

Voice, data and measuring what
matters to children: learning from the
Bright Spots Programme
Insight paper summary

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There's so many things that need to change around the foster care system. It is so important that the government, the people who have the power to make a difference, take some time to listen to children and young people who have experienced being in the care system. To them, this is just a job, but this is our lives. They have so much power to change the way things are.

Chloe (Care experienced A National Voice Ambassador (ANV) and Chair of ANV)

Context

- Government response to the Independent review of Children's Social Care identified one of the priority areas: *'improve [the] use of technology and data to make better use of evidence and data'*.
- Commitment to establish a Children's Social Care National Framework [Framework], Dashboard & Data strategy to set national direction for Children's Social Care, including describing the outcomes that should be achieved & establish stronger learning infrastructure so that the impact of what happens in practice can be understood
- To meet these commitments the Data and Digital Solutions fund (DDSF) was launched
- One of these projects is focused on *'Creating or improving specific data sets: the voice of children and families'*
- A consortium of organisations led by North Tyneside is delivering the project and this insight paper, from Coram Voice & Rees Centre, University of Oxford, contributes to this work.

Introduction

This Insight paper draws on:



The learning from the [Bright Spots Programme](#) and



Mapping work with local authorities (conducted by North Tyneside) to inform the Government work on the Framework, Dashboard and Data Strategy.

It explores three interrelated areas

1. Processes and practices to listen and respond to children's voice
2. Measuring what care experienced children and young people say matters
3. How children's voices are heard and acted on: examples of impact.

We define 'voice' broadly to mean **views, wishes, feelings and expressions of lived experience**.

We recognise that 'data' can be interpreted differently: numbers and statistics used to populate data dashboards to inform services planning / statutory return. But data can also be anything that is collected and documented such as case notes, WhatsApp messages etc.

(Our definition aligns with approach taken by the [Children's Information project](#))

About

bright spots

- Developed in partnership between Professor Julie Selwyn (**Rees Centre at the University of Oxford**) & **Coram Voice** funded by the Hadley Trust
- Supports local authorities to explore how children feel about their lives and use this to address the issues they raise



Co-produced

based on what children in care and care leavers said was important to them and what made life good.



Evidence based

- developed over 10 years of research
- international literature reviews
- piloting and cognitive interviews



Four surveys created:

- ***Your Life, Your Care*** (children in care 4-7yrs, 8-11yrs, 11-18yrs)
- ***Your Life Beyond Care*** (care leavers 16-25yrs)

Since the Bright Spots Programme started we have collected over

24,000 voices

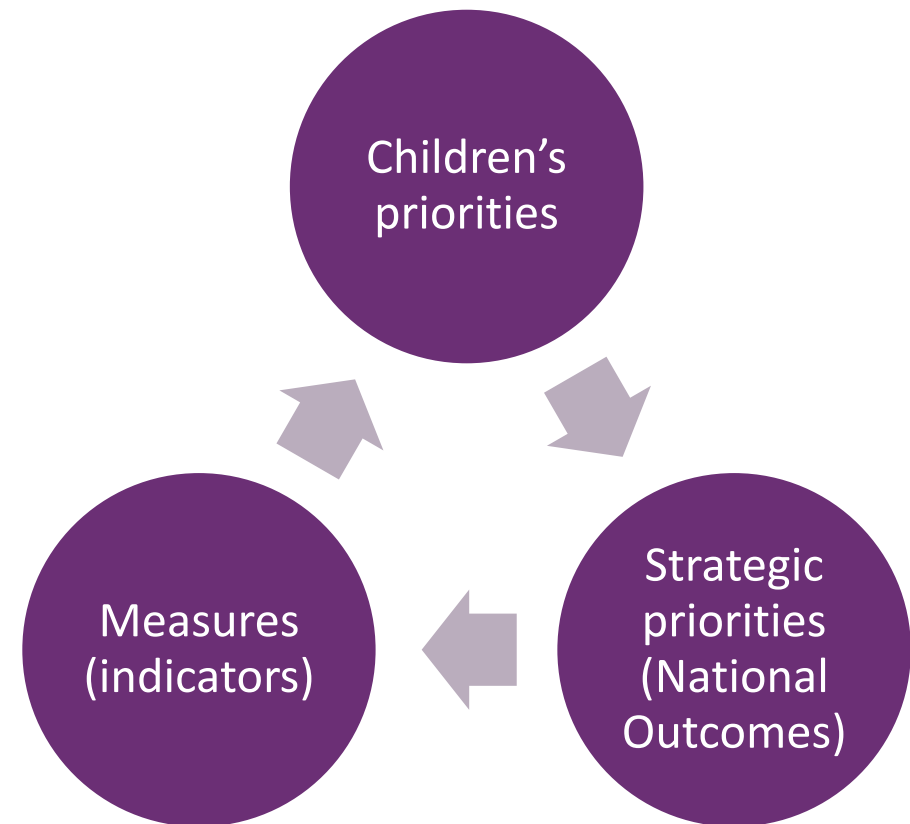
through the *Your Life Your Care* *Your Life Beyond Care* surveys working with more than

80 local authorities

Embedding children's voices

The proposed Framework and Dashboard contain only a very limited set of indicators (e.g. % of children living in foster care; % of care leavers in higher education). If the Dashboard provides only a partial description of what matters to children in and leaving care, then conversations about improving practice will also be partial

- *To meaningfully capture children's views they cannot be explored in isolation as a discreet project.*
- *Strategic priorities (national outcomes) need to align with what children say matters (children's priorities) and, in turn, joined up with what is measured (indicators).*
- *Without action and further changes to the proposed Framework and Dashboard on children's voice, we will continue to struggle to understand whether Children's Social Care is making children's lives better.*





1. Recommendation for the DfE: Embed youth voice as a key 'Enabler' in the Children's Social Care National Framework

- Youth Voice should also be embedded in the Children's Social Care National Framework. It should be identified as a key 'Enabler' to help children's services achieve the outcomes in the Framework. The Framework should set out what would be expected of leaders and practitioners to make listening to and acting on children's views a reality.
- The Department should work with sector experts to produce practice guidance to help local authorities realise this. It should be part of local authority leadership responsibilities to make sure that they have the structures, resources and tools needed to listen and respond to voice effectively.



2. Recommendation for the DfE: Make listening and responding to children a new (distinct) mission in *Stable Homes Build on Love*

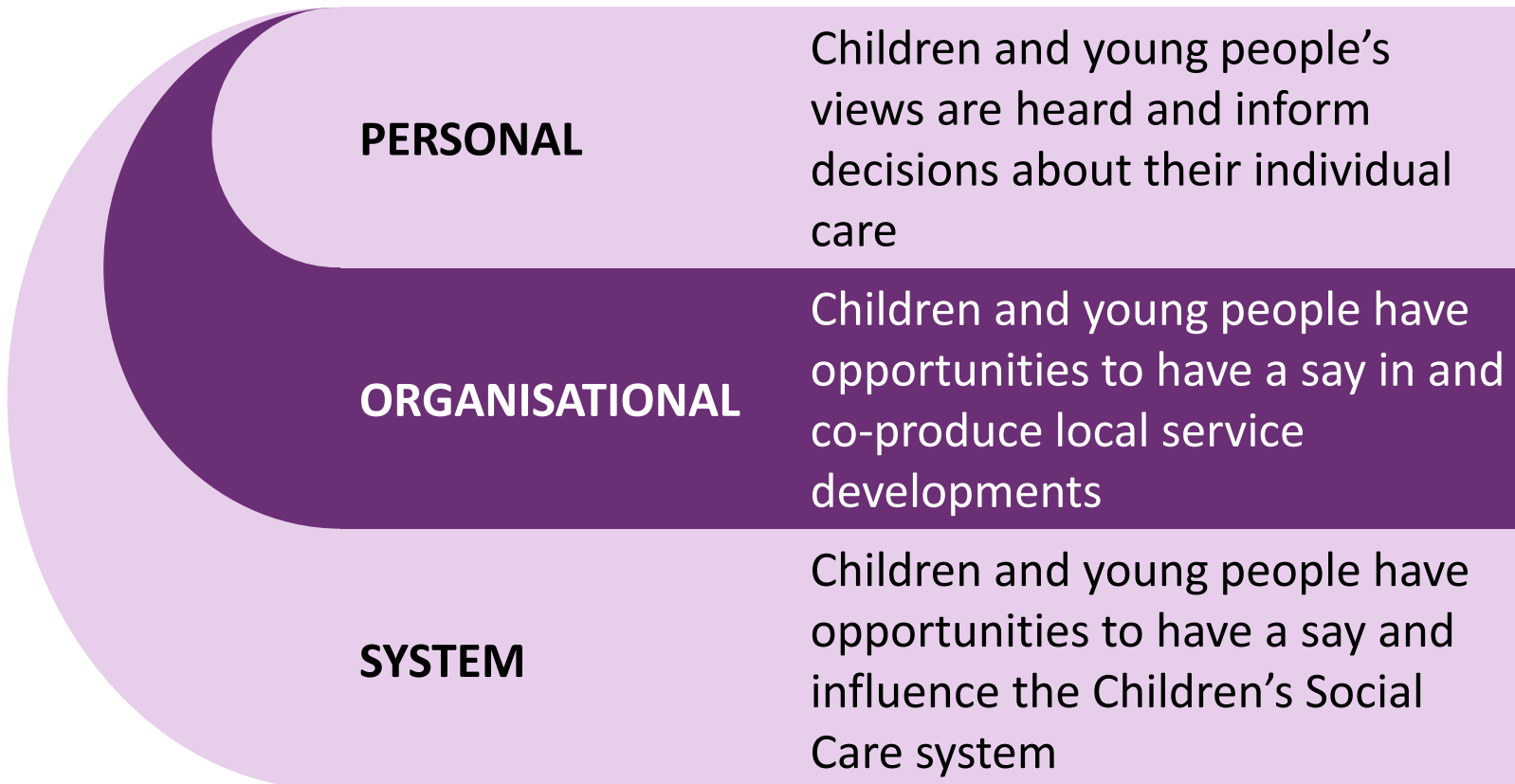
To ensure youth voice is prioritised and the structures needed to listen and respond to youth voice effectively are in place in all local authorities, we recommend the introduction of a new distinct 'Mission' focused on consistently giving children and young people a voice in their own care and in the development of children's social care (in addition to the missions identified to support children in care and care leavers in *Stable Homes Built with Love*)

Mission 7 – Voice

By 2027, all children and young people consistently report having a voice in their care, and there are structures to embed their right to be heard and enable their participation at all levels of decision making.

Listening and influencing change at all levels of decision making

Children and young people should be heard at all levels of decision-making



CAUTIONARY NOTE:
No voice without action

Data collection about children and young people needs to be linked to a child engagement framework where there is an ongoing dialogue with children and young people and, commitment to children being involved in interpreting the data and identifying what needs to be done in response.



3. Recommendation for LAs: Create a range of structures that provide a menu of options for children and young people to be heard

- There is no one specific activity that can embed children's voice in local authority work. All local authorities should ensure they have a range of structures and processes to listen and respond to how children in children's social care (inc. care and care leavers) feel about their lives in the areas that are important to them at both the individual level and collective level.
- For example, they may be captured through the day-to-day conversations workers have with children they support, through effective participation groups or through gathering the views of children in care through local authority wide surveys.



4. Recommendation for all intending to capture youth voice data: Do not collect children and young people's views unless you intend to take action on what they say

- Data on children's voice must not simply be collected to populate a Dashboard – it must be accompanied by action. It is deeply unethical to ask children and young people about their views and experiences if you do not intend to ensure their views are heard. This does not mean that children and young people always get what they are asking for, but that their views are considered and feedback is shared on what can and cannot be done as a result.
- Youth voice outcomes measures in the Dashboard should not be treated as a measure of good or bad performance – rather they should help steer staff and leaders to areas that need to be explored further and where solutions can be developed in partnership with young people. The important thing is to interrogate, reflect and respond to any data collected – ensuring that they are outcome measures for learning rather than outcomes measures simply for reporting.

Why listening and responding to children's voice is important

*"Kids feel important when you involve them in stuff about their life."
(Teenager in care, Bright Spots survey)*

*"Since I came into care, I have had no control over any aspects of my life. Social services control where I live, what I do and how I do it. I hate living in care."
(Teenager in care, Bright Spots Survey)*

Article 12

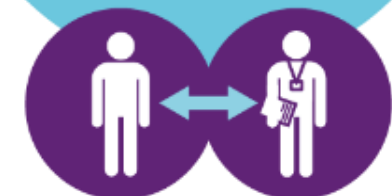
UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

Every child's right to be heard and that their views should be taken seriously



**I feel included in decisions social workers make about my life.
(8-18yrs)**

***All/most of the time**



Having a voice improves well-being

- Feeling included in decision making was associated with children in care's well-being (Selwyn et al, 2022).
- Having a sense of control over your life is linked to self-esteem and fewer mental health problems; young people who see events as largely outside their control have more emotional problems, especially when coping with stress (Heubner et al, 2001; Tangney et al, 2004; Nigg, 2017)

“My social worker always includes me in decisions. Out of all the social workers I’ve had [name] is the one I’ve connected to the most.” (Bright Spots survey, 11-18yrs)



The odds of having ‘very high’ well-being increased **if young people felt included in decision-making compared with those who did not feel involved**

1.5 times



Feeling included in decision-making was correlated with **greater optimism about the future**

“My opinion never seems to be valued.” (Bright Spots survey, 11-18yrs)

Make better decisions

- Children are experts in their own lives and provide important insights into how to make their lives better.
- There is increasing recognition across public services of the benefits of co-production

*“It gives you that evidence base on how children feel, which is the true measure on how you’re doing as a local authority isn’t it?
(Local authority development officer, Bright Spots Evaluation)*

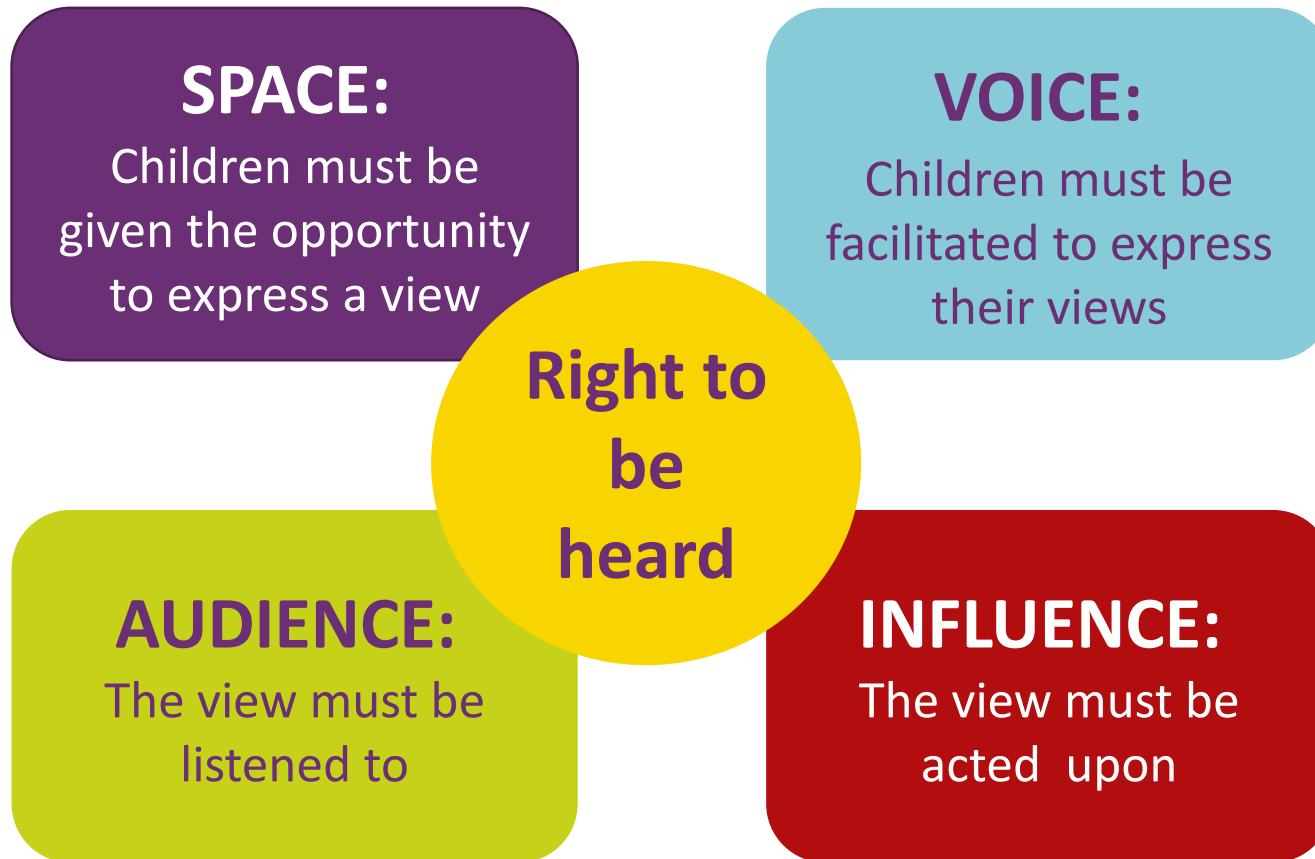
*“Listen to young people’s views, they know what’s going on. You don’t.”
(Care experienced young person, Bright Spots survey)*

Potential benefits of involving children in decision-making

- Improving the quality of services
- Helping services become more child-centred
- Generating enthusiasm and creativity
- Improving staff morale
- Raising the public profile of services
- Challenging the thinking of staff and decision-makers.

<https://www.iriss.org.uk/resources/esss-outlines/frameworks-child-participation-social-care>

Realising the right to be heard



“Through the eyes of the children... participation was about having meaningful conversations with professionals who they trusted and who provided opportunities for them to have a say in what was going on. Participation for these children was as much about feeling that what they had to say mattered and was taken into account, rather than simply about them getting what they wanted. The outcome is therefore not necessarily what children are judging when considering their satisfaction with decision-making. Rather, the process is important to them in its own right. The children’s narratives also told us that they needed support for participation to take place effectively”.



5. Recommendations for LAs, the DfE & other public bodies: Use the Lundy model of participation to assess how well they are enabling children and young people to be heard

- As part of reviewing annual plans, local authorities should appraise how Lundy’s participation model is going in practice in their organisation.
- The Lundy Model should also inform youth engagement at the national level in terms of how young people are heard by the Department for Education and other public bodies with extended corporate parenting responsibilities.

Lundy model of youth participation in practice

SPACE

- *Is youth engagement is prioritised and resourced?*
- *Have young people been asked for their views?*
- *How many opportunities have there been?*
- *Is the venue/online space accessible, friendly and safe?*
- *Do young people feel that they can be open and honest about how they feel (how, when and by who young people are asked to share their views considered)?*
- *Are the staff team trained and supported appropriately?*
- *Have young people been proactively recruited to take part from a variety of backgrounds?*

VOICE

Are young people asked about things that feel relevant to them?

- *Have young people been provided with the information they need to form a view?*
- *Do young people know their participation is voluntary?*
- *Are creative and fun activities being used to support young people to express their view on topics?*
- *Do young people have opportunities to set the agenda and define what is discussed? Is there enough time scheduled to delve into the topics?*
- *Are workshop resources accessible to young people; youth proofed; and youth friendly?*

AUDIENCE

- *Are appropriate decision makers involved and engaged?*
- *Is there a clear and agreed process for communicating back young people's voices and views to decision makers?*
- *Do young people know who their views are being shared with and what will happen to them afterwards?*
- *Do decision makers know how young people's views will feed into their decision-making processes?*
- *Is the person 'receiving' young people's views the person with the power to make (or influence) decisions?*

Right to be heard

INFLUENCE

Were young people's views considered in the decision-making process, and how is it recorded?

- *Have young people been told about how their views have impacted a decision – and if not, why?*
- *Are there procedures in place for young people to hold decision-makers to account for their decisions?*
- *When and how will young people know or see the impact of their participation?.*



6. Recommendation for the DfE: Develop youth voice indicator(s) to measure whether children and young people feel included in decisions and local authorities have structures to capture voice

As part of work on the Government's Dashboard the DfE should work with children and local authorities to develop indicator(s) to understand the way(s) children's voice is heard and acted upon in local authorities, e.g.:

- (1) An indicator to understand the degree to which LA has structures in place, such as % of children engaged in participation activities over the year and
- (2) an indicator around the degree to which children themselves feel included by asking children directly, such as through the anonymous Bright Spots survey, the degree to which they feel involved in decisions social workers make about their life.



7. Recommendation for the DfE: Ensure any Dashboard indicators designed to reflect young voices have been developed with the children and young people whose voices they intend to capture.

- The way any outcome measures are designed is important. It is essential that there is ongoing consultation with children and young people as part of the Framework and Dashboard development work.
- Learning from the Bright Spots Programme is focused only on children in care and care leavers – not other groups of children in Children's Social Care. Further development work is needed to ensure the Framework and Dashboard incorporates these children's voices.
- This work needs to be funded and involve children from the start. It is not an area that can be addressed quickly or where there are 'quick wins'.

Ways of capturing children's views

Individual Participation

- One-to-one relationships and the day-to-day conversations between workers/carers & children
- Submitting views in writing to assessment, planning and review meetings
- Attending and being actively involved in meetings. e.g. chairing own review
- Using advocacy services to represent views, including non-instructed advocacy (for those who cannot communicate directly)
- Engaging in family-led decision-making process
- Using a designated complaints procedure
- Apps, social media or other online tools enabling children to communicate their wishes
- Auto-ethnography approaches and or pictorial methods, to share information about their day-to-day lives

Collective participation

- Local, regional or national participation groups convened by service providers, central government or local authorities comprising children receiving services (e.g., children in care councils)
- Involving a panel of children in the recruitment of personnel
- Involving children in the development and delivery of training
- Including children's views in inspection reports
- Consultations or research conducted with children in receipt of services e.g., gathering the views of children through the Bright Spots Programme
- Creative projects that allow young people to express wishes, feelings and priorities
- Child- or youth-led action research



8. Recommendation for LAs: Produce an annual plan and report on progress on how they are listening and responding to young voices

- Local authorities should be required to produce a plan of how they will listen to and respond to children and young people's views and any changes that they will make to make sure that the structures, resources and tools are available to make sure children and young people are heard.
- The plan should be updated and progress reported on annually. It should be produced in a format accessible to children and young people. A process to allow children and young people to scrutinize plans and progress should be included in this work.



9. Recommendation for Ofsted – Include the annual plan in inspection evidence and report progress on youth voice in Annex A and continue to scrutinize the quality of youth voice in local authorities

- Ofsted should continue to scrutinise and report on the degree to which local authorities have the structures and effective practice in place to listen and respond to children's voice and report on the evidence of children's voice leading to change.
- The annual plan and report on progress on youth voice should form part of the Ofsted self-evaluation criteria – Annex A .

Learning from the Bright Spots Programme

Prioritising listening and responding to children requires a culture that seeks out, listens to their experiences, and then treats the information as what matters most

Processes and practices to listen and respond to children's voice (1)

- **Senior management commitment** - those with the power to effect change - is needed from the start
- **Timing** - Think about when you take part in the Bright Spots Programme – do not do it too often and check it does not clash with other demands on children
- **Commitment & resourcing** - it is hard work – commit staff time, create capacity and provide resource
- **Planning** – in the Bright Spots Programme each LA **co-ordinates a working group** to:
 - (1) to identify ways to promote the Programme and distribute the surveys and
 - (2) explore responses to the surveys
- **Communication** - develop child appropriate information to tell children about the Programme
- **Consent** - every child must be made **aware of what is being asked of them, and why**

Learning from the Bright Spots Programme

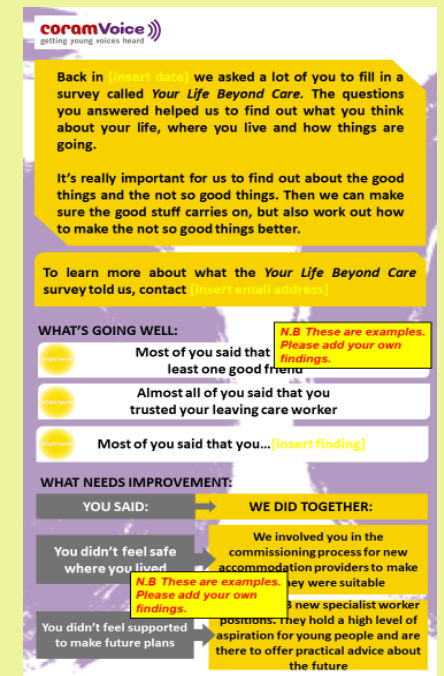
Processes and practices to listen and respond to children's voice (2)

- **Who supports children to give their views** - think carefully about *who* asks children for their views and ensure children have the support they need to give their views

Bright Spots Programme trusted adult approach a professional known to the child or young person who presents the survey to them, tells them what it's about and gives them the support they need to complete the survey

- **Survey period** - Don't run surveys for too long – be focused and time-limited to avoid 'survey-fatigue'

- **Active inclusion** - think about who may be left out and what you can do to adapt and support 'lesser heard groups'
- **Feedback loop and co-production** - there must be a robust feedback loop so key findings and what is happening next is shared with children (and staff and partners)



Measuring what care experienced children and young people say matters

- Focus on **well-being** not satisfaction with service



It is not about how services are doing but how children in care and care leavers are doing (Bright Spots Programme)

- Local authorities and Government want to know that the work they are doing makes a difference to the children they work with.
- Work needs to move beyond simply focusing on children's views of the services and support they receive to a wider lens focused on the full range of things that children say 'makes life good'.

Measuring subjective well-being through the Bright Spots Programme offers the opportunity to understand if children themselves think they are **thriving** and **flourishing**.





**10. Recommendation for the DfE:
Make Improving well-being, as
defined by children themselves, a
key pillar for Children's Social
Care.**

- An overarching goal of the Government's strategy for Children's Social Care should be to make life better for children and young people in the social care system by making well-being, as defined by children themselves, a key pillar.
- Doing so would align with the Framework and Dashboard where the purpose of Children's Social Care is described as ensuring children and care leavers thrive.



**11. Recommendations for LAs, the DfE & other
public bodies: Do not just measure children's views
on services - measure how they feel about their lives
(subjective well-being)**

- In seeking to understand children and young people's lives and their experiences of the Children's Social Care system Local authorities, the Department for Education and other public bodies working with children and young people should focus on capturing children's own evaluations of their lives (subjective well-being) in the areas that matter to them, not just children's evaluation(s) of the services and support they receive.
- Focusing on well-being (as defined by children) offers an opportunity to appraise whether children themselves feel their lives are improving in the areas that matter to them them (which may well be different from an adult-led perspective).

For this insight paper, we have reviewed the way we present the Bright Spots indicators and created a new diagram to inform the Framework and Dashboard.

- We have **one overarching domain, five further domains** and **just under 50 indicators**.

The overarching child/care leaver domain is **Well-being: Children and young people (CYP) report that their lives are good** informed by five related domains:

1. **Home:** children and young people live in safe, suitable and settled homes;
2. **Trusting relationships:** children and young people stay connected to the people they want in their lives and have access to emotional support;
3. **Rights and being in and leaving care:** children and young people have positive relationships with workers and their rights and identity are supported;
4. **Opportunities:** children and young people have positive opportunities in and outside of school / college;
5. **Feelings:** children and young people report optimism about the future and their self.



12. Recommendation for the DfE: Review the Bright Spots Well-being Framework and potential application to the DfE Dashboard

- The Bright Spots Well-being Framework provides an overview of the domains and indicators that children in care and care leavers told us made their lives good.
- The Government should review the Bright Spots framework and map to the Children's Social Care Framework

Trusting Relationships		
What matters to children	Child in care voice	Care leaver voice
See mum and dad as often as want	Age 8-17	
See brother(s) / sister(s) as often as want	Age 8-17	
Trust adults you live with	Age 4-17	
Have really good friend	All age	
Have pet	Age 8-17	
Have trusted person in your life	All age	
People to provide emotional support		
Get support with worries	Age 8-17	
Talk to adults live with about things that are important	Age 11-17	
Adults you live with notice feelings	Age 8-17	
Have someone who listens, encourages and believes in you		
Not lonely		

**Capturing young voices -
Bright Spots Well-being Framework:**
Children in care and care leavers' voices
about what makes a good life
(Coram Voice & Rees Centre, University of Oxford, September, 2023)



Rights and Being in and leaving care		
What matters to children	Child in care voice	Care leaver voice
Know social worker/ leaving care worker	All Age	
Trust social worker/ leaving care worker	All age	
Easy to contact social worker/ leaving care worker	Age 8-17	
Stability of social worker/ leaving care worker	Age 11-17	
Know can speak to social worker alone	Age 8-17	
Feel involved in decision social worker makes/ pathway planning	Age 8-17	
Not made to feel different	Age 11-17	
Reason for care fully explained	All age	

Good life / well-being		
What matters to children	Child in care voice	Care leaver voice
Satisfied with life as a whole	Age 11-17	
Happy yesterday	Age 11-17	
Things do in life are worthwhile	Age 11-17	
Anxious yesterday		

Home		
What matters to children	Child in care voice	Care leaver voice
Feel safe where you live	All age	
Feel safe in your neighbourhood		
Where you live right for you		
Like bedroom	Age 11-17	
Feel settled where you live	All age	
Stability where you live	Age 11-17	

Opportunities		
What matters to children	Child in care voice	Care leaver voice
Like school	All age	
Studying, working or training		
Adults interested in education	Age 11-17	
Supported and not afraid of bullying at school	Age 11-17	
Access to internet	Age 11-17	
Coping financially		
Chance to practice life skills	Age 11-17	
Do similar things to friend	Age 11-17	
Have fun / do hobbies	All age	
Access to nature	Age 11-17	

Feelings		
What matters to children	Child in care voice	Care leaver voice
Have goals and plans for the future	Age 11-17	
Life is getting better	Age 8-17	
Positive about future	Age 8-17	
No stress		
No worries about feelings/ behaviour	Age 8-17	
Positive feelings: proud, optimistic, full of energy		
Not angry or afraid		
Happy with how you look	Age 8-17	

The Bright Spots survey questions (indicators) for both children in care and care leavers have been mapped across the domains. In addition, the proposed Dashboard indicators have been added along with examples of *possible* supplementary local sources of data (*in italics*) to provide ideas of how other evidence could be included at the local authority level. In theory, each local authority could create their own local Dashboard with a mix of national indicators, and locally identified and sourced information

Trusting relationships: CYP stay connected to the people they want in their lives and have access to emotional support					
Domain	Outcome	Indicator	Source	Voice or admin data	Update
Trusting Relationships	CYP feel satisfied with how often see family	% of children in care aged 8-17 who are satisfied with how often see mum	Bright Spots: Your life, your care	Voice	Biennial
		% of children in care aged 8-17 who are satisfied with how often see dad	Bright Spots: Your life, your care	Voice	Biennial
		% of children in care aged 8-17 who are satisfied with how often see brother(s) / sister(s)	Bright Spots: Your life, your care	Voice	Biennial
		<i>e.g. Bright Spots question incorporated into practice – child satisfied with how often they see family member(s)</i>	<i>IRO / care /pathway plan review</i>	<i>Voice</i>	<i>Quarterly</i>
		<i>e.g. Young inspector work looking at family time centres</i>	<i>Children in care ‘deep dive’ report</i>	<i>Voice</i>	<i>Annual</i>
	CYP feel connected to important people in their lives	% children aged 4-17 who have a <u>really good</u> friend	Bright Spots: Your Life, Your Care / Dashboard proposal	Voice	Biennial
		% care leavers who have a <u>really good</u> friend	Bright Spots: Your Life Beyond Care / Dashboard proposal	Voice	Biennial
		% children <u>age</u> 8-17 who have a pet	Bright Spots: Your Life, Your Care	Voice	Biennial
		% care leavers who have a pet	Bright Spots: Your Life Beyond Care	Voice	Biennial
		% children in care aged 4-17 who have a trusted adult	Bright Spots: Your Life, Your Care / Dashboard proposal	Voice	Biennial
		% care leavers who have a trusted person	Bright Spots: Your Life Beyond Care / Dashboard proposal	Voice	Biennial
		% children in care age 4-17 who trust adult they live with	Bright Spots: Your Life, Your Care	Voice	Biennial

Embedding Bright Spots well-being measures in day-to-day practice – exploratory work

- A very important way to hear and respond to the voice of children is through the one-to-one conversations children have with the trusted adults and workers in their life.
- There needs to be space for voice expressed both formally (e.g. through care plan reviews or systematic surveys) and integrated informally in everyday interactions (e.g. conversations whilst driving together).
- What the Bright Spots programme has identified matters to children could be more embedded in day-to-day practice
- Not all of the Bright Spots indicators would be appropriate to collect via individual conversations (e.g. not appropriate for social workers to ask their children if they trusted them, as challenging to answer honestly).
- However others, such as understanding whether children have a good friend or understand why they are in care, could fit well listening and responding to children in practice

PRACTICE EXAMPLE

East Sussex have incorporated key Bright Spots questions (e.g. how are you coping financially? do you have any questions about your time in care?) into their Pathway Plan to allow workers to discuss issues with their young people. The new items will be uploaded to the case management system allowing more in real-time feedback.



13. Recommendation for the DfE and Coram Voice: Develop a dedicated project to explore how Bright Spots indicators can be embedded in day-to-day practice

- A focus on the Bright Spots indicators could help practitioners to ensure that Children's Social Care supports children and young people's well-being and what is important to them.
- A dedicated project should be set up with a small number of local authorities and partners (including young people) to explore how and which Bright Spots questions could be embedded in day-to-day practice e.g. care planning and case management recording.
- Children and young people must be central to any project and should be involved in co-producing this work.

How children's voices are heard and acted on

- Local authorities, their practitioners and wider policy-makers can learn much from children's views and ideas on how to improve the system.
- Delivering high quality services rests on having a culture that both values and amplifies children's voices and uses a range of ways to listen and respond in partnership with children and care leavers.
- Our experience of delivering the Bright Spots Programme is that simply publishing the Bright Spots local authority findings report is not enough to secure learning and change.

Some of the things we have learnt from the Bright Spots Programme about **taking action to make improvements and supporting children to get involved in influencing policy, practice and service delivery:**

- **Time, support and transparent processes** - ask young people what works best for them and if (how) they would like to get involved.
- **Fun and skills development** - make sure what you are offering fits with what young people want – a mix of **fun**, the chance to gain **skills** from being involved and a **progression route** for those interested in getting more involved
- **Co-design** - create space and different types of **opportunities for children to get involved in co-designing solutions**
- **Joint working between young people and decision-makers** - Look for opportunities for **young people and decision-makers to meet and work together**
- **Scrutiny and accountability** - create **accountability structures that involve children and young people**

- **Remuneration** - Invest in **paid opportunities for children / young people** to get involved in change and influence work.

PRACTICE
EXAMPLE

Voice & Influence workers – Sheffield have recruited four new posts – care experienced Voice and Influence - these posts are salaried and there is a minimum number of hours per month agreed. The roles will support the wide range of voice and influence activities e.g. supporting Scrutiny Panel, outreach work, leading on projects and be commissioned to be consultants in other settings such as health, the Virtual School and Universities. Each post is shaped around the individual and their availability, skills & interests.

- **Involve children and young people in reviewing and interpreting feedback** - Whilst metrics can helpfully point leaders or services in the direction of things to explore further and respond to, without further information from children and young people they do not tell us how to respond or give the full picture.

PRACTICE
EXAMPLE

Stockport undertook ‘deep dive’ with their care leavers to understand more about why some did not feel safe in their homes. As part of the work young people came up with the idea of piloting **‘video ring door bells’** as they felt this could help. The local authority responded and trialled the idea – it was a success and is now rolled out to young people moving into their own homes. The scheme costs about £100. Young people felt their voice had been listened and responded to. The work had a ‘ripple effect’ as partners asked more about why young people were being placed where they felt unsafe and led to investment in new purpose built accommodation for care leavers.

Sharing learning: examples of youth voice in practice

- Acting on children's voice can lead to all sort of positive developments in local authorities. But, we do not always hear about this work.
- Bright Spots Resource Bank showcases some of the ways different local authorities have adapted their policies and practices after taking part in the Programme
<https://coramvoice.org.uk/for-professionals/bright-spots/resource-bank/>
- Many initiatives actively work alongside children and young people to develop solutions not just identify problems.

Our insight briefing contains **around 50** examples of how actively listening and responding to what children in care and care leavers say matters has influenced Children's Social Care service development and practice in relation to:

1. **Children's Voice influencing policy change**
2. **Children's Voice incorporated to strategic plans and policies**
3. **Children's Voice raising greater awareness of issues that are important to children and gaps in service provision**
4. **Children's Voice influencing practice change**
5. **Children's Voice leading to creation of new resources for practitioners / services**
6. **Children's Voice incorporated into Quality Assurance of services**



14. Recommendation for the DfE: Promote and develop shared learning around youth voice

- Local authorities (and other partner agencies) would benefit from opportunities to share practice on ways of seeking, recording and analysing children's views and experiences. The Framework could be an opportunity to consolidate and promote learning in this area.
- To support the Children's Social Care system to continue to share and apply best practice there should be a range of opportunities for local authorities to come together to share ideas and discuss how to overcome challenges they experience.
- Equivalent opportunities need to be available for young people's participation groups too.



15. Recommendation for the DfE: Use the Bright Spots data already available to understand more about what matters to children and young people's lives and well- being and inform decision making

- We urge the Government (and others) to make use of the insights already gathered from the Bright Spots Programme to make sense of children in care and care leavers' lives.
- Coram Voice would welcome opportunities to work together to analyse and explore the Bright Spots data collated to date (24,000 voices) and in the future to understand more about what matters to children's lives and well-being.

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Resource Bank

Since 2013, the Bright Spots programme has helped local authorities directly hear from their children in care and care leavers through two sets of surveys, *Your Life, Your Care* (for children in care aged 4-17 years) and *Your Life Beyond Care* (for care leavers aged 16-25 years).

This Resource Bank includes practice examples from local authorities who have listened to what their care experienced children and young people said was most important to them. There are also a wide range of other useful materials and learnings produced by Coram Voice over the years, such as national reports, publications and webinars.



Bright Spots Resource Hub

Search

Theme

Topic

Resource Type

Local authority

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The resource hub contains hundreds of reports, practice examples, articles, videos focusing on what matters to children and young people's well-being

<https://coramvoice.org.uk/for-professionals/bright-spots/resource-bank/>

This is one example of the practice examples in the Bright Spots Resource Hub

Spotlight
on
practice



Rights & Voice

Hull City Council

Children's voice shaping policy and practice

July 2022

Hull took part in the Bright Spots programme – over 400 of their children in care and care leavers took the time to share how they were feeling – what matters to children has shaped Hull's new practice standards and corporate parenting strategy.

Why?

Hull wanted to make sure what matters to children and young people and the things that influence their well-being was at the centre of the work they do at both a practice and policy level.

What?

Hull have rewritten their practice standards – these now incorporate the Bright Spots findings.

“By using the standards and expectations within the guide, no matter what is going on in a child or young person’s life they will always receive the consistent support and the right help. We have made sure that the feedback from the Bright Spots survey has been considered in all the different areas”.

You can read the practice standards here:

<https://www.workingforhullcitycouncil.org.uk/downloads/file/6/practice-standards>

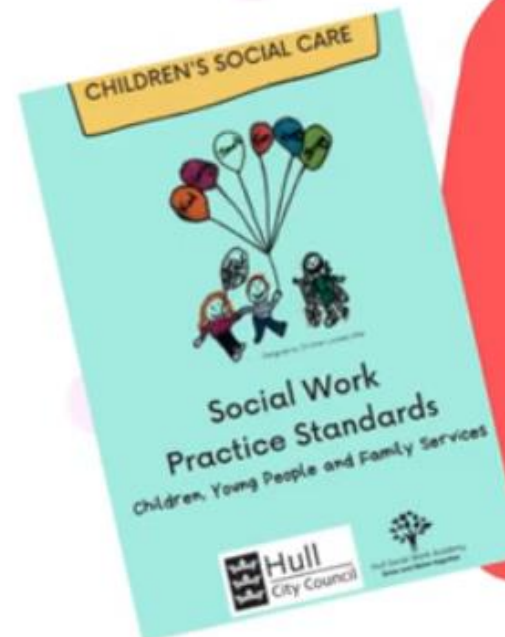
The new Corporate parenting strategy (2022-2025) has also been structured using the Bright Spots well-being domains and is based on Hull’s Bright Spots findings. The refresh of the strategy is based on extensive consultation with the people who matter most – children are young people (231 children looked after and 151 care leavers via the right spots programme) – the findings told Hull what they need to focus on to improve their lives and experiences and the strategy describes what Hull are doing as a result of the feedback and what they plan to do next. You can read the corporate parenting strategy here (scroll to end of page):

<https://www.hull.gov.uk/children-and-families/policies-and-performance/looked-after-children-pledge>

YVIC (Young Voices Influencing Care) have created a sculpture based on ‘what makes life good’ – the artwork was unveiled by the Hull Chief Executive and is placed in the Guildhall as a reminder of children’s voice (see next slide) .

Impact

Hull are committed to creating lots more different opportunities for children in care and care leavers to share how they are feeling and to influence practice and policy.



Further reading

- Bright Spots programme <https://coramvoice.org.uk/for-professionals/bright-spots/bright-spots-programme>
- Participation people – The Lundy Model of participation <https://participationpeople.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Compressed-PP--Lundy-Model-Explained-2.pdf>
- Children’s Information project <https://oxfordnuffieldstrategic.web.ox.ac.uk/article/conceptualising-childrens-voice-and-data>
- Bright Spots resource bank <https://coramvoice.org.uk/for-professionals/bright-spots/resource-bank/>