





Lived Experience of our Children We Look After – What could be improved?

Themes from the Bright Spots CWLA Wellbeing Survey - The following themes have been raised as findings of *'what could be improved'* by Coram Voice. As such, they require consideration by children and Corporate Parents to agree actions to improve experience and practice.

	Survey Finding	Comments/ideas from children, young people and CPF members
1	 <p>Feeling happy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although only two children (4-11yrs) recorded feeling <u>unhappy</u> the day before the survey, the proportion who felt quite or very happy* was lower compared to children in other LAs in both age groups. 	<p>“Stop changing my social workers please.” “They should feel happy all the time even if you are sad, just be calm.” “Ensure adults explain to you why you are in care.” “Help to feeling safe/settled at home.” “Family time?” “All pastoral teams in school should be good.” “It’s ok to have a range of emotions.” “Stop changes of social worker.” “Not close down all the shops.” “Speaking to people and family in school.”</p> <p>“Understanding our emotions – when does it become a worry?” “More things to do would help us feel happier, swimming pools, water parks.” “Scrutiny into CAMHS waiting times.” “Deep dive needed into this area for development. Do we ask what would make you happy?” “When do we ask children? Should we ask at different times?”</p>
2	<p>Young people with low overall well-being were statistically more likely to report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not liking school; Feeling unhappy with how they looked; and Not having the chance to practise life skills. <p>Other factors associated with low well-being included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feeling unhappy with how often they saw family Feeling afraid to go to school because of bullying, not having a chance to be trusted, not being able to do similar things to their friends, and worrying about their feelings or behaviour. <p>8 (11%) young people had low well-being</p> 	<p>“Lessons at school should be more fun.” “Do you ask at PEP meetings if children like going to school?” “Encourage life skills from pre-school.” “Help with bullying at school.” “Plan should include milestones – self-care, cooking etc.” “Being with positive people.” “Focus on strengths.” “School sucks!” “You should never say that you look ugly. You need to know you are perfect the way you look...!” “More art!” “Have more life skills in school – like food, make the bed, taking care of a pet etc.” “More support and personal social education around feeling happy with how they look.” “Money skills.” “Social media impacting on self-esteem.” “Scrutiny review into % school staff and council staff have ACE’s and Trauma informed practice training.”</p>
3	 <p>Understanding why you are in care</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over half (54%) of the youngest children, over a quarter (28%) of the older children and one fifth of young people (20%) did not fully understand the reasons why they were in care. 	<p>“They should explain it in a kind way so you can understand them.” “All professionals around the child should be able to talk to them about why they came into care – might need training.” “Put a summary on top of the case notes on ICS.” “Carers and Social Workers to explain.” “Scrutiny at Corporate Parents Forum.” “Ensure SWs ask at each visit and record responses – which are then audited by IRO as part of review process.” “Re-tell the reasons regularly. Sharing at different ages to meet understanding.” “Work to be done with carers and SWs to explain. Make sure carers know why.” “Simplify it so I can understand.” “Scared to talk about it.” “Believe in yourself.” “Check where this is being asked and how often – is this a performance indicator?”</p>

4	 <p>Friends</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proportion (9%) of children and young people (4-17yrs) that did not have a good friend* was three times higher compared with children (3%) in the general population. 	<p>“Ask children about friends before moving placements so you know who they want to stay in touch with.” “After school club provision? More action by school needed.” “Encourage opportunities and review them.” “Stay local.” “Least number of moves – home and school.” “Encourage children to join clubs/activities, meet others based on interest.” “Recognise children go at their own pace.” “You could speak to people in the ‘All about you’.” “Mentors for Care Leavers.” “Have buddies in school.” “Councillors Corporate Parents as mentors/supporters – concern that this may not be suitable in terms of skills/DBS.”</p>
5	<p>Knowing you can <u>ask</u> to speak to your social worker alone (8-11yrs: 90% down to 83%)</p>	<p>“Children should know why a social worker is changing or leaving.” “We do know it but had lots of changes of social worker.” “The ideal social worker is one who stays.” “Check how the child wants to be contacted.” “Told IRO about changes of social worker – only 1 IRO.” “Talk to carer.” “Speak outside of meetings.” “SW send young person/child contact details.” “Shouldn’t have agency social workers.” “Can talk to IRO instead.” “Get things done.” “Contact direct to young person on their phone.” “Review and re-launch the Children’s Charter, to ensure they know their rights in an appropriate way for age/ability.” “Monitor via the CWLA review and monitored/reported to Scrutiny and CP Forum.”</p>
6	<p>Feeling embarrassed by adults for being in care (11-17yrs: 2% up to 8%)</p>	<p>“School should be mindful of what they say – ask what they want to be called.” “PIP money taken out of class for review.” “Which adults? What reasons?” “Sometimes people who care about us sometimes embarrass us – is it always a bad thing?” “Let children decide who gets to know they’re in care.” “Don’t take children out of lessons for meetings.” “Be mindful of how we address people. Not single out anyone for being in care.” “Being taken out of school, people ask questions.” “Sleepovers – who do we ask?” “Calling foster carers by their first names, maybe call them ‘aunt’ or ‘uncle’.” “You should be embarrassed by them because they help you.”</p>

Actions to be taken in response to hearing our children and young people who we look after.

Action	Theme	By Whom	By When	Progress/Complete
<p>*Overarching action - Views to be considered by each of the five CPF Outcome Groups for focussed actions above those stated here.</p>	1-6	All Outcome Group Leads (SK, AS, HA, FW, HS)	18 Sept 2023	Views shared at September CPF including Outcome leads. Actions incorporated into CPF outcome groups.
<p>Incorporate Bright Spot views into rolling programme of mandatory SW Training and Induction. Paying particular focus on voice of the child, lived experience, feelings, their plans.</p>	1-6	Wendy Harrison	30 Oct 2023	Training delivered to all teams, incorporating ASYE’s, International social workers and Degree Apprentice students.
<p>Continue to drive the recruitment of CSC staff to support consistency of relationships.</p>	1-6	Paula Swindlehurst Wendy Harrison	Quarterly review of progress.	Programme of recruitment opportunities established – links to universities, Teaching Partnership, School careers events, local and

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				regional job fairs, rolling recruitment advert on Council job page etc.
Update procedure for change of SW, managing absence, to include joint visits.	1,2,5,6	Wendy Harrison	30 Sept 2023	Procedure updates, approved by SLT and rolled out across CS Department.
Undertake a dip sample audit of children's cases, where change of social worker has been necessary to assess if correct procedure is being followed.	1,2,5,6	Wendy Harrison	31 Jan 2024	Start date 1 January 2023.
Develop life skills resource tool for supporting children and young people in skills, understanding and development.	1,2,4	Care Leavers & Adam Smeltzer	29 Dec 2023	Draft guidance produced and shared with CPF. Tool in design/production phase.
Establish a dedicated area on ICS to record why a child is in care/evidence direct work to explain and re-visit topic with child linked to child's age and understanding.	1,2,3,5,6	Carla Middleton	31 Jan 2024	Proposal to be tabled with SLT for agreement December 2023.
Review current commission for Life Story Work supports children's understanding.	1,2,3,4,5,6	Kathryn Radclyffe	31 Oct 2023	ARC model of Life story work considered.
Undertaken research with children through VIBE/Reach on aspirations. Develop workshops based on findings.	1, 2,4	Ruth DuPlessis	Sep 2023	Research complete and workshops planned based on findings.
Produce guidance on creating Pen Portraits. All pen portraits to include statement that children can <u>ask</u> to speak to their social worker alone.	1,2,5,6	Helen Sharratt	Sept 2023	Guidance created and shared. CSW teams alerted to need to have and utilise pen portraits with their children and young people.
Undertake a dip sample audit of Pen Portrait use to assure use and quality.	1,2,5,6	Helen Sharratt	31 Jan 2024	Audit process to be agreed by SLT December 2023.
Feedback Bright Spot views to VOCC/Be Heard Outcome Group – each Champion to cascade views to their team to consider actions needed.	1,2,3,4,5,6	All Champions/Team Managers	Sept 2023	Bright Spots views shared with VOCC/Be heard group.
Feedback Bright Spot views to Practitioners Forum to ensure the voice of our children influences the Getting to Outstanding Plan.	1,2,3,4,5,6	Practitioners Forum Getting to Outstanding Board	Sept 2023 for feedback Dec 2023 for plan	Feedback of Bright Spots views given. Action will be completed when Practitioners Forum have sight of the Getting to Outstanding Plan and can consider how views can influence the plan.
Feedback Bright Spot views to Virtual School Staff and Designated Teachers.	1,2,3,4,5,6	Heather Addison	Date TBA	Views shared with Virtual School Staff. Date to be scheduled to present to Designated school staff.

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Undertake project to listen to families attending statutory CWLA reviews to understand their views on the process/experience. Develop plan to work with families to provide supportive information for those following them through the CWLA Review Process, based on the views heard.	1,2,3,4,5,6	Carla Middleton	31 Mar 2024	Method for listening to families trialled with families involved in Child Protection Conference. Start date January 2024.
Share with Foster Carers and residential providers the support offered locally through CAMHS.	1,2,4,6	Fiona Woods	Aug 2023	Updated information of CAMHS services shared through Foster Carers Newsletter and Placement Team to residential providers.
Collate and share resources to support children's emotional health and mental wellbeing.	1,2,4,6	Helen Sharratt Champions	Sept 2023 31 Jan 2024	Resources shared with VOCC. Development of this action now to pool resources across agencies through SCP padlet.
Develop process to check with children/ICS that 'why in care' understood and recorded.	1,2,3,4,5,6	Carla Middleton	29 Feb 2024	Process to be detailed and agreed by SLT prior to commencement Jan 2024.
Review and re-launch the Childrens Charter, the 'CWLA Promise' with our children and young people we look after. Incorporate children's rights.	1,2,3,4,5,6	Helen Sharratt Champions	31 Mar 2024	Start date 1 January 2024.
Listen to children in greater depth on their views of how Family Time is explained and organised. Then co-produce with children guidance for social workers on how Family Time should be explained, understood and organised.	2	Carla Middleton Wendy Harrison	31 Mar 2024	Start date 1 January 2024.