



GOVERNMENT OFFICE  
FOR YORKSHIRE AND THE HUMBER

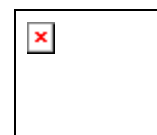
Issue 10  
Yorkshire and  
The Humber  
Children and Learners Directorate

# Every Child Matters: Change for Children

'Championing Children and Young People'  
Views of Children and Young People: Yorkshire and the Humber



"You took me into care to make things better for me, if you only did what my parents did why did you take me away"? Quote from young person from the seminar



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# 1. Introduction

This report is a summary of the key messages from young people to corporate parent(s) from a regional seminar 'Championing Children and Young People' in Yorkshire and Humber. The seminar was organised by young people from the region to ensure that;

- the views and opinions of children in care/care leavers can feed into and shape policy developments.
- corporate parents hear directly from children and young people 'what it means to be a good corporate parent'.

The active participation of children and young people in the Children and Learners Directorate's work is a priority. The Directorate's aim is to ensure that children and young people feel included in all the decisions that affect them. The Directorate worked in partnership with A National Voice, National Children's Bureau and National Leaving Care Advisory Service to establish a regional children and young people's forum.

Chris Hoyle was appointed as the Young Person's Co-ordinator to develop this work and recruited five young people from the region to organise this seminar.

Rather than provide a transcript of the day, key messages that young people wanted their corporate parents(s) to hear have been recorded.

It is important to note that the views and opinions of the children and young people expressed in this report are their views and many of the key messages expressed would be difficult to challenge.

## 2. Seminar Summary

The seminar brought together over 150 delegates, mainly children and young people in care and/or care leavers from the region as well as corporate parents from elected members, health representatives, government office staff and the voluntary and community sector to debate how children and young people were shaping policy and quality assuring care services.

Lemn Sissay, Poet and Broadcaster and David Akinsanya Journalist and Producer shared their experiences of Care, and talked about their aspirations for children in care. A really strong message was for young people to follow their dreams, to aim high and not let obstacles stand in their way of achieving their wildest dreams. There is an obvious need for corporate parents to work on self esteem issues with children and young people to help build confidence and help them reach their full potential.

The LILAC Project (Lifelong Improvement for Looked After Children) shared their experiences of training children and young people (all with experience of care) to become inspectors of local authority care services. Established by A National Voice in partnership with CSCI, the project focuses on:

- How local authorities involve looked after children in planning and evaluating care services
- Assessing complaints

York City Council is one of two authorities in the country who have agreed to pilot the scheme. [Further information available from info@anationalvoice.org](mailto:info@anationalvoice.org)

The ARTiculation Project performed a play about their responses to the Care Matters consultation. Four workshops produced lively debates and the night was rounded off with Mark Burrows from DfES providing key messages from young people to the Care Matters consultation. Copies of the presentations are available from [safeguarding@goyh.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:safeguarding@goyh.gsi.gov.uk)

Finally, Aldine House Secure Unit in Sheffield showed how working on the Healthy Care Programme's involvement of young people in secure care gave young people a chance to say what would make a difference, and take part in putting the solutions into place.

### 3. Key Messages To Corporate Parents

Young people at the seminar defined corporate parents as any professional that was working with them.

#### To Senior Managers

- Turn up to events we organise
- Get to know us properly.
- We are not a statistic, we are not a budget you can balance
- Encourage us to have high aspirations of your services
- Make sure that everyone that works for you understands our rights
- Be accountable for the decisions that you make about us
- “Young people are the experts”, young people should be involved in quality assuring every aspect of a service you provide.
- Train us to help you design, deliver and evaluate services
- Give young people an equal voice. Are you actively listening? - the test of whether you have listened is whether anything actually improves

#### Educational Aspirations

- Encourage children and young people to follow their dreams-we dream big
- Have unrealistic expectations of things we can achieve (it's part of dreaming big!). Show an interest, be a 'good' parent
- Promote peer mentoring
- We need positive role models

## Social Care

- Give social workers more power to make financial decisions that support young people
- We want our carers and social workers to help us take part in positive activities
- We want a complete and tailored support package that meets our needs.

## Placement Stability

- We don't want to be placed where there is availability, we want a safe, loving cosy home where people care about us
- Don't make assumptions about where we want to be, being with our families may not always be our first choice
- We don't want to be dumped; we need proper information and opportunities to discuss our options

## Health

- 'Health is boring', it's just health checks and doctors which is rubbish. I'm worried about a load of other stuff like money, friends and where I live.
- Health should focus on our emotional and mental well being
- We want support when leaving care for housing, benefits, life skills, budgeting and accessing services including health.
- It's important we get the chance to say the things that will make us feel better, and see things happen.
- Fun and leisure activities give us a chance to meet and make friends, be more confident and learn new things - that helps us feel fit and well.

## 4. Summing Up

The Young People's Planning Group interviewed the Deputy Regional Director for Government Office, who is also Director for Children and Learners. Her key messages to children and young people and corporate parents were the following:

### Children and Learners Directorate

- As corporate parents we need to constantly evaluate the quality of care and services we provide our children and young people. This can only be achieved by genuinely listening to their concerns
- Having integrated services, pooling budgets via Local Area Agreements and Children's Trusts should help us to do more with our money
- Being accountable to children and young people for the decisions we make is key. Like any 'good' parent, sometimes this will mean saying no to requests and explaining the reasons for our decisions. Other times it will mean recognising and rewarding positive behaviours and challenging behaviour when things go wrong
- We also need to ensure the promises we make to our children and young people are actually being delivered
- The messages I am hearing from children and young people is that we need to act as 'good' parents day to day, improve communication at all levels and empower them to positively challenge decisions when necessary. It is about all of us taking responsibility for our actions and behaviour
- I am looking forward to working with National Leaving Care Advisory Service, A National Voice, National Children's Bureau and most importantly children and young people to take forward this work in the region

### National Leaving Care Advisory Service

We want the conference to be the start not the end of young people's involvement in how GOYH works with the local authorities in the region

We will:

- Continue to support the young people involved to take their messages further
- Work to build the network of young people across the region
- Involve young people in the projects we are doing in the region
- Support young people who are involved in projects and initiatives that are developing policy and practice
- With GOYH develop new opportunities for young people to influence the

services they receive from local authorities in the region

#### **A National Voice**

- We were really pleased to be working in partnership with GOYH to ensure children and young people's voices are being heard at regional level
- Care Matters is a long awaited opportunity to make some real and much needed changes to the Care System. The most important issue to us is that children and young people have services tailored to meet their specific needs and have opportunities to voice their concerns with their corporate parent
- Corporate Parents should always be asking "Would this be good enough for my son or daughter" (Rt Hon Frank Dobson MP). If the answer is No, then clearly it is not good enough for children from care

#### **National Children's Bureau**

- We are looking forward to supporting the local and regional Healthy Care Partnership working with colleagues to ensure that children and young people in and leaving care;
  1. enjoy a healthy life, in a healthy caring environment, and this includes children in secure accommodation
  2. have creative opportunities to take part in saying what is needed, and seeing that it is done and works for them
  3. know that carers, staff and corporate parents are well trained and supported to provide them with consistent good care, support and opportunities they deserve
- Ensure that health issues are factored in alongside education and social care, taking a more holistic view of the child

#### **Final Thought.....**

##### **Chris Hoyle-Young People's Co-ordinator**

"The only way to improve services is to actively involve children and young people so they can shape the service to fit their needs; after all they are the ones that use them".

## Appendix 1

The seminar was funded by the Children and Learners Directorate and DfES. The picture on the front was kindly provided by Kellie Craig, Ex Care Leaver-Calderdale Council.

### Contacts

For further information on this report please contact: [safeguarding@goyh.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:safeguarding@goyh.gsi.gov.uk)

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Special thanks to Claire Owens and Tracy Beedle for their contributions.

## Appendix 2

Further copies of this report are available, along with other publications in our Mainstreaming Series;

1. The Children's Fund- Evidence of contribution to Pilot Children's Trusts (Feb 04)
2. Children's Funds and Children's Trusts (June 04)
3. Making the Case for Prevention
4. Children's Fund and Joint Area Reviews
5. Children's Trust Migration
6. Cross Sector Working
7. Top Tips, Involving Children and Young People in the Children & Young People's Plan
8. Local Area Agreements
9. 'Partners in Crime Prevention'

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