



Your VOICE Matters 2021

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**Believe in
children**
 **Barnardo's**

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2 | Background

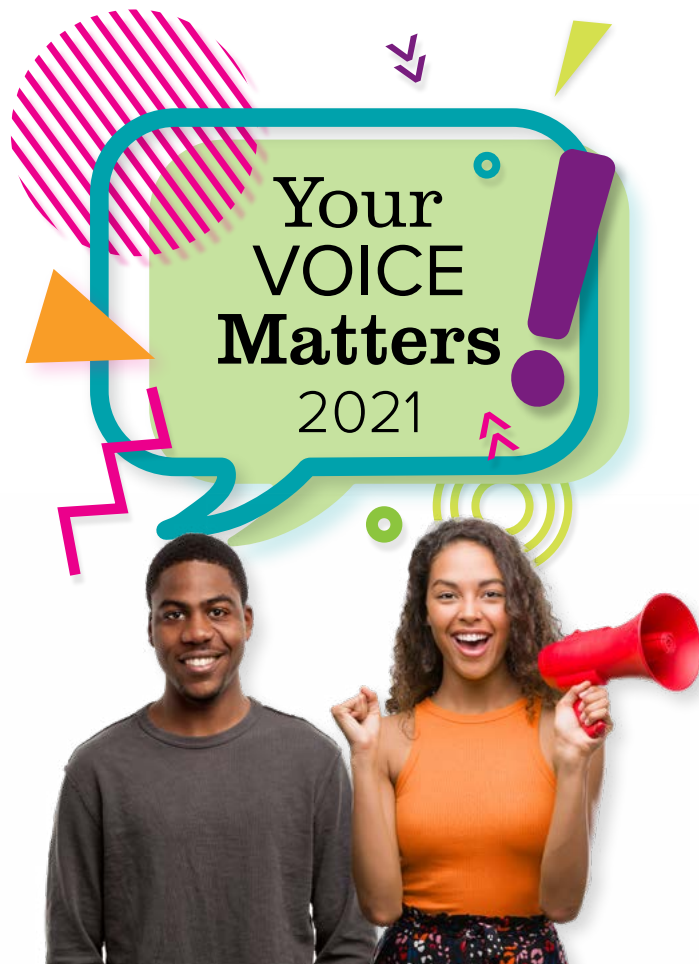
Your Voice Matters: Barnardo's first annual survey of children and young people supported by the charity was launched on 24th August 2021 and formally closed on 1st November 2021, although additional hard copy responses were received after this time, the last on 8th December 2021.

Developed in consultation with colleagues across Barnardo's, this study received approval from the Barnardo's Research Ethics Committee as well as the Data Protection and Corporate Safeguarding teams.

It was promoted via Barnardo's services to Barnardo's service users aged between 11 and 25, in accordance with practitioners' judgement on suitability. 112 children and young people participated.

The past two years of the Covid-19 pandemic have been an extraordinarily difficult time across the UK and across the world. For children and young people, this has been a significant proportion of their lives, and the cause of great disruption, difficulty, stress, and trauma. They have been asked to sacrifice a great many things, like celebrations and milestones, spending time with friends and family, opportunities and rites of passage, and the day-to-day routine of going to school, taking part in sports and activities, and playing and having fun.

Children and young people supported by Barnardo's are among those most likely to have been deeply affected by the pandemic. Many existing challenges have been exacerbated, pushing families further into poverty or making it even harder for disabled children to get the support that they need. Many have suffered bereavements, particularly within the Black and Asian families who have been disproportionately likely to die from Covid-19¹.



The toll on children and young people's mental health has been particularly severe². Existing mental health difficulties may have become worse or made it particularly hard to adjust to the restrictions of lockdown. As schools and other services have been able to re-open, those mental health difficulties have in many cases not gone away. Some children and young people are now experiencing intense anxiety and distress at the idea of leaving home, being separated from their parents, or being around crowds of people, due to their experiences during the pandemic.

The children and young people who took the time to respond to this survey told us a great deal about their lives, their experiences, and their hopes and fears for the future. Where they often told us about hardships, they also often expressed excitement and optimism for the future as they were being reunited with friends and classmates and looking ahead to life returning much closer to normal.

¹ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/908434/Disparities_in_the_risk_and_outcomes_of_COVID_August_2020_update.pdf

² <https://post.parliament.uk/research-briefings/post-pn-0653/>

3 | Key messages

Across the survey as a whole, the themes that came across most strongly were the **importance of relationships and support**.

Children and young people told us that it was really important to **have trusted adults that they felt able to talk to**. Whether a support worker, teacher, football coach or something else entirely, children and young people feel strongly that these relationships with adults outside of their immediate family are **a key part of what makes them feel safe, listened to, and cared for**.

They also told us that it was really important for children and young people to **have access to high-quality services**. Many respondents had had mixed or disappointing experiences with statutory services, particularly counselling and other mental health services. Problems included long waiting times, support only being offered for a short period of time, or support not being available at all. This lack of support can have a knock-on effect on self-confidence and future aspirations, as well as being a source of frustration and distress. Those who were currently receiving good support, whether through Barnardo's or another service, often credited this support with being **a key part of maintaining good mental health and wellbeing, responding to challenges in life, and helping to look forward to and plan for the future**.

Relationships with family and friends were also hugely important to respondents, especially since so many of them had been interrupted by the pandemic. Positive relationships were a source of happiness and support, and children and young people wanted that to be acknowledged and encouraged alongside the pressures in their lives like school work. The absence of those positive relationships, whether at home, at school or elsewhere, were a common source of stress and unhappiness. Whether children and young people were experiencing bullying or harassment, or struggling to form relationships and connections, they often wanted to **help to address these challenges so that they could fully participate in the world around them**.

4 | About the respondents

Note: **Base** = number of respondents who saw the question, **N** = number of responses received for that question.

Respondent characteristics	N	% of base	% of N
Gender (Base 112)	102		
Male	40	36	39
Female	56	50	55
Non-binary/other	6	5	6
Unknown	10	9	n/a
Age (Base 112)	112		
10 ³	2	2	2
11	9	8	8
12	12	11	11
13	13	12	12
14	9	8	8
15	12	11	11
16	11	10	10
17	12	11	11
18	12	11	11
19	3	3	3
20	2	2	2
21	6	5	5
22	3	3	3
23	1	1	1
24	2	2	2
25	3	3	3
Ethnicity (Base 112)	94		
White British	57	51	61
White Mixed	2	2	2
White (unspecified)	6	5	6
White European	6	5	6
White subtotal	71	63	76
Mixed race	7	6	7
Arab	8	7	9
Black	8	7	9
Unknown	18	16	n/a
Are you disabled? (Base 112)	102		
Yes	36	32	35
No	59	53	58
Don't know	5	4	5
Don't want to say	2	2	2
Unknown	10	9	n/a

³Two 10-year-olds completed a paper copy of the survey with support from practitioners.

How would you describe your disability? (Base 43)	42		
Neurodiversity (e.g. autism, ADHD)	19	17	44
Mental health problem	12	11	28
Physical illness	5	4	12
Other	6	5	12
Religion (Base 112)	82		
Muslim	13	12	16
Christian	19	17	23
Other	6	5	7
None	44	39	54
Unknown	30	27	n/a
Is your gender now the same as you were given at birth? (Base 112)	102		
Yes	91	81	89
No	5	4	5
Unsure/questioning	3	3	3
Don't want to say	3	3	3
Unknown	10	9	n/a
Sexuality (base 89⁴)	68		
Straight	49	55	72
LGBTQ+	19	21	28
Unknown	21	24	n/a
<i>Total LGBTQ+⁵</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>29</i>
Types of need (Base 112)	112		
None of the below	51	46	52
Young carer	19	17	19
Care-experienced	24	21	24
Parent	2	2	2
Don't know	1	1	1
Don't want to say	2	2	2
Unknown	13	12	n/a
Nation (Base 112)	95		
England	67	60	71
Scotland	3	3	3
Cymru	9	8	9
Northern Ireland	16	14	17
Unknown	17	15	n/a

⁴Question restricted to participants aged 13 and over.

⁵All respondents who described their gender as something other than male or female, said their gender now was not the one they were given at birth, or described their sexuality as something other than straight/heterosexual.

5 | Mental health and wellbeing

5.1 | Key findings

	Base:	N:
<p>73% (81) of respondents reported feeling at least one positive emotion over the past two weeks. 28% (31) of respondents selected only positive emotions, 24% (27) selected only negative emotions, and 45% (50) selected a combination of the two.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The most commonly selected emotions were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 😊 happy 47%, (52), 😓 stressed 30%, (33) and 😫 overwhelmed 24%, (27) 	112	111
<p>Respondents gave a range of responses to questions about changes to their emotions compared with the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. Answers selected by 40% or more of respondents were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trouble sleeping, about the same as before Covid-19: 46%, (41) Feeling stressed, more now than before Covid-19: 45%, (42) Feeling happy, about the same as before Covid-19: 44%, (41) Feeling proud, about the same as before Covid-19: 40%, (36) 	112	95
<p>41% (44) of respondents thought that their school, college, university, or other local services did enough to support children and young people's mental health and emotional wellbeing. 36% (39) respondents thought that they didn't, and 23% (25) didn't know.</p>	112	108
<p>For respondents who thought that their school, college, university, or local services did do enough, the most common things that they said worked well were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Having trusted adults you feel you can talk to' 67%, (34) 'Time to spend with friends' 59%, (30) 'Talking about how you're feeling and how to look after your mental health and wellbeing' 51%, (26) 	63	51
<p>For respondents who thought that their school, college, university, or local services didn't do enough, or didn't know, the most common things that they said places should start doing or do more of were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Talking about how you're feeling and how to look after your mental health and wellbeing' 62%, (34) 'Access to formal support like counselling' 60%, (33) 'Helping you deal with stress about exams' 56%, (31) 	68	55

5.2 | Key themes

Nearly every respondent took the time to answer at least one open-text question in the Mental Health and Wellbeing section, suggesting that this is an area that the children and young people supported by Barnardo's feel very strongly about.

'It's nice to talk to **trusted adults** as you can share how you are feeling.'

'They made me feel **supported** even though I was working from home – I could **always message or call my teachers if needed.**'

'**Barnardo's takes full care of you.** If you got any homework, they have trusted staff to talk to if you feel uncomfortable outside of school or home.'

5.2.1 | Trusted Adults


A key theme across all sections of the survey was the importance of having trusted adults that children and young people can speak to and get support from. In some cases, this might be a family member, but respondents emphasised the importance of trusted adults outside of their families, often a teacher, mental health professional or children's services worker who they felt they could go to with concerns and receive support.

Where respondents didn't have those relationships, they really wanted to see improvements so that adults working with children and young people were better able to offer that support. Reasons why they might not have confidence in the adults around them included a lack of understanding about mental health issues, too much emphasis placed on academic achievement above wellbeing, or a lack of confidentiality, for example fearing that a teacher would report their conversation to their parents.

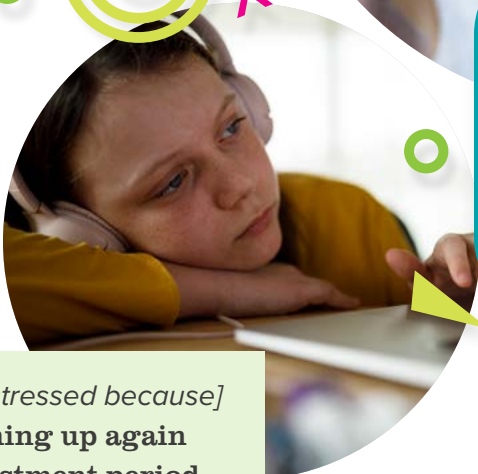
'Often college **seems to view struggles as excuses** for poor attendance or work quality/quantity which isn't fair, if someone is reaching out for help with their struggles **they should be listened to** regardless.'

'So a **young person is actually being listened to** by someone who is a professional and **help with the young person's development**'

'Because **school just say things but don't go along with it**, for example they might have an assembly about mental health but they don't actually do anything about it **in terms of helping and talking to the students.** Another thing is they tell parents and the young person might not be comfortable with this.'



‘Covid stopped me learning English at school. I had just arrived and started lessons and I found it difficult to learn English online. **It stopped my progress.’**



‘Isolation worsened my mental health as it took my independence away.’

5.2.2 | Impact of Covid-19

[Feeling overwhelmed and stressed because]

‘College and schools opening up again fully with very little adjustment period after spending almost a year working from home in isolation. On top of schools and college not providing enough support or putting anything in place to support mental or physical health needs.’

‘I think especially after lockdown a lot of people having a lot more anxiety and negative feelings coming into schools and college and so feeling heard and **having access to support for mental health could make school and college a more positive safe place for students.’**

[What would help?]

‘Being able to spend time with friends to know that you are all going through similar challenges. Rather than being sat alone, stressing, and working on the computer for online studies.’

Respondents had a wide range of experiences of Covid-19 and resulting lockdowns and restrictions. Some reported benefits such as preferring to attend school virtually, but most respondents talked about the difficulties that they’ve experienced during the pandemic, such as feeling isolated, stressed, and missing the parts of their life that were no longer possible due to restrictions. Respondents wished that things could go back to normal, particularly so that they could spend time with their friends again, take part in hobbies and activities, and spend time outside or play sports.

Covid-19 restrictions have also increased anxiety about returning to school in person, and respondents wanted to see schools acknowledge these difficulties and provide additional support to help students reacclimatise.



'The school asks us how we are feeling and they give us diaries/notebooks to **write the things we feel or can't voice down**. This really helps me. It also gives some pupils sensory toys to help us relieve anger and stress too.'

'**School failed to help and support me** during the pandemic and through my grieving process.'



5.2.3 | Service provision and resources


'**Although my college do offer counselling, the service was overwhelmed and poor, so I did not continue with the therapy.** It's good and somewhat reassuring that they offer this however after coronavirus I feel the levels of support dropped even further and now, I do not receive any mental health or wellbeing support because I am also no longer taught by my old teachers.'

'They [school] have a range of different things for different people. **Counselling was pretty good.**'

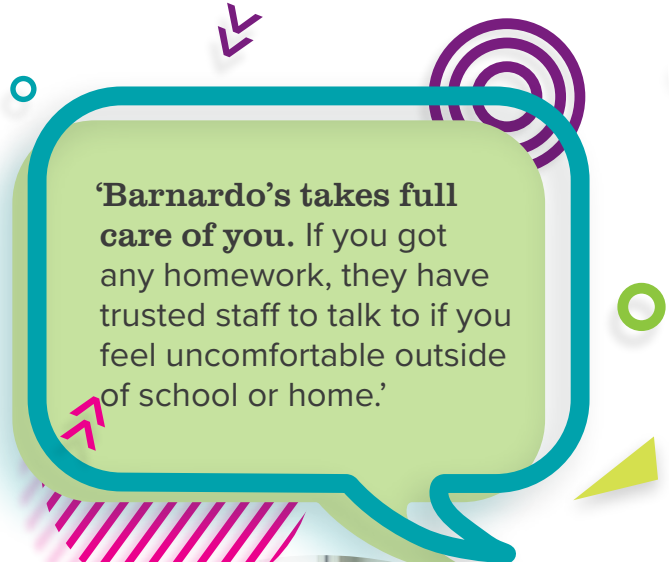
'In Counselling I felt **I could talk openly without judgement.**'

Many respondents talked about the provision of mental health services in their area. Where they had been able to access mental health services their experiences were usually positive, but in some cases, respondents reported a lack of provision or availability, with high demand leading to long waiting times or limited counselling session availability for example.

Where respondents talked about Barnardo's, they described the support they receive through our services very positively. Some respondents also had good experiences of other mental health services such as counselling, or resources provided to them by their school such as a dedicated 'zen den' that they could access, promoting mental health awareness, or teaching them about tools such as journaling or mindfulness exercises.



Feeling nervous, overwhelmed and stressed:
'Having to move and the past coming back.'



'Barnardo's takes full care of you. If you got any homework, they have trusted staff to talk to if you feel uncomfortable outside of school or home.'

5.2.4 | Transitions

Feeling happy and scared:

'I was not in school so much last year when I moved to secondary school and it all feels new to me in second year – all the changes.'

Feeling lonely, excited, overwhelmed:

'Uncertainty when it comes to social services finishing with me.'

Feeling happy and confident:

'New start, having a job, good friends, good family.'

Feeling happy, sad, worried:

'A lot of changes are going on in my life such as new job, needing to focus more on college work because I want to go to university, making and losing friends. The biggest change is me not being in a relationship for the first time in years, which can impact me badly as I have borderline personality disorder and struggle with loneliness. However, I am certainly happier out of said relationship and have more happy moments than when I was in it. I think this is just an adjustment period so will no doubt be difficult.'



Respondents often mentioned ongoing or upcoming transitions as having a big effect on their mood, both good and bad. Some respondents were very excited about returning to school in-person, or starting at a new school, college or university. Some respondents also felt nervous or worried about these changes or found them stressful or overwhelming. In some cases, respondents felt that these changes either presented an opportunity for a fresh start, or found the disruption brought back old traumas or negative experiences.

5.2.5 | Differences in gender

Girls reported significantly poorer mental health across a range of measures compared to boys. (Note: we had some non-binary respondents but not in sufficient numbers to analyse comparatively.) Most significantly:

- Girls were over four times as likely to report feeling stressed (43% of girls vs 10% of boys) or overwhelmed (34% of girls vs 8% of boys) in the last two weeks. Boys were three times as likely to report feeling relaxed (28% of boys vs 9% of girls) and 1.5 times as likely to report feeling happy (60% of boys vs 41% of girls) in the last two weeks.
- Girls were also over 6 times as likely to feel less proud now than they did before the pandemic (27% of girls vs 4% of boys), 2.5 times as likely to feel more lonely now (35% of girls vs 10% of boys), over twice as likely to be having more trouble sleeping now (39% vs 15%), and almost twice as likely to be feeling sad now (32% vs 18%). Boys were much more likely to report feeling less lonely (48% vs 27%) and less worried (45% vs 20%) compared to before the pandemic.
- Girls were over twice as likely to think that their school doesn't do enough to support mental health and wellbeing (43% vs 18%).
- Girls were also much more likely to feel fairly or very negative about their future (16% vs 3%), where boys were more likely to feel fairly or very positive (80% vs 62%).

6 | Feeling safe

6.1 | Key findings

	Base:	N:
<p>Most respondents felt safe most or all of the time at home, at school, online and walking around their local area.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> When asked to rate how safe they felt in different locations on a scale from 1 (<i>not at all safe</i>) to 5 (<i>completely safe</i>), respondents were far more likely to feel completely safe at home (70%, 61) than they were at school (35%, 29), online (30%, 26), or walking around their local area (24%, 21). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> At home, 88% (77) respondents felt safe most 'or all of the time (rating 4 or 5). At school, 65% (54) of respondents felt safe most or all of the time (rating 4 or 5). Online, 35% (31) of respondents only felt safe some of the time (rating 3), while 53% (46) felt safe most or all of the time (rating 4 or 5). Respondents felt least safe walking around their local area, with 17% (15) rating their feeling of safety a 1 or a 2, 25% (22) saying they felt safe some of the time (rating 3) and 55% (48) saying they felt safe most or all of the time. 	112	88
<p>58% (51) of respondents had experienced unwelcome comments or contact from someone in a public place, including 28% (25) of respondents saying they'd experienced this while going to or from school, 46% (41) of respondents experienced this at other times, and 17% (15) respondents said that they'd experienced both.</p>	112	88
<p>When asked about inappropriate behaviour among people their age at school or in their local area (<i>a question restricted to respondents aged 13 and over</i>), the most commonly reported behaviours were 'spreading rumours about someone's sexual activity', which 55% (36) of respondents said happened sometimes or all the time; 'sexist name-calling (insulting someone because of their gender)', which 49% (32) of respondents reported happened sometimes or all the time; and 'making unwanted or inappropriate comments of a sexual nature', which 46% (31) of respondents reported happened sometimes or all the time.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The least commonly reported behaviours were 'touching someone inappropriately or without their permission', which 43% (29) of respondents said never happened, and 'pressuring someone to do sexual things that they did not want to', which 42% (28) of respondents said never happened. Many respondents said that they didn't know whether these things took place, with 34% (23) saying that they didn't know whether 'pressuring someone to do sexual things that they did not want to' happened among people their age, and 30% (20) not knowing whether 'pressuring someone to provide sexual images of themselves' happened among people their age. 	89	68

When asked about whether children and young people they knew carried weapons (*restricted to respondents aged 13 and over*), were involved with gangs, or had been approached to sell or carry drugs, most respondents said that either this never happens **range 37-40%, (25-27)**, or that they didn't know **range 18–22%, (12-15)**.

- **45% (30)** of respondents said that children and young people they knew were approached to sell or carry drugs sometimes or all the time. 89 67
 - **42% (28)** of respondents said that children and young people they knew carried a weapon sometimes or all the time.
 - **37% (25)** of respondents said children and young people they knew were involved with a gang sometimes or all the time.
-

When asked about a range of online harms, 24 respondents (28%) reported never seeing any of the types of content listed, and 60 respondents (69%) had seen at least one type of content sometimes or all the time.

- The most commonly-seen content was: 'unwanted messages or contact from people you don't know', which **52% (45)** of respondents said they saw sometimes or all the time; followed by 'things that pressure you to look a certain way or encourage negative body image', which **51% (44)** of respondents saw sometimes or all the time; and 'things that promote violence, hatred or racist views', which **48% (42)** of respondents saw sometimes or all the time. 112 87
 - The least commonly seen content was 'things that try to sell you stuff that might be illegal', which **25% (22)** saw sometimes or all the time.
-

6.2 | Key themes

Most respondents felt safe at home, that it was a safe space for them for a range of reasons including the security of the building, being at home with family, having their own room or spending time with a pet.

Respondents who didn't always feel safe at home primarily said this was due to experiences such as a death in the family, or concerns about a family member's health making them feel worried about what might happen at home.

Respondents were less likely to feel safe when they were in a new situation, or where they were out in the local area at night or by themselves.

Having trusted adults to talk to was once again an important theme. In some cases, respondents talked about getting support from Barnardo's staff as part of their residential care to help navigate their local area safely.

'I'm in Barnardo's supported accommodation in my own flat and staff are just across the road.'

'Children need to talk to safe people.'


6.2.1 | Feeling safe



'Around my local area **there is a lot of drug dealers so it's quite daunting** and you don't know what they are going to do and **being online sometimes scares me** as you don't know who is on the other side of that screen.'

'I feel safe with my parents, in school and in the local community because I have got to know people and they are friendly.'

'I feel safe in my room at school and home and when I'm cuddling my dog.'



'I am constantly approached or catcalled by men daily however unfortunately this is normalised and something I must deal with although it is scary and makes me anxious.'

'Some kid yelled 'go back to Italy' or something because of the patch on my bag. This is when Italy had the highest [Covid-19] cases.'

'I need more support from bullying, more information on mental health.'

6.2.2 | Bullying and harassment

Respondents who didn't feel safe at school mentioned factors including verbal and physical bullying, spreading of rumours, or not having confidence in their teachers to resolve problems. Respondents reported instances of verbal harassment, including sexual harassment and racist comments.

'I'm autistic and don't understand others behaviour.'

'Don't trust loads of people in school because they spread secrets.'

'Have been hate crimed/assaulted a few times.'

'In school when I was in 1st/2nd year a male said he wanted to lose his virginity to me. This male is still trying to contact me through made up accounts and stares at me.'



'A friend got videos of someone cutting themselves.'

'I know there are bad things online because my parents have talked to us but I think they have settings on our devices that keep us safe.'

'I always go on the same sites to watch football commentaries and listen to music so I don't bother with all that negative things.'


6.2.3 | Online

Most respondents were aware of the potential dangers of the internet. Some reported that they'd never seen such things directly, either due to parental controls on their devices or their own settings/choices of online activities. Others accepted certain kinds of content as being an inevitable part of being online.

'It's so easy for people to lie. If you post things, they'll be there forever.'

'I worry that I'm being recorded through the screen and they can find out my interests, music etc and I see things online that bring back memories.'

'Social media is full of dangerous and disturbing things many of which are visible with easy access or no attempt to access whatsoever. **Instagram is one that makes me feel very low in confidence** because of the pressures to look a certain way which is not physically possible without surgery and editing however it makes myself and other young people feel like they need to change themselves. Also, with tiktok, Instagram, Facebook: **it is all too easy for strangers to contact you and send inappropriate messages.'**



‘To make money.
Police have given up because they never stop.’

‘People being groomed around my age.’

‘I used to know people who did these things for money or other people did it. **It was a normal thing for some people.**’

‘I think it’s whatever that young person has been through in the past.’

6.2.4 | Child Criminal Exploitation

Relatively few respondents answered our open text question about children and young people’s involvement in violence/gangs/drugs – those that did listed a range of possible causes, including the need for money, children and young people being groomed, or a sense that these things had become normalised in their area.

7 | Experience of care


24 survey respondents were in care or had been in care in the past. We wanted to know about their experiences of moving home, changing school, or changing social worker, and what could make things better in the future.

7.1 | Changing home (placement), school and social worker

	Homes (n 21)		School (n 21)		Social Workers (n 20)	
	%	N	%	N	%	N
1	33	7	24	5	5	1
2	24	5	33	7	5	1
3-5	29	6	29	6	45	9
6-9	10	2	10	2	10	2
10+	5	1	0	0	20	4
Don't know/can't remember	0	0	5	1	10	2
Don't want to say	0	0	0	0	5	1


Only two respondents reported never having changed home, school, or social worker during their time in care. One respondent had changed each of these at least 6 – 9 times, and 17 respondents had changed at least one of home, school, and social worker 3 – 5 times.

Some respondents said that they were fairly comfortable with these changes, but the majority found them stressful, disruptive, or upsetting, making it difficult to make and maintain friendships, feel comfortable and secure, or build relationships with professionals.




What has moving **home** been like for you while you've been in care?

- 'I'm okay with it because I easily learnt a route from and to school whilst changing and I've never really felt any stress because of the movements.'
- 'Scary at first but now used to it.'
- 'It was horrible I had no stability whatsoever and felt like I didn't belong anywhere or that I didn't have a real place I could call home.'
- 'Feel happy @ the start after a while makes me feel unsafe.'
- 'I didn't like it.'
- 'Relaxed but sometimes I misbehaved when I wasn't with my siblings.'
- 'Scary and upsetting.'
- 'It was very hard, and at the time I couldn't understand it.'





What has changing **school** been like for you while you've been in care?

- '8 schools. I hated moving schools as I never fit in, now at my current school I'm happy I fit in and I feel safe.'
- 'Bit nerve wracking but not a bother.'
- 'I was kicked out of my first high school in year 8/9 the same day I was taken into care. After that no mainstream or even specialist school would take me on because I was labelled a bad child with complications so severe no place was able to handle or cater to my needs which was unreasonable and made me feel like a monster. I was then tutored privately and although this helped me to pass my GCSES I was lonely, in and out of unstable relationships attempting to not feel alone but thus getting into toxic damaging situations. After leaving high school however and entering college: the first year proved to be the most difficult however into the second year once I formed a stable friendship with my best friend it improved.'
- 'Really difficult.'
- 'Annoyed because I was losing all of my new mates.'
- 'Great leads to more bullying.'
- 'Not too bad cause I knew people.'





What has changing **social worker** been like while you've been in care?

- '16. It's been crap as I just have no faith in the care system. But I really like my current social worker called Kelly.'
- 'Some social workers I had were horrible and I was not happy with them being my social worker, it was stressful constantly changing worker too because just when you have adapted and become used to someone you then must adjust to someone else. The only social worker I was happy with out of many was the last one I had but she was unfortunately only around for a few months.'
- 'Annoying.'
- 'Bloody awful. Losing someone close to you..feel rejected again.'
- 'I don't really care.'
- 'Annoying and disturbing.'
- 'It was very hard because I constantly had to tell social workers my story and build a relationship with them.'



‘Sarah **my care worker made a big difference** and I am still in touch with her now.’



‘I really liked both of my **foster carers**, they are both really nice people, and **my social worker would do anything she could to make me feel comfortable or optimistic about something.**’

‘**My old foster carers took very good care of me**, unfortunately they were too old to continue to suit my needs during my time staying with them but during the 7 months I spent with them they were wonderful. They had good parental rules in place which although I may not have been happy about at the time, I now see were responsible and fair. **They provided me with the only care placement I could ever refer to as home or feel comforted by the memory of**, they cooked me tasty healthy meals, included me in their family trips. They gave me an allowance for good behaviour and always took me out with them so I wouldn’t feel alone, **if I was upset, they were very understanding and empathetic. I am still in contact with them both now.**’

7.2 | What makes a difference

Respondents talked about the importance of adults in their lives who listened to them and supported them, especially those who were in their lives consistently even after they had moved on.

'The quality of all social workers to **make sure they are really there for the child.**'

'Getting social workers that **stay with a child through their time in care.**'

'If they are a bit older allow them to **have a say when it comes to some decisions.**'

'An explanation of **what could happen in care.**'

When asked about making care better for children in the future, the most common themes were more information about care and what was happening to them and what they wanted, consistency and stability in relationships and homes, and support with their mental health and wellbeing.

'Talking about mental health more and making them feel safe.'

'Keep on trying to find the right home.'

'Keep them in one permanent place so it doesn't make them suffer as much as they are already.'

8 | The future

8.1 | How Positive or Negative do you feel about your Future?

	Base:	N:
In spite of the many challenges in their lives, 79% (62) of respondents felt fairly or very positive about their future, while 10% (9) felt fairly or very negative about their future and 21% (19) didn't know or didn't want to say.	112	90

'I can do whatever I want **I have no limits** And everyone have high expectations for me.'

'I think that **I won't get a job and I'll just end up being homeless** or **I won't be happy** when am older.'

Many respondents who felt positive about the future told us that this was due to self-confidence or their commitment to hard work and pursuing education or work opportunities, looking forward to being more independent and making their own decisions about their lives. Others talked about the support they received from family, friends or other adults in their lives making them feel that they had a positive future to look forward to.

Those who had more mixed or negative views about their futures talked about their uncertainty about achieving goals like certain exam grades, or fears they had about the continuing Covid-19 pandemic or the threat of climate change. Some lacked confidence in their own abilities or were worried about the ongoing strain of things like their caring responsibilities or mental health difficulties.

'I feel good as it's my turn to make choices and decisions for my life!'

'I'm hoping that covid restrictions will reduce, leading to my future ambitions.'

'I will be famous and successful like Nicki Minaj period.'

'It did not feel safe where we lived before in Lebanon. We could hear bombs and bullets sometimes and it was not a nice place to be. **It is so much better here and we have the chance to do well, go to school and get a good job.'**

‘Scared of what I’ll become and I’ll feel like everything will be bad.’

‘Because finding work it’s impossible, the person I care for medical health issues requires 24/7 care. **The monthly income it’s too small which makes me stress over financial stability.**’

‘Climate change, jobs (don’t feel cut out for jobs), not sure of what I want to do.’

‘Sometimes I feel I will always be sad about my mum and something worse could happen in the future, something good could happen too.’

‘I selected both positive and negative because sometimes I believe I will do well and succeed and have a wonderful future however other times I feel scared and uncertain and worried about the future, I think because of my bad past I sometimes to see the future in a more positive light for fear of getting my hopes up as well as lack of positive experience.’

8.2 | If there was one thing that would really make your life better over the next five years what would it be?

'Better paying job,
getting through the
waiting list for the mental
health and learning
disability diagnosis.'

**'Less
homophobes.'**

**'To have money with
out my parents worry-
ing about going into
there overdraft every
month or having some
sort of support for that.'**

**'Constant support
from adults and
friends in my life.'**

'Access to respite and holidays I could never afford. Time to do things is great but if you cannot afford to have a holiday it's pretty much same.'

'Winning the lottery. Could help with finances such as caring costs, mortgages, and student loans.'

'For me to be more stable and happier and for me to finish university successfully and be able to make more stable friendships.'

'Someone to help my mum with her mental health consistently so she wouldn't worry.'

'Someone for me to talk to not just in school.'

'Government doing something about climate change.'

'To learn more English and be able to go to more English classes to learn the language and **do well in school and get a good job.'**

Respondents had a wide range of responses to this question. Some mentioned money, such as winning the lottery or becoming a millionaire, in some cases to alleviate current financial difficulties for themselves or their families. Some talked about career aspirations or future independence, such as getting into university, having their own home, or becoming a famous singer. Some wanted help and support for their families, such as more support for a parent's illness. Some just wanted to be happy, sometimes through more mental health support or reduced symptoms of mental illness. Others wanted to see system change, such as less homophobia or more government action on climate change.



Barnardo's annual **survey** of children
and young people

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