

SAFEGUARDING: PERSPECTIVES FROM CHILDREN IN CARE AND LIVING AWAY FROM HOME

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Office of the Children's Rights Director

- ❖ **Personal law**
 - ❖ *Currently based in Ofsted*
- ❖ **Covers children in care or receiving social care services, children in boarding or residential schools or colleges, and care leavers**
- ❖ **Independently asking and reporting children's views**
- ❖ **Independently advising on children's rights and welfare**
- ❖ **Raising issues I consider significant: *individual cases; policies***
- ❖ **To Government and Ofsted**
- ❖ **Producing Young People's Guides: *`for ten year olds and Ministers'***

Top Ten Children's Rights

- 1. To be protected from abuse***
- 2. To have an education***
- 3. To be kept alive and well***
- 4. Not to be discriminated against because of my race, colour, sex, language, disability, or beliefs***
- 5. Not to be treated or punished in a way that is cruel or meant to make me feel bad about myself***
- 6. Special help for any child with a disability***
- 7. To have privacy***
- 8. Not to be bullied***
- 9. To keep in touch with my parents, grandparents, brothers and sisters if I want to and they want to, wherever we all live***
- 10. To have my private letters, phone calls, emails and messages kept confidential.***

Top Ten Children's Responsibilities

- 1. Responsibility for your own behaviour and actions***
- 2. Making use of your education***
- 3. Showing respect to others***
- 4. Responsibility for your own safety***
- 5. Looking after others***
- 6. Looking after yourself***
- 7. Your own health and hygiene***
- 8. Carrying out your own responsibilities in the house***
- 9. Looking after the environment***
- 10. Giving your opinion when asked***

Some further Children's Rights

To be protected from using illegal drugs (11th out of 36)

Not to be locked up unless the law says I have to be (14th out of 36)

Not to be made to do work that may be harmful to me (17th out of 36)

To be cared for by my parents unless that isn't in my best interests (21st out of 36)

People looking after me should always do what is in my best interests (32nd out of 36)

To be treated well and fairly if I have broken the law (33rd out of 36)

Top Messages of the Decade (1)

Children want each child to be treated as an individual. Decisions affecting a child should be what is best for that individual child, taking their wishes and feelings into account - not what is assumed to be 'usually best for most' and not what is needed to meet targets.

Top Messages of the Decade (2)

If a child has a social worker, they should visit regularly and often, be accessible, see the child alone, fight for their child client, be able to secure services the child needs, and not keep changing.

Top Messages of the Decade (3)

Children need somebody powerful and independent to whom they can appeal for help if things are going badly wrong for them.

Top Messages of the Decade (4)

Children in care experience prejudice. 20% are bullied just for being in care. Boost a positive image of care and don't stereotype those from care.

In the way you deliver services, don't make children in care 'stand out' from their peers.

To counter prejudice ...

- ❖ ***Don't generalise about children in care***
- ❖ ***Don't tell people who don't need to know that I'm from care***
 - ❖ ***45% worry about other people knowing, concerned about being judged, bullied or treated differently***
- ❖ ***Need for a better public image of care***
- ❖ ***Concern about accommodation and employment***

Top Messages of the Decade (5)

9% report being often or always bullied. More - 15% - worry often or always about bullying.

Being seen as different from the group you are in makes you vulnerable to bullying. Children watch or join in bullying others for excitement or to avoid being bullied themselves, but are likely to help friends or family. Children are less likely to be bullied if they are helped to build protective friendship groups and not to stand out as 'different' individuals.

Top Messages of the Decade (6)

Children feeling at risk are most likely to confide first in a friend.

Top Messages of the Decade (7)

Children feel safest in the building where they live, least safe when out in town. 43% worry a little or a lot about their safety - top dangers according to children are drugs, alcohol, knives, kidnapping and bullying. Most likely cause of injury is road accident.

Feeling safe

92% feel safe or very safe in the building where they live

... fewer care leavers felt safe in the building where they live

88% feel safe or very safe at school or college

76% feel safe or very safe out in the countryside

65% feel safe or very safe out in town

... fewer in residential special schools felt safe out in town

... fewer children with disabilities felt safe out in town

Accidents ...

21% of girls thought alcohol a likely cause of accidents, compared with 7% of boys

Percentage of girls who thought alcohol a likely cause of accidents is much more than last year – percentage of boys is unchanged

Older young people more often listed alcohol as a likely cause of accident

Older young people more often listed substance abuse as a likely cause of accident

Younger children more often listed falling as a likely cause of accident

Top Messages of the Decade (8)

Staff make the biggest difference to children's experience of residential care.

Top Messages of the Decade (9)

Many young people in secure units fear leaving security - fearing being less safe and getting into trouble again.

Top Messages of the Decade (10)

The same time should be taken to check out possible placements with family or friends, as any other foster placement.

The strongest consultation answer ...

“It depends”

Don't take me out of a placement unless it really is for my own good

- Most frequent casework issue children contact us about
- "Change of policy" – "no more money" – "was only for two years"
- **Once you've placed away, let the child stay until it's in their best interests to come back**
- **Statutory duty to take their wishes AND FEELINGS properly into account**
- **An out of authority placement is a needs-long commitment**

BUT don't keep me in a 'stable placement' if a move is the best thing for me

I know it's bad for your rules and statistics, but ...

A move of placement is sometimes a good thing:

- 70% said their last change of placement was in their best interests,

A move of school is sometimes a good thing

- 54% said their last change of school because of a change of placement had also been in their best interests

Make sure I know what to do if things go wrong

Of those we consulted ...

- *73% knew how to make a complaint*
- *[65% thought complaints they had made were sorted out fairly]*
- *53% of children in care knew how to get an advocate*
- *29% didn't know what an advocate is*
- *48% of children in care knew how to get in touch with their Independent Reviewing Officer*
- *23% didn't know what an IRO is.*

And finally ... Make safeguarding proportional

Children and young people in my authority are only allowed to stay overnight in friends' houses if their friend's parents have been police checked ...

42%