

Fairness and unfairness

A report of children's views
by the Children's Rights Director for England

PHOTO REDACTED DUE TO THIRD PARTY RIGHTS OR OTHER LEGAL ISSUES



Contents

About the Children's Rights Director	3
Summary	4
How we asked for views	5
The children and young people who gave us their views	6
What is fairness?	7
How fairly are children treated by adults looking after them?	8
How fairly are children treated by school or college staff?	10
How fairly are children treated by doctors and health workers?	12
How fairly are children in care treated by social workers?	13
How fairly are children treated by their friends?	14
How fairly are children treated by other children and young people generally?	15
How fairly are children treated by the adults who run activities they take part in?	16
How fairly are children treated by the adults they are buying something from or paying for a service?	17
How fairly are children treated by the general public?	18
Being treated fairly at work	20
The overall view on fairness and unfairness	21
Examples of being treated unfairly	22
Reacting to being treated unfairly	23
Examples of being treated especially fairly	24
How to be treated more fairly	25

How it feels to be treated unfairly	26
How it feels when someone else is treated unfairly	28
How it feels to be treated especially fairly	29
How it feels when someone else is treated especially fairly	29
What makes some people more likely to be treated unfairly?	30
Advice on making things fairer	34
Is fairness or unfairness towards children increasing?	35
Children's last words on fairness and unfairness	36

About the Children's Rights Director



Roger Morgan, Children's Rights Director for England

The law sets out my duties as Children's Rights Director for England. With my team, one of my main duties is to ask children and young people for their views about their rights and welfare and how they are looked after in England. My duties cover children and young people living away from home in all types of boarding schools, residential special schools or further education colleges, children and young people living in children's homes, in family centres, in foster care or who have been placed for adoption, and care leavers and children or young people getting any sort of help from children's social care services.

As well as asking young people for their views and publishing what they tell us, with my team I also give advice on children's and young people's views and on children's rights and welfare to Her Majesty's Chief Inspector at Ofsted, and to the government. I have a duty to raise any issues I think are important about the rights and welfare of children or young people living away from home or getting children's social care support. With my team, I do this both for individual young people and for whole groups of young people.

Children and young people tell us that fairness is very important to them. The right of all people to be treated equally and fairly was one of the nine main children's rights to come out of our consultation *Children on rights and responsibilities*.¹ Many people want to make sure that nobody is unfairly discriminated against or suffers unfairly from prejudice. This report sets out what children and young people told us about their experiences of fairness and unfairness: who is most likely to treat children fairly, what being treated unfairly feels like, what makes groups or individuals likely to be treated unfairly, and how someone can try to make sure they are treated fairly.

We try to write all our reports so that they can easily be read by children and young people, as well as by government ministers. Like all my reports, this report is being published for everyone to read. You can find copies of all my reports on our website: www.rights4me.org.



¹ That report on what children and young people saw as their rights and responsibilities is on our website: www.rights4me.org.

Summary

Two hundred and sixty-eight children and young people in boarding schools, children's homes and other care and residential settings gave their views and experiences about fairness and unfairness.

They defined fairness as everyone being treated equally unless there was a good reason for different treatment, having your rights, being listened to, having what you ought to have, only being punished for things you had actually done and only as much as you deserved, and getting along together without anyone being left out. The most common form of unfairness towards children was being wrongly blamed for something. Unfairness can also be when someone else is treated better than you are. Sometimes children who misbehave can get more attention and help than those who behave themselves. Where children are allowed to get away with some things because they have a health problem, this can sometimes develop into unfairness for others. It can be unfair to be labelled and treated according to your past, or just one past incident.

Children said they were treated most fairly by adults running activities they go to, and by doctors and health workers. However, waiting a long time to see a doctor or health worker, or your health worries not being taken seriously, were both seen as unfair. School or college staff, then adults looking after children, came next in how fairly they treated children. Then came friends, people you were paying for a service or buying something from, and other children generally. Children said they are not treated very much more fairly by their friends than by other children generally. Children believe that they are treated least fairly by the general public.

The most usual reactions to being treated unfairly were telling a parent or teacher, or doing nothing at all. Children feel sad, upset, angry and bad about

themselves when they are treated unfairly. They feel angry when they see others being treated unfairly too, and feel they should be doing more to help them. From what they told us for this report, children feel more angry and upset about being treated unfairly than about almost anything else we have ever asked them about over the nine years we have been consulting children.

Children told us that how you behave towards other people makes a great difference to how fairly you are treated, and it is important to treat other people in the way you expect them to treat you. Telling someone if you are being unfairly treated, rather than doing nothing, is important to being treated more fairly in the future. Being polite is an important way to help yourself be treated fairly. To treat children more fairly, adults should support all children equally, treat children kindly, and do more asking and listening to their views and feelings.

Children said that being treated fairly makes children feel very happy and good about themselves. Seeing someone else being treated fairly is also good, although there can be some jealousy if someone else is being treated better than you are.

We were told that the children most likely to be treated unfairly by other children are those who are, or seem, 'different' in any way, those who misbehave, and children from a different race or culture. Those most likely to be treated unfairly by adults are children who misbehave, who have a bad attitude, or are rude or unkind to others. Disabled children and younger children are particularly likely to be treated unfairly.

Overall, the large majority of children reported being treated fairly, and children reported that the way they are being treated is becoming fairer.

How we asked for views

We asked children and young people for their views in two ways. First, we invited children and young people in services we selected at random across the country to fill in a survey questionnaire on fairness and unfairness. They were able to complete this survey online through the web, or if they preferred, to complete a paper copy of the survey and send it back to us.

Second, we held seven group discussions with children and young people to go more deeply into issues about fairness and unfairness. For these discussions we visited two boarding schools, two residential special schools, two children's homes and one secure children's home. We chose at random which schools and homes to visit. Each group was led by a member of our team, and another team member took notes of the views people gave.

Not everybody answered every question in our survey, so we have given the number who did answer for each question in this report. Where we have given

the percentage of people giving a particular answer, this is the percentage of everyone who answered that question. We have rounded these percentages to whole numbers, so they may not always add up to 100. Where we have listed the top reasons for giving a particular answer, we have written all the reasons given by at least one in 10 of the children who wrote a reason down. We did not list any possible answers to choose from for any of the questions in the survey, so all the answers came from the children and young people themselves, without any suggestions from us.

We have not left out any views that we, Ofsted, social care staff or politicians might disagree with, nor have we made our own comments on anything children or young people told us. We have not added our own views or ideas. As with all our reports, what this report says is purely the views of children and young people.

PHOTO REDACTED DUE TO THIRD PARTY RIGHTS OR OTHER LEGAL ISSUES



The children and young people who gave us their views

A total of 214 children and young people sent us their views about fairness and unfairness through our web survey. Another 54 took part in our seven discussion groups. Altogether 268 children and young people gave us their views on fairness and unfairness for this report.

Of the 207 people who filled in our web survey and told us their gender, 129 (62%) were boys and 78 (38%) were girls. The youngest person who filled in the web survey was eight, and the oldest was a care leaver of 23. The 'middle' age for the children who filled in the survey was 12.

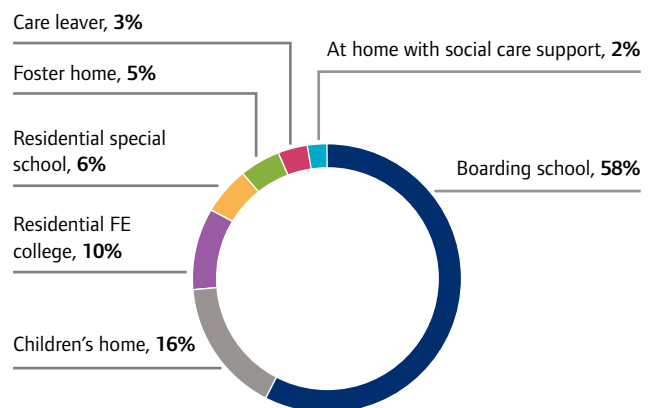
Out of the 208 people in our survey who told us about their ethnicity, 146 (70%) said they were white, 50 (24%) said they were Asian, seven (3%) said they were Black, and five (2%) said they were from a mixed background or a different background from these.

Out of the 208 people who told us in the survey whether or not they were disabled, 21 (10%) said they were disabled. Seventeen people told us about their disability. Four said they had attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), four that they had autism, three that they had a learning disability, two that they had special educational needs, two that they had a hearing problem, one that they had a mental health problem, and one that they had diabetes.

Out of the 214 children and young people who filled in our survey, 205 told us the sort of place they were living in, and whether or not they were in care. Out of these, 61 (30%) were in care, and 144 (70%) were

not in care. The majority (58%) of those answering our web survey were boarders in boarding schools of all types. The next largest groups were people living in children's homes (16%) and those living in residential special schools (10%). This report is therefore about the experience of fairness and unfairness of children and young people living away from home. It includes the experiences of people in care, but is not about being in care. Figure 1 shows where the children filling in our survey were living at the time.

Figure 1: Where the children and young people lived



Percentages are based on the 205 children who answered this question.

What is fairness?

In our seven discussion groups, we asked children and young people what 'fairness' meant to them. They told us that it meant getting your rights, having a say and being listened to, 'having the right to express your own views and opinions'.

They also discussed whether fairness meant everyone being treated exactly the same. Some said fairness did mean 'being treated the same as everyone else', but others said that it could not mean just this. For example, at school, 'a group might have different abilities and the teacher would need to adapt', and 'you get privileges as you get older'. They thought both of these were fair. Treating children differently could be fair, as long as there was a good reason for this. What was unfair was treating people differently without a good reason.

Some children told us that they thought it was unfair when they did not get something they thought they ought to be allowed to have or to do. Sometimes this was something big, like being allowed to have visits from friends as well as family when you were living in a secure children's home. Sometimes it was something smaller, like being allowed to do an activity that only children older than you were allowed to do. But simply not getting what you want is not always unfair: 'Sometimes when you don't get what you want you think it is unfair but sometimes it's right.'

Being punished for doing something wrong was perfectly fair, as long as you had done something to deserve it, and as long as the same rules and the same punishments applied to everyone. 'You do something wrong, you pay the consequences. That's fair as long as it happens to everybody.' What would make a punishment unfair was if it was much too strong a punishment for what you had done, or if some people were allowed to get away with something that other people got punished for.

One group told us that punishing a whole group of people for something that not all of them had done was unfair to the people who hadn't deserved the punishment. They thought this was wrong and unfair, but they also said that it happened because it meant the people who were punished unfairly then put pressure on the people who had got them all punished: 'It's not fair but it does work.'

One discussion group thought that fairness also meant people in any group getting on well together, and not leaving anyone out of things.

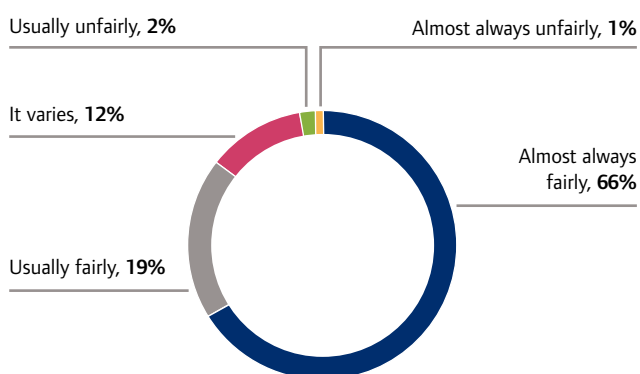
PHOTO REDACTED DUE TO THIRD PARTY RIGHTS OR OTHER LEGAL ISSUES



How fairly are children treated by adults looking after them?

In our web survey, we asked how fairly or unfairly children thought they were being treated by the adults who look after them where they live. Figure 2 shows their answers.

Figure 2: How fairly or unfairly are you treated by adults looking after you where you live?



Percentages are based on the 212 children who answered this question.

A very large majority of children (85%) thought that the adults looking after them treated them either almost always, or at least usually, fairly. Very few (3%, six children altogether) thought the adults looking after them treated them usually or almost always unfairly.

We asked children to tell us why they had chosen the answer they chose. We did not suggest any reasons, so all the reasons given came straight from the children themselves. Altogether, 146 children gave their reasons for saying they were usually or almost always treated fairly by the adults who looked after them. These were the top reasons.

- The way I am treated is just fair (25% of the children).

- They are good carers (18% of the children).
- Everyone is treated equally (16% of the children).

Some said that the way they were treated was just fair because they were treated in a nice or good way. Others said that their carers were nice because they gave them help when they needed it. One reason children gave for saying they were treated fairly, which just missed coming from one in 10 children, was that punishments were given out fairly. This came from 8% of the children.

Examples of how children said they were treated fairly because they had good carers were: 'because the staff here are really kind and always help'; 'my carers are kind'; 'because they listen to both sides of the story and try and help you'; 'they treat me as one of their own'. For some, making decisions about children fairly was an important part of being looked after fairly: 'because there are always fair decisions made around me'; 'because I know all the time the decisions are being made for my own good and most of the time I agree with them, if I don't I again know that it's all been made for my own good'.

Those who said that they were treated fairly because children were all treated equally said things like: 'because [they] like us all the same and don't treat anyone better or worse'; 'they don't treat me different to anyone else'. One person did make the point that you could still be treated fairly even if you were not treated exactly the same as everyone else, because different people sometimes do have to be treated differently: 'We are all in here for different reasons but sometimes people have to be treated differently for reasons of their own.'

Five children raised one very different reason for saying that they were being treated fairly. This was because of their religion: 'My religion teaches us to treat fairly.'

One person summed up what many told us about being treated fairly by adults looking after you: 'They look after you really well and they treat people the same.'

Out of the 25 children and young people who told us 'it varies' whether they are treated fairly or unfairly by adults looking after them, 23 told us their reasons for saying this. Here are some examples of the reasons they gave.

'Because different staff are different people'

'Depends on my behaviour, if I am being disruptive I don't get treated fairly and get no respect given, but if I am doing well and working with the staff I get treated with respect and treated fairly'

'Because sometimes you don't get treated how you would like – when someone's having problems, everyone else has to suffer'

'Sometimes it depends on the mood of the worker'

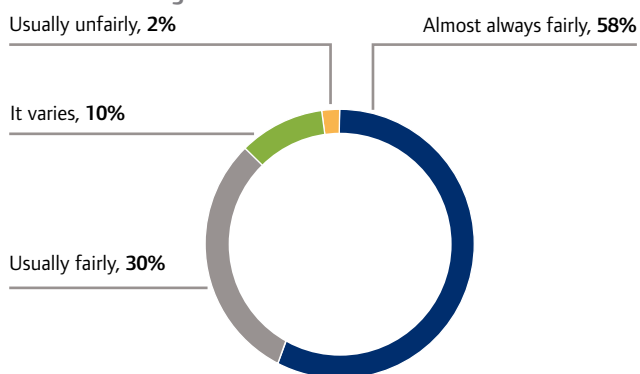
One young person gave us this analysis of their experience of fairness and unfairness as a child in care because of problems in the past: 'My foster dad would hold the attitude of "why should I treat them differently just because of what they've been through" – which I partly agree with but sometimes it wasn't appropriate and sometimes we may have behaved a certain way because of what happened in the past. So I think it's unfair to be removed from your family for whatever reasons and to be expected to be completely normal in a new home. It's just unrealistic.'

'We are all in here for different reasons but sometimes people have to be treated differently for reasons of their own'

How fairly are children treated by school or college staff?

Out of the children and young people who answered our survey, 96% were at school or college. Figure 3 sets out children and young people's views on how fairly or unfairly they are treated by school or college staff.

Figure 3: How fairly or unfairly are children treated by school or college staff?



Percentages are based on the 198 children who answered this question. Nobody said they were almost always treated unfairly.

Again, a very large majority of children and young people (88%) thought that their school or college staff usually or almost always treated them fairly. Very few indeed thought their school or college staff usually treated them unfairly (and none thought staff 'almost always' treated them unfairly).

The top reasons that children and young people gave for saying their school and college staff treated them fairly were the same as the reasons given for fair treatment by adults looking after them at home. We were given reasons by 133 of the 174 children who said their staff treated them usually or almost always fairly. The top reason (from 27%) was that their treatment just is fair. Next (from 17%) was that their school or college staff are friendly or kind. And third (from 10%) was that everyone is given equal treatment.



'If I treat staff with respect they will treat me with respect'

Here are some examples of what children and young people said about being treated fairly by school and college staff.

'The teachers treat us with respect and don't belittle us'

'99% of the time I am treated fairly but once in a blue moon they don't understand and I am misunderstood'

'We have very caring teachers and they are not unfair, of course lots of pupils (including me sometimes) THINK that teachers are being mean but they're actually not'

'They treat people the same'

'They give us rules to abide by and if we don't abide by the rules we have a fair warning'

'If I am upset they will try and be fair and will not have a go at me, instead they will calm me down'

'If I treat staff with respect they will treat me with respect'

For children in care, being treated the same as other people can be very important: 'I get treated just like all the other children that go to my school whether they are in care or not.'

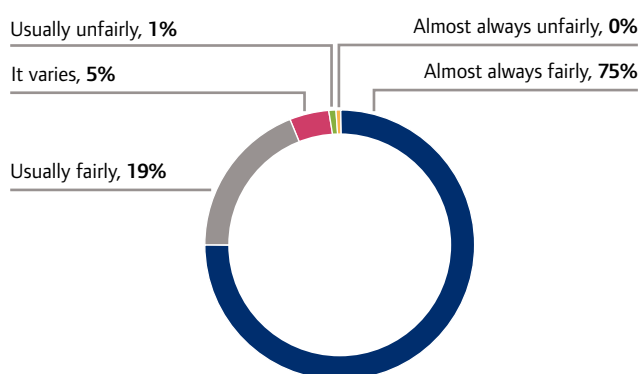
Although only four children told us they were usually treated unfairly by staff at school or college, two of the reasons they gave show very clearly why those children thought this happened: 'the school I go to judges me by my past and they never give me chance to show them I am not like that any more'; 'if one person does something wrong, they blame the rest of the class'.

Children and young people who said 'it varies' when we asked whether their school or college staff treat them unfairly gave a number of different reasons. These included: 'sometimes you get picked on even if other people are doing the same thing'; 'I can be treated unfairly by teachers who don't like me or fairly by teachers who like me'; 'there are so many people and so many things going on that they can't always have their attention on you'.

How fairly are children treated by doctors and health workers?

Our next survey question was to find out how fairly or unfairly children and young people thought they were treated by doctors and other health workers. Figure 4 gives the answers.

Figure 4: How fairly or unfairly are you treated by doctors and health workers?



Percentages are based on the 208 children who answered the question. Only one person answered 'almost always unfairly'.

This time, even more children and young people reported being usually or almost always treated fairly. Altogether 94% said they thought they were usually or almost always treated fairly by doctors and health workers, and only three out of 208 children reported being treated usually or almost always unfairly.

Here are the top reasons given from the 146 children who gave us their reasons for saying they were treated fairly.

- The way I am treated is just fair (22% of the children).
- They are kind (19% of the children).
- They look after me well (15% of the children).
- They are helpful/supportive (12% of the children).

Kindness by doctors and health workers was important to feeling they treated you fairly: 'I'm treated fairly because they help and support you'; 'because they are always caring and understanding and they always ask you how you are feeling and what's wrong and how they can help you, and they are always very gentle and never unfair on people'. Being given the right treatment was an important part of fairness by doctors and health workers: 'I only go to the doctors when I am ill and when I do go they always give me the treatment I need'; 'my doctor always takes into account my needs as opposed to the majority of children'; 'whenever I see them they always help me to get better'; 'I reckon they take great care in my health and my mental health considering I have bipolar'. Some thought that being fair goes with working as a doctor or other health worker: 'It is their job to treat you fairly as their job is to keep you healthy.'

For a few people, having injections you needed – or being able to choose not to have them if they weren't essential – were important to doctors and health workers being fair. One person said, 'Even though I do not like having injections that's what they recommend is best for me which stops me from getting ill'; but another said, 'They do not give me a type of injection if I do not want to.'

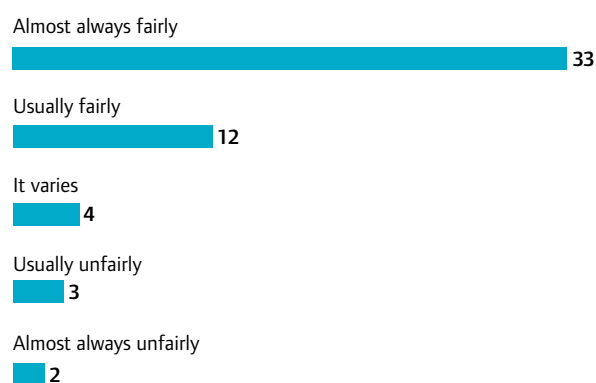
In one of our discussion groups, children told us about two things they find unfair when seeing doctors or health professionals. One was **having to wait for long periods whenever seeing a doctor or health worker**: 'Waiting for ages is unfair.' The other was that **some health workers did not always take a child's health worries seriously**, saying things like 'that's nothing' or 'you're fine' rather than explaining things or dealing with something that was worrying the child.

One person's reason for why they chose the answer they did to our survey was very helpful in understanding how answers sometimes get chosen: 'I don't see doctors enough to say and I don't think I've ever seen a health worker, so I clicked a random one.'

How fairly are children in care treated by social workers?

We had answers to this question from 54 children who were both in care and told us they had a social worker. Figure 5 shows how fairly or unfairly they thought their social workers treated them.

Figure 5: How fairly or unfairly are you treated by social workers?



Figures are numbers of children from the 54 who answered this question. The numbers were too small to give percentages.

The large majority (45) of the children with social workers thought they were treated usually or almost always fairly by them. Five of the 54 children answering this question thought their social workers treated them usually or almost always unfairly. The main reasons children gave for saying their social workers treated them fairly were that they were doing their best to help with the children's problems, they were friendly, and they listened to what the children had to say. 'My social worker has time for me and listens to my choices, she tries her best to get me what I want or what will make me more happier in my stay'; 'if I have a problem she always talks with me and tries to sort it out'; 'my social worker is one of the best social workers I could ever have as they do everything quickly for me'.

Here are two of the reasons given by children who said their social workers treated them unfairly: 'I haven't heard from her for months'; 'my social worker doesn't spend much time with me but she spends most time with my mum and sympathises with her more'. One discussion group also told us they thought that social workers sometimes treat some parents more favourably than others.

Children and young people who said it varies whether their social worker treats them fairly or unfairly gave many different reasons for saying this. Here are a few examples: 'sometimes my social worker can be OK but not always'; 'there are times when she doesn't keep me informed'; 'if I'm cheeky with them which sometimes happens, they get annoyed and be unfair with me'.

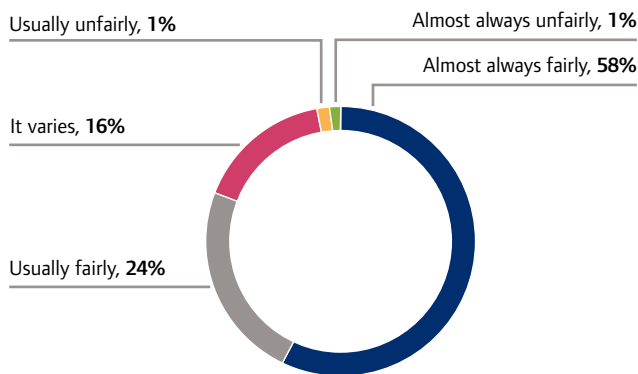
'My social worker has time for me and listens to my choices'

PHOTO REDACTED DUE TO THIRD PARTY RIGHTS OR OTHER LEGAL ISSUES

How fairly are children treated by their friends?

Figure 6 shows how fairly or unfairly children thought they were treated by their friends.

Figure 6: How fairly or unfairly are you treated by your friends?



Percentages are based on the 209 children who answered the question.

Overall, 82% of children and young people answering this question thought their friends usually or almost always treated them fairly, 16% said it varies, and six children (2%) said their friends usually or almost always treated them unfairly.

Five top reasons for saying that friends treated you usually or almost always fairly came from the 127 children who gave us reasons.

- They do just treat me fairly (25% of the children).
- They are kind (17% of the children).
- We usually get on with each other (17% of the children).
- Just because we are friends (14% of the children).
- They are there when I need them (12% of the children).

Being fair is clearly for many people part of what being friends is all about, and it goes along with being kind, getting on well, and being there to support each other when needed. Some quotations say this much more personally: 'usually I am treated fairly by my friends, but sometimes we fall out, but most of the time they will support us through'; 'I have a great group of friends who always stick by my side through everything'; 'my friends are the people who listen to all my problems and they are ever so trustworthy'; 'even though we are from different races, and live in different countries with different backgrounds, we put our differences aside and just get along'; 'if my friends did not treat me fairly then they would not be friends'.

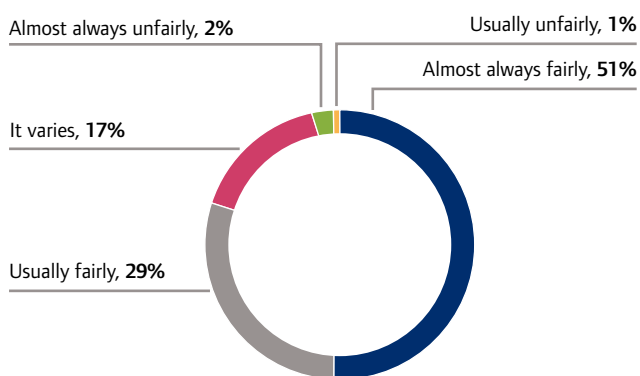
There were two main reasons for children saying that it varies whether their friends treat them fairly or unfairly. One was that friends treat each other fairly while they are getting on well together, but can treat each other unfairly at times they are not getting on so well; 'Sometimes we get along, sometimes we don't.' The other was that sometimes people you thought were friends can also tease or even bully you: 'sometimes some people at school annoy me when they think it is funny and I don't think it is funny'; 'sometimes I get bullied'. One person wrote about how sometimes friendship seems unfair if you give more to your friends than they give back to you: 'Some of my friends do not help me when I need help, but I always try hard to help them.'

'My friends are the people who listen to all my problems and they are ever so trustworthy'

How fairly are children treated by other children and young people generally?

The answers to this question in our web survey are set out in Figure 7.

Figure 7: How fairly or unfairly are you treated by children and young people generally?



Percentages are based on the 211 children who answered the question.

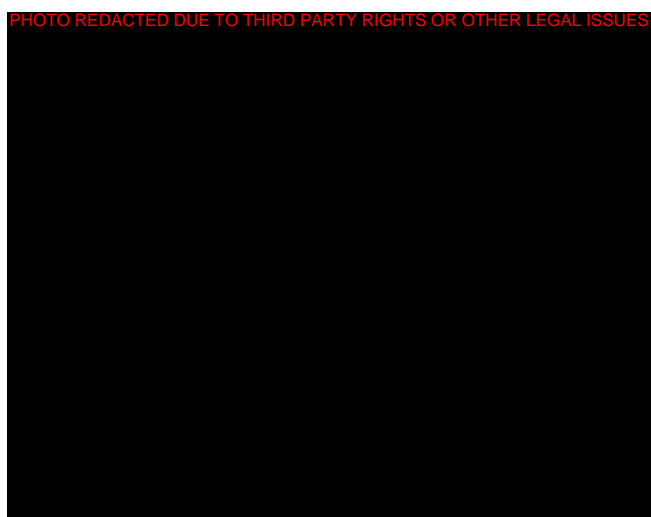
Overall, 80% of the children and young people told us that other children and young people either usually or almost always treat them fairly. Only 3% said they usually or always treat them unfairly. So **children were telling us that they were treated almost as fairly by children and young people generally as they were by their own friends.** As with friends, getting on well together was given as an important reason for being treated fairly. One in 10 (10% of the 113 children who gave us their reasons for saying they were fairly treated by other children and young people generally) told us that **respecting others was an important part of treating each other fairly.**

Examples of how people are treated fairly by other children and young people were: 'if you're alright with them they are alright with you'; 'I can't remember the last time I was left out by young people'; 'to get respect you give respect'. Some gave us examples of how having had some of the same experiences in the past could help people to get on and treat each other

fairly, 'because some kids have been through what I've been through'. Some told us how they avoided being treated unfairly: 'If I see something wrong going on, I keep myself out of it.' For some, there could be problems of unfairness some of the time, but they were usually treated fairly and could cope with occasional unfairness: 'some young children make jokes about me, but I don't take it too seriously'; 'you would be bullied at times because I was in care, but that was only a small minority. Most people understand and don't mind what background I come from'.

Children who told us it varies whether they are treated fairly or unfairly told us how this depended on who they were with, and on the moods people were in: 'it varies depending on the moods and behaviours of other young people within the home'; 'it depends on the group of people – most people judge you by the way you look'; 'it varies because some children be nice and helpful to you and some be nasty'.

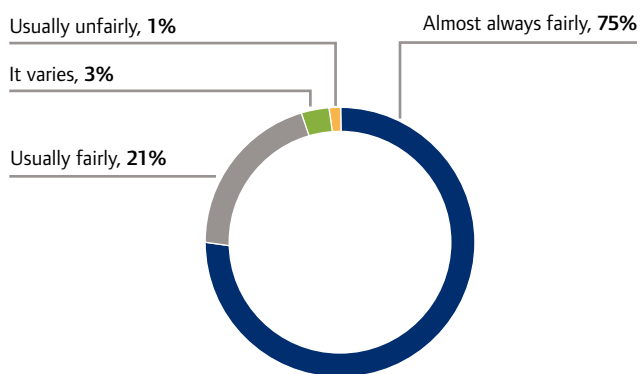
The very few children who said they were usually or always treated unfairly by other children and young people gave us very clear reasons on why they thought this happened: 'they say I am a loner and a weirdo'; 'they don't like where I'm from'; and one simply said that they knew they were 'too cheeky' to other people.



How fairly are children treated by the adults who run activities they take part in?

In many of our consultations, children and young people have told us that activities are very important to them. Many activities are run by adults who are not the carers or teachers of the children, and so we were interested to know how fairly or unfairly children thought these adults treated them. Figure 8 gives the answer.

Figure 8: How fairly or unfairly are you treated by adults running activities you go to?



Percentages are based on the 146 children who answered the question. Nobody answered 'almost always unfairly'.

Altogether 151 children and young people in our web survey told us they took part in organised activities or hobbies. Of these, 146 answered our question about how fairly they were treated by the adults running their activities. A very large majority, 96%, of these told us that the adults running those activities usually or always treated them fairly. Not one said that these adults 'almost always' treated them unfairly. The most usual reason given for being treated fairly by

adults running activities was that they are kind and nice people. That answer came from 11% of the 130 children who gave us their reasons. Two other answers each came from 9% of those children. These were that **people enjoy themselves doing fun activities, making people feel they are treated fairly, and that the adults who run activities give children encouragement and support through those activities.**

Some children explained these reasons further: 'the activities I do are usually run well and are very good fun'; 'they involve me in everything'; 'they always encourage me and help me on my way'; 'they try and do the best for you as normally they run it because they like it so they will want to see young people do well at what they do'. One young person commented that they choose which activities to do, and 'if they were not being fair then I would stop that activity'.

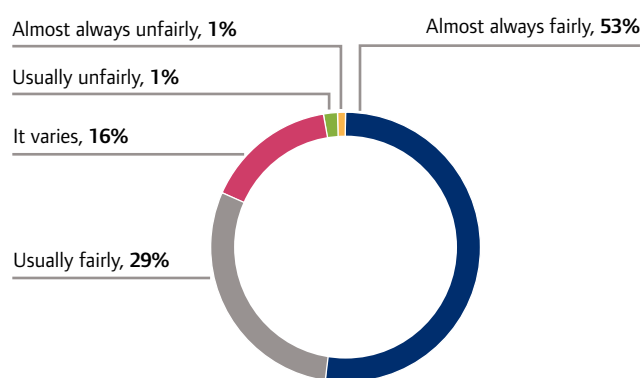
A few children even told us how the adults running activities can stay fair even when things go wrong: 'if we play football activities and I get tripped up they give the others a red card'; 'they always treat me fairly and I get treated nicely even if I am rude, which teaches me to be polite'.

'They always treat me fairly and I get treated nicely even if I am rude, which teaches me to be polite'

How fairly are children treated by the adults they are buying something from or paying for a service?

There are many times when children and young people, like anyone else, are being given a service, like using a train or bus, or are buying something. We asked how fairly or unfairly children and young people felt they were treated by adults they were actually paying for something. Figure 9 gives the answers from our web survey.

Figure 9: How fairly or unfairly are you treated by adults you are paying for something?



Percentages are based on the 208 children who answered the question.

Overall, children and young people reported a high level of fairness from adults they were paying for something, with 82% saying they were usually or almost always treated fairly, 16% that it varies, and only 2% (five children) that they were usually or almost always treated unfairly. The most common

reasons given by people who said they were usually or almost always treated fairly by these adults were that these adults were kind, friendly, helpful and patient. 'The people in the shops are just as nice to us as they are to other people'; 'always helpful and friendly and are patient if I need time to count out coins or putting my money away'; 'they're always helpful and I get what I paid for'; 'I have never been ignored and have never been refused to be served in a shop'; 'they see that I am a child so they are always trying to help'.

Some children and young people explained to us that they felt they were usually treated properly as the customer, like anybody else, 'because we are paying for the service and products we are buying so it's only fair for them to treat me and others well'; 'because I am their customer and otherwise I wouldn't pay if they were rude'.

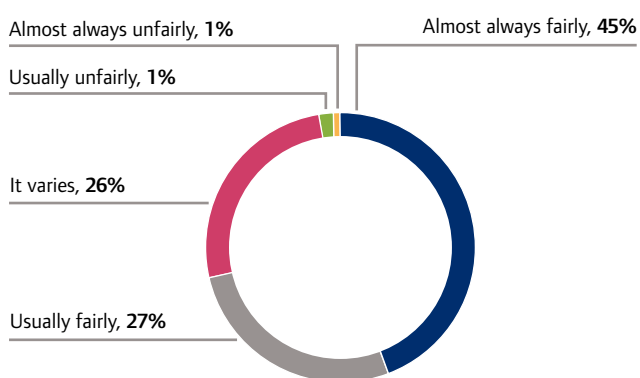
Eighteen children and young people told us that adults they are paying for something vary in whether they treat them fairly or unfairly. They thought this was because there are some people who tend to ignore young people, even if they are customers, or who think young people are bad. A few said that they found some shopkeepers to be racist, and others to be generally grumpy or angry, or likely to 'give you funny looks': 'some people look like they don't want me there'; 'because I am a teenager some adults think bad of me'; 'sometimes they say racist comments'. One person gave us this experience of using a young person's free bus pass: 'Bus drivers are really uptight and do not like me travelling with my free bus pass. They always assume it's invalid even though I was given it to support me.'

'The people in the shops are just as nice to us as they are to other people'

How fairly are children treated by the general public?

Figure 10 shows how fairly or unfairly children and young people told us they were treated by the public generally.

Figure 10: How fairly or unfairly are you treated by the general public?



Percentages are based on the 206 children who answered the question.

Fewer than three quarters (72%) of the children thought they were usually or almost always treated fairly by the general public. Only 2% (five children) thought they were usually or almost always treated unfairly, but **over a quarter (26%) thought it varied how fairly or unfairly they were treated as young people by the general public.**

The most common reason given by those who said they were usually or almost always treated fairly by the general public was that people are generally polite and friendly towards them. In the same way, the usual reasons given by those who said it varied how fairly or unfairly they were treated by the general public were that sometimes people could be unpleasant rather than polite and friendly, and that some could be racist. Examples from our survey were: 'people can be polite and helpful but others are rude and push past you in the street'; 'it depends who I bump into'; 'some people might be kind and some people might be nasty'.

Out of the five children who said they were usually or always treated unfairly by the general public, one said they found the public mainly rude and selfish. Another said that they suffered racism from the public because of their religion and clothing, being told to 'get out of England', which they said 'makes me feel hurt and sad inside'.

A few children told us that they could not really say whether the general public would treat them fairly or unfairly, because they 'never really talk to the general public'.

Some children and young people told us that **how they behaved towards other people made a great difference to how fairly they were treated in return:** 'if you are polite and considerate to them, they are usually OK back'; 'people stay out of my way and I stay out of theirs'; 'I never give anyone a reason to be unfair to me in public'; 'I smile at people and I think that gives them positive vibes'.

PHOTO REDACTED DUE TO THIRD PARTY RIGHTS OR OTHER LEGAL ISSUES

Here are some quotations from children and young people about how the public sometimes treats them fairly and sometimes unfairly.

‘Because they don’t know you they make a first impression, so they often treat you on how they think of you’

‘Not everyone is nice’

‘There are many people in the public with different views and opinions’

‘Some people don’t like kids’

‘Some people always push in front of me in the queue because I’m smaller than them’

‘Some are racist, some are not’

‘Once I didn’t mean to walk into this man’s wheelchair but he shouted at me and called me stupid’

One young person summed up how they saw difficulties between young people and the public in general: ‘Negative stereotypes. Bad press about young people gets the general public’s back up and causes them to make assumptions about how young people are, which in turn makes young people defensive when treated unfairly.’

PHOTO REDACTED DUE TO THIRD PARTY RIGHTS OR OTHER LEGAL ISSUES

Being treated fairly at work

Only nine young people in our survey were in work. Every one of these told us that they were almost always treated fairly by the person in charge of them at work. One spoke very positively of their experience of being accepted at work regardless of their care background: 'My boss at work knows that I'm in care but doesn't seem to care.'

Out of the nine young people in work, six said their work colleagues almost always treated them fairly, one that they usually treated them fairly, and one that it varies. One said they were treated fairly by work colleagues because their work team were nice people, one that they were fairly treated because they were seen as funny and hard to dislike, and one said, 'They don't care about me being in care.'

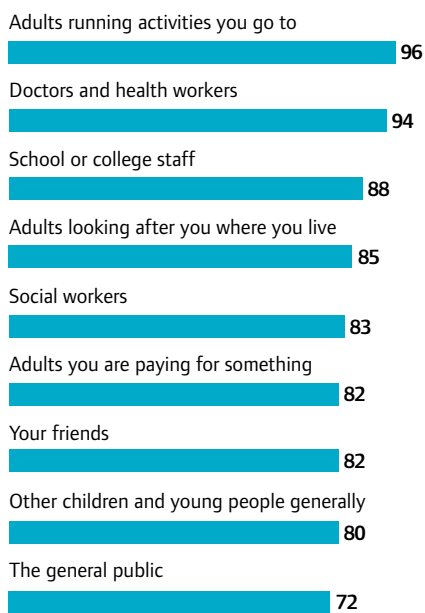
PHOTO REDACTED DUE TO THIRD PARTY RIGHTS OR OTHER LEGAL ISSUES



The overall view on fairness and unfairness

We put children and young people’s assessments of fairness and unfairness from different people and in different settings together, to give us a ‘league table of fairness’ in Figure 11.

Figure 11: A league table of how fairly children say they are treated by different groups – the percentage reporting being treated usually or almost always fairly

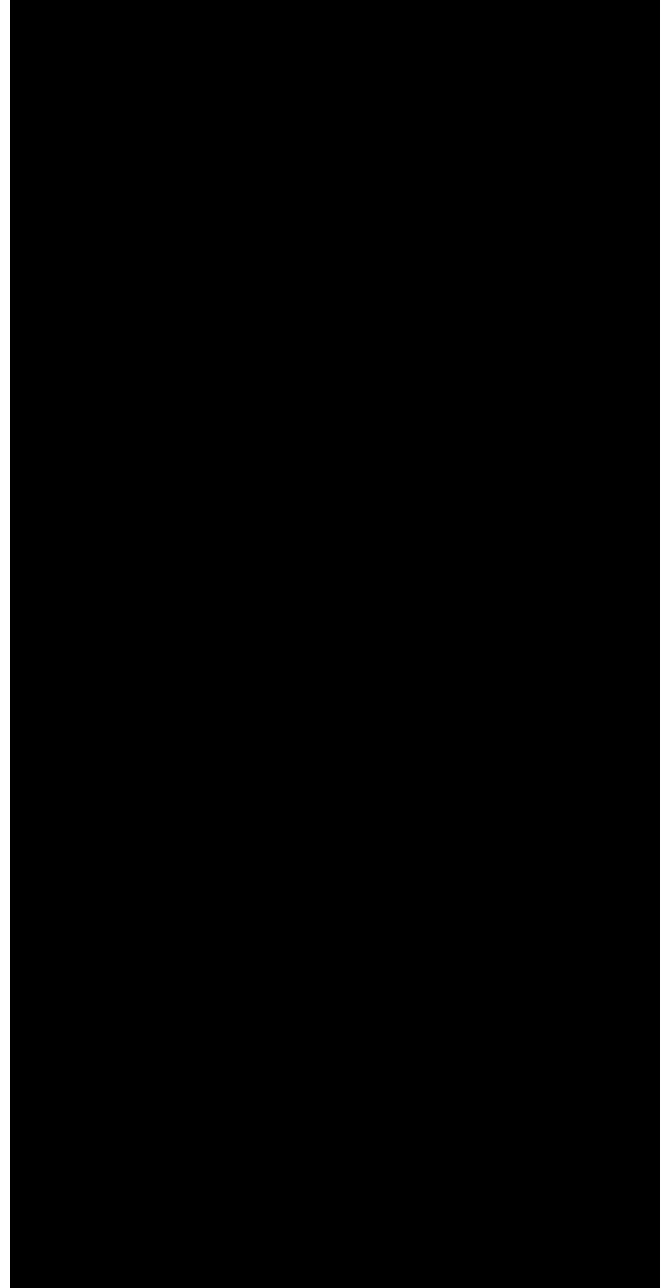


The percentages shown are based on the percentages of children answering.

Overall it is clear that the children and young people we asked in our survey thought that **the people who treat children most fairly are adults running activities, and doctors and other health workers, followed by school or college staff, then adults looking after children. Friends did not score so highly, being rated the same as people you were paying for a service or buying something from. Friends were only rated as slightly more fair than other children and young people generally. The general public were rated lowest for treating**

children and young people fairly. However, even the general public were still reported by the large majority of children to treat them usually or almost always fairly.

PHOTO REDACTED DUE TO THIRD PARTY RIGHTS OR OTHER LEGAL ISSUES



Examples of being treated unfairly

We wanted to know what sorts of things children and young people saw as unfair. When we asked children and young people in our survey to tell us about the last time they were treated unfairly, we were given lots of different examples. **Only one main type of unfair treatment came out as common, and that was being wrongly blamed for something.** For example, 'I was blamed for something I didn't do and I had to suffer the consequences.' Out of the 148 people who answered this question in our survey, 14% told us about being wrongly blamed.

It was also clear from the examples people gave that being treated unfairly, even by other children or young people, is not the same as being bullied. Only four children told us that the last time they were treated unfairly, it was by being bullied. One of our discussion groups thought that the main difference between bullying and unfairness was that being treated unfairly happens every now and again, but it becomes bullying if the same person is always treated unfairly: 'Bullying happens over a prolonged period of time, being treated unfairly is mostly just one time.'

Some gave us examples of being treated unfairly by other children: 'in my last school some children played with other people but not me'; 'my sister... was having a bad day and took it out on me as usual'; 'one of the new girls that I was first to meet and to tell her about the school – I got on really well with her until we had our first day back and she deserted me and went off with one of my best friends'.

Others told us about times they were unfairly treated by professional adults: 'when I was grounded for something I didn't do'; 'when my social worker didn't tell me what happened in court'; 'one of the teachers at my school didn't give me a chance to explain myself, she just excluded me'. We were also given examples of adults treating children unfairly in shops or on buses: 'I was in [a shop] looking for a toy car for my cousin, and they thought I was stealing, which I wasn't'; 'I was not allowed on the bus with my free pass as the bus driver questioned my travel direction, even though it was the bus that took me to my

school'. One group told us that 'sometimes staff start arguments and then young people get into trouble'. One group told us they thought it was unfair when at a home or a school everyone has to do the same activity, often because there are not enough staff to give people a choice.

Discussion groups told us of some other examples of people being treated unfairly. Some thought that bringing the police in to deal with bad behaviour in a children's home could be very unfair. One young person told us how he had been arrested for damaging his own property: 'How can I get done for criminal damage to my own property?' Another example of something people thought was unfair was having your property confiscated as a punishment when it wasn't something dangerous: 'Staff shouldn't be able to take things off you as a punishment, especially when you have earned money and bought them yourself.'

In order to be fair, punishment needs to fit how serious the 'crime' was. One group gave us this example: 'If you are late for supper and you keep everyone waiting, you are punished. Fair. If you are late for supper by 30 seconds, you are told off. Unfair.'

Some people told us that they thought it was unfair that something that was allowed in one home or school was not allowed in another one, without any good reason for these differences. One example was: 'All the homes I have been in we got seconds but it's different here.'

Bad or slow service when you were paying for something was also discussed in our groups as an example of unfairness. This was seen as unfair, not because you were being treated differently from other people, but because it was only fair that if you paid for something you should get good service. One young person said that it was unfair that at their birthday party, the food which had been ordered and paid for arrived so late that the party was over. Another said that last time they went for a meal in a place that was not crowded, 'They had three chefs but it took a very long time for two small pizzas to come out.'

Reacting to being treated unfairly

In our survey we asked what children and young people had done about it the last time they were treated really unfairly. The three top answers, from the 126 children and young people who answered this question, were **telling a parent, telling a teacher, and not doing anything at all**. Each of these answers was given by one in 10 of those who told us what they had done.

Children told us about very different ways of reacting to unfair treatment. Some argued their case: 'I told them that I didn't do it and eventually they realised it was not me.' Others just accepted it: 'I completed my punishment and got on with my life.' Yet others were just upset: 'I kept myself to myself'; 'I just sat down

and started to play darts and I was really sad'; 'just walked away to calm myself down'.

Some children told us they thought they had reacted too strongly to being treated unfairly: 'I ran away'; 'I kicked off and was sent to my room'; 'I went mad and got arrested which I regret'.

Very few children had made a complaint about how they had been treated: 'I wrote a letter to the gallery manager and he said that he was sorry about what had happened.' One of these was the young person who had not been allowed to go on the bus to school with their bus pass: 'I went to the bus station and made a formal complaint about the bus driver.'

PHOTO REDACTED DUE TO THIRD PARTY RIGHTS OR OTHER LEGAL ISSUES



Examples of being treated especially fairly

We also asked about the last time children had been treated especially fairly. We had answers to this from 152 children. There was **no main type of especially fair treatment**, and 15% of the children simply said that they could not give examples because they were just treated fairly all the time: 'I can't name a specific time since there are lots of times.'

Some children gave us examples of how being listened to meant being treated fairly: 'when everyone in boarding was in trouble I was allowed to have my views heard'; 'when my parents asked me about my decision on something and my views got taken into account!'. Others gave examples of sharing between children: 'when I was with my friends and they all shared their sweets with me on the bus back from hockey'; 'taking turns on the computer with the other young people at my care home'. Some wrote about being treated fairly when being told off or punished:

'I was late for the lesson and the teacher didn't shout at me, but he gave me a warning'; 'when I got in trouble for using bad language the teacher got me and the other girl who also used bad language and told both of us off for it'. Some told us how they had been fairly treated by the care system: 'when my case manager told me about my care plan'; 'the children's guardian did a proper assessment and told the court that social services assessments were totally wrong and she got me an independent social worker to redo the assessments'. A few wrote about being praised – 'when my English teacher kept me behind to tell me what a fantastic piece of work I had done', 'he was pinpointing all my good qualities' – or being treated fairly by adults in shops: 'The last time I went into a shop and bought something I was treated fairly by the adult.'

'When everyone in boarding was in trouble I was allowed to have my views heard'

How to be treated more fairly

We then asked what a child or young person could do for themselves that would make it more likely that other people would treat them fairly. Here are the top answers, from the 137 children who answered this question.

- Treat other people nicely (26% of the children).
- Treat others the way you want to be treated (18% of the children).
- Be fair yourself (15% of the children).
- Tell people how you feel about things (10% of the children).

This shows two main ideas about how to make people more likely to treat you fairly. **First, behave towards other people in the way you want them to behave towards you – nicely and fairly. Second, tell someone when you feel that you are being treated especially fairly or unfairly.** The next suggestions on the list, although they came from fewer than one in 10 children, were on the same lines – respecting other people and their opinions, and behaving well and responsibly yourself.

Here are some examples of what children and young people wrote about treating others the way you want to be treated yourself: ‘treating them fairly so they will treat me fairly back’; ‘take other people’s opinions and respect them’; ‘give respect to them and be kind to them as that is what I expect back’; ‘be kind and fair and don’t leave people out or be really nasty to them’; ‘treat them fairly, it’s like saying “what comes around goes around”’. One person put this the other way round, saying that if others treat you fairly, you should treat them fairly back: ‘treat them how they treat me’.

Our discussion groups told us about how important it is not to stay quiet when you are treated unfairly, but to say something about it, to put your points across, ask questions about it and tell somebody.

Some gave us some other ideas, like being the sort of person who is likely to be treated fairly anyway: ‘Be nice, kind, funny, outgoing and happy, that always works.’

‘Treat them fairly, it’s like saying “what comes around goes around”’

How it feels to be treated unfairly

We asked children and young people to tell us how they felt when they were treated unfairly by others. Altogether, 169 children and young people answered this question. Three feelings stood out from all the others.

- Sad and upset (51% of the children).
- Angry (16% of the children).
- Bad (15% of the children).

Children wrote about very strong feelings indeed when they were treated unfairly. Here are some direct quotations.

'I feel annoyed and angry and upset'

'It makes me feel small like I am insignificant and unimportant'

'That I mean nothing in the world like a speck of dust and that no one likes me'

'Unhappy inside and I didn't think I did anything wrong. I also feel anger to the person who is treating me unfairly'

'Like I am a piece of junk and that I am wrong, I am not cool enough to be their friends'

'Sad and unhappy – it just makes me want to cry or scream!'

'Tell someone or if no one there run away'

'It makes me feel like I have no friends and people don't want me around and that I am not important and it makes me feel like someone is constantly punching my stomach'

'Crap, disappointed, feel like no point in living'

'Sometimes I am not bothered, other times it makes me angry'

'I get really upset, it feels like there is someone inside me killing every happiness I have'

'Excluded. Paranoid. De-valued. Frustrated'

'I hate it but take it in my stride as I am a true believer that everything happens for a reason, it's all about staying positive especially when you are in care'

'Disappointed about being a teenager'

'Angry, frustrated, upset. I distrust Authority figures even more'

'I feel like making them go through what they made me go through'

These are some of the strongest feelings children have ever written or spoken about to us in our consultations over the years. **From what they wrote to us for this report, children and young people feel more angry and upset about being treated unfairly than about almost anything else we have ever asked them about.**

As well as this, children and young people also told us very strongly that they wanted this report to result in children being treated more fairly in the future, but thought it would just be read and ignored: ‘now I have finished [this survey], you won’t even care or listen’; ‘they don’t do nothing about it’; ‘what I say will not influence the decision makers, so why bother?’; ‘don’t just give a reassuring acknowledgement but act upon what you hear and show what you have done to shift the negative stereotypes and despicable quality that exists in some areas of society where young people should have a right to be listened to’.

Children in our discussion groups told us that being treated unfairly by adults can feel particularly bad, partly because it was harder to do something about it or to tell someone about it, and partly because ‘if adults treat you unfairly it can feel even more unfair because they should be more mature’.

‘I get really upset, it feels like there is someone inside me killing every happiness I have’

How it feels when someone else is treated unfairly

The next list gives the top answers when we asked how it makes people feel when they see someone else being treated especially unfairly. We had answers to this question from 167 children and young people.

- Sad and upset (22% of the children).
- Angry (15% of the children).
- I try to help them (15% of the children).
- Bad (14% of the children).
- I feel sorry for them (14% of the children).
- I stand up to the unfair person if I can (11% of the children).

Seeing someone else being treated unfairly makes children feel sad, upset, angry and bad, in the same way as being treated unfairly themselves. As well as feeling sorry for someone else, some children would try to help a person being treated unfairly, if they were able to. Sometimes, though, this is not something you can do: 'I want to stick up for them but I can't really do that if it's a teacher that is being unfair to someone. If it's someone around my age being unfair I usually help the victim'; 'I want to do something about it. I do if I can, but I can't always help which annoys me'.

Some wrote to tell us that they felt bad about someone else being treated unfairly, and they wished that they had actually done something about it: 'I want to be someone that stands out of the crowd and stands up to that meanie'; 'I think I need to get involved because it is out of order'. We heard that it can feel great if you do stand up for someone else who is being treated unfairly – 'like a hero because I stand up for them'.

PHOTO REDACTED DUE TO THIRD PARTY RIGHTS OR OTHER LEGAL ISSUES



'I want to stick up for them but I can't really do that if it's a teacher that is being unfair to someone'

How it feels to be treated especially fairly

One hundred and sixty-eight children and young people told us how they felt when someone treated them especially fairly. Only one answer stood out – **being treated especially fairly made them feel good and happy**. This answer came from a huge 85% of all the people who wrote us answers to this question. ‘Happy and like I have a million pieces of me are about to explode’; ‘it makes me feel full of life and that people want me around and I am important’; ‘u feel good inside and out’; ‘it makes me feel valued as part of the community’.

‘Happy and like I have a million pieces of me are about to explode’

How it feels when someone else is treated especially fairly

We got much the same answer from the 164 people who told us how they felt when they saw someone else being treated especially fairly. Eighty per cent of these said that **seeing someone else treated fairly made them feel good and happy too**: ‘I would be very happy for them’; ‘like people are kind and that’s how I want life to be’.

A few children and young people did tell us, though, that **seeing someone else treated especially fairly could make you feel jealous if you were not being treated so fairly yourself**: ‘happy for them and a bit jealous’; ‘if I’m being treated unfairly and they are being treated fairly I feel angry’; ‘I feel left out and want some attention’.

What makes some people more likely to be treated unfairly?

We wanted to know if there was anything that made some people more likely to get treated unfairly, either by other children and young people or by adults. We had answers on this from 141 children and young people in our survey.

Here is the list of top answers about things that make some children and young people get treated unfairly by other children and young people.

- They look different (14% of the children).
- They misbehave or are bad (13% of the children).
- They are from a different culture or race (13% of the children).
- They act differently from others (12% of the children).
- They treat others unfairly (11% of the children).

Eleven per cent of the children said they didn't know anything that might make someone more likely than anyone else to be treated unfairly by other children or young people.

Here are some examples of what individual children wrote: 'when people have disabilities or when they are a different race'; 'they might have a disability, be poor, or have glasses'; 'maybe if they are not particularly nice or hard to be around, people may not feel that they want to be respectful towards them'; 'if they are disabled or in care'; 'if someone's different, styles, accent, sexuality etc'. One person said that people could make themselves unpopular and likely to be treated unfairly if they got others into trouble – 'if they grass people up by telling a member of staff'. Someone summed up how unfairness can happen in society generally: 'The way they dress or speak or the friends they have. There are a lot of different "groups" in today's society and they often don't get on well at all.'

We also asked about things that make some children and young people more likely to be treated unfairly by adults. We had answers to this question from 131 children and young people, and here are the top answers.

- They misbehave or get into trouble (34% of the children).
- Their attitude (11% of the children).
- They are rude or unkind to others (10% of the children).

Fourteen per cent of the children said they simply didn't know what might make someone likely to be treated unfairly by adults.

Here are some examples of what children wrote in answering this question: 'not being very good at the work they are being set or not having a good attitude about something they are doing'; 'they do not do as they are told'; 'they may be rude so the adults don't like them'; 'if they have done something in the past'. One young person simply wrote that adults tend not to like or treat fairly anyone who is 'gobby and loud'.

'They may be rude so the adults don't like them'

One person pointed out that unfairness at school could be because someone was a favourite, rather than because someone was treated particularly unfairly: 'They could be good at the subject or sport and so they are liked more.' Another explained how adults could come to treat someone less fairly than others: 'If they are naughty all the time and don't show respect, if the staff/adults are trying to help and they just throw it back in their faces they are most likely to not treat them as fair as others.'

We also asked whether being part of any particular group of people usually made it likely that you would be treated unfairly. A total of 134 children and young people answered this question. **Children and young people thought that there are two main groups of people who are likely to get treated unfairly: young people with disabilities and young people from a culture or religion different from most other people they are with.** Our discussion groups also told us that people who go to a private school and wear its uniform could be treated differently and unfairly when outside the school, and particular groups inside a school – such as choristers – could be treated unfairly inside the school. Sometimes this was to do with other people expecting a lot from them. Inside a secure children's home, people there for different reasons could be treated very differently – for example those there for their own protection rather than after committing a crime – and young people thought this could become unfair.

In some groups, people thought that **younger children can be treated less fairly.** They are the ones who have fewest privileges in a school, and they may miss out on things because people think (sometimes wrongly) they are too young. One group told us that shopkeepers sometimes short-change younger children if the child is not good enough at checking their change to realise this, or does not have the confidence to challenge the shopkeeper if they do think they have been short-changed.

Some discussion groups thought that **boys and girls were often treated differently in ways that could be unfair.** Staff often reacted differently to the same action, depending on whether it was done by a boy or a girl. In one group, we were told: 'Some girls hug staff, boys can't, that's not fair.'

One of our discussion groups told us that members of **staff in some places get different food and more food than the children and young people get,** and they thought that was unfair. They thought that everybody living in the same establishment, whether they are staff or young people, should get the same food.

PHOTO REDACTED DUE TO THIRD PARTY RIGHTS OR OTHER LEGAL ISSUES



Generally, we were told that **‘being different’ makes anyone more likely to be treated unfairly, by other children or by adults.** This might be ‘children with disabilities or that are different or always getting into trouble or if they’re adopted or fostered’; ‘people who wear hoodies and tracksuits or people who vandalise things’; ‘children in care’; ‘quiet children’; or it might be those who ‘have glasses or are a bit overweight’; who are ‘ginger, black, Chinese, Japanese’; who are ‘autistic, have a disability, are not as skinny as a model’; and ‘bullies’. As one person put it, ‘some children who look different or are different are usually treated badly by other children’. One of our discussion groups that discussed disabled children being treated unfairly said, ‘Nobody is normal’ and ‘Just because you have something wrong with you doesn’t mean you’re not normal.’ Another group told us how good it can be if you are too ‘different’ in one place, but then move somewhere where you are accepted: ‘At my old school I felt like a part of the puzzle that didn’t fit. Here I feel like I can be myself.’

Many in our discussions told us that **it can be unfair if someone else is treated better than you are, without anything particularly unfair actually happening to you.** Many in our groups agreed that favouritism leads to unfairness. Sometimes a particular child is simply a favourite child, gets treated better than other people, and gets away with more than other people. A rather different example was where someone who had run away was treated especially well when they got back, and had things that other people were not allowed: ‘She gets spoiled, it’s discrimination.’ Someone with a particular health problem could very easily come to be treated better than others, and allowed to get away with more than others, and this could then become unfairness.

Sometimes, when **someone who behaves badly behaves slightly better than usual, they get more attention and more benefits** than anyone else can get. One person told us: ‘For people who do bad things, things just get better. I’m thinking of doing bad things just to get better things.’ They

thought how you are treated should depend on your behaviour, and the same rules should apply to everyone: ‘If young people do something good they should get something good. If you do something bad you shouldn’t get anything.’

A similar message came from another group, who told us that if you are usually well behaved, or do well at things, you can be treated unfairly if you slip up once in a while, because staff expect more of you and are shocked. If someone is always playing up, staff simply expect that and think it’s normal.

Discussion groups also told us that **people can be treated unfairly because of one bad thing happening, or treated in a particular way because of their past,** rather than being treated as they deserve now. It is unfair to ‘label a person and treat them differently because of one incident’. ‘It’s unfair to judge you for the past.’

Finally on this question, we heard how the general public can become unfair to young people: ‘Lots of adults take against teenagers – just because of all the stuff in the media they assume all teenagers are the same without getting to know them, they assume that you aren’t going to be very nice.’

‘Some children who look different or are different are usually treated badly by other children’

PHOTO REDACTED DUE TO THIRD PARTY RIGHTS OR OTHER LEGAL ISSUES

Advice on making things fairer

Towards the end of our survey, we asked children and young people whether they had any advice about how they, and adults who look after them, could make children and young people generally be treated more fairly.

One hundred and fifty-three children and young people sent us their suggestions for what children and young people themselves should do to make life fairer for them. One suggestion stood out from all the different suggestions made. This was that **children and young people can make life fairer for themselves if they are polite.**

Here are three very different pieces of advice from children and young people on how to make life fairer.

‘Be more outgoing and open. Sometimes others don’t treat you fairly because they hardly know you, or just feel as if you don’t want to know them. People should just be more sociable’

‘Show their personality and don’t stand for it when you are being treated unfairly. If you make your point and don’t give up, then people will have to listen and treat you fairly’

‘Be more of an open and approachable person. For instance, don’t wear your hood up and have a music player in. Be polite and try not to swear around other people’

One person wrote that it was wrong to expect people to change how they are in order to get others to treat them more fairly: ‘They shouldn’t have to change in any way. It’s their life and if people can’t accept them for who and what they are, then why should they be bothered?’

There were four different pieces of advice for adults on how to treat children and young people more fairly that each came from more than one in 10 of the 142 children and young people who answered this question.

- Help, support and educate them (19% of the children).
- Ask for their views and feelings (18% of the children).
- Treat them kindly (13% of the children).
- Listen and understand more (11% of the children).

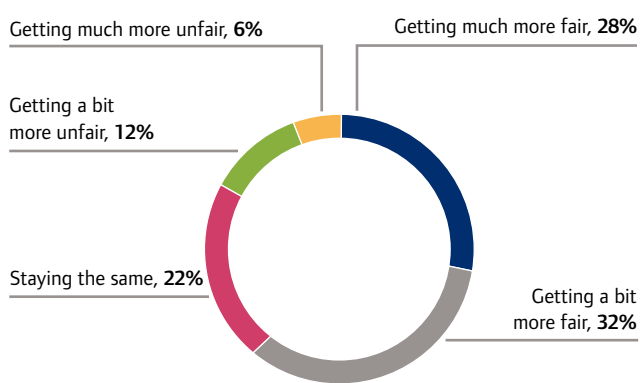
Asking and listening to children and young people were seen as very important for adults to do in order to be fair: ‘listen to people and understand how they are feeling’; ‘talk to them and discuss’; ‘talk more, explain things, be honest’; ‘have an open door policy for any issues’; ‘listen to two sides of a story’. Some wrote about how it is important to be positive about what a person can do – ‘encourage them in every good thing they do’ – or that adults should try to treat children and young people equally: ‘Treat us all as equals, not have one rule for one and not for the other, and give each young person a chance to change.’ It was also important for adults to watch out for unfairness or unhappiness: ‘keeping an eye on them if they do not look happy’; ‘keep an eye on them and be firm with those who are not treating people fairly’.

One young person, writing about their experience in a children’s home, gave this advice for residential staff: ‘1. Don’t treat them unfairly themselves because then it shows to the people in the home that it is right. 2. Activities are always good to get kids to like each other. 3. Bring it up in residents’ meetings. 4. Do keyworking sessions on it.’

Is fairness or unfairness towards children increasing?

So far in this report we have only written about how children and young people think they are being treated now. As our last question, we asked whether they thought things are changing, and whether fairness or unfairness towards children is on the increase these days. Figure 12 gives the answer.

Figure 12: Is the way children and young people are treated getting fairer or more unfair?



Percentages based on the 196 children who answered the question.

As Figure 12 shows, 60% of children and young people in the survey thought that their treatment is getting fairer, compared with 18% who thought it was getting more unfair, and 22% who thought it was not changing. We checked to see if there were any big differences between boys and girls, or between older and younger children, in what they said about this. There were no big differences between those aged under 14 and those aged over 14. Boys, though, were less likely than girls to say that their treatment was getting fairer. Fifty-seven per cent of boys thought things were getting a bit fairer or much fairer, compared with 68% of girls. Boys were not much more likely than girls to say that things were getting more unfair, but more boys than girls thought things were staying the same. Twenty-five per cent of boys thought that things were staying the same, compared with 16% of the girls.

Overall, the children and young people in our survey tell us that **the way children and young people are being treated is changing and it is getting fairer. Those who thought their treatment by others was getting fairer outnumbered those who thought it was getting more unfair by more than three to one.**

PHOTO REDACTED DUE TO THIRD PARTY RIGHTS OR OTHER LEGAL ISSUES

Children's last words on fairness and unfairness

At the end of our survey, we asked whether children or young people had any final messages for adults and the government about fairness and unfairness. These last words come from their answers.

'They should all give us a chance because we are all different and not vandalisers'

'Everyone should have the right to speak if they are being treated unfairly'

'People in the street should get the message that not all people in hoodies should be treated like they are going to do something bad'

'I think people who are treated fairly are normally white and not poor'

'[Unfairness] happens all the time no matter what, and it will be hard to stop no matter what'

'It is important that they know that some things that have an effect on adults can also have an effect on the children'

'I think all adults working with children should promise to treat all children the same'

'I would like all children to have the same as more fortunate children'

PHOTO REDACTED DUE TO THIRD PARTY RIGHTS OR OTHER LEGAL ISSUES



If you would like a version of this report in a different language, or in large print, Braille or audio, please email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk or telephone 0300 123 1231.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

Ofsted
Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.rights4me.org

No. 090116
© Crown copyright 2010

