



Championing Children and Young People in England

**Office of the Children's Commissioner's  
response to the DfE consultation:**

**Children's Safeguarding Performance  
Information Consultation**

**April 2012**

## **Office of the Children's Commissioner**

The Office of the Children's Commissioner is a national organisation led by the Children's Commissioner for England, Dr Maggie Atkinson. The post of Children's Commissioner for England was established by the Children Act 2004. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) underpins and frames all of our work.

The Children's Commissioner has a duty to promote the views and interests of all children in England, in particular those whose voices are least likely to be heard, to the people who make decisions about their lives. She also has a duty to speak on behalf of all children in the UK on non-devolved issues which include immigration, for the whole of the UK, and youth justice, for England and Wales. One of the Children's Commissioner's key functions is encouraging organisations that provide services for children always to operate from the child's perspective.

Under the Children Act 2004 the Children's Commissioner is required both to publish what she finds from talking and listening to children and young people, and to draw national policymakers' and agencies' attention to the particular circumstances of a child or small group of children which should inform both policy and practice.

The Office of the Children's Commissioner has a statutory duty to highlight where we believe vulnerable children are not being treated appropriately in accordance with duties established under international and domestic legislation.

## **The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child**

The UK Government ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 1991.<sup>1</sup> This is the most widely ratified international human rights treaty, setting out what all children and young people need to be happy and healthy. While the Convention is not incorporated into national law, it still has the status of a binding international treaty. By agreeing to the UNCRC the Government has committed itself to promoting and protecting children's rights by all means available to it.

The legislation governing the operation of the Office of the Children's Commissioner requires us to have regard to the Convention in all our activities. Following an independent review of our office in 2010 we are working to promote and protect children's rights in the spirit of the recommendations made in the Dunford report and accepted by the Secretary of State.

In relation to the current consultation, the articles of the Convention which are most relevant to this area of policy are:

- Article 3:** The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all things that affect them.
- Article 12:** Every child has the right to have a say in all matters affecting them, and to have their views taken seriously.
- Article 19:** Governments must do all they can to ensure that children are protected from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect and bad treatment by their parents or anyone else who looks after them.
- Article 25:** If a child lives away from home (in care for example), they have the right to a regular check of their treatment and the way they are cared for.
- Article 20:** If a child cannot be looked after by their family, governments must make sure that they are looked after properly by people who respect the child's religion culture and language.

The response below has therefore been drafted with these articles in mind. We do not propose to respond separately to every consultation question. Rather, we will respond where we feel the UNCRC gives us a locus to do so, and where our existing evidence base gives us a perspective.

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<sup>1</sup> You can view the full text of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights website at: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/crc.htm>. A summary version, produced by UNICEF, is available at: [http://www.unicef.org/crc/files/Rights\\_overview.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/crc/files/Rights_overview.pdf)



# **‘Starting a conversation’ and ‘Actions speak louder than forms’**

## **1. Introduction**

In her Review of child protection, Professor Eileen Munro addressed the need for performance information which can support learning and practice improvement at the local level. Her reports stress that data collection should help map the child’s journey, so giving greater weight to the experience of children and young people and the difference made by services to their lives. The present consultation on performance measures has posed questions that oblige local authorities and their partners in safeguarding to find effective ways of learning about the impact of services from children and young people themselves as part of information gathering at a local level.

In exploring what this might mean to children and young people, we very quickly found that, while this might be the adult agenda, it was not the place to start for those with whom we engaged. Their starting point was nearly always on an individual and personal level. At the beginning of one session a young girl put up her hand and said:

*‘Can I ask something first, if I talk to you does it mean you can change my social worker?’<sup>2</sup>*

This question reflects a fundamental understanding that is required when involving children and young people in measuring performance:

- Children and young people find it hard to talk or evaluate service provision at the organisational level if they cannot inform or influence what happens to them at an individual level.
- If children and young people share their views and experiences with adults they want to see that their views have made a difference to what adults think and do.
- Adults may come with the questions they seek answers to but it might mean they do not get to hear what really matters to the children and young people.

We have therefore focused our response on the ways in which young people think local authorities and partner agencies might obtain feedback at the individual and collective level and how they might evidence the impact of this feedback.

This response is based on our conversations with children and young people who have experience of care and/or child protection processes. We aimed to find out how young people might contribute to the evaluation of services at a local level and how their

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<sup>2</sup> Throughout this consultation we use quotes (in italics) from young people.



feedback might assist those running local child protection services to learn whether they are making a difference. The intention is to assist local authorities and partner agencies in developing performance measures which connect with children's experiences and which enable improvements to be made to outcomes for them.

## **2. What we did – a child rights approach**

This consultation has been part of our work to promote the rights which children have to be heard and to have their voice taken into account under Article 12 of the UNCRC. The Office of the Children's Commissioner (OCC) has been developing contacts with a range of groups that support children and young people who have experience of child protection and care and enable them to have a voice about the services they receive, so that we can offer opportunities for them to be heard more widely and so that our work on safeguarding is better informed.

We met with several of these groups - with 28 children and young people in all -to find out if they felt able to tell adults whether and how the involvement of professionals was making things better for them and the ways in which they might do this.<sup>3</sup> This included a group of children aged 7-11 as we were keen to learn the views of younger children. We have included their own words below and organised these through a number of themes which emerged. Our consultation response is therefore based on a small, qualitative study of the experiences and views of those with direct experience of relevant services.

Our work has focused on children aged seven and over. As most children who have child protection plans and are recorded as 'in need' are over five,<sup>4</sup> it is clearly appropriate to address how children of these ages could express their views. However, it is essential too to consider how even younger children's experiences can be understood so that this can be built into the evaluation of practice and services.

In doing this work we were made aware of what would count most for young people if they were to believe it was worthwhile giving their feedback. We have suggested some principles or messages below which have emerged from our discussions with children and young people and could guide adults in planning for gaining feedback which can be used for performance purposes.

## **3. Key messages for adults in enabling feedback from children and young people**

We began by asking children and young people whether and how they thought they could let those working with them know how they felt and whether their actions were 'making things better'.

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<sup>3</sup> With grateful thanks to NSPCC Young Ambassadors; Worcestershire LSCB Young People's Panel; Voice young people's policy group; Barking and Dagenham children and young people.

<sup>4</sup> At March 31<sup>st</sup> 2011: source <http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/STR/d001041/index.shtml>



### 3.1 Develop a listening culture

*'It has to be the norm to listen to young people.'*

One young person pointed out that young people are not used to being asked their opinions: for instance in school teaching about PHSE, *'they never ask the students what they want to learn about - teachers just assume they know best.'* Others agreed with this – confirming that it was not a straightforward matter to believe that your view as to your personal situation and how people were helping would make a difference. Young people wish to be treated as competent and not be patronised.

*'You've got to give the young people a non threatening opportunity to have a voice.'*

*'Making someone feel confident is really important, so many adults make me feel small and don't treat me as an individual. Different people have different needs.'*

*'Adults should spend time in our shoes – they should spend more time with us.'*

*'Social workers make us fit in for them, they're so patronising and don't listen to us.'*

*'Adults are patronising because of my age. They put words in my mouth. I know how I feel but adults think they know best and won't listen.'*

Young people told us that what the adult brings to the conversation really matters: so it is not only about whether or not they talk to adults but how the adults help them to feel well understood. This is to do with skills, role and reaching out to young people:

*'Adults shouldn't expect children and young people to talk without some encouragement – adults should go to the young people first.'*

Article 12 obliges us to 'assure' each child is able to express their views freely and that their views are given 'due weight in accordance with their age and maturity.' Young people, when expressing their doubts about whether they will be heard, often say that adults often do not think they are competent to give their views or they are treated in a patronising way. This may include a 'benevolent paternalism' when adults believe it is burdensome for children to be asked their view or given an explanation. Some adults will maintain that children will want things which are not good for them and some will find it painful to listen to what children wish to say. We know from the children we have spoken to, in this and in other work, that they are already trying to cope with great anxieties and that being heard and having a better understanding, through supportive relationships with caring adults, are essential to their wellbeing.

Many of the above points from young people are about good communication with children and young people. Gaining feedback requires good practice in these basics but there are additional things to be aware of when young people are given to understand that this is about making a difference to practice.



### 3.2 Build trust

*'It does depend on the person, but you've really got to trust them. If you are going to talk to someone about whether things are getting better or worse, they need to be someone who listens, who has patience, who will never judge you or look down on you.'*

The 'trusted adult' was a key theme for the young people. This was about personal qualities and ability to communicate and included adults in a range of roles. It had much to do with the importance of relationships but also the child's understanding of the person's role: some conveyed clear expectations of their behaviour and tasks, such as advocates. The roles of others are less distinct or are complicated by their breadth, such as social workers. Many of these messages are the same as those that young people have conveyed about being listened to by social workers and others when seeking help or during their involvement more generally but additional messages emerged when feedback, which might be critical, was considered.

Many children and young people, in the midst of child protection processes, do not yet feel safe nor able to put their trust in the adults around them. We know from our other work that young people involved with child protection services are living with the stress and confusion of what is happening in their family; may feel disloyal to parents if they talk with professionals; may not understand child protection processes and may fear the outcomes for them and their families.<sup>5</sup> Young people in this situation may not indeed have a view that services are 'helping' them and may have additional fears of the consequences of giving feedback on services. We have heard in other consultations that young people involved with child protection processes are vulnerable and so not likely to say they are unhappy.<sup>6</sup> They may fear that comment may make things worse.

'It depends' was a common theme: it meant that there was not a straightforward or general answer about which adults could be trusted with feedback. Characteristics of both child and adult who were giving and receiving comments counted. The subject matter of the feedback, the situation of the child and the context – for example whether school or home – all need to be considered.

Overall, the message from young people was that if they were to give feedback this would be best given either as part of a good relationship or with a belief that someone's role would ensure they managed the feedback well. However, choice, which meant taking into account the list of 'it depends' factors, was important to most young people.

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<sup>5</sup> See for example OCC reports "Don't Make Assumptions (2011), Cossar, J et al ; and our submissions to the Munro Review [www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk](http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk)

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/content/publications/content\\_492](http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/content/publications/content_492)



### 3.3 Take account of individual needs

*'Have an awareness that not all young people are the same – you need to understand the individual; an awareness of their needs is really important.'*

Young people did not want a 'one size fits all' solution to giving feedback. While general approaches might be appropriate for some, most wanted a personal and individual response. A number of messages link to this theme: one is finding the right time to ask:

*'Sometimes, adults will need to wait for me to be in a good place. I don't always want to share but they make me feel bad because it doesn't fit into their diary.'*

Other messages on this theme came from young people with disabilities. Many of these were related to the need for adult professionals to use extra effort in using different communication approaches and to take more time over this:

*'It's more complicated for young people who cannot speak up. Non verbal communication is very difficult but there is some help out there.'*

This was not the only message from this group: we heard of problems particularly experienced by these young people which would require specific processes for developing relevant performance measures. Being recognized as an individual and able to live a life as a young person rather than have the disability as the main focus was important to them in terms of an outcome from help.

*'It depends on how the disability has impacted on the person.'*

Young people with disabilities might also wish to provide feedback to a wider group of professionals than others, given the range of services with which they were engaged. These included health personnel and those providing facilities in the community such as sports and leisure. For them it was not just about help and support but also being able to overcome barriers. Ways of providing feedback which could lead to measurement of outcomes on their issues requires a specific focus and young people could help with this.

### 3.4 Have a conversation - and not just on adults' terms

*'It's about starting a conversation – it can't be just when the adults want it.'*

A powerful theme running through many young people's responses was the need for adults and young people to engage in a conversation so that feedback was not just one way. It is the experience of many young people who have spoken with us that their views are requested but that they do not hear of the outcome and may not recognise any impact. Young people told us that if they were to consider giving feedback to be worthwhile, they had to hear back personally. They preferred this to be done in the way



they had provided their feedback so that there was two-way communication. Many also wish to initiate the conversation – as reflected by the quote at the end of this report.

*'We're asked to fill out lots of forms but we never hear anything back. I don't just want to wait and see the improvements, if there are any. Having someone feed back is really important.'*

*'They ask for our feedback but they never give it to us. We don't want to keep filling out forms and hearing nothing.'*

### **3.5 Provide evidence that feedback has made a difference**

*'We'll believe things have changed when we see them change.'*

*'It's the actions afterwards that have the impact – that's how you know it's not a worthless exercise'*

*'I think it's easy to tell people what we want, but it's not easy for them to action our requests. You'd know if something was being done because you'd notice it but someone should tell you too.'*

Above all, children and young people thought they should be told what had happened as a result of their feedback and the difference it had made. To make sense to them, this would need to be clearly related to what they had said and an explanation should be given if something could not be changed.

## **4. Giving and gathering feedback which can make a difference**

We asked children and young people about the ways in which feedback might be given and why these methods might or might not work for them.

### **4.1 As part of a relationship**

#### **Talking to someone you trust:**

*'When I do speak about it, it's like a big weight lifted off my shoulders'.*

Most of the younger children agreed with this idea: *'if you tell someone you trust (how things are going for you) you can tell them what you are really thinking and get the problem solved.'*

Some children said they were not sure who they could trust. Younger ones were clear about the importance of a relationship with the trusted adult if they were to make comments and were more likely to talk to their participation or rights worker or their carer, who would then represent their views. Youth workers were also mentioned. Having a

'trusted adult' is a common theme from research on children's views, although this is often a call for a more substantial role for someone who can provide a consistent relationship over a lengthy period.

**Talking to a social worker** to give feedback was right for some but not all: for some it was the worst option. Many of the reasons they gave for this hinge on the issue of trust and also make clear what might make it work. Young people are highly dependent on their social worker, may worry about upsetting them and do not always have enough time with them.

*'Contact with social workers is too formal and they don't stick to the dates or times they say. If they have too much on they shouldn't make promises they can't keep.'*

*'You should be able to talk to your social worker – some will go out of their way.'*

For several young people the idea of feedback which might appear critical of the social worker was simply a non-starter:

*'When you start they feel you are attacking them and call their manager. Telling them how to do their job better would be seen as abusive.'*

But for others 'it depended' on the social worker: many would value talking with a social worker who would spend time with them and would *'take it in the right way'*.

One group told us that it would be better if there were more social workers who had been in care themselves. *'They can relate and know what you are going through.'*

#### **Being asked:**

*'They should ask, not assume. If they ask more we'll tell them more.'*

*'Ask, 'how are you?' more often. Give more opportunities for us to speak.'*

*'Stop assuming, start listening'*

*'You need to be asked first and there's not enough opportunities for that; I think I'm just expected to say how things are going but they should ask me.'*

#### **4.2 Adults taking notice – being observant**

*'Make an effort to read young people's body language and don't presume.'*

*'Do not judge a book by its cover.'*

In other conversations we have had with young people they have called this *'vigilance'*; adults looking out for children who may be having problems so that young people do not always have to initiate and raise their worries. This would be considered by them a measure of good practice and could be applied to the ways in which adults could understand children's experiences of help and whether they feel safer as a result.



### 4.3 Telling someone else

Several young people thought they might find it more helpful and more comfortable to talk to 'someone they had not met before' about whether things were getting better. This did depend on who this was, their personality and their role. For some this choice had to do with not wishing to upset their social worker:

*'You don't want to offend people so sometimes you keep quiet – most young people are like this.'*

Not wishing to offend came from a genuine concern not to hurt the adult's feelings but was also due to fears of the consequences when you need support. Anxiety about the situation would be likely to make feedback difficult.

*'The huge range of people makes it really difficult to know what to say and to whom. You have a really low confidence level when you're going through this stuff and that's a really big barrier. On top of that young people are really aware of adults' feelings.'*

**Advocates** were, for those who had experience of them, most helpful in supporting young people to convey their views. But they emphasised to us that advocates must be able to keep their independence and that this could be at risk depending on the source of funds for advocacy services.

### 4.4 Group feedback

*'Group feedback works if you're talking about general things but I don't want to talk about my experiences in a group.'*

The groups we are in contact with which are run for the children and young people who have or may still be involved with child protection processes are clearly supportive and meet many needs. Other reports we have published, which have been referenced earlier, have recommended that such groups for children in need should be further developed given their potential for support. Several of these groups also provide opportunities for giving children a voice about services. Children of different ages might wish to be with those nearer in age to themselves if they were going to use these group methods to put across their views. Overall, we have seen that the balance of support and consultation for groups which have, or might have, this dual purpose needs careful management so that the needs, wishes and choices of the children are put foremost. This requires skilled participation work.

## 4.5 Writing it down

Reasons not to give verbal feedback to social workers were frequently that your words would be 'twisted'. This has been a common theme in our work with young people and we find that this is often because young people rarely see their actual words written down but rather an interpretation of what they have said. This led some to prefer the option of writing down their views.

Writing blogs, using tape recordings, drawing pictures and creative approaches to finding out children's views were all mentioned as possibilities. The following comments are general to all forms of written feedback.

Choice and the possibility of a stronger message were among the positive reasons:

*'Some people might not want to talk. It depends on personality and prejudices.'*

*'If it's on paper it cannot be changed'.*

*'Writing it down you have more power. You have the proof about what you say.'*

For the younger children, writing things down was not the preferred method but they too recognised that there was a need for choice:

*'For some it's easier than talking it.'* *'Some people have a problem with speech.'*

These younger children's views might reflect the greater difficulty in writing down what they felt. However, they were more likely to be worried about what might happen if they wrote down their views: *'Someone could get it and show it to someone else.'*

For some in the younger age group there was a greater risk of not being heard and perhaps of not being taken seriously:

*'I don't know if it's safe-someone might pick it up and throw it away.'*

*'It's better talking face to face than writing it down as it might get thrown in the bin.'*

This difference between older young people and children is important to understand. We believe that the younger children were conveying something significant about their experience in saying that their written views might be thrown away.

## 4.6 Completing surveys and questionnaires

*'Forms are more generalised. The person reading them could interpret the meaning wrong.'*

Some young people thought there was a place for a survey of views to be undertaken once or twice a year and that it would be good if there were an incentive for young people to participate. However, they thought effectiveness would depend on the questions asked



and there would have to be some open questions, which would be more like research. It could enable the measurement of change through being repeated. Other young people thought that some scales or rating schemes might be a useful start but more to get young people talking, as they were used to this model of feedback.

Younger children were more concerned about who might see what you wrote and so did not entirely trust this method for personal feedback, although some did say it would help because you could put in whatever you wished.

This approach could be useful in gathering views about safety in a local area, for example and has advantages in finding out about what numbers of children think on specific issues. As with so many of the other suggestions, this method was only valued by the young people if they were to hear back or something was done as a result.

#### **4.7 Providing online feedback**

The older young people reflected that many of them had phones which could access online resources so these made this source of feedback more accessible and likely to be used by young people who spend much time online. However, many of them suggested that they were less confident about the security of this information for this purpose, less sure about its accuracy given how quickly responses would be made and thought it restrictive because it limited feedback to the questions asked.

*'It depends on the question you ask – if it's too long you won't do it.'*

*'Is the data valuable? Is it reliable?'*

*'It would be too light touch.'*

#### **4.8 Using a comments box or writing a postcard to the Director**

Several young people thought a comments box was a good idea. The box would need to be secure so others would not see what you had written.

The postcard idea, which is in place in some local authorities, was thought by some to be one good option:

*'You know who you are writing to and they have the power to change it. They must respond to it.'*

However, others were not convinced that it would be read by the person who needed to see it.

*'You would have to know that the manager was setting aside time to read it.'*

One suggested way of showing that such approaches were taken seriously was that a record could be kept which gathered together all the comments and what had been done with them and this could be put on the wall of the Director's office.



#### 4.9 Seeing and contributing to formal plans: space for young people's views

One of the options which emerged from these discussions, and from others we have had with young people, was how the existing formal plans and processes could be used to engage with children's views and to contribute to measures of outcome. Looked after young people can contribute to their individual care plan reviews and Children in Care Councils and other groups can represent their collective views. However, we have found that many children have not seen their child protection plan and do not attend child protection conferences or meetings around children in need plans. When we discussed these options with them many young people were unaware of the extent of formal planning which goes on. Yet good practice requires that social workers agree plans with parents which are specific about what needs to change and how they can work together to achieve this and children need to understand this too, taking into account their competence and the need to manage this with care and sensitivity. Our consultation work with young people has repeatedly shown how much they want to understand what is happening to their family.

The advantages include clarity about the baseline: it is easier to measure changes and improvements if there is a clear starting point. By putting the child's view explicitly into children in need plans, child protection plans, placement plans and care plans and talking these plans through with them social workers would enable children to understand the overall intention and the specific actions being taken. It would also require that their perspective on help and what they needed from changes in their family would be taken seriously. Revisiting the child's views when plans are reviewed would mean that feedback on the impact on the child of changes and intended improvements could be gathered. Independent Reviewing Officers, child protection conference chairs and Guardians could all play a role in this process.

The young people we consulted thought that having the choice to do this was a good idea and might lead to improved openness:

*'You can talk about the issues and what you want changed.'*

*'It would be open for you to see.'*

*'My care plans were never followed through.'*

*'You can see your care plan for court – it's a legal document and you can get it. It means you can challenge it. That's powerful.'*

*'I wanted to go into care so having my view (in the child protection plan) would have helped.'*

Children in need and who are involved with child protection processes have had rights to have their views taken into account since 2004.<sup>7</sup> However, the means for this to happen,

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<sup>7</sup> Children Act 2004 Sec 53



and for the views to include comment on their experience of help, do not seem to have been widely or consistently developed.

Many young people are looked after and so have placement plans while risk is assessed and their future is determined through the courts. Young people commented that having their views included in the placement plan would enable them to have a voice in arrangements for changes of school, for contact and for the details of daily life, particularly where there had been several moves and changes for them in that time.

*'As an individual I have obstacles in my life. These should be in the plan.'*

Understanding what was in the agreed plan would make it possible to say subsequently what was working. An agreed approach for including the child's views could be built into each plan. This need not be too formal or bureaucratic: as one young person said: *'you don't want too many plans – you just want you and your social worker to share ideas.'*

#### **4.10 A Pledge to children in need**

Young people who knew about the pledges for children in care thought these could also be written for young people in need. They commented that the best ones had been written by and with young people themselves and made many positive comments about them.

Pledges made clear what young people were entitled to:

*'You have an argument to fight on – if it's agreed they have to go through with it.'*

A pledge could be a start in providing a baseline of service for feedback but ways of measuring whether it worked were difficult unless more was done to check and this was within time limits. One young person suggested *'group meetings to talk about the pledge and whether it happened'* to get feedback. Some care leavers had experience of focus groups looking at how the pledge by their local authority was working and had discussed promises such as mentoring and internships. Follow up support from advocates had enabled some of the young people to make claims on the basis of the pledge.

It would seem that the same could apply for children in need and those involved with child protection services. Pledges could include such content as the expectations young people could have about seeing their social worker; choices as to participation; information and explanations they could expect, for example about meetings and plans and how they could give their views.



## **5. Conclusions and reflections:**

**5.1** We have outlined above some principles in the form of key messages which have emerged from discussions with children and young people. These are suggested as the essential requirements if they are to engage with giving feedback on services which can be a basis for measuring improvement.

**5.2** There are some important starting points: to build a listening culture in order to establish what are the issues that matter to individual children and to all children and young people in a particular area; and to help professionals to communicate well with children about their intentions and plans. Both will help to make the gathering of feedback a routine part of practice and respect for their views a meaningful right for children and young people.

On the first point, much is already known about what matters to children about those who work with them, from research and young people's messages from a range of consultations both local and national. Consistent messages have been given about the need for sustained relationships; for more contact with social workers and greater continuity of worker; for ways to be consulted, engaged and informed. Local areas can establish ways of finding out what matters for the children and the families they serve, alongside gathering feedback on ongoing experience. The ideas above will assist in guiding this work so that outcome measures can be developed within the listening culture which children want.

On the second point, most of us, when asked for feedback on a service, have a clear idea of what we expected in the first place; we might have a baseline from which to judge whether we felt better or safer, if that was the intention. Some of the ideas which young people discussed suggest that it would help them to know what the plan is and what the professional view of 'better' is supposed to look like. This may sound obvious to adults but, for many children, this is not their experience. This might be one place to begin, and at the same time, there is a need for professionals to understand what 'better' would look like to the individual child. This means having conversations with children and young people, as they suggest.

**5.3** One of the suggestions above is that existing approaches for engaging with looked after children could also be developed with and for those in need and in need of protection. Those practices would need to be built upon in order to make it possible to draw on them for performance purposes. Another overall message is that effective feedback relies on good practice in communication with children and so perhaps one of the ways forward is to build the requested conversations into basic good practice in the context of the relationships young people have with those working with and caring for them. This would bring in other aspects of the agenda for change following the Munro Review – concerning quality of training and professional support.



However, taking into account the messages about trust and safety raised by these children young people, it is clear that some will prefer other routes for feedback which are more independent or anonymous and ways need to be found for the messages from these to be built into the approaches for collating outcomes information.

**5.4** The messages from children indicate that getting and using feedback for improving services depends not only on good individual practice but also on broader ways of doing things – on systems which make good listening an organisational goal. It is suggested that children and young people in each local area can contribute from the outset to finding effective ways in which practice can be improved: they will know what the issues are for them and so need to be asked. As one young person told us:

*'When government have a brainwave they go to the young people and the young people are there for them, but when the young people have a brainwave, they're nowhere to be found. They have to be there!'*

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