

the good childhood

a national inquiry



**The
Children's
Society**

The Good Childhood Inquiry

Focus group consultations with children and young people

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Introduction

Over the last year The Children's Society has carried out 51 focus groups with over 407 children and young people regarding the six themes of *The Good Childhood Inquiry*.

The purpose of these groups has been:

- to explore some of the issues identified within each theme with a diverse range of young people, in order to identify key areas of difference which may need to be considered.
- to ensure that the views of children and young people who may not have had the opportunity to respond to the call for evidence were included in the Inquiry process.

The consultation has included the following groups of children and young people:

- Young people in trouble with the law (79)
- Disabled children and young people (53)
- Young people in public care (12)
- Young refugees and asylum seekers (35)
- Young people living in areas of high disadvantage (58)
- Children under the age of five (106)
- Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and young people (15)
- Young people excluded from school (7)
- Others including children in single parent families (42)

The consultations were carried in all four nations that make up the UK.

Of the 407 children and young people that took part, 231 were male and 176 were female. We heard from children born in the UK, Kenya, Burundi, Vietnam, Kurdistan, Croatia, Serbia, Albania, Romania, Nigeria, Liberia, Rwanda, Eritrea, DRC, Rwanda, Burma, Afghanistan, Congo, Tunisia and Jamaica.

The key messages identified through this consultation are summarised in the attached set of papers, under the six inquiry themes. There are a number of messages emerging from the consultation that can potentially help the panel to ensure that the final inquiry report is sensitive to issues of difference.

As an example, in relation to the learning theme:

- a group of young offenders agreed that it is important that parents provided support with their education, but some commented that their own parents had not had the skills and knowledge to be able to support them with their homework.
- a group of young people in public care in Northern Ireland noted that they didn't have access to the Internet to support their learning

A full listing of topics covered in the accompanying papers is shown on the next page.

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Analysis: key points arising from the focus groups

Friends

Ten focus groups were carried out with children and young people on the theme of Friends. These included:

- 4 groups of very young children (aged 3 to 5 years) located in Bradford, Bath and Northern Ireland
- 3 groups of disabled children and young people (aged 8 to 17 years) in Wolverhampton, London and Northern Ireland
- 1 group of young refugees and new migrants in Sheffield (aged 15 to 21 years)
- 1 group of Roma young people (aged 7 to 18 years) in London
- 1 group of young people that have been in care (aged 15 to 21 years) in West Sussex

We have also referred to a focus group that was carried out with a group of young offenders in Cheshire on the theme of Lifestyle, which included a discussion of the influence of peers and bullying.

Friendship was clearly of central importance to the children and young people that participated. They valued friendship for the individual interactions, shared activities and sense of inclusion in a group. As one participant put it:

“Who doesn’t want to be in a group of friends? That “sticks and stones” rhyme is not true – words are worse.”

Group of young people that have lived in care, West Sussex

Qualities in a friend

The children and young people had similar ideas about what qualities are important in a friend. Trust, support, loyalty, respect and honesty were all felt to be crucial, with participants stressing the need for friends to “keep secrets and promises”, “stick up for you” and “be there when needed”.

“Trust and keeping secrets”

“That they accept you for who you are”

“Most important that they help defend you and don’t just believe what people say –you feel safe with them”

“They stick with you and keep things to themselves and not tell anyone.”

Group of disabled children and young people, Wolverhampton

“Or maybe just say if they had an opinion that was different to yours even if you don't agree with them it is good to respect it anyway”

Group of disabled young people, Northern Ireland

Other important qualities in a friend included being kind, nice and fun to be with. Being able to “have a laugh” together was a common response.

“My mate Chrissie makes me laugh and she is really fun to be with...”

Group of disabled young people, Northern Ireland

“They’re nice to me.”

“They’re kind.”

“Having fun with them.”

“They’re funny.”

Group of Roma children and young people

The children and young people - in particular the under 5s - felt that friends could be of any age, members of your family, siblings or pets. However, some of the older participants felt that it was often easier to be friends with people like them. This was a particular source of discussion for the group of young people that had lived in care.

“In care you need to have other friends who are in care.”

“Don’t mind – have a friend who used to live in a children’s home”

“It’s harder to have friends in care”

“Some parents don’t like their children to have friends who are in care”

Group of young people that have lived in care, West Sussex

Q. What do you want your friends to be like?

“Like me”

Group of young offenders, Cheshire

One participant with ADHD described the particular challenges he faced in making friends:

“Because I have ADHD some can’t accept me for who I am – I only had 1 friend [in secondary school] until I mixed with people in care and older people.”

Group of young people that have lived in care, West Sussex

Shared activities

Children also valued their friends for the things they could do together. The younger children talked about playing together and going to each other’s houses for tea and sleepovers, while the older children mentioned their favourite activities such as going out, shopping, going to the cinema, bowling or ice-skating, playing sports or watching TV and playing video games together.

“I liked play-fights, to go to the cinema, bowling...”

“When you are little you visit homes, when you are older you are at school or you go out”

“Now you go out and do illegal things!”

Group of young people that have lived in care, West Sussex

Just chatting and having someone to talk to was seen as an important element of friendship.

“Someone to talk to.”

“When you need advice you can ask them.”

Group of Roma children and young people

"You can talk to them."

"You can share secrets, tell your friends what happens."

Group of deaf young people

Friendship problems and falling out

Participants were vociferous about the upset and pain caused by friendship problems, giving an indication of how important friends are to them.

Not having friends or not being included in a group was a common source of distress. The young people that had lived in care talked about the importance of "belonging".

Q. Do you need to belong?

"You want to be in with them... if you don't have the right stuff – in or out"

"Out feels like shit"

"If you are in with the popular group you like going to school if you are out you don't like going..."

"I wanted to be accepted but I wasn't and it felt like shit – so I don't go to school"

Group of young people that have lived in care, West Sussex

Participants also disliked falling out with their friends or when their friends are upset with them.

"You are really fucked if you lose your friends."

"I keep going over it and reliving the experience [of falling out]"

"A nightmare – I would be lost without my best friend."

Group of young people that have lived in care, West Sussex

Q. How do you feel when you argue with your friends?

"Sad"

“Sad, if someone don’t like you, you need to go home and tell mum and dad.”

Group of under 5s, Bath

“When they get upset with you.”

Group of Roma children and young people

Some also felt that friends could sometimes be unnecessarily argumentative or “stir things up”.

“Sometimes it is like when some other friends are arguing and they kind of get involved in things and that kind of stirs it up a bit”

Group of disabled young people, Northern Ireland

Being betrayed by friends was another source of upset. Participants disliked it when friends “tell your secrets”, are “two-faced” or “back-stabbing”.

“I gained loads of friends – but what they do, is stab you in the back”

Group of young people that have lived in care, West Sussex

“When they break promises.”

“When they don’t keep secrets.”

“When they lie to me.”

Group of Roma children and young people

“When you tell your friend something and they go and tell others”

Group of disabled young people, Northern Ireland

A group of disabled young people from Northern Ireland and a group of deaf young people from London mentioned the unkind or hurtful comments that friends sometimes make.

“When they are nasty to you.”

“When they give you dirty looks about your clothes.”

“When they say you are ugly.”

“If they say ‘You’re ugly and I’m pretty’.”

“If they say you are fat.”

“When they are speaking English and laughing about you because you can’t understand English. When they call you a loser and tease you.”

Group of deaf young people, London

“sometimes people give their opinions when they are not asked for or when you make unnecessary comments sometimes it can make you feel hurt”

Group of disabled young people, Northern Ireland

Participants were also critical of friends who are self-centred, inconsiderate, and not prepared to compromise or listen to the views of others. Others conveyed a similar sentiment by commending the opposite qualities, such as friends that share.

“I don’t like it sometimes when [you want to do different things] and they just decide to go off and do whatever they want to do and not listening to what you wanted to do”

“I think if you are trying to say something and they butt in”

Group of disabled young people, Northern Ireland

Adult support for friendships

Asked how adults could help children and young people to make and keep their friends, participants came up with various suggestions, the most common being to introduce children to others their age, provide opportunities for them to spend time together and give them some freedom.

Q: How can parents and other adults help you make friends?

“Encourage children.”

“Your mum and dad can introduce you to others.”

“They can put you in a club to make friends. A fun club.” [Meaning a sports or social club].

“If you have no friends, and your mum and dad’s friend has a daughter...”

“A parent can make you play with your neighbour’s children.”

Group of deaf young people, London

“Take you on trips; arrange meetings so you get to know others. I never knew people until Heather [the facilitator] arranged it.”

“When my mum has friends who have kids and we meet up. When my mum tells us to go to the [sports] club and meet with friends.”

“If your parents let you do things.”

Group of Roma children and young people

“You don’t make as many friends if they are too over protective”

Group of disabled young people, Northern Ireland

Some of the participants saw adults as having a conflict resolution role.

“They can ask both [children] to come together.”

“If they are arguing, the teacher can say ‘You were good friends before’, and so they feel bad, the teacher will say ‘Be good!’ to both of them, and ‘You should be friends again!’”

Group of deaf young people, London

The young people that had lived in care were critical of the care system for presenting obstacles to their friendships.

Q. Do carers help [to encourage making friends]?

“No! They do the opposite”

“You can’t do things in care – like sleep-overs and surfing the internet”

“You can’t have friends round in children’s homes – if you are going to call it a home it should be treated like a home and you should be able to invite friends... there are different rules for different children’s homes in the same area.”

Group of young people that have lived in care, West Sussex

Adult intervention in friendships

Unprompted some of the participants recognised that their friends were not always a positive influence on them and *vice versa*.

“The worst thing I did was started smoking cos that’s when I like started hanging around with the wrong people and started drinking and then smoking weed and just going out and getting pissed all the time, coming down, thought I’d lost it in my head but yeah its just the people you hang around with, you need your children to keep away from the bad people”

Group of young offenders, Cheshire

“Yeah, like just say if your friend who your mum and dad don’t like say he smokes or drinks or anything, say if he is out and about and he meets up with a whole crowd of people and they start saying go on take a cigarette and all and you know you don’t smoke and your mum and dad will angry if you smoke and then peer pressure comes in and you really don’t know what to do”

Group of disabled young people, Northern Ireland

However, when they were asked whether adults should intervene when children’s friends are getting them into trouble, opinions were divided. Some felt that adult intervention was helpful, while others saw it as counterproductive.

Q. So is there anything your parents can do to stop you seeing people you get into trouble with?

“No”

“I don’t know hopefully your children just realise who the wrong people are”

“Parents should give them the choice who they hang round with instead of telling them, you know what I mean?”

“I’d tell my children even if you hang around with them don’t let them bloody say start smoking”

Group of young offenders, Cheshire

“When you come back stoned they try to stop you seeing your friends”

“But that only makes you want to see them more.”

“If they did/do I feel offended.”

Group of young people that have lived in care, West Sussex

“Sometimes your mother and father might not want you to hang around... it depends on the children. You know your friends better. You don’t have to listen to your parents unless they are that bad. Not on all occasions, but sometimes you should obey.”

“At the end of the day you should listen to parents.”

“I would say ‘I want to play with that girl because I need friends’. I’d play anyway.”

Group of Roma children and young people

“Phone the other children’s parents.”

“Visit the other children.”

“If you have a naughty friend, go to their house and tell them to stop.”

Group of deaf young people, London

Participants were also asked about teachers separating friends in the classroom. Although a few young people expressed clear dislike for not being able to sit with their friends, surprisingly most were supportive of the practice. The young people pointed out that being separated from their friends didn’t stop the friendship, and sitting with others allowed them to make new friends and concentrate on their work better.

Q. Do you think it’s a good idea that at school, teachers separate friends?

“It can be a good idea – it depends – it helps naughty children. It’s a positive thing really.”

Group of young people that have lived in care, West Sussex

“Good idea, because you can focus and learn.”

“It is best to separate friends.”

“It is better boy – girl – boy – girl – boy – girl...”

Q: Why?

“You can focus, boys won’t want talk to girls!”

“If you sit next to someone else, you can make a new friend.”

Group of deaf young people, London

“It’s good to sit with them, as it’s not so lonely. Good if apart because you study and concentrate more.”

“If you have a test and have to concentrate then it (sitting apart) is OK, if you’re with friends you can’t really.”

“You talk to each other even if you sit apart.”

Group of Roma children and young people

“Quite happy cos’ you can talk to them from the other table like this”

[demonstration of silent lip talk]

“Good for concentrating on work but you might be lonely – It’s OK mostly cos’ I’m used to it”

“Upset if you only have one friend cos’ then you have none”

“Very annoying in the middle of a conversation”

“I don’t like to be separated in class”

Group of disabled children and young people, Wolverhampton

Bullying

The focus group participants’ comments about bullying were reminiscent of young people’s views on the subject in general. However, in addition to talking about bullying from the perspective of the victim, participants also reflected on the issue from the bully’s point of view. Some even admitted to having bullied themselves.

“Don’t think its right to bully people”

“I don’t think its right but I think everyone in time will actually bully people because if they’ve been bullied then they’ll probably end up bullying people.”

“Everyone experiences it at some point”

Group of young offenders, Cheshire

The group of young offenders in Cheshire in particular had a number of ideas about how children and young people should respond if they are being bullied.

“I know it’s hard but ignore them you just need to I don’t even know...”

“If you show you’re scared they just terrorise you even more”

“You need to stick up for yourself”

“Most people are scared to stick up for themselves”

“Even if you do stick up for yourself its still gonna be there no matter what.” *“The only thing that works I think is knocking them out”*

“They need to not seem bothered about them or terrorise them even more”

Group of young offenders, Cheshire

Participants tended to agree that friends play an important supportive role if a child is being bullied.

Q. With bullying – how can you be helped or help?

“You’re fucked when you don’t have friends.”

Q. Should friends help when you are being bullied?

“Yeah but it leads to more trouble.”

“Fighting leads to court”

“I stick up for myself.”

Group of young people that have lived in care, West Sussex

“If I had a friend and someone bullied me, people who still bully me. If on their own, and they’re geeks, people would still bully.”

Group of Roma children and young people

“They can reassure you, tell you not to worry, a friend is for life and can help you.”

“If you are with your friends, maybe the bully will be scared.”

“If you are being bullied maybe your friends can look after you.”

“Maybe someone sees someone being called names and says you are ugly. If you are with a friend, maybe your friend can hit them.”

“They will go and tell.”

Group of deaf young people, London

Family

Eight focus groups were carried out with children and young people on the theme of Family. These included:

- 4 groups of very young children (aged 3 to 6 years) located in Bradford, Bath and Northern Ireland
- 1 group of young men in custody in London (aged 15 to 17 years)
- 2 groups of disabled children and young people (aged 10 to 25 years) in Cardiff and Northern Ireland
- 1 group of children living in an area of high disadvantage in Cardiff (aged 3 to 12 years)

When they were asked, children's responses illustrated many different types of families, reflecting the diversity found in family composition in the UK. Despite the diversity within the groups, a number of themes emerged, indicating that across different age groups and circumstances, children and young people tend to have clear ideas about what families should be like and the factors that impact on harmonious family life.

Key ingredients for a happy family life

When the children and young people were asked what makes a good family life, they associated it with togetherness and sticking together, being nurtured and cared for, affection, play and having fun together.

There were a number of examples of the importance of spending time together and supporting one another.

"Being together"

Group of young children (aged 4 to 6), Bath

"I like it when we spend time together"

Group of disabled young people, Cardiff

“Spending your life with them, spending time together”

Group of disabled young people, Northern Ireland

“You’re there for each other”

“When trouble comes, you’ve got to work things out together”

Group of young men in custody, London

Even from a very young age, children recognised their role in a happy family.

“Being good”

“Being kind”

“Being friendly”

Group of young children (aged 4 to 6), Bath

“Me”

“Playing with my little sister, I help her to move”

Group of under 5s, Bath

“Yes. My Mummy makes me happy. I cuddle her”

Group of under 5s, Bradford

Participants also had clear ideas of the role of parents within the family, which includes providing love, support and material possessions.

“They look after you and make sure you have everything you need. I wouldn’t be able to survive without my mum”

“It is really great to know that you are loved”

Group of disabled young people, Cardiff

“You need to be understanding

“You’ve got to be there for them [your children]. Like in here, like us”

Group of young men in custody, London

However, while the children and young people had clear ideas of parents' roles and responsibilities, they tended to feel that outside of practical skills many of these attributes cannot be taught.

"I don't think it [lessons] work"

"You can't tell people how to be a parent"

"Just love them"

Group of young men in custody, London

The children and young people also discussed what makes family life difficult. Again there were many similarities amongst the groups, particularly the effect of discord within the family unit.

"When we disagree"

Group of disabled young people, Cardiff

"Fighting"

"Arguing"

Group of disabled young people, Northern Ireland

Not being with one's family was particularly difficult for younger children

"Being on their own"

"Being lonely"

"When someone is left out"

Group of young children (aged 4 to 6), Bath

A distinct message from the young people in custody was the impact of negative external influences on family life. There was a general consensus that factors such as crime, drugs, abuse and poverty all stop children from having a good family life. Also to some degree these young people associated their offending with influences outside of the home and a clash between parental and peer influences.

“Bad friends you know? You get dragged into it. You want to stay out late at night at certain times and it’s hard. You get kicked out of the house sometimes”

“If I’d stayed at home I wouldn’t be in this mess”

Group of young men in custody, London

Attitudes to family life

Attitudes to the amount of time parents spend with their children, including attitudes to parents working were explored. A variety of different views were expressed but in general, children and young people highlighted the importance of spending time together and of having a parent with them to provide the majority of care-giving, particularly in the early years of life. There was no preference shown for whether the stay at home parent was their mother or father.

“Say if they were toddlers and they always went to a childminder they would have to get... they would not get to know their mum and dad when they get older”

“Because if you were with somebody else like a childminder or anything like that there they are going to get more attached to them and probably the childminder if your mum is out working from 8 in the morning until 8 at night or whatever obviously the childminder is going to know more about the child than their own mum and dad.”

“There should always be a parent with them”

“Whoever brings in the best money”

“One person should work and one person should take care of the kids”

Group of disabled young people, Northern Ireland

“I think it’s important to stay home and look after the kids when they’re young. Once they’re older they can go to playschool or nursery.”

Group of disabled young people, Cardiff

Children recognised the importance of work and generally thought it is important that their parents work. They also recognised the difficulties parents

experience in finding a balance between work and spending time with children.

“You need money and it’s important to have enough”

Group of disabled young people, Cardiff

“They should spend more time with family but they should work too”

“A mum with no work might have lots of time [for her family] but no money. But a mum who works might have some money, but not much time left”

Group of young men in custody, London

Attitudes to parental conflict and separation

Many of the groups discussed how parents should handle separation or divorce and whether parents should stay together for the sake of their children. There were mixed views on this topic, with some children believing that parents should do everything to salvage their relationship.

“They should try to stop arguing and try to remember what they love about each other”

Group of disabled young people, Cardiff

While others thought it is worse for children to see their parents constantly in conflict.

“because then they would be miserable and argue all the time and make the kids lives miserable too...”

Group of disabled young people, Cardiff

“Bad when you see them fighting”

Group of disabled young people, Northern Ireland

The impact of parental separation was also discussed, including the loss of contact with the other parent, a lack of male role models and confusion about

what the separation means for the parent-child relationship and parental feelings towards their children.

“Not getting to see the other half, like say your dad gets the children and you don’t get to see your mum or the other way around, that’s the worst part about it”

“If you are young they are not really going to know what’s going on if they split up but as you get older they are going to know more about it and all and then... there’s been things about people getting all depressed, children and all because the other family member, the mum or dad or whatever didn’t speak about it and then you are not getting to see the other side of the family”

“it’s kind of sad when you don’t see them, one of them is with you and one of them is away”

Group of disabled young people, Northern Ireland

“It’s difficult when there’s no role model there. Dads are role models”

“the dad’s the one that mum can tell if the kids are naughty”

Group of young men in custody, London

However, parents that stayed together and continued to argue were seen to have a long-term negative effect on children, leading to depression, anger and even inappropriate behaviour, such as bullying.

“it will cause problems for them in the future”

“Get depressed and all that, you might turn into a bully or something because it releases anger on someone else”

“It would probably turn the little ones into big bullies”

Group of disabled young people, Northern Ireland

Generally, young people believed that parents need to consider the best interests of the child.

“They should talk to the child and do what’s best for them”

Group of disabled young people, Cardiff

Some groups also discussed neglect and abuse and how this should be handled, including avenues for support.

“Phone Childline”

“Ask help – someone who knows you and helps you more than your parents”

“Or someone who really loves you in the family”

“Teachers in school or use the internet”

“Tell a person you can trust, as long as it is an adult”

“Tell the teacher”

“Talk to a friend”

Group of disabled young people, Northern Ireland

There were different views on the role of external agencies, such as social services.

“They should get counselling or advice. Don’t take the child away from the parents”

“I think there should be more people going around checking out people’s houses, seeing if they’re ok to live in and stuff”

“No, there shouldn’t be coming in and checking. I’d get pissed at the social services man if he came to the door and was like, you’re doing stuff wrong, to my mum”

Group of young men in custody, London

Learning

Six focus groups were carried out with children and young people on the theme of Learning. These included:

- 3 groups of young people in trouble with the law: one group of young men in secure care in Manchester (aged 13 to 16 years), one group of young men in custody in Staffordshire (aged 16 and 17 years), and one group of young people at risk of offending in Cheshire (aged 12 to 16 years)
- 1 group of young people that have lived in care (aged 15 to 21 years) in West Sussex
- 1 group of young refugees and asylum-seekers in Northern Ireland (aged 12 to 14 years)
- 1 group of children and young people from one-parent families (aged 4 to 15 years) in Harrow.

Learning in general

The main benefits of learning mentioned by the focus group participants related to self-improvement and things that would help them in later life.

Participants placed particular emphasis on learning that was relevant to their lives and ideas. The group of young people in custody in Staffordshire explained that when they were at school the subjects that they 'switched off' in were the ones where they saw no relevance to their future. If the subject had no meaning for them then the class would generally be disruptive.

There was general support for vocational courses across all the focus groups. The young people in custody in Staffordshire were enthusiastic about trade courses run from the prison and learning new skills that they could use directly in the job market. They would have liked more practical "hands-on" subjects that were relevant to their career choices.

The young people who have lived in care in West Sussex highlighted the value of life skills such as cooking and learning how to do everyday tasks such as read a bus or train timetable.

One young man in secure care in Manchester also pointed out that education helped pass the time.

“Makes time go faster”

[What do you like about your school?]

“School on a Sunday to make time go quicker”

[If you could change one thing about your school, what would it be?]

Group of young men in secure care, Manchester

The young men in custody in Staffordshire acknowledged that discipline is a key feature of learning in prison and that they had strong incentives to engage in learning. They could be put on report and lose time out of cell for ‘messaging about’, whereas attending classes presented the opportunity to earn privileges such as being able to spend more time out of cell.

Friends

The young men in custody in Staffordshire saw school (prior to prison) as a good opportunity to meet with friends and have a laugh.

One young man from West Sussex who has lived in care articulated the upsetting experience of not having friends at school. He found the focus group challenging because of his painful memories of school where he experienced a lot of bullying because of his behavioural problems.

“I hated school! My experience, never had any friends, because nobody liked me! I used to get bullied at school.”

“It doesn’t matter how supported you are if no-one likes you... If you don’t have friends there is no point in going to school – it completely fucks up your education.”

Group of young people who have lived in care, West Sussex

The young people (at risk of offending) from Cheshire felt that they learned a lot from their friends:

“You learn more from them than you do in school”

“Everything really”

“Everything and anything”

However, some participants felt that their friends were a bad influence, encouraging them to get into trouble and involved in crime and *“stuff that gets you locked up”* (young men in secure care, Manchester).

Bullying

There were some strong views about bullying and what should be done about it from the young people (who have lived in care) from West Sussex who had experienced it themselves.

“The person who is bullying should be bullied himself... I’ve been through a bad life. I would chuck the person [the bully] out of school.”

“Bullying is disgraceful... I’ve got no time for them at all...”

“I would drag the bully in...”

“I would get their parents in and I would tell them parents what they [the bully] have done - and make the parents really ashamed of their child.”

A good learning environment

The young men in secure care in Manchester felt that a good learning environment was one with small classes where you get the attention you need (this seemed to be the approach taken there). They also wanted classes to be calm, quiet and relaxed. These sentiments were echoed by the young men in custody in Staffordshire who called for teachers to be more “chilled” but able to keep the class under control.

Having fun was of clear importance to participants with some complaining that fun was absent from the lessons that they had experienced.

Q. What makes learning enjoyable?

“Make it fun”

Group of young people who have lived in care, West Sussex

More practical and interactive ways of learning, and more practical subjects were mentioned across the focus groups. A related point is the importance of good teachers that are “genuine”, “supportive” and “respectful”.

“The teachers”

“As you get older the teachers get more sarcastic...”

[What did you like about your primary school?]

One young person (at risk of offending) from Cheshire preferred college to school for the increased respect and autonomy that it offered.

“Show more people that you can respect them in college”

Group of young people at risk of offending, Cheshire

“kids are listened to”

Group of young men in secure care, Manchester

The young men in custody in Staffordshire had a negative view of most of the teachers (that they had at school) whom they felt showed them no respect and “looked down on” them.

Influence over learning

The general opinion of participants was that they had some influence over their learning, such as having good teachers that listen to you and being able to choose some subjects.

“Yes I feel listened to by staff and other lads.”

Group of young men in secure care, Manchester

However, they felt they had little influence over the content of lessons and ways of learning.

“You only really get to choose 3 things. There’s like 20 there and we have to take RE and crap.”

Group of young people at risk of offending, Cheshire

The young men in secure care in Manchester said that they would like more opportunity to choose what and how they learn.

“Yes because then if you don’t like what you are doing then you can say.”

“Yes because you might never use the things you learn in that lesson.”

“Yes like you should choose what sport you do in P. E”

“Yes, I am sick and tired of the same lessons every day”

“Yes would like to work on other things e.g. on cars / trainee work”

Group of young men in secure care, Manchester

Learning about relationships

The group of children and young people in one-parent families - mostly younger ones aged 8 to 12 – said that they learned social skills, such as how to make friends, stop fights, help people feel better if they’re upset, take breaths to overcome anger and what to do when they fall out with people, and agreed it was useful. One girl mentioned Citizenship classes, which she like because it helped her *“understand what other people are going through”*.

However, others took a different view. The young men in custody in Staffordshire felt that this was private and their own business. When asked whether they would like more opportunity to discuss feelings and relationships at school, all but one of the young men in secure care in Manchester said no.

“No because it can be quite personal.”

“I think we have enough”

Exams and testing

Most of the focus group participants concurred with the general view that exams are stressful, not a good way of measuring learning, and cause lower achieving pupils to feel demoralized. They preferred the idea of ongoing assessment based on their normal work and one-to-one meetings.

However, the young men in secure care in Manchester were a notable exception, with all but one agreeing that exams and tests are a good way of judging what you have learned at school.

“Yes because they show your level of education.”

“Yes they are ways of showing you have paid attention.”

“Yes you can express all the things you learn.”

“Yes as they cover everything that you learn through out school.”

“Yes, they will help you get a job.”

“If you see a high score then you know you’ve done well.”

“That’s why you go to school because you learn about these things.”

The young refugees and asylum-seekers in the Northern Ireland also took a more positive view of exams.

Particular issues

A Sudanese girl living in Northern Ireland said that she found sex education embarrassing. The translator explained that she didn’t like being shown the genitals of both sexes as she was not used to this kind of discussion and was shy talking about these things.

When asked about Pupil Referral Units, and whether they are a good idea, the young people who have lived in care in West Sussex made derogatory comments.

“A ridiculous idea... all the people who have been chucked out of school ... all the naughty kids....”

In the Northern Ireland focus group with young Albanian, Kuwaiti and Sudanese refugees, two of the participants mentioned that they had experienced racism from teachers and other pupils.

Parental involvement in learning

The young men in secure care in Manchester felt that parents could help their children learn in various different ways: by helping them with their schoolwork; by sending them to school; by encouraging them; by teaching them skills and giving them advice.

However, the young people (at risk of offending) from Cheshire pointed out that parents aren't always able to help with schoolwork even when they are willing.

"My dad wanted to do my maths homework and it went completely wrong!"

"Yeah my mum keeps doing that everytime I get stuck she does it and its all wrong"

Group of young people at risk of offending, Cheshire

The young refugees and asylum-seekers living in Northern Ireland felt that family could teach you such things as "how to be nice people" and "right and wrong".

Lifestyle

Thirteen focus groups were carried out with children and young people on the theme of Lifestyle. These included:

- 4 groups of young people in trouble with the law: one group of young people at risk of offending in Cheshire (aged 12 to 16 years), one group of young offenders in Cheshire (aged 16 and 17 years), one group of young people in secure care in Northern Ireland (aged 13 to 15 years), and one group of young men in custody in London (aged 15 to 17 years)
- 5 groups of young people that live in areas of high disadvantage: two groups in one school in London, (aged 12 and 13 years) two groups in another school in London (aged 14 and 15 years) and one group in a project in London (aged 11 to 15 years, all female)
- 1 group of young people excluded from school in London (aged 14 to 16 years)
- 1 group of disabled children and young people (aged 11 to 25 years) in London
- 1 group of young refugees in London (aged 15 to 19 years)
- 1 group of young people in public care in Northern Ireland (aged 16 to 17 years)

Alcohol and drugs

A number of focus groups were asked what they think about alcohol and drugs and why young people take these. There was general agreement that drinking in particular was ubiquitous, with a number of young people linking it to the problem of “having nothing to do”.

Q: What do you like to do in your spare time?

“Have a beer and spliff”

“Yeah”

“There’s nothing really to do though. Not where we live anyway”

“Too many kids these days to tell the truth smoke weed and get bladdered every weekend. That’s basically what every teenager does”

“Yeah cos there’s not much to do”

“Yeah cos its illegal I reckon that’s why kids do it cos they get told by their mum, don’t do it don’t do it so that’s why they do it”

“Like what else have you got to spend [your money] on? Nothing”

Group of young offenders, Cheshire

The group of young refugees and asylum-seekers in London clearly considered smoking, drinking and drug-taking to be heavily influenced by culture, describing the different attitudes to these things in their countries of origin.

“They sell alcohol in any corner shop and pubs are 24hour, drugs classifications reduced...”

“Like weed – in my country you go to prison for a long time. Here, it is 1 month or something”

“In Africa, role models who get exposure are really good people”

“I would never smoke, you don’t get respect for it”

Group of young refugees and asylum-seekers, London

Participants had both negative and positive things to say about drugs and alcohol. Some of the benefits mentioned included that “it’s fun” and “it lets you have a good time”, “it calms you down” and “makes you feel better”. The escapist argument and the fact that everybody else is doing it were strong threads across a number of focus groups.

“If they have problems then they will drown their sorrows”

“To block things out “

“Cos they just want to act hard”

“Cos everyone else does it”

Group of young people in public care, Northern Ireland

At the same time, the young people were all too aware of the problems associated with alcohol and drug use.

Q. Does alcohol cause any problems for young people?

“Behavioural problems”

“Makes you paranoid”

“No that’s weed really”

“Weed makes you paranoid”

“Anything really you’re up for anything, anything”

Group of young offenders, Cheshire

Q. What about smoking cannabis at your age?

“It can kill you, your lungs, its just like smoking, you can get cancer”

Group of young people at risk of offending, Cheshire

Q. So why do some young people not take drugs?

“It would ruin their life”

“If they take it they might get addicted and then they might live the rest of their life the way they didn’t want to or something”

Group of young people in public care, Northern Ireland

However, awareness of some of the negative aspects of alcohol and drug use - even when it was based on personal experience - didn’t necessarily influence their behaviour.

“Young people haven’t been drinking for long enough to experience alcohol destroying their lives completely. They get drunk one night and then the next day their lives are back to normal. They need to be warned about those habits”

Group of young men in custody, London

Asked whether they have enough information about the effects of alcohol and drugs use, participants seemed weary of being told about them.

"We are never done hearing about"

"In school, TV ads, school"

"That talk to Frank you hear that all the time, it's on the radio and all, posters, bus stops"

"And the helpline number"

Group of young people in public care, Northern Ireland

"They see adverts on the TV but you don't write down the numbers or the helpline information. You don't think: oh yeah, I better write that down for when I get drunk"

[laughter]

Group of young men in custody, London

The group of young offenders from Cheshire were of the opinion that information about the effects of alcohol was only likely to influence those that weren't already drinking, whereas those that had already started were unlikely to listen.

Q: So if they got to you before you started drinking would you listen then?

"Yeah I think they should start early, start it all early"

Q: What age?

"Primary school"

"14"

"No not 14 cos I started drinking at 13"

Group of young offenders, Cheshire

Romantic and sexual relationships

Two of the focus groups that were held in Northern Ireland discussed romantic and sexual relationships with young people in public care and in secure care. Asked about the positive and negative aspects of romantic relationships, the young people talked mainly about the emotional side of having a girlfriend or boyfriend, although some of the boys commented on the practical or physical side.

"It gives you something to do"

"Someone to talk to"

"You feel loved"

"Experience"

"They are always horrible to you"

"You can catch Aids... you can catch STDs..."

"You always argue"

"You always get paranoid, is he flirting with her and is she flirting with him"

Group of young people in secure care, Northern Ireland

"And if you're living here, you don't really get much of a relationship, do you?"

"If you're constantly fighting and arguing"

Group of young people in public care, Northern Ireland

Almost all the young people thought that most started having sex in their early teenage years or at age 11 or 12, and they seemed to agree that 13 or 14 was about the right age for sexual debut.

"Once you hit 13 that's ok because you are a teenager then"

"13/14 I reckon"

"That's alright, it's not too young"

Group of young people in secure care, Northern Ireland

"It doesn't really matter what age you are I don't think"

"I dunno. I think it's alright [at 13 or 14]."

"In other countries they get married at, like 12"

Group of young people in public care, Northern Ireland

As well as seeing it as a normal activity for someone their age, participants felt that young people were influenced by their peers, curiosity, alcohol and drugs.

“It just happens”

“You just want to see what it is like”

“Sometimes people want to because they don't want to be classified as a virgin, because everybody goes are you a virgin – no – you don't want to end up doing that, everybody's going oh I've him and him and him and you are sitting there like a...”

Group of young people in secure care, Northern Ireland

Asked where they would go for advice about sex, the young people said they would consult a doctor, their parents, Brook, the YFCA, the library or the Internet. The anonymity of gleaning information from the Internet or even the television seemed an attractive option to the boys in particular.

“I'd look something up on the internet

“Aye, just type in whatever you want to know... cause there's all the information online and it just comes up”

“I've no-one to ask”

“Staff”

“(laughing) Aye, they'd probably shout at us for asking them!”

“Dunno, probably Mummy”

Group of young people in public care, Northern Ireland

One comment, which was interpreted by the facilitator as flippant but seemed to be partly sincere, pointed out that watching porn was a good way of learning about the mechanics of a sexual relationship.

“Playboy TV. If you watch it you see what happens, if you have never been in a sexual relationship you just pay about £20 to watch it”

Group of young people in secure care, Northern Ireland

Material possessions

When participants were asked what they like to buy with their own money, typical responses were sweets and snacks, CDs and DVDs, cinema tickets, clothes, video games, phone credit, “whatever you need” and “treats”. More unusual responses included a guitar and a football ticket. Unprompted, one disabled young person from London said: *“Give some to my parents.”*

The young people explained that their money came from parents, siblings, working, birthday presents and ‘shotting’ whereby you sell things that you don’t need.

Two of the groups took part in an activity that involved being given an imaginary £50 and a list of options to spend it on including “parents”, “charity” and a variety of things for themselves. Most chose to spend it on themselves, although a number of the girls chose to give some to their parents.

“I’ll give some of it to my mum and dad, coz they give me stuff”

“I’m saving it for something bigger than fifty pounds, like a games console or something”

Q. I noticed no one has put any money on charity

“You can just give things that you no longer need to charity instead of money”

Group of young people living in an area of high disadvantage, London

The young people were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement: “Some people say that young people today spend too much time thinking about and buying clothes, technology and other possessions.” With the exception of the group of disabled young people from London, most participants tended to agree that this was the case, albeit somewhat reluctantly.

“Kind of true“

Group of young people living in an area of high disadvantage, London

“No people are just assuming and adults too”

“Some do”

“It’s true though”

Group of young people living in an area of high disadvantage, London

[Everyone in the group agrees.]

“Everyone wants the best stuff to get girls. If you can’t afford the best stuff then sometimes you have to do crimes to get it”

“It depends how your family is – people want to look good to represent their family”

Group of young men in custody, London

[Everyone nods in agreement]

“Yeah that’s true but all the adverts for us on TV are just of those things anyway.”

“Appearance matters”

“There’s peer pressure too...what other people have if it looks good you want it too.”

Group of young people living in an area of high disadvantage, London

“Friends are more important than possessions”

“Can’t live without my phone and my clothes.”

Group of young people excluded from school, London

There was a similar response to a question about the importance of brands, with most admitting that they like to wear them, although a few took a more critical standpoint. One of the key features of this discussion was that it was easier for girls than for boys to buy cheaper brands like Primark because of the nature of fashion.

“Yes, I have bought something just because it was a designer label.”

“It’s not good to buy something for the label. Just to look cool and flash your cash.”

Group of young people living in an area of high disadvantage, London

“Yes, but I’ve been brought up with designer labels”

Group of young people living in an area of high disadvantage, London

“It’s nice to have good brands”

“Good brands make popularity; and you’re starting a trend”

Group of young people living in an area of high disadvantage, London

“Nike make everything else look rubbish.”

“Brands are important but Primark is good value”

Group of young people excluded from school, London

“Boys are always after brands”

“It used to matter to me but now I realise that spending money on brands, I’m not getting richer!”

“It’s youth culture – people ask where you got something from and you want to feel good”

“Girls are different to boys – new stuff comes in all the time for girls.”

Group of young refugees and asylum-seekers, London

“Yeah, but it’s easier for girls to buy cheaper stuff”

Group of young people at risk of offending, Cheshire

Most of the participants would not admit to feeling under pressure to keep up with the latest trends, which is somewhat incongruous with their responses to the previous two questions. However, it may be that they saw such an admission as a failing as they were readily able to identify others who were under pressure to dress a certain way.

Q: Do you know anyone who feels under pressure to buy things?

“Yeah, I do. The person that does this acts like he’s not under pressure but he is. He wants to have lots of friends. He wants to keep up with the latest trends. He wants to do this or that. He really wants to be popular. He’s making a show of himself. In this school, if you want to

be popular you have to act badly, you have to steal something and you have to wear the brands. "

Group of young people living in an area of high disadvantage, London

Q. Would you wear plimsoles instead of trainers?

"No way"

[Everyone laughs]

"No but clothes aren't too important"

"Everyone has their own style"

Group of disabled young people, London

"Sometimes it's better to be unique."

Group of young people living in an area of high disadvantage, London

There was general agreement that they sometimes feel unhappy because they can't buy things they would like, with the group of disabled young people from London describing these feelings as "disappointed", "pissed off and annoyed", "cheesed off".

"Back in year 7, everybody always had all these trainers and jackets and stuff and I always wanted to buy some. The thing is, I didn't know how to save up so I couldn't buy some."

Group of young people living in an area of high disadvantage, London

"I'd save up and buy it"

"Wait for the sales"

Group of disabled young people, London

Advertising

Young people held different views about adverts, with some of the opinion that they are harmless, don't influence their choices and that children are capable of making their own decisions, and others feeling that there are too many, that they are misleading, and "brainwash" people into buying things that they don't need or want.

“If you are old enough to talk, you can make your own decisions“

Group of young people excluded from school, London

“If you are in your room on your own on a Saturday night and you have a TV and there’s a drink advertisement you just go aaahhh I need a drink”

Group of young people in secure care, Northern Ireland

“Adverts for us are not a bad thing. Why stop the adverts?”

“Yes it should happen here because more adverts make you put pressure on your parents”

“They make you want to buy things”

“It’s too much everywhere, on T.V, buses, leaflets, the internet”

“They urge you to buy something but it does not force you to buy it”

“Yeah but it just gives you the good side, not the bad side of the product, can be misleading”

Group of young people living in an area of high disadvantage, London

Participants did seem to agree, however, that adverts are frequently misleading.

“Adverts – talk about good stuff and then you buy it and it’s not right.”

“Yeah like drinks that aren’t always healthy”

“Like things that break”

“A toy that don’t work after 2 days”

“They just say it to make you buy it. It’s not true that it is the best toy out there and also the most expensive.”

“They should just be honest. When it’s not true and people buy stuff, people spread the word around”

Group of young people living in an area of high disadvantage, London

There was also a consensus that it is unfair to advertise to young children who are not old enough to understand advertising.

“Yeah cos every time something new comes out on TV they want the new one don’t they”

Group of young offenders, Cheshire

“Parents should teach you about advertising but some parents just buy everything their kids want and get into debt”

Group of young women living in an area of high disadvantage, London

“I agree. They don’t have any money. They will pressure their parents.”

“They want it but they don’t know if they need it or the value”

“I agree. Like my neighbour and dolls – she has got loads – she always wants one, always, but then she gets bored.”

Group of young refugees and asylum-seekers, London

Television

Young people all seemed to watch the same types of television programmes, such as soaps, sitcoms, cartoons, music TV, drama, sports, chat shows, reality shows, films and documentaries. With the exception of some cartoons, all of these would seem to be primarily intended for an adult audience.

Television seemed to feature particularly highly in the lives of the young people in public care and secure care in Northern Ireland, although having the TV on did not always equate to giving it their undivided attention.

Q. How much TV do you watch?

“12 hours a day”

Q. 12 hours a day – that’s an awful lot by anybody’s standards!

“We don’t watch TV on it, we listen to music on it”

“On the weekends you just watch TV flat out”

Group of young people in secure care, Northern Ireland

Q. Has everyone got TVs in their bedrooms?

“Yes”

Q. So you can watch it for as long as you want then?

“As long as you can get yourself up on time (next day) for whatever you’re going to do”

Group of young people in public care, Northern Ireland

Celebrity

When the participants were asked whether they ever wished they could be like celebrities, they mentioned very few by name, although Jordan and Amy Winehouse drew admiring comments from some of the young women on the basis of their money and lifestyle: *“Pure mad, drugs, partying everyday”* (young person in public care, Northern Ireland).

In general, their comments about celebrities centred on the attractiveness of having a lot of money, and to a lesser extent fame.

“I want to be rich”

“I want to be rich and famous”

“I want to be rich and famous and have my own show”

“I want to be rich, play football and have 23 cars, private jet and my own TV show”

Group of young people living in an area of high disadvantage, London

Q. Is there anything about them you like, or you copy?

“The money, that’s it”

“Yeah the money”

“It’s all about the money”

Q. What about footballers and people like that?

“Oh yeah I’d love to be one of them it’s the amount of money they get paid”

Group of young people at risk of offending, Cheshire

However, one participant respected celebrities that don’t forget their roots.

“No. Be who you are, no point in being like someone else.”

“I don’t want to be like them but I like some of them who are positive like they come from a council flat or something and they still respect the people from their area.”

{laughter}

Group of young women living in an area of high disadvantage, London

Video games

Most of the young people said that they enjoyed playing video games, although some were less keen.

“I used to be on it all the time”

“My brother is 19 and he’s never out of his room.”

Group of young people in secure care, Northern Ireland

They particularly liked video games for being relaxing, fun and for passing the time, while a good video game was described as one with *“good graphics, bit of violence”* (young man in custody, London).

“They chill you out“

“They keep you quiet”

Group of young people in secure care, Northern Ireland

“Time flies when you’re playing”

Group of young men in custody, London

“Play when I don’t want to talk to my mum”

Group of young people excluded from school, London

“I like playing video games because it stops me thinking about my homework”

Group of young women living in an area of high disadvantage, London

They also acknowledged that video games had some shortcomings, including being addictive, having physical effects, providing bad examples of behaviour, and causing distress when you lose.

“like there’s some games I wouldn’t buy ‘cause you can get really addicted”

Group of young people in public care, Northern Ireland

“You lose your game you lose your head”

“You like smash stuff if you don’t win one”

Group of young people in secure care, Northern Ireland

“They make my eyes sore”

“They make me sick or ill if I play too much... after 4 hours it gives me a headache.”

Group of young people living in an area of high disadvantage, London

Some of the participants said that they played video games that are violent *“most of them are”* (young people in public care, Northern Ireland) and admitted that they enjoyed playing them. They rejected the idea that doing so made them or others they know act violently and felt that young people could distinguish between “make believe” and reality.

“Some violent games are really fun”

“I play a lot of shooting games. It’s really good, but I never want to go out and kill someone”

Group of young people at risk of offending, Cheshire

In contrast, they felt that younger children *were* influenced by violent content.

“With little kids it does – they think they can do it [act violently] but when they get older they understand.”

Group of young women living in an area of high disadvantage, London

“When they’re younger”

Group of young people at risk of offending, Cheshire

“[My little brother is] banned from them because once we went to church and he kicked someone who fell on the floor. He watches it too much and copies a lot of the things he sees. He learns a lot from what he sees”

Group of young people living in an area of high disadvantage, London

The group of young refugees and asylum-seekers in London felt that television makes violence acceptable and that people were becoming desensitised to it.

“It makes it seem fun when you hurt people”

“And you don’t worry about the consequences”

“If another young person dies you’re not upset or scared because you see it all the time on TV, and in real life”

The young people also recognised that it was relatively easy to access material intended for adults and that carried an age restriction.

“My bro plays Grand Theft Auto and he is 7.”

“My Dad let me watch the film White Noise. I begged him to let me watch and Dad said ‘Don’t blame me if you get scared and you cry lots’.”

Group of young women living in an area of high disadvantage, London

“At the cinema they ask you age so you just wait for the DVD if you’re underage”

“You still can’t buy it though. You just go to a friend’s house”

Group of young refugees and asylum-seekers, London

The Internet

Most participants said that they used the Internet to access social networking sites, to buy things and to play games, although some were less enthusiastic about the Internet (group of young offenders in Cheshire) or didn't have access.

Q. You don't have internet access here?

"No! It's crap!"

Group of young people in public care, Northern Ireland

They showed a surprising lack of interest in adult content such as sex, violence and gambling, and felt that children should be protected from it.

"They're so annoying and disgusting too. There're always pictures coming up of...well, I'm not going to say anymore"

Group of young people living in an area of high disadvantage, London

"Pop-ups are everywhere. Parents and schools should protect children"

Group of young people living in an area of high disadvantage, London

"One bad thing about the internet is that you can get anything you can imagine in your mind {like under-age porn and videos of shootings}"

Group of young men in custody, London

There was much enthusiasm for instant messaging and social networking websites, although they were equally well aware of the shortcomings.

"You get to meet new people. You can talk to people through it."

"On Bebo you can make friends and then they get on your nerves, or they're rude or chase you."

Group of young people living in an area of high disadvantage, London

"Msn mate, all the time"

"Yeah I got accused of cyber bullying"

Group of young people at risk of offending, Cheshire

“MySpace is big! Everyone’s on that. You might see someone from another gang online, then you’ll want to do something to them”

“Yeah, because people put their names and their top ten friends”

Group of young men in custody, London

“Not sensible to chat to people you don’t know or arrange to meet them”

Group of young women living in an area of high disadvantage, London

Things to do

Asked about the facilities that they would like to be able to access, the group of young men in custody in London talked mainly about physical activities like boxing, football and the gym.

“Being able to go to the gym more often”

“I need a boxing bag”

“Inside football and badminton. Inside football would be good”

{Nods of agreement}

Group of young men in custody, London

The group of young people who were excluded from school had similar ideas about what they would like to see in their local area:

“Pool, table tennis, food bar, gym, somewhere to meet friends, somewhere to smoke, open Weds to Friday.”

Although they made disparaging comments about the local “Just Drop In” centre because “you get all like, no offence, like Goths and all”, the group of young offenders in Cheshire were clear about the activities that would attract them to a youth centre.

“Swimming, swimming’s a good one”

“All sorts of things, trampolining, kick boxing everything”

“They should do day trips and stuff and take you out”

Making choices

A common thread running through the discussions on Lifestyle was that it is extremely difficult to influence young people’s choices and that there is only so much that adults can say or do. Some felt strongly that although it is a parent’s job to tell their children not to do certain things, sometimes doing so would just make them *“start hating you”* and *“do it behind your back”* (group of young offenders in Cheshire).

“Stop telling them they can’t go on [the Internet] cos then kids are going to go on it.”

“Kids don’t listen; kids just do what they want to do. It just depends on who they’re gonna start hanging around with”

“They’re gonna have to make that choice whether you’re going to be in that gang where they think they’re all cool and wannabe but are stupid people really”

Group of young offenders, Cheshire

However, the group of young refugees and asylum-seekers in London had a different perspective, underlining the importance of family background and the media in influencing young people.

“What people do – drink, smoke – its their family background. They end up in prison when they have no support and know no-one who doesn’t drink, do drugs and smoke. Some people say you’re a coward if you don’t smoke with your friends. Some people don’t know any other life – that’s how they grew up. The media is big – one of the biggest problems. Look at Pete Doherty and the photographers taking pictures at the time; if he was a single mum, you’d call the police!”

Health

Eight focus groups were carried out with children and young people on the theme of Health. These included:

- 4 groups of young people in trouble with the law: one group of young men at risk of offending in Cheshire (aged 12 to 16 years), one group of young offenders in Cheshire (aged 16 and 17 years), one group of young people in secure care in Northern Ireland (aged 13 to 15 years) and one group of young men in custody in London (aged 15 to 17 years)
- 1 group of disabled children and young people (aged 14 to 25 years) in Cardiff
- 1 group of young refugee and new migrants in Sheffield (aged 12 to 16 years, all female)
- 1 group of children living in an area of high disadvantage in Oldham (aged 10 years)
- 1 group of Traveller young women in Northern Ireland (aged 12 to 14 years)

Diet and activity

When these young people were asked what a healthy person “looks like” and “does”, they associated health with diet, activity and appearance, and revealed a great deal of knowledge about healthy and unhealthy behaviours. According to participants, healthy people have particular physical characteristics: they are strong, not fat or too skinny, they have smooth skin and “don’t have bags under their eyes”.

“Yeah, you don’t look good if you eat too much”

“You might be shorter if you don’t eat proper food”

Group of children living in an area of high disadvantage, Oldham

Healthy people are also active: they train, do exercise and various sports, and walk everywhere. They get plenty of sleep but aren’t lazy “couch potatoes” who watch TV all day, and they don’t smoke or drink. They have a healthy diet

that contains salad, fruit, vegetables, water and vitamins as well as a balance of different types of food. They consume some foods in moderation - like fatty and sugary foods, fizzy drinks and alcohol - or cut them out altogether.

There was general agreement that it is important to be healthy. However, participants acknowledged that many children in the UK do not have a healthy diet and admitted that they liked to eat junk food themselves. They gave a number of explanations for why children are not as healthy as they should be, including the expense of healthy food, the absence of skills and knowledge, low levels of exercise, allergies, the consumption of cigarettes and alcohol, lack of self-control and comfort-eating.

“Lots of people eat junk food and they have no time to do exercise to burn it off.”

“People buy cheaper food which isn’t as good for you.”

“People don’t cook proper food.”

Group of children living in an area of high disadvantage, Oldham

“The UK is now like the USA, people eat a lot of chips“

“People smoke too much, then they eat too much because they can’t taste it”

“Alcohol”

“People eat because other think they are fat, they carry on eating because it makes them feel better”

“Too much pressure makes me go for sugar”

Group of young refugees and new migrants, Sheffield

Q. Do you like to eat junk food?

All: *“YES!”*

Group of children living in an area of high disadvantage, Oldham

The young men in custody in London described the particular challenges of being in prison:

“We don’t get to go to the gym but we want to.”

Some groups discussed whether girls and boys have different attitudes to diet and appearance, with different views on the subject.

“Girls are all like, I’ll eat this much and all that crap”

“We’re not like that!”

“Aye girls watch what they eat more than guys”

Group of young people in secure care, Northern Ireland

“It’s more important to girls, they care more about their appearance.”

“I disagree, boys want to stay healthy too or they get bullied. You have to stay fit if you’re boxing to fight. Guys want to look good.”

Group of young men in custody, London

There was general agreement that it is difficult to get children to eat healthily and that good eating habits need to be established from a young age. The parental role in this was emphasised.

“You get used to food when you’re young so if you eat unhealthy food when you’re little, you get used to that and you grow up eating unhealthy food”

Group of young men in custody, London

“It’s up to your ma and dad”

“They are supposed to rear you”

Group of young people in secure care, Northern Ireland

However, not all participants thought that parents were a good influence.

“Parents aren’t healthy”

“They eat chocolate and they drink and they smoke and people in the house get passive smoking.”

“They eat too much junk.”

Group of children living in an area of high disadvantage, Oldham

“Some parents encourage kids to eat chocolate, I’ve actually noticed that, my Dad”

Group of young men at risk of offending, Cheshire

There were mixed views about the role of schools in helping children to eat more healthily. Some participants felt that schools had a key role and discussed the various ways they could help, while others felt that it was “not their job”.

“They could change the rules.”

“They could ask what children like and don’t like.”

“They could experiment with menus”

Group of children living in an area of high disadvantage, Oldham

“Some schools give healthy food and don’t let children eat the unhealthy foods they have brought with them {group members thought this was a good thing}”

“Ban chocolate and sweets from school, everyone eats them in lessons”

Group of young refugees and new migrants, Sheffield

“It’s not a school’s job to tell you what to eat”

“But they can give you better options”

“Yeah, but if you don’t want to eat it...!” {They can’t make you}

Group of young men in custody, London

There was a similar disparity of views about what could be done by the government. The children living in an area of high disadvantage in Oldham had lots of ideas:

“Cut traffic and give kids places to play.”

“Get stupid drivers off the streets.”

“Make parks where there are disused buildings”

“Get them to stop drinking.”

“You could put labels on food with the traffic lights, but you would have to teach people to read them.”

“Free swimming pools”

The young people in secure care in Northern Ireland disagreed:

“It’s not the government, that’s just stupid, it’s nothing to do with them”

Information, healthy alternatives and making unhealthy foods less affordable and accessible were popular suggestions for how to get children to eat more healthily.

“By informing people about good food – telling them it makes them strong.”

Group of children living in an area of high disadvantage, Oldham

“Sometimes I can’t be bothered, so I want quick food. I like burgers and sausage rolls – maybe if they made healthy versions?”

Group of disabled young people, Cardiff

“Put it in nice things, like, don’t hand someone, like, a big plate of vegetables. Make it look nice.”

Group of young people in public care, Northern Ireland

“They should stop selling junk food”

Group of young people excluded from school, London

“Need to make unhealthy food more expensive”

“Make chips expensive”

“Close chip shops –no can’t do that!”

Group of young refugees and new migrants, Sheffield

It wasn't obvious from their comments that the young people involved in the focus groups held views on diet and physical activity that were distinctive to what other young people might have said on the subject. There are two exceptions to this:

- 1) The Traveller young women living in Northern Ireland revealed strongly gendered experiences and attitudes towards diet and exercise, and clearly distinguished between the things that boys and girls do. They also emphasised the importance of attracting a boyfriend and an offer of marriage.

"it's mostly boys that are active"

"yeah, loads of them do boxing"

"they go to the gym and keep fit"

"they die over themselves!" [they really care about how they look]

"[girls] wouldn't want boy muscles"

"girls have dinner [ready] and mind the children"

- 2) There was some hostility amongst children that were in trouble with the law to approaches to healthy eating that constrain their freedom and autonomy. Whereas participants in other focus groups felt that restricting children's choices was a necessary element of helping children to eat healthily, three groups of young people in trouble with the law in Cheshire and London expressed clear dislike for being told what to do or eat. They felt this particularly strongly in relation to schools and the government.

"Eat when I eat"

"Eat what we like"

Q. Do you think schools should help children to make healthy choices?

"Jamie Oliver's done it already"

"Just because like 20% of the school are overweight fat people all the skinny people have to eat it as well"

*"F**king Pasta"*

Group of young men at risk of offending, Cheshire

"You gotta give [children] the choice haven't you?"

"If they don't like it then they don't like it"

Group of young offenders, Cheshire

"Yeah, but I reckon you should be able to eat what you want. Why not?"

Group of young men in custody, London

Appearance

In addition to comments about girls' and boys' different attitudes towards diet and exercise, two of the focus groups (all female) were asked to think about the pressures on young women to look a certain way.

Q. Many young women feel that they have to be thin, why do you think this is?

"Some girls don't eat enough and can't do anything, they need special help"

"Bullying when people are fat, or really skinny"

"Models"

Group of young refugees and new migrants, Sheffield

Q. Do you think that Traveller young people worry a lot about how they look?

"Yeah 'cause some of them are fat and some of them are skinny and the fat ones need to go on a diet to try to look skinny"

{General but indistinct discussion about the importance of getting married and getting boyfriends which is summarised by the youth worker}

Group of Traveller young women, Northern Ireland

Happiness, worry and stress

The group of disabled young people in Cardiff were asked to think about the best ways to stay happy. Relationships, hobbies and physical activity were a common feature of their responses.

“Say hello to one person, go shopping, being around friends and family, socialising”

“Meeting friends, coming here [Cardiff Young People First], sharing your problems, painting”

“Spending time together, going to the cinema with my boyfriend.”

Relationships were also described as a source of stress and worry. In addition, the Traveller young women from Northern Ireland were concerned about their appearance, getting married and domestic chores.

Q. What makes you stressed?

“Blokes”

“Quarrels with family.”

Group of disabled young people, Cardiff

Q. What sorts of things do Traveller young people worry about most?

“If you don’t get married then you’ll be old and gnarled and get like an old granny”

“Most of them worry about their figures”

“Have dinner and {someone prompts her} mind the children and have the children in bed before they {mummy and daddy} get back”

Group of Traveller young women, Northern Ireland

Asked how they “de-stress”, the group of disabled young people in Cardiff described their preferred methods of relaxation including having quiet time, walking away, listening to music and watching DVDs.

Q. How do you de-stress?

“I stay in bed.”

“Painting walls. Seeing my best friends also helps.”

Group of disabled young people, Cardiff

Q: What helps you stay happy?

“Getting out of the house and (indistinct)”

Group of Traveller young women, Northern Ireland

When the Traveller young women were asked to think about what boys worry about there was general agreement that girls were under much more pressure.

“All they [boys] have to do is come in and wash themselves and then they go out in the van – and leave their mess for the women to look after”

“They don’t have nothing to worry about”

“In case they don’t get a girlfriend”

Mental health

Some of the focus groups were asked to think about good mental health and mental health problems.

Q. What is good mental health?

“Not going mad or hearing voices”

“If you have good health you’re happy”

Group of Traveller young women, Northern Ireland

Depression was one mental health problem that the young people recognised, although they did not all consider it an illness.

“It’s not a sickness, I don’t class it as a sickness.”

“I disagree, you have to take medication for it.”

“Drugs can cause people to get depressed, like ecstasy.”

“If you have HIV you might get depressed, there’s a lot of things that might cause depression. Everything could just go wrong.”

"It's a mental state, you just have to snap out of it."

"There's things in your life you can't control. Say a person close to you died, you take drugs...you have to do something about it to stop, get out of the house. When it happened to me, I took it out on other people and got into crime. After a while I calmed down."

Group of young men in custody, London

Asked where they would go for advice, support and information, the Traveller young women from Northern Ireland said they would go to the doctor or speak to a family member about it. The young men in custody in London made similar suggestions.

"I'd talk to my elder sister about it"

"I can't tell. I'm the eldest and I'd probably talk to my mummy"

"It would be some kind of girl in the family"

"Yeah, it wouldn't be a boy"

Group of Traveller young women, Northern Ireland

"Talk to FRANK."

"That's about drugs."

"But it could help with other things."

"Childline"

"Friends, parents, most people could talk to them."

"Parents and friends are good for help. They're there if you need them."

Group of young men in custody, London

The young men in custody in London were asked to think about how to promote good mental health.

Q. How could you encourage good mental health?

"Choose good role models amongst groups."

"You can't stop mental health, you have to treat it, you can't prevent it."

"You can stop young people taking drugs."

“Some are out of control. You could discourage smoking, drinking, too much sex.”

“Young people are under pressure to smoke, with all the shops selling it to you.”

Group of young men in custody, London

They were also asked questions to make them think about the stigma attached to certain health issues, such as mental health problems and HIV.

“With HIV there’s no cure. People want to stay away.”

“When people find out though they runaway, like when they call you up to come to your house they avoid letting you come round.”

“People don’t care if you get flu, everyone knows what it is. With HIV there’s shame.”

“There’s shame with depression, paranoid people are classed as mad, and their own family can be ashamed of it for a while.”

“With HIV people are embarrassed, you can’t be embarrassed about depression.”

Group of young men in custody, London

Values

Five focus groups were carried out with children and young people on the theme of Values. These included:

- 2 groups of young people living in areas of high disadvantage in Glasgow (aged 9 to 12 years and 13 to 16 years respectively)
- 1 group of young men in custody in London (aged 15 to 17 years)
- 1 group of asylum-seeking young people in Norwich (aged 16 to 21 years)
- 1 group of young people from a Church of England school in Worcestershire (aged 14 and 15 years)

Across the five groups, the young people did not immediately recognise what values are but when a definition was given, they were able to explore this theme in various ways. Values were described as reflecting positive ideas and beliefs, which influence individual behaviour and social cohesion.

“If there were no values, there would be chaos”

“If there were no values, no one would work”

Group of young people from a Church of England school,
Worcestershire

When the young people were asked which values are important, they focussed on how people treat each other, particularly the need to respect or be fair or kind towards one another.

“Respect”

“Good Manners”

“Friendship”

“Promise-keeping”

“Don’t treat people how you don’t want to be treated”

“Kindness”

“Responsibility”

Group of young people living in an area of high disadvantage, Glasgow

“Treat others the way you would like to be treated.”

“Respect”

“Yeah, respect is important.”

“Be polite”

“Forgiveness”

Group of young people from a Church of England school,
Worcestershire

*“Being fair. It’s really important that people treat me fairly because
some times people don’t treat me fairly.”*

“It is important for us to be honest”

Group of young asylum-seekers, Norwich

In some of the focus groups, values statements were used to generate responses. Again, the young people tended to focus on values that related to the way people interact and treat each other.

*“It’s your Ps and Qs you’ve got to respect each other. It’s the way
you’re treating people. There’s more and more things, this is just some
of them. Manner is your most value. People judge on manner. For
example, people who’ve been around longer know best.”*

Group of young men in custody, London

*“Respect your family because they’re your family and what they think is
important.”*

*“Making the most of your education and possessions – because you
only get it once.”*

“Respect for people and things. Not to be cheeky to people.”

“Respect for God is important.”

Group of young people living in an area of high disadvantage, Glasgow

“Helping those in need is the most important for me”

“I think treating people equally – because more people should be treated fairly”

“Respect your family”

“Helping those in need”

“Giving to charity”

Group of young people living in an area of high disadvantage, Glasgow

Young people generally believed that values are learnt but that young people also exercise choice in which values they adopt and how this influences their behaviour. A common response was that values come from the family or the wider community or culture that you are brought up in.

“They come from your family. My family taught me how to do things. If I did things in a bad way they told me how not to do this.”

“Everyone from my country are the same. In our culture we believe you must respect Allah and respect your parents. Family is very important to us.”

Group of young asylum-seekers, Norwich

“What you’ve been taught by your parents”

“The way you have been brought up”

“They learn from elders”

“Parents”

“Family”

“Home”

“Community”

Group of young people from a Church of England school,
Worcestershire

Peer influences were also highlighted.

“Many people have their parents values, some people have different values to their parents. So for example, I may have picked my friends

depending on the person I was because of the values they had given me. But as I grew, I may have picked up some of their values.”

Group of young asylum-seekers, Norwich

“Respect elders, some respect family but certain people don’t. The reason why they stop respecting people is what they do on the street they take back home. So they loose their respect [for family].”

Group of young men in custody, London

It was also acknowledged that values are shaped from one’s interactions and experiences and that young people process and choose values that are right for them.

“People... Everybody - like your family, people you work with. People.”
“It’s whoever you meet – they [values] don’t necessarily come from your parents. When people do something that you admire, or even when you don’t, you can take something from that.”

Group of young people living in an area of high disadvantage, Glasgow

Some participants felt that values are intrinsic attributes, so that - while young people are influenced by others in the home, school or wider community - it is individual characteristics that determine how young people develop values.

“Your personality”

“Yourself”

Group of young people from a Church of England school,
Worcestershire

Some of the groups discussed the role of religion, which for some of the young people strongly influences their beliefs and behaviours

“Being a Muslim is always with me wherever I go so I will always behave the same in any country.”

Group of young asylum-seekers, Norwich

However, the young people also tended to agree that being religious did not necessarily equate with having a higher moral code or being better behaved and that one can hold values and treat others well regardless of faith.

“With young Christians some steal, murder...so they don’t keep to the commandments. Just because you don’t have religion, you can still have values. Muslims don’t drink, but some non-Muslims don’t drink either and don’t have religion.”

Group of young men in custody, London

The young people tended to believe that values change over time and are part of development.

“Growing up you do different things. When you are a child you don’t know what you are doing. This is why you need family.”

“When you are younger, you forget your values because you want to look cool or you want to belong, but as you get older, your values become more important.”

Group of young asylum-seekers, Norwich

The young people acknowledged that behaviour can be at odds with values and that when one doesn’t live according to their values it can have potentially negative consequences. It appears that for some, concern about negative consequences helps them to act in a responsible, caring way.

“Because when you do something bad, you feel sorry and guilty and ashamed”

“Because they’re scared of what might happen, like if they get punished.”

Group of young people living in an area of high disadvantage, Glasgow

Some of the groups discussed how adults and young people behave towards one another. These discussions did not delve into how this behaviour reflects

or is governed by the values held by either group, rather they tended to reflect attitudes and stereotypes, particularly those perpetuated in the media. However, if it is assumed that behaviour reflects values then it appears that many young people do not feel that adults treat them in a respectful way (respect is a commonly used term which appears to have a number of meanings, including fairness and kindness). Some young people suggested that their behaviour towards adults would improve if adults' behaviour towards them were different. However, others believed that acting up or engaging in behaviour that adults do not like is part of being young and growing up.

“Adults look down on them, they group them together, give them no respect. Then it’s the same in reverse, young people don’t respect authority.”

“Because we’re not respected... If more people were polite we might do it.”

“People would still play around, play fights, laugh”

Group of young men in custody, London

Appendix: Background information on focus groups

Friends

1. Group of under 5s, Bradford

Participants: Under 5s. An Early Years Practitioner interviewed a total number of seven children, both individually and in groups of two or three. The members of the group were of White, Pakistani and mixed origin. All children interviewed were three and four years old.

2. Group of under 5s, Bath

Participants: Under 5s.

3. Group of under 5s, Bath

Participants: Under 5s.

4. Group of under 5s, Northern Ireland

Participants: Under 5s. Four 4-year-old boys and two 4-year-old girls.

5. Group of disabled children and young people, Wolverhampton

Participants: Nine children: five younger (8 to 10) and four older (12 to 16). The children and young people attend a number of different schools in the local area but meet regularly at the centre and know one another.

6. Group of deaf young people, London

Participants: Six young men and four young women. One young woman was Asian, and three young men were black. The children were roughly of the same age – 11-13 years.

7. Group of disabled young people, Northern Ireland

Participants: Three 16-year-old young men, one 17-year-old young man, one 14-year-old young woman and one 14-year-old young man. All attend a school for young people with moderate learning difficulties.

8. Group of young refugees and new migrants, Sheffield

Participants: Four young women took part. They were aged between 15 and 21 years, and were all of African origin. The young people are involved in a Children's Society project based in Sheffield that works with young refugees and new migrants in South Yorkshire.

9. Group of Roma children and young people, London

Participants: 10 Roma children (5 younger and 5 older)

10. Group of young people that have lived in care, West Sussex

Participants: All White-British, the group consisted of 2 young men and 2 young women, aged 21, 16, 18 and 15.

Family

11. Group of under 5s, Bradford

Participants: Under 5s. An Early Years Practitioner interviewed a total number of seven children, both individually and in groups of two or three. The members of the group were of White, Pakistani and mixed origin. All children interviewed were three and four years old.

12. Group of under 5s, Northern Ireland

Participants: Under 5s. One 3-year-old girl, one 3-year-old boy, four 4-year-old girls and one 4-year-old boy.

13. Group of under 5s, Bath

Participants: Under 5s

14. Group of young children, Bath

Participants: Under 5s. 11 children aged 4 –6

15. Group of young men in custody, London

Participants: Young Offenders. There were nine young men aged between 15-17 years old. Ethnic breakdown was: 3 black; 3 white; 3 of mixed ethnicity.

16. Group of disabled young people, Cardiff

Participants: Eight young people aged 14-25 with learning disabilities and two adults.

17. Group of disabled young people, Northern Ireland

Participants: Two 14-year-old boys, two 11-year-old boys, one 12-year-old boy and one 10-year-old girl.

18. Group of disadvantaged children, Cardiff

Participants: Disadvantaged children aged 3 to 12

Learning

19. Group of young men in secure care, Manchester

Participants: All the young men who participated were serving custodial sentences or were on remand awaiting sentencing. They were all aged between 13 and 16 years of age.

20. Group of young men in custody, Staffordshire

Participants: Six out of the seven of the young men had either been suspended or expelled from school at some point prior to custody. Six were aged 17 and one was 16. Three were from London. One was from Nottingham. One was from Cumbria. Two were from Wales. 6 were White British and one was Black Caribbean.

21. Group of young people at risk of offending, Cheshire

Participants: The group consisted of 6 young men and 1 young woman; two 16 year old, one aged 15, two aged 14, one aged 13 and a 12 year

old. The young people are involved in a Children's Society project that works with 13–16 year-olds who have been identified by agencies as at risk of offending.

22. Group of young people who have lived in care, West Sussex

Participants: The group consisted of two young men and two young women, aged 21, 16, 18 and 15. All were White-British.

23. Group of young refugee and asylum-seekers, Northern Ireland

Participants: The group consisted of three young men aged 12, 13 and 14, and one young woman aged 14. This group of young people had never met before gathering at a resources centre for this focus group.

24. Group of children in one-parent families, Harrow

Participants: The ages of the children and young people varied from 4 to 15 years, with an average of approximately 10 years. All had a parent present (mostly mothers, one father) and most had at least one sibling present as well. At the beginning of the focus group there were 3 boys and 9 girls although more arrived during the session.

Lifestyle

25. Group of young people at risk of offending, Cheshire

Participants: The group consisted of six young men and one young woman; two aged 16, one aged 15, two aged 14, one aged 13 and one aged 12. The young people are involved in a Children's Society project that works with 13–16 year-olds who have been identified by agencies as at risk of offending.

26. Group of young offenders, Cheshire

Participants: The group consisted of two young men and two young women, one 16-year-old and three 17-year-olds.

27. Group of young people in secure care, Northern Ireland

Participants: One young woman aged 13, one young woman and one young man both aged 14, one young man and one young woman both aged 15.

28. Group of young men in custody, London

Participants: There were nine young men aged between 15-17 years old. Ethnic breakdown was: 3 black; 3 white; 3 of mixed ethnicity.

29. Group of young people living in an area of high disadvantage, London

Participants: The group consisted of seven pupils from a school in an area of high disadvantage aged 14 and 15 years old.

30. Group of young people living in an area of high disadvantage, London

Participants: The group consisted of seven pupils from a school in an area of high disadvantage aged 14 and 15 years old

31. Group of young people living in an area of high disadvantage, London

Participants: The group consisted of five pupils, all aged 12 and 13 years old. There were four girls (2 black, 2 white) and one boy (black).

32. Group of young people living in an area of high disadvantage, London

Participants: There were three girls and five boys in the group, all aged between 12 and 13 years old.

33. Group of young women living in an area of high disadvantage, London

Participants: Twelve young women aged between 11 and 15 started the session, the majority were BME, one was white. As the session

progressed the group was joined by several older girls, some BME some white.

34. Group of young people excluded from school, London

Participants: Eight young people attended in total; six at the beginning though one girl left almost straight away after aggressive attention from the boys, leaving four boys and one girl, who herself was virtually silent throughout; and two girls came in for a few minutes separately at the end. All but one were BME and aged 14 to 16.

35. Group of disabled young people, London

Participants: The group consisted of six disabled young people.

36. Group of young refugees and asylum-seekers, London

Participants: Six young men and five young women.

37. Young people in public care, Northern Ireland

Participants: The group consisted of one young man aged 17, one young woman aged 16 and two young men aged 16.

Health

38. Group of young men at risk of offending, Cheshire

Participants: There were eight young men and two adults: one aged 16, two aged 15, four aged 14 and one aged 12. The young people are involved in a Children's Society project that works with 13–16 year-olds who have been identified by agencies as at risk of offending.

39. Group of young men in custody, London

Participants: There were six young men aged between 15-17 years old. Ethnic breakdown was: 3 black; 2 Asian; 1 white.

40. Group of disabled young people, Cardiff

Participants: There were eight young people aged 14-25 with learning disabilities and four adults.

41. Group of young refugees and new migrants, Sheffield

Participants: The group consisted of seven young women aged between 12 and 16 from Iran, Burma, Poland and Palestine.

42. Group of children living in an area of high disadvantage, Oldham

Participants: There were twelve children participating, all 10 years old. There were five girls and seven boys. Five of the participants had been affected by domestic violence, one of them affected by severe corporal punishment and two were refugees.

43. Group of Traveller young women, Northern Ireland

Participants: The group consisted of one 13-year-old, one 12-year-old and two 14-year-olds.

Values

44. Group of young people living in an area of high disadvantage, Glasgow

Participants: There were five children participating, all between 13 and 16 years old, with one girl and four boys.

45. Group of young people living in an area of high disadvantage, Glasgow

Participants: There were seven children participating, all between 9 and 12 years old, with six girls and one boy.

46. Group of young men in custody, London

Participants: There were four young men aged between 15-17 years. Ethnic breakdown was: 2 black; 1 Asian; 1 white.

47. Group of young asylum-seekers, Norwich

Participants: There were eight young men and one young woman. The young people were different ages ranging from 16-21 years. All of them were seeking asylum apart from the young woman who was the UK-born girlfriend of one of the young men.

48. Group of young people from a Church of England school, Worcestershire

Participants: There were eighteen children participating, all between 14 and 15 years old. There were five girls and thirteen boys.