DECISIONS ABOUT CHILD PROTECTION

Having services and social workers involved in family life is a deeply challenging time for children. They told us that they want to be involved and understand what decisions are being made about them and their lives. Some felt that they were left in unsafe situations for too long. Others felt it took too long for people to believe them.

"Let the child know and join meetings too, we would be better if you told us straight away. "

"The meetings were all about the workers and what was best for them. They don't tell you anything or include you, they make decisions for you."

"Services were involved before we were born but we were left [with our parents] for 14 years [before coming into care]. We had every early intervention, on and off early help, an intervention at least once a year."

"I kind of had to build up the courage to speak to my social worker. They get in touch with someone else if it's a severe case."

ENTERING CARE

Children and young people told us that they want to know why they are in care, what is happening to them and have some choice over where they go. Some children will have no choice and this includes unaccompanied asylum seeking children.

"It's tough because you aren't with your real family. Scary because you don't know where you will be put or how long you will be put there for."

"In my experience when I went into care, it was an overnight thing and I don't even know why I was there or what I was doing there...I was like 8 or 9 but no one really explained anything."

"As a teenager I wanted more insight about what is going on, you don't actually get told and you should know more. You don't get told what is actually going to happen and what has happened, unless you find out yourself."

IN CARE

Children and young people told us the positives and negatives about:

- Keeping relationships with their family
- Relationships with social workers and carers
- Homes for children, matching them to the right place, and the impact of frequent changes
- Keeping friendships and the difficulties with needing background checks on people for sleepovers
- Education, changing schools, exclusions, being called out of class and relationships with school staff
- Getting emotional help and mental health support
- Getting help with immigration processes.
- Being in secure homes
- Being in youth custody

"I have no relationship with my wider family. I wasn't allowed to see them at all so when I see them now they don't feel like family."

"Consistency of social workers, PAs and foster carers is so important"

"It isolates you to not have it and you can get bullied because of it. "

"There's a lot of security and reassurance in care."

"The most important thing for people in care are education and love, reason being is that they want to give you hugs because they are missing their parents and may want a hug. Education is important because they might have fallen behind which could affect them in the future. "

16/17 YEAR OLDS

Young people becoming looked after at this point can be difficult. Some young people are housed in independent or semi-independent accommodation. This does not suit everyone. Moving from having a social worker to a Personal advisor can work really well, but for some it doesn't and there are problems getting the right support.

"As you turn 16, and 18 you are given a lot of information, but you are not interested in this at that age. The information is not provided in the right way e.g. leaflets"

"In my 16-18 there was staff there 24/7 [semi-independent housing]."

"They use CCTV because they don't have the people to check up on me."

"Often your belongings are just put in bin-bags, and then because it was all arranged last minute you don't have keys to your new place and there is no one there so they just unload your bin bags in front of the house, and this can be very embarrassing. And it makes you feel unloved – you're on your own, you've lost your family, the people who've been with for years, your foster siblings and you're just thrown outside and having to find your own way"

"When I was 17 they tried to put me in supported living. It was horrible for me going from a family home to independence, I need more support because I have autism"

"On one hand they tell me I'm old enough to make my own decisions but then say I'm a vulnerable young woman who needs high levels of support and can't manage on my own."

MOVING ON (18+)

Young people told us that sometimes they have a good experience when turning 18. They're able to stay with their carer and are supported with getting a job, studying or settling into adulthood.

We were often told about the 'care cliff edge' where young people experienced support falling away. This meant they felt isolated, may experience homelessness, difficulty getting a job, found it hard to access support and weren't able to achieve their dreams.

Young people told us that accessing their social care records is an emotional experience, and whilst sometimes they get support to read through them, other times they have to do this on their own.

"They should be putting it into legislation that they can't get rid of us until we're 25. It is only guidance at the moment. We should have more support with transitions."

"A lot of private landlords do not accept housing benefits. And the council would take so long paying out the deposit, and this would mean that I would lose the property and I needed to find another property again."

"It feels like it is me against the whole world, once you leave the system the local authority is not interested in supporting you anymore."

"[About access to care records] It's a data dump but has a big emotional response."

KEY MESSAGES

Care experienced young people told us that when other parts of government get involved in their lives it can become even more challenging, in particular the Home Office in relation to insecure immigration status, the Ministry of Justice in relation to crime, and health in relation to who supports families when there is a disability.

Children want a voice and want their rights to be realised. We heard good stories about advocacy services, independent visitors and mentors. However, when there are no stable adults advocating for the children there is difficulty ensuring children's rights are met.

Mental health support and support with coping with trauma is important at all stages and into adulthood.

LGBTQ+ community wants their gender identity and sexuality to be recognised and respected by all professionals. They fear further stigma when they are in contact with children's social care.

The way that children and young people from other ethnic backgrounds experience the care system isn't always good enough. This has been highlighted in terms of matching children and carers and keeping in touch with communities.

Disabled children and young people want to be listened to and for their needs to be met at all points in the system.

Care experienced young people in youth custody are still looked after by the state and this continuity of responsibility is not always felt. The extreme isolation of these young people and the additional challenges they face on release were highlighted.

Being placed in an area away from home can lead to children and young people missing out on support they need, losing important connections with family and friends, and turning 18 and leaving care difficult. It also highlights the different support available in different areas.

Love, stability, and safety – most children and young people agree that it is important for children to be connected to people important to them, to feel a sense of belonging, and strong sense of identity.

YOUNG PEOPLE ARE FULL OF VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE

CHILDREN TOLD US IN THE FUTURE CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE SHOULD BE:

- "ABOUT PUTTING THE CHILD FIRST"
- "PUT THE YOUNG PEOPLE BEFORE THE FUNDING"
- "UNDERSTANDING THE CHILD'S BACKGROUND"
- "MORE FOCUSED ON HELPING PEOPLE IN CARE NOT MOVING THEM"
- "KNOW THE PERSON NOT THEIR REPORTS. I WANT THEM TO TALK TO ME AND KNOW MY SIDE NOT JUST THE TICK BOXES"
- "THE TRANSITION OUT OF CARE NEEDS TO BE BETTER"
- "EASIER ON THE CHILD AND THE SOCIAL WORKER"

CARE SHOULD BE A HAPPY PLACE, FOR GROWTH, DEVELOPMENT AND CHILD/YOUNG PERSON FOCUSED. IT SHOULD FEEL LIKE A SECOND HOME, IT SHOULD BE A PLACE WHERE THOSE IN CARE ARE ABLE TO EXPRESS THEIR FEELINGS FROM POSITIVE TO NEGATIVE WITHOUT FEELING/BEING JUDGED.

What Next?

It is really important that we continue to listen to children and young people, the review team are continuing to read all the feedback and ideas for recommendations that we are sent. They will be creating the recommendations to address these based on all the information and activities they have received. If you would like to contact us you can by emailing or following us on Twitter.

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 [@reviewCSC](https://twitter.com/reviewCSC)



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of children's social care