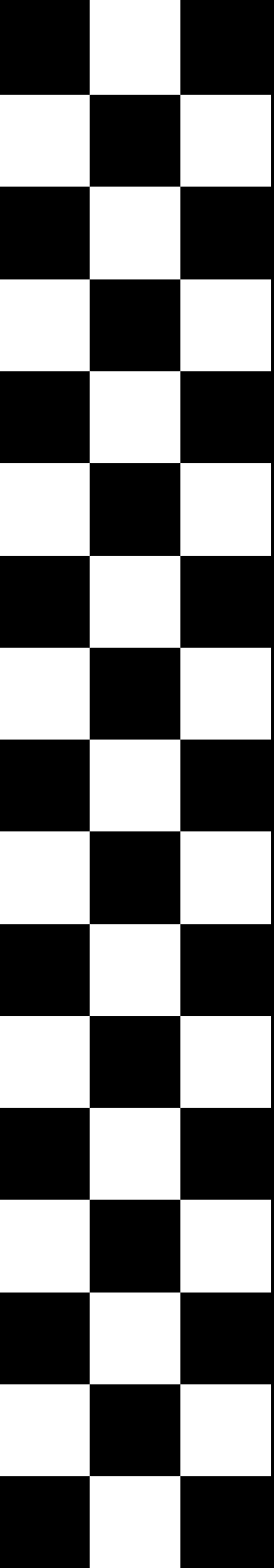


The
Children's
Society

CREATED BY YOUNG PEOPLE,
BIG UP THE BILL AIMS TO HIGHLIGHT
GOOD EXAMPLES OF POLICE WORK

childrenssociety.org.uk/bigupthebill



This report has been put together by a group of young people who have come into contact with police staff and have been helped by The Children's Society's specialist services. It focuses on children's experiences of the police, and the changes needed to enable the police to better protect children.

The report outlines the key messages from the young people to the police - both decision makers and front line staff. It is part of the young people-led Big Up The Bill campaign, which aims to highlight good examples of police work and encourage all police staff to develop the skills, knowledge and behaviours that will make them better at working with children - especially vulnerable young people.

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INTRODUCTION

The Big Up The Bill campaign has been created by young people because:

- * Young people's experiences with the police are often negative.
- * There are some exceptional policemen and women with the skills and knowledge to build trust and relationships with young people.
- * Encountering such a police professional can be a catalyst for positive change in a vulnerable young person's life.
- * It is important that all police professionals learn how to best work with the children and young people they encounter through their work.
- * It is important that police professionals who make a difference to children's lives – through their dedication, commitment, ability to empathise, listen to and understand children – are recognised and celebrated.



RECOGNISING POLICE WHO MAKE A DIFFERENCE



Young people shared many examples of police staff they met who had made a lasting positive impression and a real difference to their lives. Some examples included relationships built over time, but others were examples of one-off situations that were nevertheless very important.

The police staff referred to in these examples have a lot in common. They are being respectful, knowledgeable, calm under pressure and friendly in a professional way.

At times they also did more than their duty called for, be it spending their off-duty time looking for a young person who went missing; driving a young person home to make sure that they got there safely, or just brewing a young person some tea or buying them a bottle of coke.

'In my opinion, it takes a lot to **build confidence** in anyone, especially a police officer.'

'On my first incident, he **made me feel comfortable** by making a brew and talking about football.'

'There was an incident with my anger at home where he ended up coming. But instead of shouting at me or threatening to arrest me, he **sat with me while I cried** and made sure that I was calm. He came to see me next day to make sure that I was alright.'

'He always asks how I am doing and checks that I am safe when he sees me about.'

'When I went missing, even if he was not on the job he **spent six hours of his own time to look for me** and then came to check on me the day after.'

'She **gave me a choice** about being referred to social services. I did not want them involved. But she referred me to The Children's Society instead.'

'She was straight to the point and **never sugar-coated things** to make me feel better.'

'She **took time to listen** to me, even if it took me four hours to explain.'



'She lived in my local area, so she knows what the place was like.'

'Understanding and calm - even if I wasn't.'

'Supported my decisions. Never pressurised me.'

'Always there whenever I needed her.'

'Always helped me understand what's best for me.'

'Picked me up from school when I was not safe.'

'Made things convenient for me arranging meetings at a local police station.'

'She helped me with problems that weren't to do with the case.'

'Helped my family as well as me.'

'Got me counselling.'

Whilst there are some very positive examples of how police support and work with young people, these examples are sparse. Young people believe that to ensure that more police staff are able to work and support them appropriately, some key changes are needed.

“When I had serious issues he came to take a statement and told me I can take my time and if I want, to leave something till next day. He said we'd get through it as I **BUILD MY CONFIDENCE.**”

Checklist: Making a difference

- ✓ All police staff should receive training on how to work with children, not just specialist police staff.
- ✓ All police staff should learn about how children who have experienced abuse and exploitation may feel and behave.
- ✓ All police staff should learn how, through their attitudes and behaviours, they can demonstrate to young people that police are on children's side.
- ✓ All police staff should learn about relevant laws, signs of grooming and exploitation, de-escalation techniques and understand the impact of trauma on a child's mental health and behaviour.
- ✓ Police practices in relation to victims of abuse or exploitation should improve.

**ALL POLICE
STAFF HAVE
CONTACT
WITH
CHILDREN**



Police jobs, ranks and responsibilities can be confusing for children and young people. Whatever these jobs and responsibilities are, anyone in any policing job can come into contact with vulnerable children – from the receptionist at the police station to the Police and Crime Commissioner. As a result anyone can make an impact on a child's life – whether it is a positive or a negative impact depends on how police staff treat young people.

'Teenagers may come into contact with a receptionist at the police station if they've come to make a statement, or to draw a picture of that person. I think receptionists are dead canny. They know how to treat you. Young people's experiences with receptionists are generally quite good.'

'Teenagers who do not pay for tickets may come into contact with transport police and if you do not pay for tickets you are in trouble. However, **safety of children should always come first**. It should be the key message for this role.'

'Undercover police - they may get a young person trying to buy stuff. We had a legal highs shop closed like that.'

Checklist: Contact with children

- ☑ Good police staff, no matter what their job, think of safety of children first.

•• Police Community Support Officers deal with antisocial behaviour. Sometimes they work with an actual police officer. They are the ones who everyone [young people] picks upon because they can. They can restrain you, though. We used to meet at least two a night. They come up and say "you need to move alone". ••

**CHALLENGING
BEHAVIOUR
MAY BE A SIGN
OF A CHILD IN
TROUBLE**



TOP TIPS FOR POLICE FROM YOUNG PEOPLE

1. No matter what your job is, think of the **SAFETY OF CHILDREN FIRST.**

2. **SEE AND TREAT A CHILD OR A YOUNG PERSON AS IF THEY ARE IN TROUBLE,** not as if they are a trouble.

3. **DON'T JUDGE THE YOUNG PERSON,** but try your best to understand what's going on. Judge and assess risks, suspicious people or circumstances - not a young person.

6. **KNOW THE LAWS AND SIGNS OF A CHILD BEING GROOMED OR EXPLOITED.**

7. **UNDERSTAND THE IMPACT.** The trauma of being abused or exploited can have on child's mental health and behaviour.

ICE PLE

4. **COMMUNICATE WELL.**
Speak to young people as normal human beings, make small conversations before asking big questions, and use simple language to explain things.

5. **KNOW HOW TO STAY CALM** even if a young person isn't - and learn how to calm a challenging behaviour without having to restrain a young person.

8. **UNDERSTAND CONFIDENTIALITY** and the importance of keeping a young person updated about the progress of their case.

9. **WORK WELL WITH OTHER PROFESSIONALS** to help get the best outcomes for a young person.

10. **TREAT YOUNG PEOPLE HOW THEY WISH TO BE TREATED.**

There are many barriers in relationships between young people and police.

'If I am in trouble I would like to be able to come up to police and tell.'

'The role of police is having to tell people off. It is a barrier. That is how all young people see police. You are not going to be best mates with the police officer.'

'Police may try keeping you safe, but young people do not see police that way. You may be angry because they [police] may want to tell your parents.'

'It also depends on perspective. We also judge police officers. We think they are all bad and they may have bad perspective on us.'

'Young people do not like police. They may think police are horrible people.'

Some of these barriers are down to the lack of understanding that many police staff have about how children who have experienced trauma – or have been victims of crime – may feel and behave.

'There is not enough training to help police understand that we are not all the same.'

'If young people are with friends they may be using swearing and bad language. They do it because they are scared, scared of getting into trouble. The police will see the person who is trouble, not the person who is in trouble.'

'Sometimes it can be difficult to deal with us because we are angry and we are upset. The police can not see the deep stuff that goes underneath.'

'Young people may not want to engage because they are scared, do not like the police, are not ready.'

'Young people may be ashamed to talk about what happened to them.'

'Some teens do not understand what has happened to them. They might think it is normal, for example, if they are being groomed.'

'Sometimes the young person may not be ready to speak. Sometimes young people may not be fully accepting of what happened to them, or they are not ready to accept help. Sometimes there may be peer pressure and you are doing what everyone else is doing.'

Checklist: Challenging behaviour

- ✓ Police staff should see and treat a child or a young person as if they are in trouble, not as if they are a trouble.
- ✓ Police staff shouldn't judge, but try their best to understand what is going on in that young person's life. Judge risks, suspicious adults or circumstances – not the young person.
- ✓ When police come across a young person in a dodgy area at night, they should ask questions.
- ✓ The behaviour of young people may be relevant to who they are with. For example, if police come across a young girl in a group of lads or one girl with older men, they should ask questions.
- ✓ In bad areas with high crime rates, police should ask young people 'Why are you here? Because it's not safe.'
- ✓ If police staff come across someone staying out late they should consider that the young person may be missing from home or care.

**THE
BEHAVIOUR
AND ATTITUDES
OF POLICE
MATTER**



When it comes to winning young people's trust, the way police staff behave towards them really matters. It's important that young people are respected and listened to, and overall, to show that you care. Ideally young people want to feel calm, positive, and that the police are approachable and dedicated to supporting young people.

'POLICE COME AROUND AND STAND AND THEY ARE BIG. SOMETIME THEY DO NOT TAKE ON BOARD WHAT YOU ARE SAYING. SOMETIMES THEY MAKE AN EFFORT TO UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU ARE SAYING.'

'Police should use appropriate language, and **make the person feel comfortable** - no swearing or demanding.'

'Need to **treat a young person as a human being**, not as a case you are just working on. To behave respectfully and not saying, "you are wasting my time".'

'Don't act as a big man trying to control young people, but treat young people respectfully and help them **build trust**.'

'Police should **think about other people's feelings** so that they are not intimidating. They cannot come across as arrogant or otherwise the person will not tell them, instead burying the truth inside.'

'She **took time and built a relationship**. We talked about issues in my life - school etc. It helps that what I tell this police officer stays between us. It helps, as I know I can tell her anything. Of course, if I am in trouble she would need to tell, but other issues I can talk to her about anything. We need to be able to trust police and know how what we are saying will be used.'

'Do not **restraint as a first resort** (when dealing with young people who are angry).'

**SMALL
MINDED**

**HEAVY
HANDED**



**BIG
BOOTS**

**BIG
MAN**

Checklist: Behaviour and attitudes

- ✓ Understand that body language matters.
- ✓ Smile. Give young people a chance to introduce themselves.
- ✓ Treat young people respectfully – as a human being, not as a case you are just working on.
- ✓ Speak to young people as normal human beings.
- ✓ Use simple language to explain things.
- ✓ Make small conversations before asking big questions.
- ✓ Try to calm the situation down if a young person reacts angrily, using de-escalation techniques, not restraint.
- ✓ Don't confuse facts with opinions.
- ✓ Make young people feel safe, offer support from someone of the same gender, give young people a choice.
- ✓ Show that you care.
- ✓ Be a good listener, empathise, work well as a team with other agencies, be calm.

**SKILLS AND
KNOWLEDGE
NEED TO
IMPROVE**



To enable police to protect vulnerable children and young people, they need to have strong knowledge in several key areas: laws protecting children, spotting signs of a child being groomed or exploited, having skills to deal with angry outbursts or challenging behaviours

'Be there - not just for young people but also for their families.'

'Treat people as they wish to be treated themselves.'

'Specialist training around child sexual exploitation is important. They should know signs of grooming and child abuse.'

'Police should be able to help young people with other issues. For example, understand if someone is a young carer.'

'They should know the law and the rights of children inside out and how they apply in practice.'

'If police are not able to help the person they should be able to refer.'

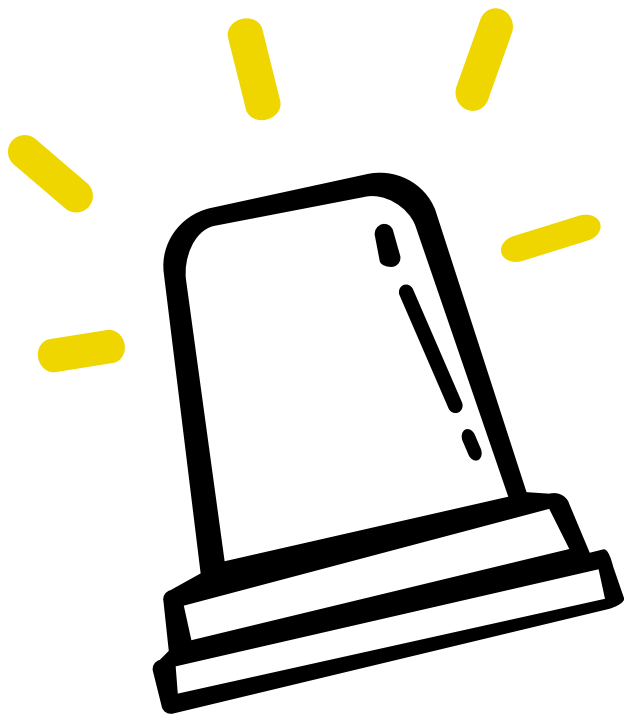
'Knowledge. She knows how to approach young person - not intimidating, not full on.'

'They should not assume that they know how a young person feels about what happens.'

Checklist: Skills and knowledge

- Know the laws protecting children and children's rights, including about equality and diversity.
- Know the signs of grooming, abuse and exploitation.
- Know how to be understanding and calm, even when a young person is not.
- Know de-escalation techniques.
- Understand the impact of trauma on children's mental health and behaviour.
- Know how to plan for a child's safety.
- Know how to help young people with other issues. For example, understand if someone is a young carer.
- Do not assume that they know how a young person feels.
- Be there – not just for young people but also for their families.

Police processes, rules and working practices are often very inconsistent and unclear. Even in situations where a young person is treated as a victim of crime, it is not clear what to expect.



'When you do a written statement it is not always someone you know.'

'They came to my house to take a statement, but did not write it down so how will they remember?'

'I had to re-watch my video interviews before I went to court.'

'My mum had to re-read her written statement.'

'Usually when you do an interview [achieving best evidence interview], it must be with someone who you have met at least once.'

'We have a specialist CSE service based at a police station. I don't think they should be based at a police station.'

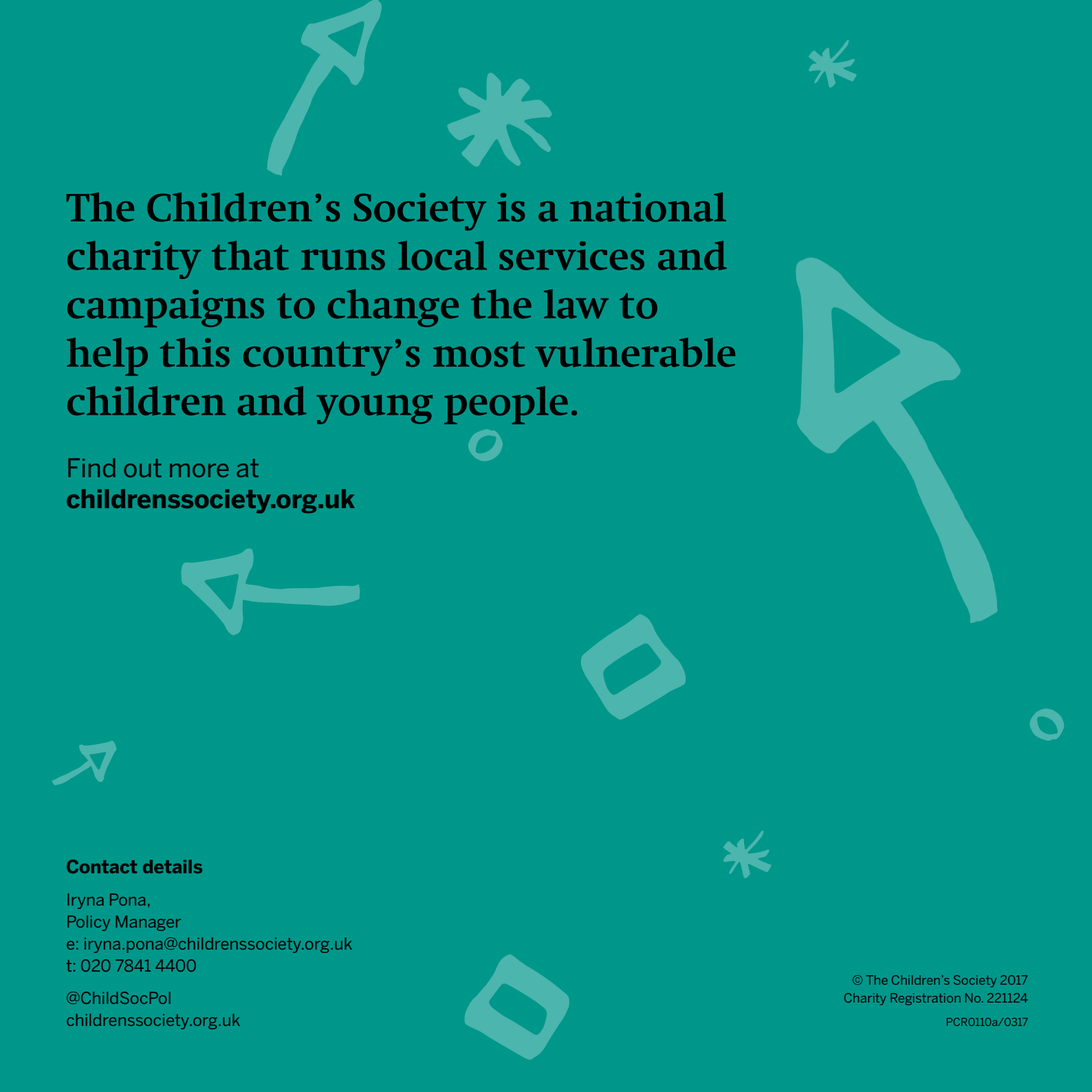
'There are different numbers to call and sometimes when you have a crime number you call a separate line.'

'The 101 number is not advertised enough to young people.'

'Young people should be able to trust police are not going to leave suddenly.'

Checklist: Skills and knowledge

- Communicate clearly how information that young people and their families share with the police is going to be used, including about confidentiality.
- Stay in touch with a young person as needed and update on progress on their case regularly.
- Take time to enable a young person to build enough confidence and trust to give evidence.
- Explain next steps, decisions made and help available.
- Work with the young person to find the best solution, or to help them understand what's the best.
- Refer and signpost children to help if it's not possible to help through police.
- Communicate clear telephone numbers that young people need to call, and remind them about 101.
- Work alongside other professionals.



The Children's Society is a national charity that runs local services and campaigns to change the law to help this country's most vulnerable children and young people.

Find out more at
childrenssociety.org.uk

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