



Daily life

East Riding of Yorkshire Council

Understanding why you are in care using pathway planning

October 2019

Compared with the national average, a higher proportion of care leavers in East Riding reported they knew all they wanted to know about why they were in care. In East Riding, the pathway planning process involves asking young people, '*Do you have any questions about why you became looked after?*'.

Why?

Understanding your history and having a full understanding of the reasons you went into care are important for young people developing a sense of themselves and recovering from past trauma.

Impact

The vast majority (87%) of care-experienced young adults in East Riding felt the reasons why they were in care had been fully explained ; a much higher percentage than the average (77%) for other local authorities.

What?

- In East Riding the pathway planning process contains a specific question in the 'identity and interests' section which asks: '*Do you have any questions about why you became looked after?*'
- The question acts as a trigger for discussions with young people and is a prompt for leaving care workers to check with their young person every now and again whether they feel happy with the knowledge they have and to ask if there is any support they need with this area.

Read more about the Bright Spots Programme work on 'understanding why you are in care'

https://coramvoice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Bright-Spots-insight-paper-Understanding-why-you-are-in-care_compressed-1.pdf

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Understanding why you are in care
bright spots insights

About Bright Spots
The Bright Spots Programme is a partnership between Coram Voice and the University of Colchester, funded by the Hartley Trust. It supports local authorities to systematically listen to their children in care and care leavers about the things that are important to them. Since 2013 we have worked with children and young people to develop two new sets of well-being indicators measured by our online surveys: one for children in care aged 4-17 (Our Life, Your Care) and one for care leavers (Our Life Beyond Care). The Bright Spots Programme complements existing outcomes data that focuses on adults' perspectives and objective measures, by exploring subjective well-being. i.e. How children feel, how they enjoy, seek and feel they are doing well!
By working with over 40 local authorities and gathering almost 10,000 responses from children and care leavers we have gained insight into the key question - what makes life good for children in care and care leavers? Our insights papers seek to share some of this learning.
'Has someone explained to you why you are (or were) in care?' is a key question in the Bright Spots survey because children and young people feel this was important. Our research revealed that children often had understanding, guidance and wanted help to understand why their family could not always give them safe or positive relationships.

Why do children need to understand why they are in care?
Every child and young person who comes into care needs to know why and have opportunities to discuss the reasons this happened whenever they feel unclear. Coming to an understanding about this life-changing event is the 'right' of every child or young person and fundamental to their development, identity and emotional well-being (Aldishead, 2012; Adler, 2012; NICE, 2013). When this does not happen, it can lead children to feel insecure, unwanted, and responsible for being in care - factors that can have a severe negative impact on their self-worth and well-being (Staines and Selwyn, 2019).

The Bright Spots national findings
Based on responses from our Bright Spots surveys with children in care and care leavers we found:
• Younger children (those aged 4 to 7) were more likely to be confused or unclear about why they were in care - half felt they hadn't had an explanation from an adult.
• Young people (aged 11-18) were more likely to feel they had received a satisfactory explanation but about a fifth were unsure or did not know. Boys were more likely to feel they knew enough.

I don't know why I was in care or would like to know more.
24%

Someone has fully explained why I am in care.
87%

'I would like someone to talk to about my feelings and tell me about my past. I would like to see a picture of my dad, so I know what he looks like, I would like to see a picture of me as a baby, I have never seen a picture of me, I have a lot of questions that no-one answers.' (D-19/20)

Analysis of the Bright Spots data showed that a lack of knowledge about the reasons for care was associated with feeling unsettled in placement and low subjective well-being for children in care (Staines and Selwyn, 2019).
• Young people who had left the care system continued to report that they had not had a full explanation about why they had been in care - nearly a quarter of care leavers (aged 18-25) surveyed through Bright Spots felt this way.

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