

Tell It Like It Is

Young People's
Conference

26th March 2010



Introduction

This is a report of the key issues for young people who are looked after away from home which came out of the **Tell It Like It Is Conference** held on 26th March 2010 in Inverurie. The Conference was organised by The Young Peoples' Organising and Campaigning (YPOC) Group with the support of Aberdeenshire's Children's Rights Service.

What is the YPOC Group? This is a group of 6 young people who are all looked after away from home, or care leavers. They meet regularly and were responsible for planning the Conference and leading the workshops. They are: **Jamie, Charlene, Dale, Kevin, Hannah and Leanne.**

The event was attended by 15 young people aged 14 and upwards who themselves are or have been looked after away from home. Young people worked in groups to identify what the main issues are for children and young people who have experienced being looked after away from home. In the afternoon they presented their findings to an audience of councillors, senior managers, social workers, teachers and other professionals.

"I enjoyed giving the presentations."

The young people from the YPOC Group are keen to keep campaigning and highlighting the issues that affect young people who are looked after away from home.

These are their comments on the day:

"I enjoyed meeting all the different people who came and it was good to see people listened to what we had to say."

"It was good to see that there are so many other young people experiencing the same as us and it was nice to meet up with new young people."

"It was a belter of a day and I think we did a good job organising it and giving the presentations."

"Next time we do a conference we should give ourselves more time to work on presentations as it was a bit rushed."

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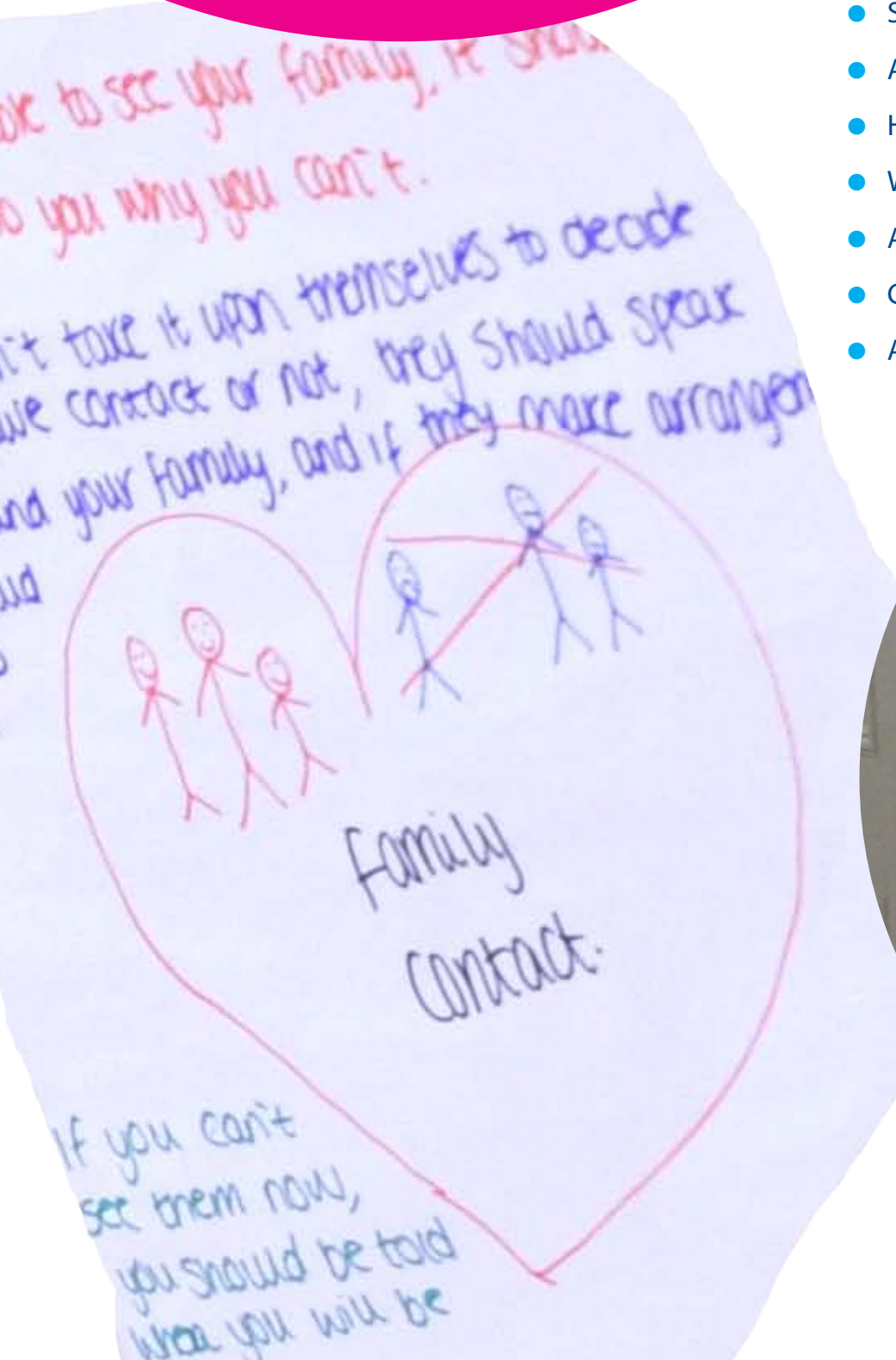
Family Contact

Family contact is important if you get on with them because:

- So you can stay close and keep a good relationship even if you don't live with them.
- If you don't see them, you worry about them.
- It's hard when you don't see them.
- It's another way to get support.

If you don't get to see your family, it makes you feel:

- Different from everyone else.
- Sad/upset.
- Annoyed.
- Hurt.
- Worried.
- Angry.
- Confused.
- Anxious.



Family Contact - What Should Happen

- If it's at all possible, you should be able to see your family.
- If you aren't able to see your family it should be explained to you why you can't.
- Social Workers shouldn't take it upon themselves to decide if you have contact or not, they should speak to you and your family, and if they make arrangements they should stick to them.
- If you can't see them now, you should be told when you will be able to.
- If you don't feel physically or emotionally ready to see your family, even if your family are ready, you shouldn't be forced into it.



Children's Rights Service
Contact: Lynn Miller or Kate Ramsden
Children's Rights Service
Gordon House
Bishopscote Road
Metherall
HELSBETH
FREEPHONE
0800 917 8275
Email: lynn.miller@aberdeenshire.gov.uk
www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk

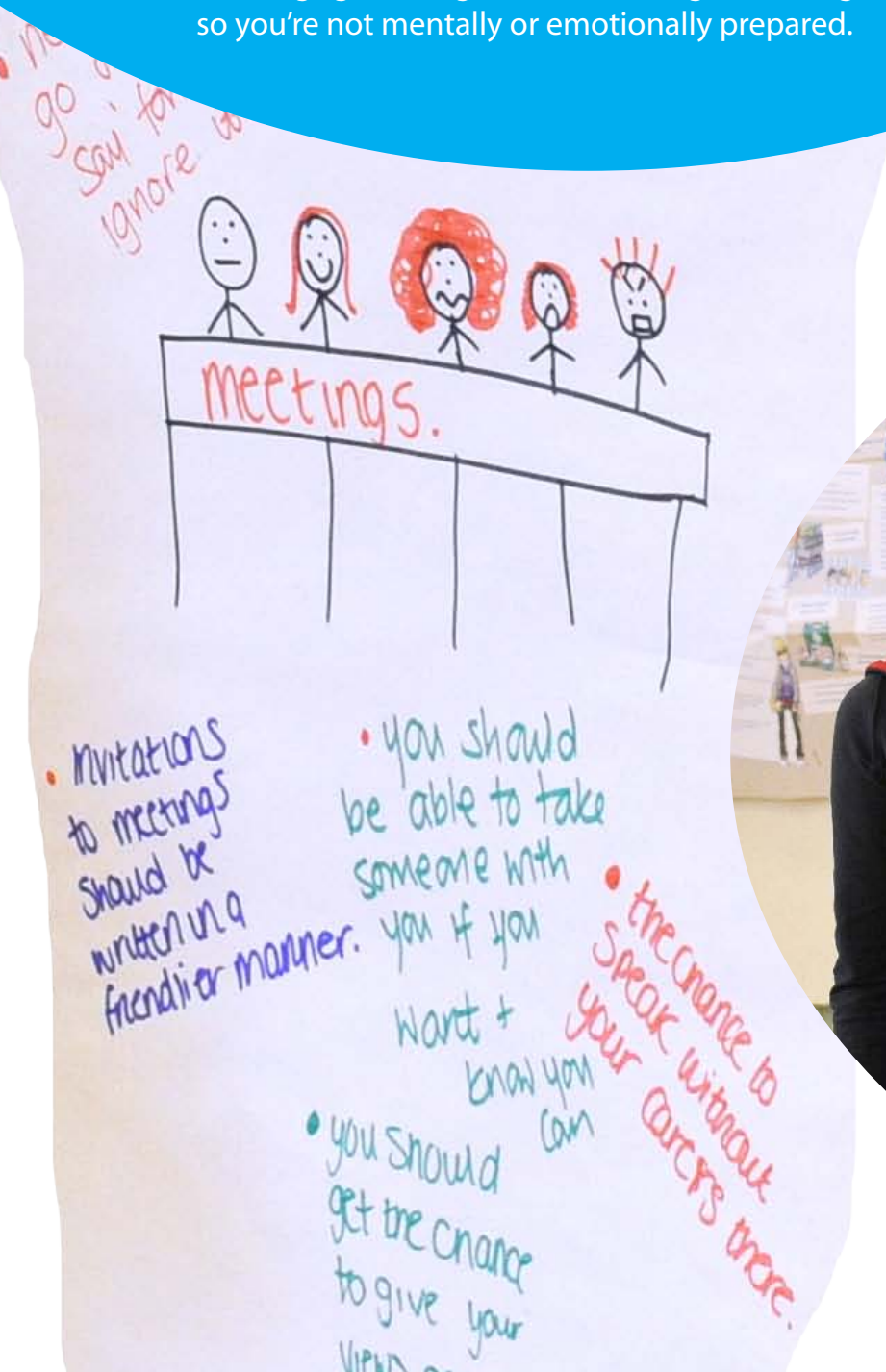
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ISSUES.
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It's hard when you can't see them.
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If you don't see them, you worry about them.
If you don't get to see your family, it makes you feel:
Different from everyone else
Sad / upset
anxious
hurt
worried
angry
Confused / nervous

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If you aren't able to see your family, it should be explained to you why you can't.
They shouldn't take it upon themselves to decide if you have contact or not, they should speak to you and your family, and if they make arrangements they should stick to them.
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Meetings - What's Wrong

- It's the same topics every meeting, very rarely it changes.
- They always refer to the past.
- They continuously ask the same questions.
- They don't understand that they make you feel intimidated.
- You feel angry because strangers are making decisions for you.
- Sometimes you're bored/fed up/scared/anxious to express your own views.
- Worried to say how you really feel in case it causes more problems/conflict.
- It's hard to say what you think about carers/schools with them there.
- Meetings get changed and re-arranged, it can get sprung on you so you're not mentally or emotionally prepared.



Meetings - What Would Make Them Better

- More chance for better preparation.
- Need to properly go over the 'Have your say' forms and not just ignore it.
- Shouldn't drag on and should be about the here and now and not the past.
- Invitations to meetings should be written in a friendlier manner.
- You should be able to take someone with you if you want and know that you can.
- The chance to speak without your carers there.
- You should get the chance to give your views one to one.



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School - What Makes It Hard For Us At School

- Being moved to different homes.
- Different rules in different placements.
- Where you are being moved to is important to us.
- We would like to have a say in where we are being moved to.
- No choice in which school we go to.
- Family contact.
- Meeting strangers in new placements and everyone is strange.
- We don't like the amount of meetings we have to go to.

This all affects how we learn at school.



School - Good and Bad Teachers

We did a role play on showing how good and bad teachers can affect our learning.

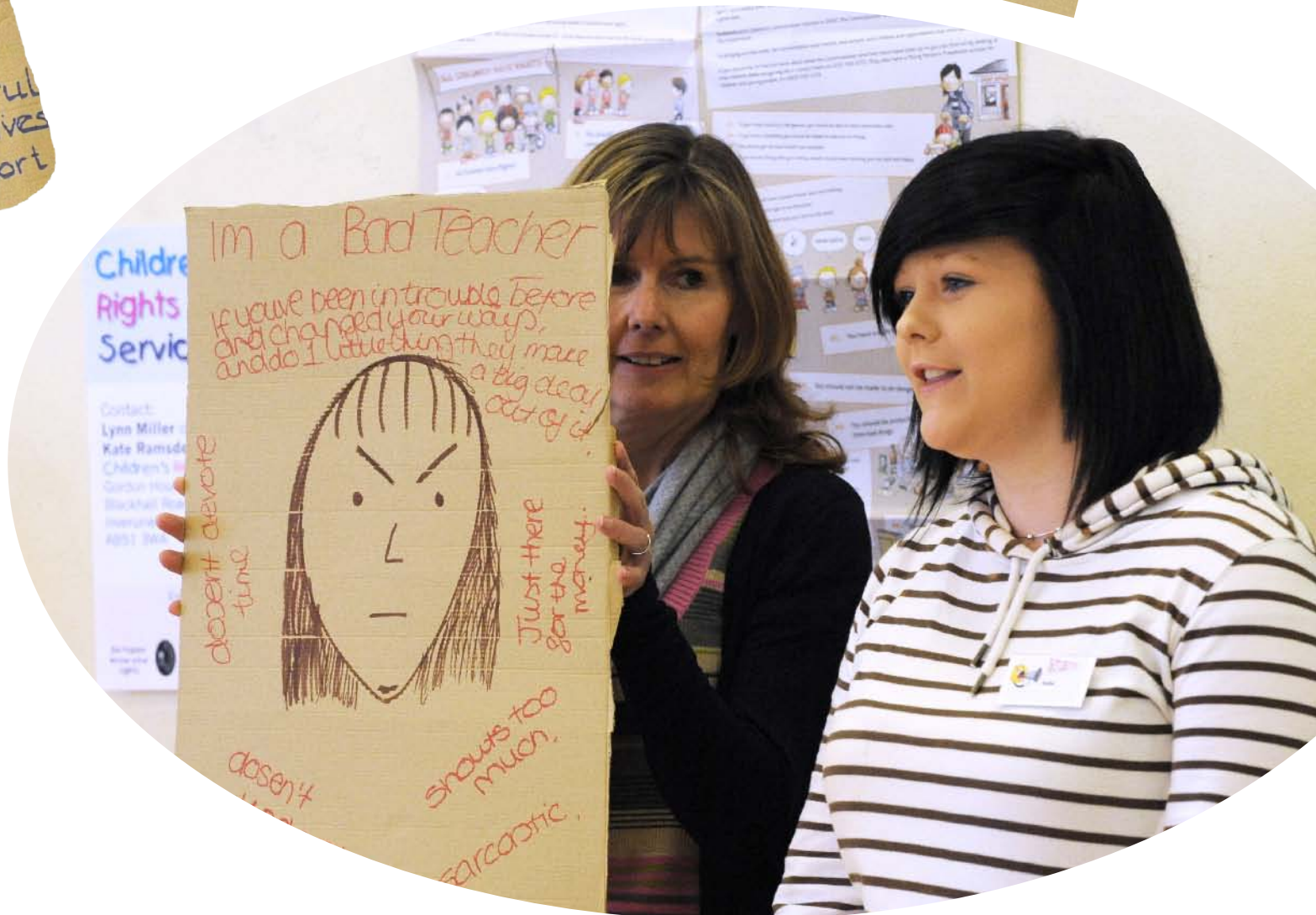
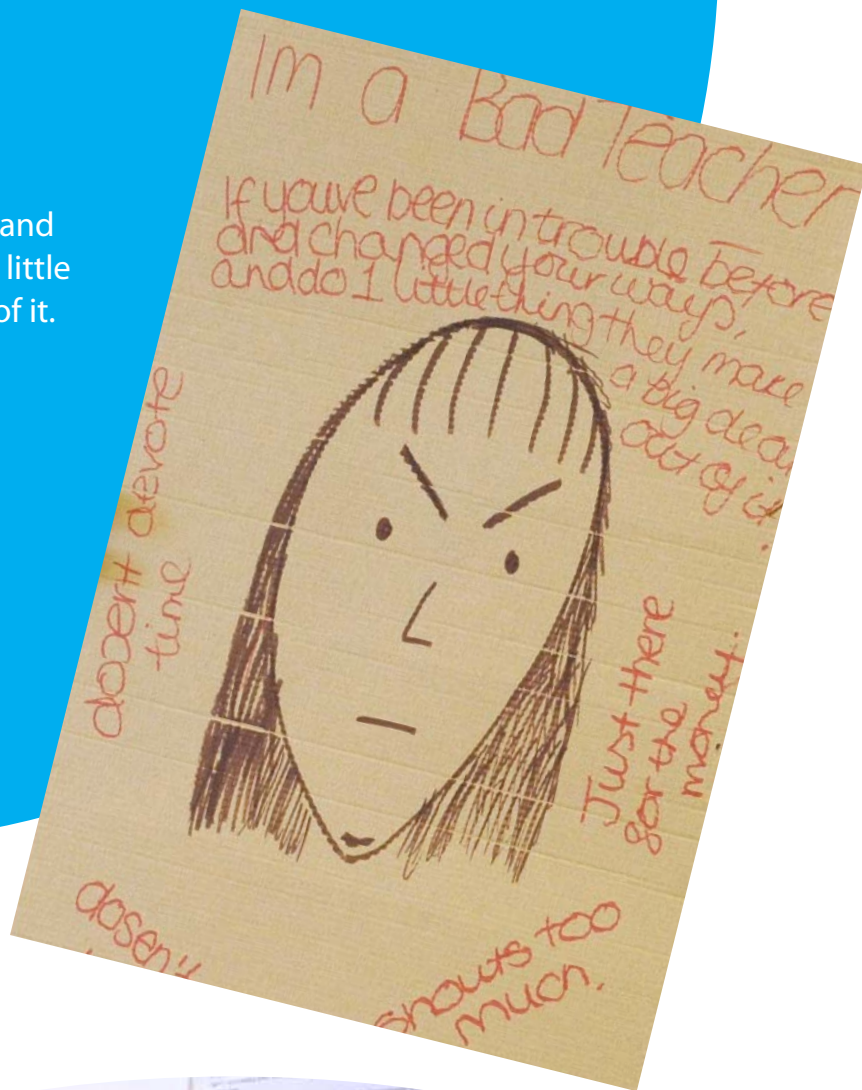
I'm a Good Teacher

- Someone who enjoys their job.
- Cheery / Happy.
- Caring.
- Someone that will listen and understand.
- Empathy.
- Helpful and gives support.



I'm a Bad Teacher

- If you've been in trouble before and changed your ways, and do one little thing they made a big deal out of it.
- Doesn't devote time.
- Just there for the money.
- Doesn't understand.
- Issues sanctions.
- Shouts too much.
- Sarcastic.



Leaving Care - Future and Planning

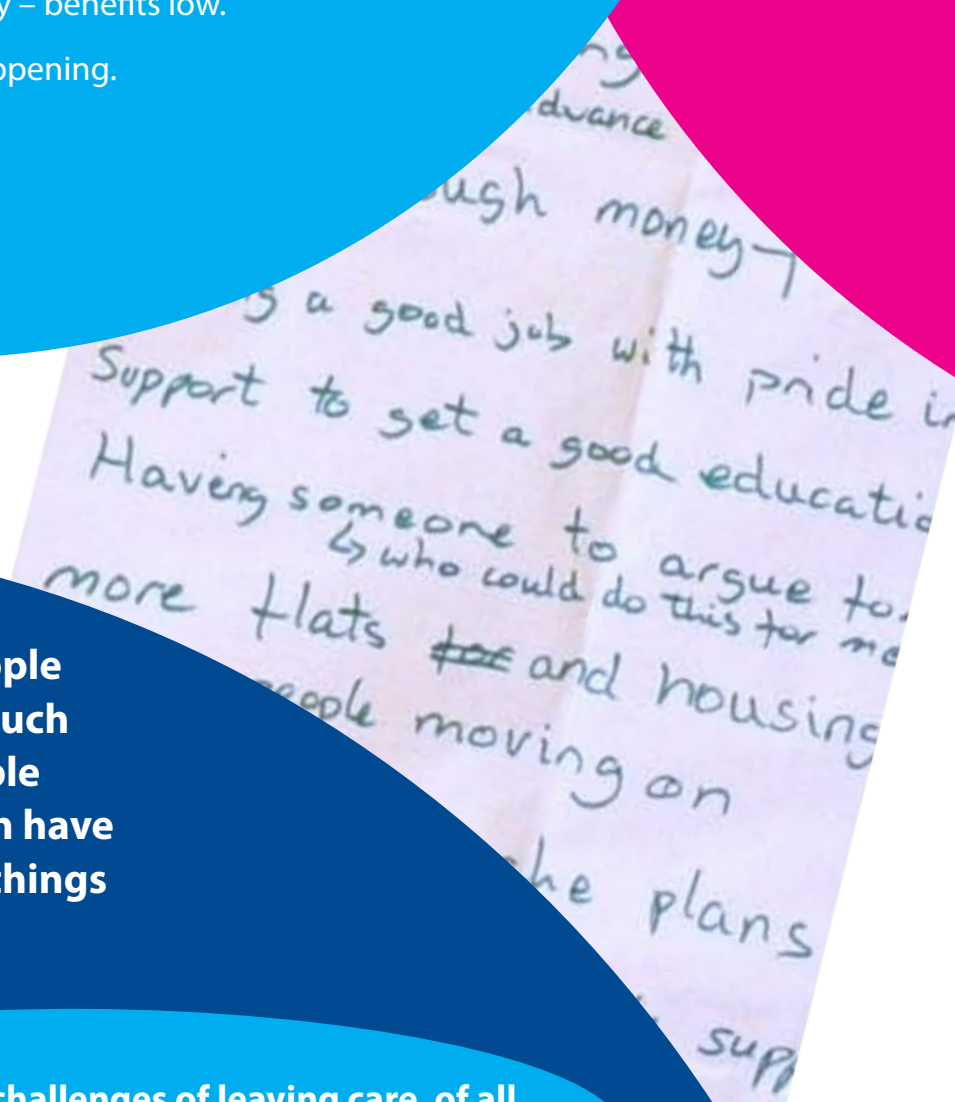
Problems:

- Plans changing for the worse – uncertainty.
- Not a lot of money.
- Low income – jobs/poor pay – benefits low.
- Not getting told what is happening.
- Not being told future!
- Lack of information.

Looked after young people become independent much earlier than young people living at home and often have nowhere to return to if things don't work out.

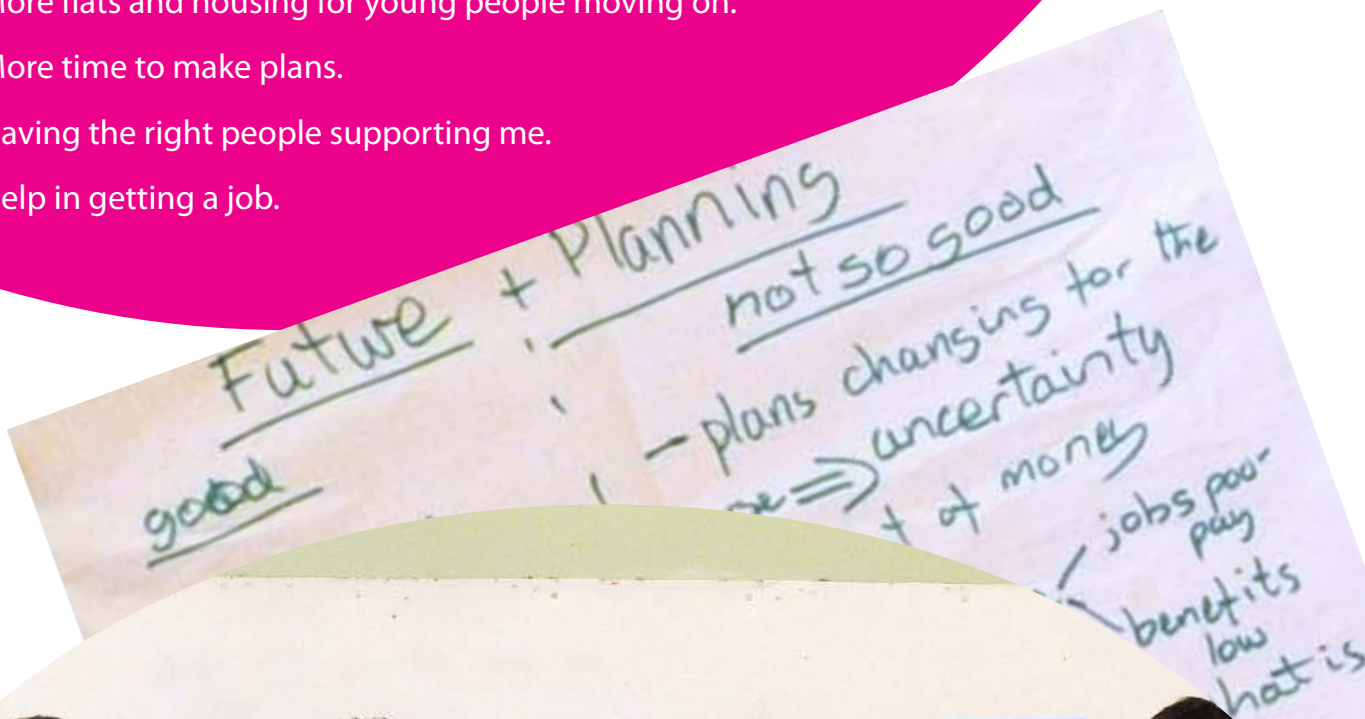
They spoke about the challenges of leaving care, of all the uncertainty that can create; having to live on their own with little money and limited support.

They told the adults that they would like more support to get a good education or a good job; more choice of suitable accommodation, and more time to make plans for their future.



What we would want to change!

- Clear plan and good support to do it.
- Would like to be told when and why things are changing – information in advance.
- Having enough money – knowing entitlements – planning/budgeting and bills.
- Having a good job with pride in it.
- Support to get a good education and training.
- Having someone to argue for me – who could do this for me?
- More flats and housing for young people moving on.
- More time to make plans.
- Having the right people supporting me.
- Help in getting a job.



Audience Feedback - Tell Us What You Learned

The extent of the difficulties that looked after children have e.g. changes in school, Social Worker etc.

That the young people here today should be very proud of their achievements. They spoke well and were brilliant. Well done!

Tell Us What You Thought

My goodness what wonderful kids we have. Well done and please continue to do your stuff. Amazing.

- A wonderful opportunity for looked after children to inform us of their experiences and the range of potential problems they encounter with social workers, carers, teachers. They made us considerably more aware of their circumstances and the areas where they can be better supported both as children and young adults. *Banff Academy (M. Munro).*
- Great idea for day. Thanks to all the kids involved – most impressed. What about asking the Children's Panel if you could do this for them – it would be a really interesting experience for the adults.
- An excellent afternoon. would want to involve these young people in any staff development for looked after children and young people.
- Lots of very valid points made by all the groups. Certainly given food for thought.
- To have more stronger advocacy when they are moving on.
- Very insightful, the young people did a great job.
- Excellent presentations where young people demonstrated confidence.
- Thank you for inviting me. A very good insight given to the things that cause you concern and would be good for you and this dialogue needs to continue.
- I was very impressed by your knowledge and your commitment to make things better.
- Really impressed with the young people's presentations.
- We have some resource to invest in looked after children. I would like to continue some conversations with you on what will make the difference. *Lynn Hendry - Enlight (Enlight at The Entrepreneurial Exchange).*
- Need to speak without carers present.

Excellent Presentations, well done, we need to listen and act.

Statistics

The statistics are horrendous.

Our group of **15** young people had between them:

57 different placements

44 different social workers

52 different schools

and spent **63** years in care!

Great information – very open and honest young people. We have a lot to learn from them.

- I thought this was amazing and I learned a lot even though I have a child in care, it's great.
- Today highlighted to me as a Social Worker the importance of ring fencing time to see young people – they are the priority.
- Very insightful and thought provoking – statistics really hit home the extent of young people's experience and how it is for them. Sorry that we don't always get it right.
- A breath of fresh air, hearing the views of the young people. Keeping the young people in the forefront of any decisions – hearing their VOICE.
- This was an excellent educational opportunity for myself. Well done, to all the young people.
- Very interesting presentations and debates and has given me a lot to think about and take forward.
- I am really keen to be involved in future work with the group. Would love to get the group to make a presentation to all teachers.
- Meetings and reviews, how can we make it better, a day focused on these with managers/ Social Workers/teachers/panel members and young people.
- Transitional support through care and aftercare. As I work through care staff/ Social Work/Barnardos.
- Well done everyone, now I know what you have been up to this past year.



Thanks, Kate & Lynn



Jamie



Hannah



Leanne



Dale



Charlene



Kathleen



Scott



Paul



Lyle



Stephen



Katy



Lindsay



Be happy
know your
rights

