

A NATIONAL VOICE

coramVoice)))
getting young voices heard

A National Voice

'Stable Homes, Built on Love'

**Strong and Loving
Relationships**

Feedback

Building Strong and Loving Relationships

Coram Voice have been meeting with children and young people from across England through regional networks of children in care councils.

The session focused on Mission 1 of 'Stable Homes, Built on Love': By 2027, every care-experienced child and young person will feel they have strong, loving relationships in place. We want to see significant progress in children in care and care leavers having and maintaining loving relationships with people who are important to them.

Who we heard from:

A total of 96 children young people attended the sessions. They were aged 13-25+ and were from across England:

North West
North East
Yorkshire and Humber
East Midlands

Also we held an online session and had it as part of Activity Pack 1



WHAT does love mean to you?

Supportive and always there for you when you need them

Unconditional

Not judging people

Love to me means like a happy trustful and personal connection with someone that over time builds up and stuff

Feeling safe and warm and like I can be myself

Having supportive relationships

Having a mutual understanding between people

Being able to talk to them without judgement

I think love means to care and be affectionate towards other people. Someone to hug

Um someone who actually listens and show they are also someone who helps in the moment without causing harm

WHICH people in your life that are important to you?

Family

Grandparents
My Gran
Biological family
New family, step brothers and Sisters
Siblings
Extended family
Nieces
Family friends
Parents
Mum and Dad
My son
My partner and his parents
Caring for others (maybe grandparents)

Foster Care

Foster carers
Foster family
Other young people (care leavers for experience)

Education

Teachers
Trusted Teachers
Pastoral workers at school

Pets

Dog

Friends

Good friends
Friends from my old school

Social Care

Social worker
Old social workers
Councilors
Looked After Children Nurse
Independent Reviewing Officers
Advocates who you have worked with
PA's/ leaving care
Safeguarding Team

Health

Therapist
Doctor

Other adults

Care/ support workers
Role models
Youth workers/ Participation Team
Guides/ volunteers
Work colleagues

"Young people told us that their family, friends, pets and foster carers are the most important to them. Professionals such as IRO's and social workers were included but young people disagreed about the closeness - this reflected their mixed experiences"

Strong and Loving Relationships: CORAM Voice

The Government want every care-experienced child and young person to feel they have a strong, loving relationship.

Mission 1: By 2027, every care-experienced child and young person will feel they have strong, loving relationship in place.

The consultation took place on Thursday 24th August and Monday 4th September a total of 27 young people from across Cumbria shared with us their thoughts on the questions below.



What makes good relationships?

Who are the important people in your life?	What are the things that are needed to make this relationship strong and loving?
Sisters	Sleepover with my sister
4 school friends at my old school	Playdates with my friends from my old school
Mum and Dad	Get to see them
Sister	Do an activity with them
Mum and Dad	Face time/What's app calls
Dad and Step-mum	Activity time with them
My mum	Spending time with her
Sister	To come and have tea at mine forever
Mum and Dad	Being able to love them still
Mum	I kiss my mum
My foster sister	To continue being allowed and able to be friends if one of us ever gets moved.
My old friend from my old school	Help to keep in touch with them
My other foster carer	Keep in contact with my old foster carer
My granddad	Being able to call them
Mum and Dad	More time with them
My real siblings	See them more and do fun activities with them
My foster siblings	Being able to stay in contact with them
Friends	Go outside more with them
Girl friend	To be able to come to have a sleepover for 2 days
My foster mum	More one to one time with just her and me
My foster carer	She is the perfect match for me and I would like to stay there forever
My friends	Sleepover and play dates would help keep our relationship.
My mum	I only see her every 3 weeks and I would like to change that to more.



Westmorland
& Furness
Council

Working for Cumberland Council and
Westmorland & Furness Council

WHO

would you want to be in contact with in 5 years?

Friends

School friends
Other young people
Work colleagues

"I would like to imagine my current friend group will still be much as it is right now, even if we are middle aged"

"I would like to hopefully keep friends with my close mates and again"

Relationships

Relationships (romantic)
Ex-partner

Family

Siblings
Grandparents
Parents
Aunt
Step family

"My partners Nan as I love her to bits she's amazing"

Foster Care

Foster carer
Care worker
Other foster children

"As many care experience people as I can because I love helping others"

Health

LAC Nurse
Doctor
Therapist

School

Teacher
School support
Designated teacher

"Teachers that I built a good relationship with"

Other adults

Youth worker / Participation worker
Mentor
Support worker

Pets

Pets (Dog/Cat)

In 5 years' time who would you still like to have contact with?

125 responses



WHO

would you want to be in contact with in 10 years?

Friends

Friends from the past
Work friends

"Other young people with care experience"

Relationships

Relationships (romantic)

Family

My Dad
My Nan
Siblings
Parents
Own family
My kids and family
Aunt/ Uncle
Extended family
Biological family
Grandparents

Social Care

PA
IRO
Social worker
Advocate
IV

"Professionals to see how far
how I have come"

Foster Care

Foster carer
Care worker
Foster siblings

Health

Doctor/nurse

School

Teacher

Other adults

Youth worker / Participation worker

Pets

Pets (Dog/Cat)

15.04.25

Important People

1 Write down people in your life that are important to you

Family	5 - 10 years.
Friends	5 - 10 years.
Professionals	5 years.
Teachers	5 years.
Care workers	10 years.
Social workers	5 years.
IRO	5 years.
hac nurse	5 - 10 years.
Foster carers	10 years.
Foster family	10 years.

2 Next, using 2 different colours, circle from the list above which important people you want in your life in:

→ 5 years time (1st colour)
→ 10 years time (2nd colour)

In 10 years' time who would you still like to have contact with?

89 responses

A word cloud of responses to the question 'In 10 years' time who would you still like to have contact with?'. The words are arranged in a circular pattern and vary in size and color. The most prominent words are 'family', 'friends', 'romantic relationships', 'brothers and sisters', and 'foster carer'. Other visible words include 'participation team', 'care worker', 'own family', 'social worker', 'doctor nurse', 'advocate', 'teacher', 'experience people', 'leaving care pa', 'extended family', 'biological family', 'care experience people', 'iro', 'pets', 'parents', 'grandparents', 'youth worker', 'aunt uncle', and 'old friends'.

participation team grandparents
care worker brothers and sisters
own family family^{iv} parents
social worker friends
romantic relationships
doctor nurse foster carer youth worker
advocate leaving care pa
teacher experience people
extended family
biological family

Dear Professional

Cut out the speech bubbles and write inside statements that tell professionals practical/specific ways to improve and support you with developing strong and loving relationships.

Dear Professional

Family

"More frequent time with siblings (being able to sleep at my siblings)"

"I want to spend time with my biological dad, even though I can't"

"Now that I have moved out of my foster home, I still want to see my sister and want my social worker to help me with this"

"Better contact services and able to go out with family"

"I want you to let me see my family more"

"Be able to go out during contact"

"I want to see my half-sister again"



Friends

"More friend time"

"I want to be able to sleep at my friend's house when I want"

"I want to spend time with my best friend"

"I want to be able to have sleepovers at friends/ parents when I'm old enough"

Education

"Stop using up my time in school, it puts me behind my classmates"

Social Worker

"Don't be a 'mood hoover'"

"Stay, rather than say you're staying but leave the following week"

"Have a laugh but be serious when need to"

"Make sure you're understanding towards the person"

"Not do it for money, do it because you want to"

"Make sure you're understanding towards the person"

"Not do it for money, do it because you want to"

"I want social workers to listen and act on what you say and not just keep on swapping"



Dear Professional

Social Worker

"I want social workers to spend more time with you"
"Social workers should listen to peers, because when I said when I was getting abused they didn't listen to me"

"More informal conversations with social workers"
"Do what you say you are going to do"
"Keep me informed when things change, not just at meetings"
"Never let you down"
"No false hopes"
"Don't make it feel like a meeting"
"Write down things that are actually important"
"Recognise when we are struggling and help us"



Mental Health

"Having support in place for mental health"
"Better health services to access"

"Stop using LAC acronym with the GP"

Decision making

"Keep letting me travel"
"Let me make my own decisions – if you are concerned ring every few hours"

"Ask me when I want contact – don't set this up without talking to me"
"I want to be able to make my own life decisions"
"Let us make our own choices"

Social care

"Include all children in activities and events"
"Making sure we have activities"
"I want to access LGBTQ services without trouble"

"I want to have money for bus fare provided as and when I need it for meetings and to see my friends"
"I want money for activities (i.e. cinema)"

Dear Professional

Contact with important people

"Discussions about keeping in touch with old social workers and carers as they have played an important role in my life"

"I would like to have an IV, I had one but it stopped because I got to old/ apparently I did not need it anymore. I would like it where you decide when you no longer need it"

Listening

"I want you to take me seriously and act on what I say"

"When I ask for something I expect it to happen soon and not in 5 years"

"Talk to you and explain how"

"Listen to me and explain why I can't"

"Show me you have listened to me by making a change"

"Listen to what us young people say. Do your job"

Questions

"What are the reasons behind my restrictions?"

"Why can I not go on a sleepover I asked about?"

Pets

"Let me see/spend time with my pets"



Heads Hands & Hearts

What should professionals think, physically do, and feel?

Heads Hands & Hearts



Heads: What should social workers think?

"Be patient – think in mind set of me"

"They understand attachment and trauma so they understand why children rely on them so much"

"They understand how complex each case is and they always tailor their work for each individual"

"Fully understand my past"

"Compassionate"

"If someone said 'you can't see your siblings or family anymore' they would feel so angry and hurt and not understand why. The most important people in their life has been taken from them."

"Keep children safe and safeguard"

"'Not be annoying' be accountable for things they haven't done. Don't blame foster carers"

"Feel worried for us, visit us, call us"

"Deeper understanding to support us better"

"To want to be there"

"Open minded"

"Think your mind but be honest"

"Trust the child's instinct"

"Don't assume that all children do/feel the same thing"

"What do young people need?"

"Able to listen"

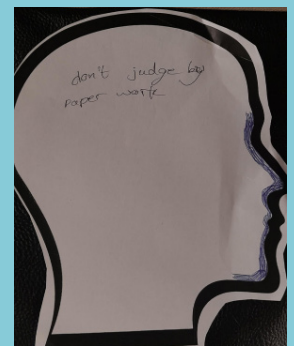
"Do the right thing"

"Understand mental health"

"Think what suits best"

"Patient"

"Should understand why I may not want to/ be able to talk my feelings out"



Heads Hands & Hearts



Heads: What should social workers think?

"Should be mental health and trauma aware"

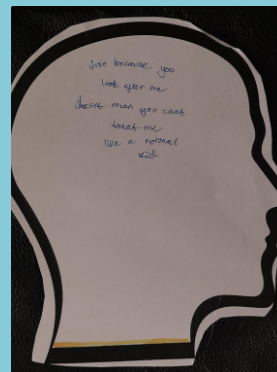
"Trained in health and safety"

"I love working with you"

"Understanding"

"Treat children like a person"

Teachers



"Have an awareness of children in care's feeling, maybe I'm having a bad time at home not bad behaviour"

Residential Staff

"Care about me as a young person, think about my background and history, I might not understand love, I am a human being I make mistakes"

"Be there for a helping hand when they need them"

"Understand child's wishes and support family time and contact with carers and teachers etc. despite changes"

Heads Hands & Hearts



Hands: What should social workers physically do?

"Take me to do activities/bonding time"

"Take me to see family Birthday cards/celebrations"

"Meeting me when agreed"

"Be on time or have an explanations why later or unable to come"

"Spend time"

"Make sure they are reliable"

"Listen to me"

"Praise me"

"Encourage me"

"Motivate me to achieve"

"Show interest in my hobbies"

"Have a laugh and a joke - not always serious"

"Don't come and see me because you have to"

"Talk to me"

"Help and support me"

"Christmas presents"

"Explain why we need a social worker"

"Keep promises"

"Take me out for a meal"

"Not judgemental"

"Try to do something about it"

"Birthday cards birthday presents"

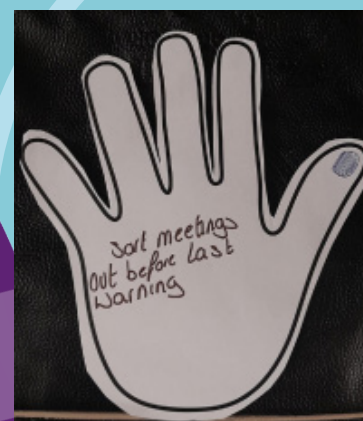
"Explain stuff to us - contact make us feel like we can trust them"

"Visits from PA's face to face"

"Longer visits to get work done"



"Plan to do fun stuff"



"Permanent workers"

Heads Hands & Hearts



Hands: What should social workers physically do?

"Visits from PA's face to face"

"Don't feel patronizing"

"Confidentiality"

"Encourage people (groups) respond make a good impression"

"Mind language used"

"Stop thinking we can't handle some information."

"Don't lie."

"Listen and act"

"How repeating peoples experiences can be upsetting"

"Don't force anything or guilt trip"

"Do the right things"

"Complain and challenge bosses"

"Help me"

"Keep promises"

"Be real"

"Faster - if asked to do something"

"Make sure I see my family"

"Planning for transition"

"Help to clean if I need it"

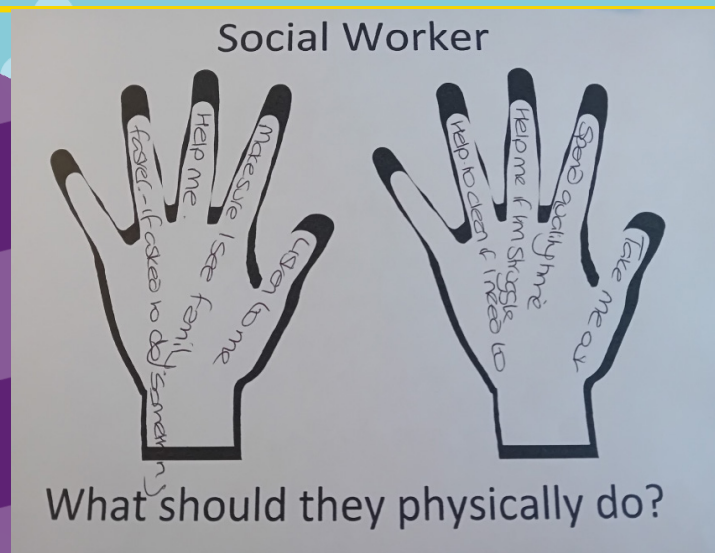
"Do activities that we enjoy"

"Help more with work experience"

"Transport costs"

"Come more often"

"How to keep links with people that child/ young person care for"



Heads Hands & Hearts



Hands: What should social workers physically do?

"Visits from PA's face to face"

"Life story work"

"Communicate with other worker"

"Get me a birthday card every year"

"How and when meetings take place"

"Takes me out to places"

"Transport to youth clubs/ participation groups"

"Recalling memories"

"Create memories"

"Gives certificates to show achievements"

"Remember things you have told them"

"Remember hobbies and interests"

Foster carers

"Hugs, support, go to places with us"

Teachers

"Help us when we are struggling, don't treat us differently"

Residential staff

"Help us with mental health, gives me time to talk and think, buy the things I like, takes me on days out"

Heads Hands & Hearts



Heart: How should social workers feel?

"Compassionate"

"Love"

"Happy to do their job because it's a privilege working with children in care"

"Acknowledge how they are feeling"

"Make sure that their children are treated the same as their birth children and make sure they have equal opportunities for all"

"A little more sympathetic that there children who they help are referred to as their own birth children as practically social services are your corporate parents"

"Show that they care about me"

"Dedicated"

"Love Responsible"

"Treat me like you would want your own family member to be treated"

"Being proud of them"

"It's not a bad thing to say that you love your kids."

"Tell them how strong they are"

"Praise positivity I feel like I want them to tell me when I have done something wrong and tell me how they feel about it"

"Celebrate their achievements with them"

"When they are sad they feel sad as well"

"I would want them to feel like I mean as much to them professionally that they will stay in my life even after independence"

"They should feel like sort of 'a parent' in your life and give you they support, guidance and reassurance for you to grow and develop"

"Trust care what your saying"

"Do things properly"

"Celebrate achievement"

"Praise us"

"Believe in me"

"Awards celebrations for our foster carers"

Heads Hands & Hearts



Heart: How should social workers feel?

"Be prepared to challenge things on our behalf advocate for us"

"A shoulder to cry on"

"What will help this relationship?"

"Don't make judgements on paperwork"

"Patience, Resilience, Emotional vulnerability"

"Kind/bubbly, Shows their personality"

"Proactive- if they express a wish to see someone then look into ways for this"

"Understanding"

"Sympathy"

"Listen more"

"Motivated"

"Ready to help"

"Non-judgmental"

"No two children/ young people are the same"

"Not overly emotional/ neutral"

"Feel something"

"Cheerleader"

"Flexibility in who we can be in contact with"

"Be proud of us and our achievements"

"They should not feel any different"

"Creating the right culture to develop good relationships - from the start to the finish"

"Tell me I will get far in life"

"They want you to feel "normal" but they don't make you feel like that."

"I'm still in care but for them to stop treating you differently to a "normal child" like not having the the same things or having to have your social workers permission for things"

Heads Hands & Hearts



Messages for other professionals?

Residential staff

- "It isn't just a job"**
- "Passionate"**
- "Being proud of me"**
- "Photos and certificates on the walls"**

Foster carer

- "Be kind and caring"**
- "Show respect"**
- "Ask about your day"**
- "Treat me like family"**
- "Know what you are like and interested in"**
- "Physical touch"**
- "Improvise"**
- "If you buy me something I will think it's mine (my phone is mine)"**
- "Just because you look after me doesn't mean you know me"**
- "Don't talk about my needs to others"**
- "Remember to talk calmly"**
- "Listen"**
- "Love"**
- "Encourage me to go out and play"**
- "Hope"**
- "Support me"**
- "Help with school and problems"**

Independent Reviewing Officer

- "That you should be happy"**
- "Not to make judgements based on paperwork"**
- "Do they have options about where you live and do they know about them"**
- "What will help this relationship?"**
- "I want them to know about my sister and that they aren't just someone to see on their birthday"**

Teacher

- "Don't always think it's because I am in care"**
- "Help me"**
- "Support me, talk to me"**



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