



Children & Young People's Annual Report

2022-2023



**Hillingdon Safeguarding
Partnership**



The Safeguarding Partnership is all the people that help and support us. Our social workers, doctors, carers, mental health workers, nurses, police officers, GPs, housing officers, mentors, support workers and many more.

Children's Voice



Listening to us and doing the things you say that you will do.

Learning about the things that matter to us!

When adults show us that they care

Having groups where there are fun activities, and where we can speak to other kids and adults that understand us.

What is going well?

- What our 6-12year olds said about being in care:
- I feel loved
 - I feel cared for
 - I have fun
 - People are kind
 - I get the help I need



Being searched at school...

Travel costs

Being outside late at night

Worries

Changing workers

Social media

Schools aren't getting us ready for adult life

Help me understand what I'm thinking and feeling

Get to know us by listening to us and doing fun things.

Understand what it's like to be us

What Helps?



We should meet somewhere that feels homely

Make it easier to see my social worker

Introduction

Hillingdon Safeguarding Partnership is committed to listening and learning from the expertise and experience of our children and young people. This year we have amplified the voices of children and young people through working with them directly, explaining the role of the Safeguarding Partnership, and seeking their input into quality assurance. During discussions the children and young people were encouraged to share both their own experiences, and their wider knowledge of their siblings and peers, to ensure that the learning can be applied widely across the partnership. The young people reported that they felt valued that their contribution could lead to change and help other children feel safer.



Thirty-six, children and young people were consulted in small groups settings, with familiar peers and adults to support them. Contributions were made by our Children in Care Council, for Looked After Children from age 6 plus and care leavers up to age 25, and the Youth Voice participation group, for children aged 12- 17 years who have experience of safeguarding services or the Youth Justice Service. The young people were from a range of ethnicities, gender identities, cultures, religions, countries, and some had disabilities and/or neurodiversity needs. They thought about their interactions with the wide range of professionals that have supported them. This included social workers, doctors, carers, mental health workers, nurses, police officers, care providers, GPs, housing officers, mentors, support workers and many more. We hoped to understand their lived experiences and gain their expert knowledge of what it feels like to be in receipt of a safeguarding service. The following questions were asked:

- Have you felt listened to by the Safeguarding Partnership?
- What do you think we do well?
- How can we make things better for children and young people?
- What worries you or makes you feel unsafe living in Hillingdon?
- Is there anything you could suggest that could help change this?

1. How well were you listened to?

Reliability - Most young people said that the Safeguarding Partnership have listened to them, by explaining their roles, attending their meetings, listening to their views, and sharing them with senior leaders who can influence and make change.

The young people described the Safeguarding Partnership team as “nice” they “call people to account”, “credible” and “on it all the time”.

Validating – The young people felt appreciated and empowered when they saw how their information was used. Particularly when their quotes were used in the Voice of the Person review.

Consistency - Meeting a regular face from the safeguarding partnership team has helped the young people to build relationships and become more open and honest about their lives and experiences.

Empowerment - They felt that they were not judged and that their views were held as being as important as those of the adults.

Trustworthiness – They were updated on some of the decisions and changes that have been made by senior leaders that care about them.

Shared understanding – They understood that some of their recommendations were quicker to action than others, timescales and plans were communicated. Any recommendations that were not realistic were discussed openly and honestly in a respectful way.

Respected – The children and young people felt that creating an annual report from their perspective was a good idea, however they felt the Safeguarding Partnership should provide quarterly updates in person to children and young people.



2. What is working well?



Building Rapport - When workers go above and beyond and show children and young people that they care. Children find it helpful when practitioners travel to places to meet them where they feel comfortable.

Safe Spaces – Environments that are designed to be accommodating and welcoming for children and their families.

Awareness Raising Interventions - Learning about things that matter and impact their daily life such as Pride Month, Black History Month, National Child Exploitation Day, Mental Health Awareness week and drug and alcohol use prevention sessions.

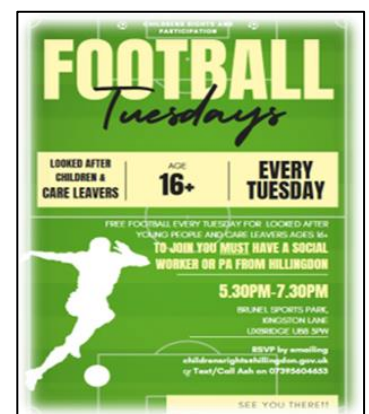
Positive Activities - Discussion groups, activity days, food and sweets from Children’s Rights and Participation Team and Safeguarding Partnership.

Engagement - Attending groups where there are fun activities, and they can speak to other young people and adults that help and have similar experiences. *“It helps me realise that other people have experienced similar things”.*



Implementing Change - Professionals making an effort to speak to young people and make changes based on important information they have heard. Following consultations, returning to the young people, to explain how they have used the information and recommendations.

Care Experienced - Younger children said that were grateful to be in care because they live with people that show them *“love”*, are *“kind”*, *“feeling cared for”*, having *“fun”* and getting the *“help that they need”*.



3. What are we worried about?

Wider Community - Seeing and hearing about poor street lighting, people hanging around, grooming, stabbings, violence against women and girls, crime, gangs, thefts, acid/bleach attacks and fights.

Fear - Having to be 'street smart' *"I shiver when I walk past some people sometimes, I have to run away feeling scared because I can't fight"*. Being outside late at night *"...you learn to manage the fear because its normal"*.

Negative relationships with some professionals due to a lack of trust (police) and/or high turnover (mental health staff/ social workers)

Police presence *"Seeing police on the streets knowing they are there for safety still scares me, as they may suspect me of something although I am innocent"*.

Experiencing racism

Poverty – *"Children living in poverty not getting enough food and needing extra lessons so they can do well at school and in life"*.

Being searched at school (metal detectors/bag/ body) *"makes people think dangerous things are happening and I should be worried"*.

School exclusions – *"Schools should do their best to keep children there, it's hard to get into a new good school if you have a bad record... that can mess up your life!"*.

Life Skills - *"Core subjects are not core any more"*.

Expenses - Travel costs are expensive when surviving on subsistence.



Social media – Regular exposure to videos of people being hurt or publicly humiliated.

Media - The media sharing information about professionals hurting/ abusing people.

Support for Parents - *"Some people are having children younger; therefore, they might need more support about good routines and boundaries to keep their child safe"*.

4. How can we make things better for children and young people?

Training – Practitioners should be encouraged to think from a child/ young person’s perspective - *“They should attend walking in our shoes, then they can feel what it’s like to be us”. “Professionals should get to know us by listening, doing fun things and having an interest in the things that I enjoy.”*



Voice of the child – Consulting and co-producing with children and young people, then updating them about any progress or developments.

Speaking to a wide range of young people, in places that they enjoy spending time (youth clubs, classrooms, sports clubs) and with adults that they trust.

Mental health services – *“there should be help and support earlier, rather than leaving things to become bigger problems”.*

Developing relationships is important if adults want honesty. Frequent changes of workers are not helpful. Particularly with key workers, social workers, and mental health workers.

The duty process is unhelpful – contacting teams or managers for support if their practitioner is absent should be easier.

Appointments with health professionals, *“Especially doctors should be quicker, by the time they call back the problem is often gone.”*



Resources - Making the community safer by having more youth centres, mentors, sense of belonging, fun activities, building better relationships with the police, providing self-defence sessions to decrease violence.

Housing Support - Providing better housing options and support for care leavers *“you may feel alone, and people see you less because you are an adult”.*

Earlier Intervention - *“Teaching children about things when they are younger is important, they often get into trouble because they don’t know things are wrong. Sometimes they learn it’s wrong when it’s too late”.*

5. What changes would you like to see?

Increased education and awareness - Arrange for experts to speak to children and young people in classrooms at school about life skills.

"Small groups are less intimidating".

"Educate us on why drugs are bad and what happens if you take certain drugs, not just DONT TAKE DRUGS".

"Large assemblies don't work".

"See me in places I am comfortable, reach out to me, visit me regularly, come and watch the things I enjoy, put me to live in places that I am comfortable... I know I may not be able to get my own flat but try to understand my feelings.

Sometimes I am scared, and I have nightmares, but I may not always be able to tell you because I keep saying the same thing over and over again and still nothing changes. I will always say I am fine, find a different way to ask me about my feelings."

Youth Provision - Provide more activities for young people to get involved in such as football, tournaments, swimming, dance, fun days, more youth clubs, ESOL, more sessions from the Children's Rights and Participation team.

Shorter waiting lists for mental health services

Trauma Informed Environments – Ensuring the environment where children work with practitioners is welcoming and comfortable. Consider consulting with children to create safer spaces that *"feel more like home, especially if you have to attend a hospital or an office"* *"The contact rooms in the family hub are great"*.

Peer mentors - young people should be able to help provide preventative interventions to other children that they can relate to.



Training – Mandatory agreement for practitioners that work with children and families to attend walking in our shoes training delivered by care experienced young people.

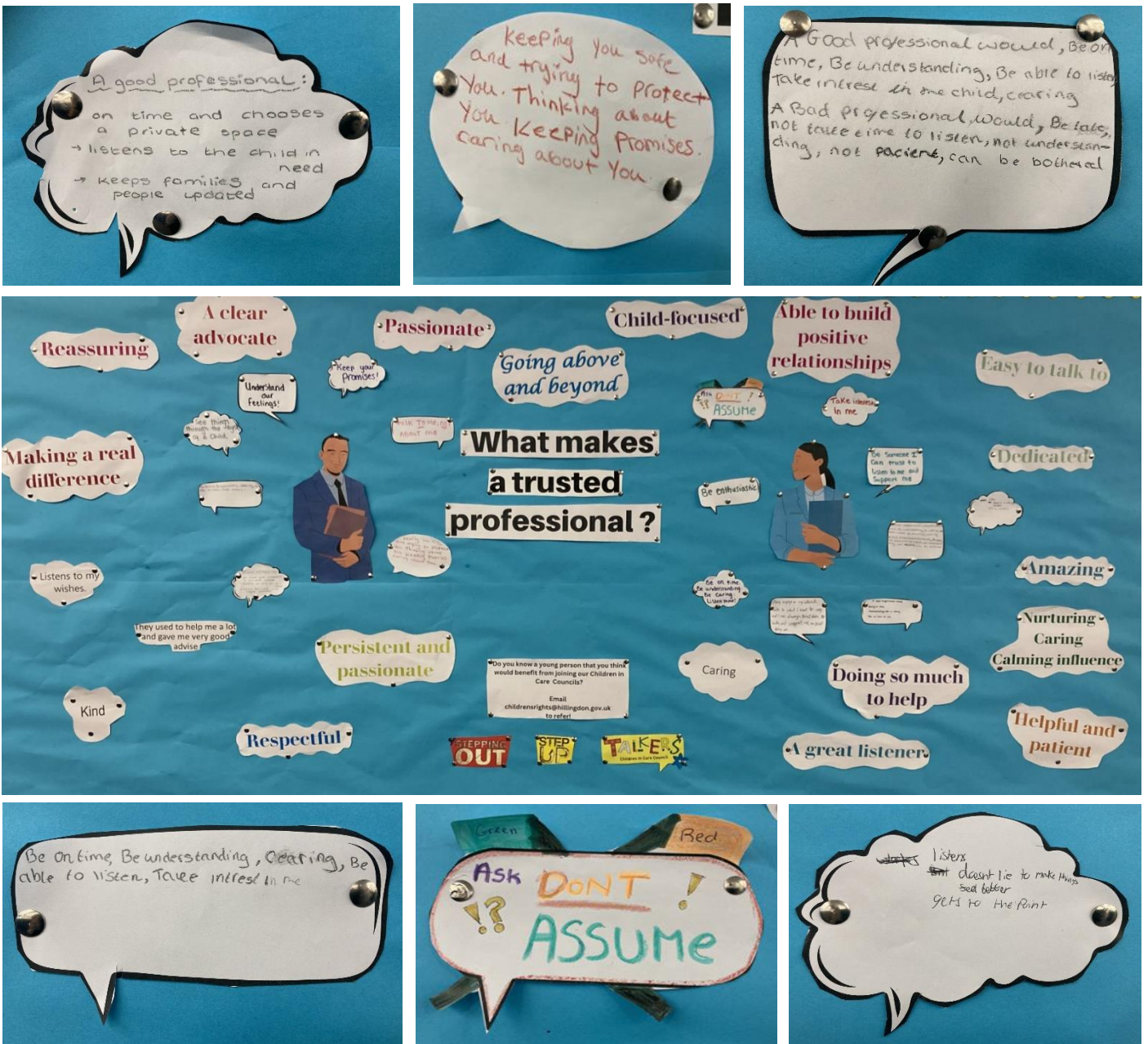
Communication - Using social media, discussion groups or activity days to communicate important changes that impact young people. Better understanding and advertising of services locally that can provide help and support.

Transitional Safeguarding – Better support for young people when they turn 18, particularly care leavers.

Roundtable discussions with managers and senior leaders from across the partnership. Managers could explain their roles, processes and how they can improve things for young people. *"If they can't come in person attend our events or join us on zoom"*.

6. Next Steps

The children and young people that were involved felt empowered and validated to be consulted and to have co-produced learning for dissemination across the partnership to safeguard children and adults across Hillingdon. They highlighted our good practice, particularly consulting with children, young people and adults and considering things from their perspective. There are aspects that they felt should be improved. These included having trauma informed spaces, making our community safer and building better relationships with children and the wider community. Their suggestions to help included: providing more activities, practitioners understanding young people's lived experiences, utilising social media to share information, increasing prevention and awareness sessions, and having children and young people understand what senior leaders that have influence 'actually do'.



With thanks to all the children and young people who wrote this report, and to the Hillingdon Children's Rights and Participation Team for their support.