



Supplementary Report to the Oversight Board for The Promise

Young People's Voices
Consultation June – July 2026

About Intandem

Intandem is a mentoring programme for children and young people experiencing the care system, or at risk of care. Mentoring starts between the ages of 7 and 15 years and continues for as long as needed. Established in 2016, the programme is managed by Inspiring Scotland and delivered by 13 partner charities across 22 local authorities in Scotland. Intandem is based around building positive, trusting and consistent relationships to support children and young people to thrive.

OUR VISION

We empower children and young people experiencing the care system to build the resilience and confidence they need to thrive

Introduction

Intandem was commissioned by The Oversight Board for The Promise to support the gathering of children and young people's voices for its forthcoming fourth report on the current progress of The Promise. This supplementary report brings together the views of 51 children and young people, gathered through 1:1 sessions and focus group consultations.

All young people who took part were care experienced, including young people living with family, carers, friends or other arrangements, with many in kinship care or looked after at home.

Age ranges of those who took part were between 8 – 18 years old.

Engagement Type	Number of young people	Age Range
Group sessions	20	11 - 18
Supported 1:1	31	8 - 17
Total	51	8 - 18

Methodology

There were two methods of engaging with this consultation:

- **Focus group sessions facilitated by Intandem staff**
- **1:1 engagement sessions which were completed with the young person's mentor or staff member.**

All Intandem partner charities were offered this opportunity.

1:1 sessions were completed with support from each young person's mentor or a member of staff. All questionnaires had a video introduction to ensure that young people were made aware of the purpose of the consultation, and how their voice would be used and recorded, ensuring consistency across all that submitted their responses via this method.

Introduction video can be viewed here:

<https://vimeo.com/1200792027/c4d078b8d7?share=copy&fl=sv&fe=ci>

Focus group sessions were designed so that young people responded to the same core questions as the individual engagement option, while allowing the delivery to be adapted to the needs of each group and explore some of the themes in more detail. This helped ensure that no young person felt pressured to share their personal story within the wider group setting.

For a large majority of young people involved, this was their first experience of participation. It was also the first time many had been asked to share their views on care experience and the current support structures available to young people.

Young people were reassured that they did not need to answer questions they did not want to, this led to some of the total figures varying from question to question. Likewise, some of the questions were specific to the 1:1 questionnaire rather than the group session and was deemed not appropriate to ask in a group setting.

The resources and sessions were developed in conjunction with The Oversight Board For the Promise and framed through a trauma-informed lens and utilising the Each and Every Child Framework in relation to framing questions.



Executive Summary

Key themes that were raised by young people included relationships, trust, being listened to, communication approaches, privacy, support, understanding of care experience and awareness of The Promise.

Theme 1: Relationships Matter Most

Relationships, family, friends and trusted adults were the strongest contributors to positive wellbeing.

Theme 2: Trust

Young people described trust as key to feeling safe, accepting support and feeling able to take part.

Theme 3: Help is Relationship-Based

Young people were most likely to seek help from people they already knew and trusted. Some mentioned they would not seek support in person if they did not have a relationship with the adult, and a small number reported seeking advice online or using AI.

Theme 4: Being Heard, Believed and Understood

Young people wanted adults to listen, understand and act.

Theme 5: Telling Your Story Multiple Times

Many described having to repeat their story before receiving adequate support.

Theme 6: Feeling Safe

Young people described safety as being rooted in having trust, feeling comfort and connection. Access to quiet spaces, a sense of belonging and reliable relationships all helped them to feel secure and grounded.

Theme 7: Communication and Understanding

Young people wanted clearer explanations and checks from adults that they understood information in a way that works for them.

Theme 8: Respect, Privacy and Ownership of Their Story

Young people valued confidentiality, dignity and control over their personal information.

Theme 9: Understanding of Care Experience

Understanding varied across the consultation, with some young people clear about care experience and others unsure what the term meant.

Overall Conclusion

Relationships, trust, listening and understanding remain the strongest messages from young people across the consultation. The findings also point to the need for further work to increase awareness and shared understanding of what care experience means across schools, communities and services.

Recommendations from consultation

Below are the emerging themes from consultation that young people have identified as priority areas for Scotland to improve upon.

- 1 The importance of positive and trusted relationships.
- 2 Reducing the need for children and young people to repeat their story.
- 3 Making support easier to access through trusted people and familiar places.
- 4 Improving communication and checking understanding with young people.
- 5 Increasing awareness of care experience and The Promise within communities.

Response to individual question sets

Below is a summary of the responses to each question that was asked during the consultations. Some questions were not asked in the focus group sessions due to the question type, however alternative questions were asked that covered the same theme. Along with this report, we will include within the appendix anonymised quote dataset from each question for the Oversight Board for The Promise to use as they see fit.

1) What Things in Your Life Make You Feel Good?

Young people identified the importance of people in their life, the qualities they show young people, the importance of relationships and taking part in activities as the biggest contributors to feeling happiness and positive wellbeing. Young people referred to feeling good when they are connected and able to spend time with people they care about, have shared experiences which in turn makes them feel valued. Friends, family, trusted adults, hobbies, sports, music, pets and youth groups all featured strongly within this section.

"My friends and the people I want to be with. They make me feel loved and have my back."

"Going to [youth club], seeing my emo friend [name]."

"It's people, they make you feel happy and good."

"Having people I care about around me."

"Football and gran, Florida."

"My cat."

2) Who Do You Look To For Help When You Need It?

Again, young people referenced that who they go to for help would be relationship led. Young people overwhelmingly identified trusted individuals rather than services. Family, friends, grandparents, mentors, teachers, youth workers and support workers were the most common sources of help.

Interestingly a number of young people also mentioned using online support utilising search engines and AI to answer their questions. Many were in agreement that the young person would only seek help from someone they know and trust first before approaching services.

//

My gran.

//

My support worker [name] and friends.

//

Friends or I google it.

//

I can talk to friends, my coach, teachers, carer.

//

My pastoral care teacher, mum, [Youth club].

//

I'd ask Chat GPT.

3) Do the Adults Around You Work Together Well?

This question brought a mixed response from young people however the majority did feel adults work well together.

Of the 27 responses to this question young people voted the following:

Response	Percentage
Yes	81.50%
No	18.50%

Some young people reported positive experiences where there were effective communication and adults working together to find solutions. However, others reported poor communication or conflict within families due to high stress situations such as a recent move into kinship care.

//

They work well together because they do want to help me.

//

The staff are absolutely brilliant.

//

They all communicate fairly well.

//

My gran with school yes. My school with gran, no! My social workers with anyone, hell no!

//

I stay with my mum but used to stay with gran. My gran does not get on with my mum because of her past. My auntie does not get on with my gran or my Mum there is lots of fighting between each other. I've stayed with my older sister too, but we fell out because everyone was worried me staying there would put her housing bid at risk.

4) How Many People Did You Need To Speak To Before Getting Help?

Across all consultation methods, the most common experience reported by young people was needing to speak to between 2 and 4 adults or people before receiving the support they needed, accounting for 56.9% of the vote. Only 17.6% of responses suggested that support could be resolved after speaking to a single adult. A further 13.7% believed that five or more people may need to be involved before issues are addressed. Young people frequently described support as involving multiple conversations, referrals and repeating their experiences to different adults. Some young people within this question felt like they would not ask for help or not feel comfortable doing so.

Number of People Needed	Total	Percentage
Did not need help / did not ask	6	11.80%
1 Adult / Person	9	17.60%
2-4 Adults / People	29	56.90%
5+ Adults / People	7	13.70%

Reflections on how many adults they'd need to speak to were mixed. Some of the group felt, it was good to talk to make sure you got the right person, or that telling more people helped, while others referenced feeling frustrated or needing to repeat their story or share personal information repeatedly.

" Good, but it took a long time to get better and had to say the same thing again and again.

" You always have to speak to a few of them.

" Sometimes you can't just go up to social work. There's no social work popping about everywhere.

" It doesn't always mean it's bad though, I think sometimes talking to more people helps you get through whatever you're going through. It does get your thought out a bit more.

" That's the first step, just getting it out, talking to people if it gets sorted then I'm happy to talk to people about what's going on.

" It's always having to go up a chain.

" Sometimes people don't listen.

" They've got to pass it on to higher staff.

" You want to keep it more personal.

" I still see the same amount of people. They then just put you in touch with someone that is specialised in that to help you.

" So the longer you keep them in, the worse it gets.

" I think if you worry too much about talking and telling people what's going on The longer you keep it to yourself, the worse it gets." You have to think what's worse, people knowing your story or not getting help?

5) Do Young People Know Where To Get Help?

Response	Total	Percentage
Yes	26	54.20%
No	4	8.30%
Not Sure / It's Complicated	18	37.50%

Across all consultation methods, just over half of young people (54.2%) reported that they knew how or where to get help if they needed it. However, more than one-third (37.5%) described the issue as either "not sure" or "it's complicated". Only 8.3% reported that they did not know where to access support.

Whilst the 1:1 supported session responses suggest a relatively high level of awareness about where support may be available, the group discussions revealed a more nuanced picture. Young people frequently explained that knowing where help exists is not the same as feeling able, comfortable or confident to access it. The dominant group session response was often "it's complicated" and sighting the importance of having trusted relationships with an adult to seek support.

" Ask at home

" Ask my Mum

" School

" Ask a teacher

" I'd just google it though; you can google anything!

Within the groups, a number of young people felt they would not reach out for support in person unless they had a positive relationship with the adult, examples were also given outside of school within youth clubs and groups they regularly attend. However young people struggled to identify where to get help outside of their social circle or within their local community.

“If I didn’t know them, I probably wouldn’t ask.”

6) What Would Make It Easier To Get Help?

Young people identified trust, time, relationships and having access to the right environment as important enablers of help-seeking. They wanted adults to be available, approachable and patient. Some young people also mentioned advertising more on what help is on offer.

“A quiet place.

“They got to know us and we trust them.

“Posters, phone calls

“Getting on with someone, like learn about them like [Youth Worker], she got to know us, we trust her so we feel comfortable talking to her.

“Go to nurture base.

“It’s the person’s time to choose when they talk.

“Just being there for someone.

“It’s more like the person’s time to choose when they talk to them. you know what I mean, you can’t really speed someone up or slow them down. It’s going to come out when it comes out.

“Just being there for someone, they have built trust with you, so you know you can go to them.

In one group the participants spoke about nurture bases in school being good access points to support, where there are adults in school available to talk to you when you need it.

A number of participants reported that their schools do not have nurture spaces available or that they were not aware they existed in their school. All young people present in the session felt that having a nurture space would be helpful as a space away from noise and pressure and somewhere to help regulate emotions when needed with an adult they could build a relationship with.

7) Where Do You Feel Safe and Secure?

Young people felt safe in places that were familiar to them, especially at home or in their own personal space. Bedrooms, beds and quiet places were mentioned often, with young people linking these spaces to being able to relax, have privacy and feel settled. Positive relationships were key to feeling safe, with friends, family members, mentors and other trusted adults all being named. Some young people also spoke about feeling safe in community spaces, including school, youth projects and local clubs.

//
My room.

//
At my home and at youth clubs

//
The school library

//
Playing on my xbox

//
Home, and underneath trampoline.

//
At my home, or with my friends, or talking with my mentor

//
Everywhere, if I didn't feel safe - I'd go home. (Home means Foster Home)

//
My Mum

//
Someone you trust.

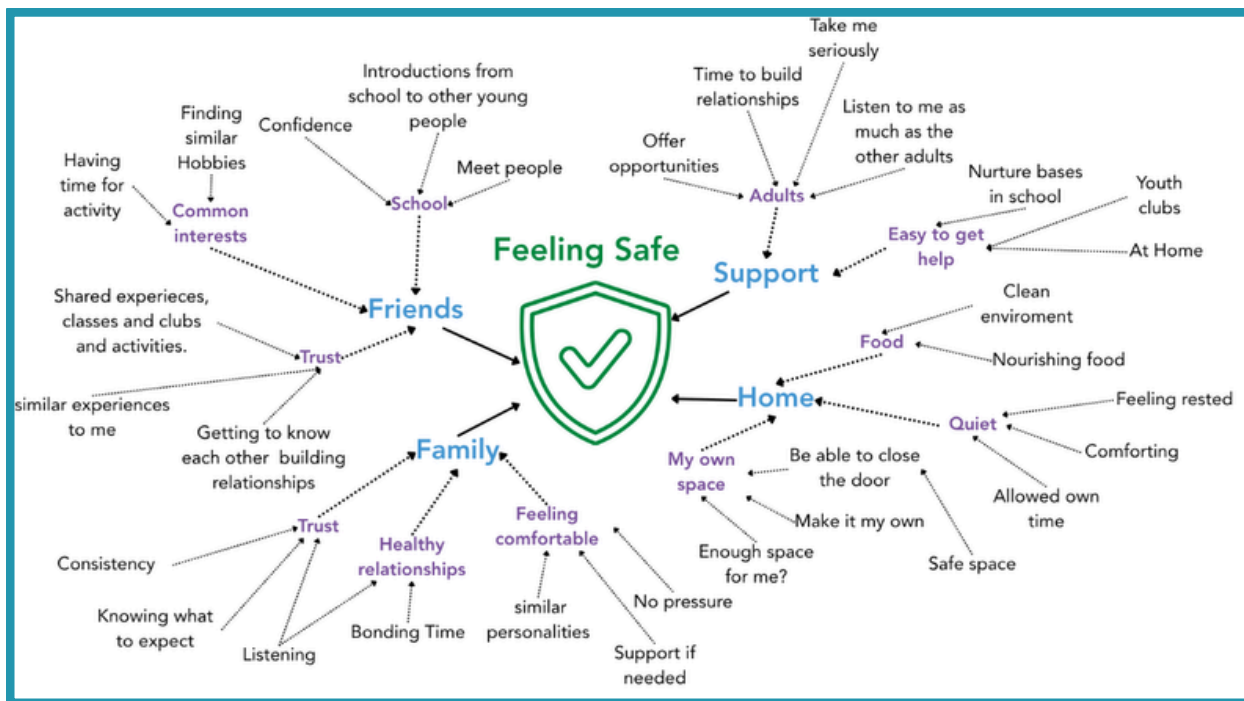


Figure 1: Group 2 feeling safe exercise

Within the group consultations, young people initially identified key elements that contribute to feeling safe. Facilitators then explored what was needed for those elements to be achieved, creating a "Doing List" that mapped the building blocks required before young people felt they could experience safety. The Doing list is created by having a broad subject matter such as "Feeling Safe" and asking the group to think of at least three elements they would need. For every suggestion they are asked to think of a further three elements until cycle naturally comes to an end. This can then be used to identify pathways of reaching the goal, "Feeling Safe".

The combined suggestions across all group's identified safety is built through the following:

Trust	Relationships
Family	Friends
Community	Understanding
Listening	Comfort
Quiet spaces	Belonging

Young people's understanding of safety extends beyond physical safety. Across questionnaires and both "Doing List exercises", young people consistently described safety as something built through trusted relationships, understanding, comfort, belonging and having spaces where they can relax and be themselves. Home, bedrooms, friends, family, trusted adults and community connections all emerged as important foundations that contribute towards feeling safe.

8) When you're worried, is there someone you can talk to or turn to for support?

The table below is the responses from the 1:1 consultations. With over half of young people stating that they have someone to talk to or have support when they need it.

Response	Number of Responses	Percentage
Always	17	54.80%
Sometimes	11	35.50%
Rarely	1	3.20%
Never	1	3.20%
I'm not sure	1	3.20%
Total	31	100%

For the group sessions, young people were asked "When young people are worried what helps?"

Young people described talking and communication with trusted people such as family, friends and important adults in their lives, taking part in activities and hobbies to act as a distraction

"Talking to people.

"Talking to a trusted adult.

"Doing something that you like.

"Having a hobby to focus on.

"Telling a teacher a worry and them helping.

"Food, even just getting out of the house, food somewhere that isn't home and just chat to someone

"Medication.

"Music, takes me out of my head and I can relax

While the group were discussing the importance of having someone to listen to your concerns one of the young people within the group felt that it was not always possible:

"Some people are busy and don't have time to listen to your worries."

9) When you're worried, is there someone you can talk to or turn to for support?

Young people consistently identified listening, relationship building and understanding as the most important things adults can offer when support is needed. They want adults who take time to listen without judgement, understand their perspective, and act on concerns when they are raised.

Many emphasised the need for kindness, empathy, confidentiality and safe spaces to talk. While they recognised that many adults provide valuable support, they repeatedly called for adults to listen more, make fewer assumptions, and ensure that young people feel genuinely heard and understood.

// Help them and listen.

// Comfort me and check up on me.

// Just listen and don't think you always know what's best or how I'm feeling, you don't!

// Calm them down, make their feelings feel valid.

Within the group sessions we also asked extra questions around adults.

What do adults in your life do well?

Both groups recognised that adults play an important role in their wellbeing. They spoke positively about adults who listen, help find solutions and connect them to services and opportunities. The groups valued adults who take time to build relationships, provide practical support and create opportunities that help young people manage worries and challenges.

Many acknowledged that adults often have access to resources and support networks that can help young people navigate difficult situations.

// There's not just one building I go to, they have different places, organisations, resources and money to help, they can help you get support."

// Finding solutions."

// There's a lot of people helping young people."

What adults could do better?

Young people consistently highlighted the importance of being listened to. Several young people wanted adults to take more time to understand their experiences, avoid making assumptions, and act on what they have been told. Building trust was also highlighted, with young people explaining that support is most effective when adults invest time in building genuine relationships.

Participants also raised concerns about confidentiality, expressing a desire for adults to treat their personal stories with respect and only share information when absolutely necessary. Clear communication, respect, and meaningful involvement in decisions were also identified as important areas for improvement.

// Young people want adults to spend more time listening and less time assuming."

// Some staff will pass on information and think it's not their job."

// Instead of telling secrets, or sharing them for chat, they keep it with them only sharing if they need to, if it's dangerous."

// It's your story. It's your life. It needs to be protected."

10) Do Adults Explain Things In Ways You Understand?

Response	Number	Percentage
Yes	27	56.3%
No	14	29.2%
It's complicated / Not sure	7	14.6%
Total	48	100%

Just over half of the responses indicated that adults explain things in ways that young people understand. However, almost half of responses either reported difficulties understanding explanations or described the issue as more complex. During the group consultations, young people explained that understanding often depends on how information is presented, their emotional state at the time, and whether adults take time to check understanding. Young people suggested that adults could improve communication by using simpler language, breaking information down into smaller steps, providing written information, using visual aids, and creating opportunities for 1:1 discussion.

A consistent message was that adults should not assume agreement means understanding and should take time to ensure young people feel confident to ask questions and seek clarification.

Interestingly in one of the group discussions, a young person mentioned just agreeing with an adult “nodding along” to stop the conversation, they did not understand what was being said but did not want the conversation to continue. Several within the group admitted to doing similar with adults to try and stop uncomfortable conversations as quickly as possible.

// Take Baby steps.

// More detail.

// Writing it out, so I can read it over later when I'm not as stressed.

// Use pictures so I can see it.

// 1:1 time.

// Don't use big words.

// Sometimes I just say I understand so they stop talking to me.

// Make it easier to understand, check that I know what has been said and I understand it.

11) Do Young People Feel Listened To?

Response	Number	Percentage
Yes	27	56.3%
No	14	29.2%
It's complicated / Not sure	7	14.6%
Total	48	100%

A consistent message was that adults should not assume agreement means understanding and should take time to ensure young people feel confident to ask questions and seek clarification.

Interestingly in one of the group discussions, a young person mentioned just agreeing with an adult “nodding along” to stop the conversation, they did not understand what was being said but did not want the conversation to continue. Several within the group admitted to doing similar with adults to try and stop uncomfortable conversations as quickly as possible.

“ At home I think you are, or with my mentor, but not as much at school or social work.”

Across both group discussions, young people felt that being listened to involves more than simply being heard. They want adults to understand their experiences, avoid making assumptions, and take meaningful timely action when concerns are raised.

“ Listened to, yeah... but not always understood.”

// "Like they can listen and say all the right things, but not do anything about it."

// "Sometimes, maybe not in school but everywhere else."

12) What would help you feel listened to?

Young people described feeling listened to as being about much more than simply being heard.

Trusting relationships emerged as a key factor, with young people explaining that they feel more listened to when adults take time to get to know them, remember what matters to them, and engage without judgement.

Young people also highlighted the value of speaking to people with relevant lived experience or a strong understanding of their circumstances. Overall, the findings suggest that feeling listened to is closely linked to feeling respected, understood and supported.

// If they thought about it from my perspective

// Knowing people that have been through it before.

// Younger people who've done it before.

// I do feel listened to by some adults but not all. I think them just understanding some of my feelings and why I feel like that and not making things more difficult

// If they listen and not making judgements, repeating what I've said and asking how it makes me feel, then I feel heard.

13) Has there been a time when you told an adult something important and things got : Better / Worse / Remained the same (1:1 question only)?

This question was only asked to those completing the 1:1 engagement

Response	Number of Responses	Percentage
Better	18	58.10%
Worse	5	16.10%
Stayed the Same	4	12.90%
No Response	4	12.90%
Total	31	100%

When things got better

Young people described feeling relieved, safe and supported when adults responded positively:

//

It made me feel happy because I could get it off my chest.

//

It made me feel safe.

//

It made me feel a lot better and made me feel listened to.

//

Relieved

When things felt worse – How did that feel, what could have been done differently?

Feedback from young people suggests that negative experiences were often linked to feeling misunderstood, judged, or not fully listened to.

//
Not yell at me and jump to conclusions”

//
Actually listen to me”

//
Confused, wished the adult could have stayed out my way in school.”

//
listen and care and be kind”

//
I think when I told them something they did not understand, they did not believe me and because of that it made going to school harder”

14) Do you have a person who is always there for you especially when things are difficult?

This question was only asked to those completing the 1:1 engagement

Response	Number of Responses	Percentage
Yes	22	71.0%
No	9	29.0%
Total	31	100%

The responses suggest that most young people who participated had someone they could rely on when things were difficult, with 71% answering "Yes" to this question. However, feedback from participants and group discussions also highlighted that some young people would have preferred more open-ended questions, rather than being limited to binary "Yes" or "No" responses.

15) Who is your champion in your life?

Most young people identified a trusted family member. Friends, carers, teachers, mentors, youth workers and support workers were also recognised as important champions in young people's lives.

// Best friend, family members and people at school"

// My dad and my nana"

// Boyfriend"

Young people defined a champion as someone who is consistently there for them, believes in them, encourages them and helps them navigate challenges.

// My gran she always has my back. She helps me and encourages me when things are hard or no one else is listening, I know she is the one person I can fully rely on."

// My champion is my nana who always encourages me to keep singing."

16) Do you feel respected by the adults around you?

Response	Number	Percentage
Yes	22	55.00%
No	9	22.50%
It's Complicated / Mixed Views	9	22.50%
Total	40	100%

Within the groups, a number of young people mentioned that they either didn't feel young people had the same level of respect as adults do and adults needed to do more to bridge that gap.

// "Not as much as an older person."

// "Not as much as they should."

17) What would make you feel more respected?

When asked what would make them feel more respected, young people consistently focused on the quality of their relationships with adults. Listening emerged as the strongest theme, with many participants saying they wanted adults to pay attention to what they were trying to tell them, avoid interrupting and take their concerns seriously.

// I do feel listened to by some adults but not all. I think them just understanding some of my feelings and why I feel like that and not making things more difficult."

// Time together."

// If they listen and do something about it."

Young people also highlighted the importance of being understood, believed and involved in decisions that affect them. Group discussions emphasised that respect is closely linked to having choices, being treated fairly and knowing that personal information will be handled sensitively and respectfully.

// Adults need to be respectful to young people and believe them when they tell them things."

// If you've got options and you can pick from them."

// If you've got a young person's secret... they should keep it."

18) What does care experienced mean to you?

Of the 48 young people that responded to this question, understanding of the term "care experienced" varied considerably across both the individual responses and group consultations. While some young people were able to provide clear explanations, others had only a partial understanding or said that they did not know what the term meant.

Less than half of participants demonstrated a clear understanding of what it means to be care experienced, with over two in five young people either unsure of the term or unable to explain it.

Response	Number	Percentage
Clear Understanding	22	45.80%
Partial Understanding	6	12.50%
No Understanding/Unsure	20	41.70%
Total	48	100%

Examples of understanding the term care experienced:

//

Being looked after by someone who is not a parent."

//

Experience with care like foster care"

//

Someone that can't stay with their birth parents or it's not safe for them to be at home

//

In the care system"

Examples of partial understanding:

//

Looking after people"

//

Care home"

//

Carers"

Examples of No Understanding/ or Unsure:

//

IDK"

//

I really don't know"

//

I wouldn't know because I'm not care experienced" – [*All young people that took part were care experienced]

//

I don't know what the meaning of care experienced"

//

Nothing, I don't know what it means"

1:1 Consultation Age breakdown (1:1 numbers only)

As we recorded the 1:1 data using a digital tool we can also breakdown the 31 responses in age brackets to look at a more in-depth response. Unfortunately, we cannot create an age bracket for young people that participated via group session.

Age Group	Clear Understanding	Partial Understanding	No Understanding/ Unsure	Total
8-10 years	1(20.0%)	1(20.0%)	3(60.0%)	5
11-12 years	2(28.6%)	2(28.6%)	3(42.9%)	7
13-14 years	5(38.5%)	3(23.1%)	5(38.5%)	13
15-17 years	6(60.0%)	1(10.0%)	3(30.0%)	10
Total	14(45.2%)	7(22.6%)	14(45.2%)	31

Group session conversations relating to term care experience:

One of the most notable findings from the group consultations was the variation in young people's understanding of care experience. While young people were able to describe what it means, others were less familiar and expressed uncertainty about its meaning. These discussions highlighted that understanding of care experience cannot be assumed, even amongst older young people.

//

I don't know what that is"

//

What does that mean?"

Conversations about care experience also led to wider discussions about The Promise, with some young people questioning what it is, what it means in practice and why it exists.

// What is The Promise? What was the point of it?"

This then started a conversation on whether as a society we should talk more about care experience publicly and what it is.

// Yes, in school we don't get any of that, people don't know."

Young people felt that schools could play an important role in improving awareness and understanding of care experience.

When the facilitator asked more young people within the same group about schools talking more about care, most were in agreement however one young person said the following;

//

I'm not bothered."

//

I don't want people to find out about what care is."

When asked why they do not want people to find out they said;

// Dunno I just don't!"

At a separate group session when we came to this question around care and levels of understanding, although the group were younger they were able to answer this question easier with 3 members mentioning that their school covers care experience within its curriculum, with one having a care week at school and an assembly celebrating care experience.

//

Care experience means where you live in a foster home."

//

Or with a family member."

Similar to the first group, the second group were also unaware of The Promise and it's purpose.

19) Would you like to tell us if you live with family, friends or a carer?

Placement type	Number	Percentage
Family	41	85.4%
Carer	5	10.4%
Friends	1	2.1%
Other	1	2.1%
Total	48	100%

Most young people who participated in the consultation reported living with family members. Across all consultation methods, 85.4% of participants indicated that they lived with family, while smaller numbers reported living with carers, friends or in other arrangements.

20) We're at the end, how do you feel? Is there anything we should change about the questions for other children and young people?

Young people found the consultation accessible and easy to participate in but highlighted the importance of offering flexible ways to respond. Participants valued opportunities to share their views and suggested that future consultations could include more open-ended responses, visual aids and interactive activities to better capture the complexity of young people's experiences.

//

I think some of the questions could have been longer."

//

Didn't like some of the yes or no ones. Would have liked the option of adding in sometimes."

//

More pictures or videos to help explain."

//

It was fine, easy to answer."

//

No I think these questions are ideal."

//

I like this stuff it's helping people isn't it, making it better, I could talk about this more."

//

Yes! The questions should be easier to answer..."

//

I feel amazing that we are done, probably nothing because they're easy to answer."

One of the group sessions took place during a heat wave and the session did become harder to focus, young people found some of the questions quite long and would like to break up the questions with more activities in-between.

//

It's Hot, really hot"

//

We should do more activities in-between questions."

Following on from the focus group consultations young people were invited to attend some connection activities. The facilitator was made aware prior to the consultation session that a young person wanted to attend but was feeling very anxious. Once comfortable in session they contributed excellent points with them then reflecting the following to the facilitator with the group:

//

I get really overwhelmed sometimes. Me and my mentor are working on tackling my anxiety. Once I know people and settle a little it's OK. But until then I just struggle, It was a lot, walking in here [Bowling]. But I want to do more stuff like this with groups... I didn't know I was so good at bowling?! This has been so good! And I feel so much more relaxed now and with the group. Can we do this more? I want to get over my social anxiety."

Conclusion

Young people felt that when they need support, they are most likely to turn to people they know and trust. Family members, friends, teachers, youth workers, mentors and other trusted adults were mentioned far more often than services. This shows that support is built through relationships. Knowing where help is available does not mean a young person feels able to access it. Trust, familiarity and feeling understood often determine whether support is used.

Young people consistently spoke about wanting adults to listen, believe them and take action. Many felt that being listened to means more than being heard. They want adults to understand their situation, take their views seriously and involve them in decisions that affect their lives and act upon it. The need to repeat personal stories remains a significant issue. Many young people described having to explain the same experiences to several different people before receiving support. While they understood why information sometimes needs to be shared, repeated telling was often linked to frustration, stress and feeling that nobody had fully understood them the first time.

Safety was also described in much broader terms than physical protection. Young people spoke about safety as something created through trusted relationships, feeling comfortable, having privacy, belonging and access to spaces where they can regulate their emotions. Feeling safe was closely linked to feeling understood and accepted.

The consultation found that understanding of care experience and The Promise cannot be assumed. A significant number of young people were unsure what care experience meant, and many had limited awareness of The Promise. Young people felt that schools could play a greater role in improving understanding of care experience.

They also spoke about wider awareness within communities and the importance of people understanding what care experience means. Some of our partners have also feedback noticing this trend while supporting young people to complete the online questionnaire. It could play a greater role in improving understanding of care experience.

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When I did it one to one with young people, they struggled with the question 'what does care experience mean'. Whether they were too young, or don't see themselves as care experienced, I'm not sure, but no-one answered that one. We had 9 young people complete it"

– **Intandem Partner Coordinator**

Several young people said they would use online searches or AI tools such as ChatGPT when looking for information or support. This highlights the need for clear digital signposting and access to trusted information.

Above all, young people want to have a say in decisions that affect their lives. They want choices, options and opportunities to use their voice. They want adults to listen, explain things clearly in ways that work for the individual and respect their views. When young people feel heard, valued and involved, they are more likely to engage with support and feel a greater sense of control over their lives.

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