

HEAR MY STORY

HEAR MY VOICE



OUR JOURNEY BEGINS.....

WHAT WE DID...



WE ASKED SOME OF OUR AMAZING YOUNG PEOPLE, WHO ARE PART OF THE **DUDLEY CHILDREN IN CARE COUNCIL**, ABOUT THEIR JOURNEY AND EXPERIENCES THROUGH CARE.

Dear Social Worker,
We like it when you...

M.A.D
MAKE A DIFFERENCE
Dudley's Children in Care Council

- show interest in us** - find out what we like to do and support us to find groups and clubs that we can join
- ask us when and where we would like to meet you,** and what we want to talk about
- turn up to see us on time -** or let us know if you can't make it or are going to be late
- tell us why we are in care -** when we are ready to know
- listen to us carefully,** and clarify/check that you have heard us correctly
- text, call or send us a card** on our birthday
- give us extra support** when we have a problem - and please take it seriously
- meet us as soon as know you are working with us -** and say goodbye if you are leaving
- take time to get to know us -** maybe take us out for some food so we can chat and find out more about each other
- are honest with us -** and only make promises that you can keep
- ask to speak to us away from our carers -** it can be awkward if we have to ask!
- use incentives to reward us** for achieving agreed targets e.g. keep out of trouble at school

Thank you from **Make A Difference** on behalf of all of Dudley's looked after children and young people

For more information about Dudley Children In Care Council, visit:
<https://cic.dudley.gov.uk/children-in-care-council>

Dudley
Metropolitan Borough Council



OUR QUESTIONS WERE INSPIRED BY THE 'DEAR SOCIAL WORKER' PROJECT, COMPLETED BY THE CHILDREN IN CARE COUNCIL!

WE HAVE LISTENED TO THEIR RESPONSES AND FEEL IT'S IMPORTANT TO SHARE THEIR ANSWERS WITH YOU TOO! IF WE ARE TO ENSURE THAT **CHILDREN ARE FIRST AND IN THE HEART OF ALL WE DO**, THEN HEARING WHAT THEY HAVE TO SAY IS A GOOD PLACE TO START...

**...HEAR OUR STORY,
HEAR OUR VOICE**



WE ASKED THE YOUNG PEOPLE TO RECALL TIMES THEY WERE LISTENED TO AND HOW THAT MADE THEM FEEL?

I WOULD BE IN JAIL IF IT WASN'T FOR MY SOCIAL WORKER - JUST HER BEING THERE FOR ME... SHE GETS PEOPLE TO DO WHAT THEY NEED TO DO TO GET MY NEEDS MET. SHE USES HER AUTHORITY TO MAKE MY SITUATION BETTER.



I'M LISTENED TO REALLY WELL BY MY CURRENT SOCIAL WORKER - IT MAKES ME REALLY HAPPY! I TOLD THEM I DIDN'T WANT CONTACT WITH MY MUM ANYMORE AND IT STOPPED IMMEDIATELY.

I DIDN'T LIKE MY PLACEMENT, THERE WAS LOTS OF SHOUTING AND THE CARERS WOULD DRINK ALCOHOL. I TOLD MY SOCIAL WORKER AND I MOVED PLACEMENT - THIS MADE ME FEEL RESPECTED.

WHEN I'M INCLUDED IN BIG DECISIONS INSTEAD OF BEING LEFT IN THE DARK - IT MAKES ME FEEL REALLY VALUED AND APPRECIATED.



WE THEN ASKED IF THERE WERE TIMES THEY FELT THEY HADN'T BEEN LISTENED TO?

AND HOW THIS MADE THEM FEEL?

WITH MY FIRST SOCIAL WORKER, SHE DIDN'T LISTEN TO WHAT I HAD TO SAY AND IT REALLY ANGERED ME. SHE BRUSHED OFF MY COMMENTS...I DON'T LIKE BEING IGNORED. IT'S VERY RUDE.

ONCE, WHEN I NEEDED MY SOCIAL WORKER, SHE NEVER GOT IN TOUCH WITH ME.



I DIDN'T LIKE MY BROTHER AND MY SOCIAL WORKER MADE ME HUG HIM...HE DIDN'T EXPLAIN WHY HE ASKED US TO HUG...THIS MADE ME FEEL ANGRY!

I'D LIKE MORE CONSIDERATION. LIKE THEY'LL SAY 'OH, THAT'S GOOD' BUT NEVER 'IS THIS HOW YOU FEEL?' OR 'DOES THIS REFLECT YOUR EMOTIONS?'.

MY FIRST SOCIAL WORKER JUST PASSED ME OFF, NEVER TOOK THE TIME TO GET TO KNOW ME. I WAS JUST ANOTHER 'TICK IN THE BOX' FOR HER. IT MADE ME REALLY DISTRESSED...IT WAS A REALLY EMOTIONAL TIME AND SHE TOOK NO CONSIDERATION, MAYBE IF SHE'D HAVE BEEN NICER IT WOULD HAVE BEEN BETTER.

WE ASKED THE YOUNG PEOPLE TO DESCRIBE METHODS SOCIAL WORKERS HAVE USED TO GAIN INFORMATION ABOUT THEM...

IT'S USUALLY JUST A CONVERSATION AT FIRST...I LIKE DOING THE WORKSHEETS ABOUT WHO YOU ARE, WHO YOU ARE CLOSEST TO. THERE AREN'T ANY SHEETS I DON'T LIKE.



MANY OF THE CHILDREN DIDN'T RECALL SEEING DIRECT WORKSHEETS BEING USED BY THEIR SOCIAL WORKERS.

THEY ALL EXPRESSED AN INTEREST IN ENGAGING IN THIS TYPE OF DIRECT WORK THOUGH.



WE ASKED THE YOUNG PEOPLE TO THINK OF A TIME SOMEONE DIDN'T TAKE TIME TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THEM?

AND HOW THIS MADE THEM FEEL?



LOTS OF TIMES. I'M REALLY INTO MY ART - MY ART REFLECTS WHO I AM AND HOW I'M FEELING. IT'S REALLY **UPSETTING** WHEN SOCIAL WORKERS DON'T ASK ABOUT IT.

MY SOCIAL WORKER NEVER LISTENED ABOUT WHAT I LIKED, IT'S REALLY **DISRESPECTFUL** - THEY SHOULD KNOW ABOUT A PERSON!

A SOCIAL WORKER I HAD DIDN'T READ WHAT HAD HAPPENED IN MY HISTORY - IT **GOT ON MY NERVES.**

MANY OF THE YOUNG PEOPLE FELT THEIR SOCIAL WORKERS DIDN'T KNOW THEIR LIKES/DISLIKES OR HOBBIES.



WE ASKED THE YOUNG PEOPLE IF THERE HAS EVER BEEN A TIME THEY HAVEN'T KNOWN WHY THEY ARE IN CARE?

AND HOW THIS MADE THEM FEEL?



WHEN I WAS 10 YEARS OLD, I ASKED MY SOCIAL WORKER WHY I WAS IN CARE? SHE SAID I WAS **TOO YOUNG** TO KNOW. A SOCIAL WORKER NEVER TOLD ME WHY UNTIL I WAS 12 YEARS OLD - I'D BEEN IN CARE SINCE I WAS 7 YEARS OLD.

I WAS TOLD WHEN I WAS IN YEAR 5 WHY I WAS IN CARE. IT PUTS **PRESSURE** ON A CHILD IF THEY DON'T KNOW. THEY THINK **THEY HAVE DONE SOMETHING WRONG** TO BE THERE.

I DIDN'T REALLY KNOW WHY I WAS IN CARE AND MADE RANDOM GUESSES, IT MADE ME FEEL **BAD**. MY BROTHER USED TO BE NAUGHTY AND I USED TO THINK IT WAS HIS FAULT...I AM **DISAPPOINTED** IN MYSELF FOR NOT KNOWING.



I FELT **HAPPY** WHEN I KNEW AND UNDERSTOOD.

WHEN I CAME INTO CARE I KNEW EXACTLY WHY, MY CARERS HAVE TOO MUCH **RESPECT** FOR ME TO LIE AND NOT TELL ME THE TRUTH.



I FELT **RELIEF** ONCE I KNEW WHY I WAS IN CARE AND THAT I WAS **SAFE**.

IT CAN BE HARD AND UPSETTING TO HEAR THINGS LIKE WHY YOU ARE IN CARE. WE ASKED THE YOUNG PEOPLE WHAT COULD WE DO TO HELP SHARE THIS INFORMATION WITH THEM?

I WAS UPSET WHEN I FOUND OUT. I WAS UPSET ABOUT **WHAT** I WAS TOLD AND **HOW** I WAS TOLD...IT WOULD HAVE BEEN BETTER IF THERE WASN'T AS MUCH DETAIL.

IF YOU WANT TO KNOW [WHY YOU'RE IN CARE] YOU SHOULD BE TOLD IN **LITTLE CHUNKS** - NOT ALL IN ONE GO, THAT'S TOO MUCH AND TOO HARD TO TAKE IN.



YOU COULD BE MORE **CONSIDERATE**, INSTEAD OF BEING BLUNT AND HARSH. HOWEVER, THE TRUTH SHOULD NOT BE **HIDDEN** - THE MORE **LIES**, THE MORE PAIN.

ALL THE YOUNG PEOPLE AGREED THAT CHILDREN SHOULD BE TOLD 'WHY' THEY ARE IN CARE BUT THIS SHOULD BE DONE IN AN AGE APPROPRIATE WAY AND NOT NECESSARILY ALL IN ONE SESSION.

WE ASKED THE YOUNG PEOPLE IF THERE WERE TIMES THEY DIDN'T FEEL ABLE TO SPEAK OPENLY WITH THEIR SOCIAL WORKER?

AND HOW THIS MADE THEM FEEL?

I'VE HAD 24 SOCIAL WORKERS IN THE PAST 3 YEARS - I DON'T TRUST ANYONE TO SPEAK WITH OPENLY.

WHEN I WAS UPSET I DIDN'T ASK MY SOCIAL WORKER FOR HELP AS I DIDN'T WANT THEM TO HAVE A GO AT ME. I WAS WORRIED BECAUSE THIS HAD HAPPENED BEFORE WITH ANOTHER WORKER.

I WAS AT THE FOSTER CARERS HOUSE AND COULDN'T TALK OPENLY AS I DIDN'T WANT TO UPSET OR HURT THEIR FEELINGS.



WHEN THE SOCIAL WORKER COMES TO SPEAK TO ME AT THE FOSTER CARER'S HOUSE, THERE ARE REALLY THIN WALLS AND I DON'T LIKE TALKING ABOUT PRIVATE STUFF.



FINALLY, WE ASKED THE YOUNG PEOPLE TO SHARE A TIME THEY FELT HAPPY TO SPEAK OPENLY WITH THEIR SOCIAL WORKER?

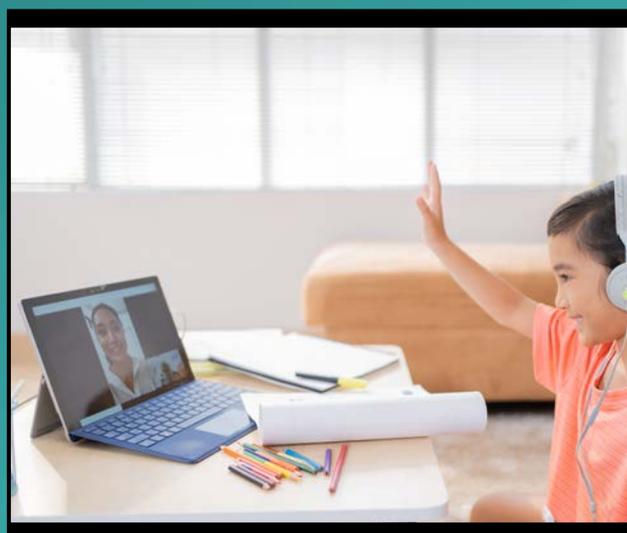
A SOCIAL WORKER USED TO TAKE ME TO MCDONALD'S - IT ALLOWED ME TO **CALM DOWN**, **EXPRESS** MY FEELINGS AND SPEAK WITHOUT THE CARERS HEARING.

I CAN SPEAK **REALLY WELL** TO MY SOCIAL WORKER AND CAN CONTACT THEM **ANYTIME** - I'VE HAD MY SOCIAL WORKER FOR NEARLY 4 YEARS NOW.

I LIKE MEETING UP WITH MY SOCIAL WORKER - MEETING SOMEWHERE LIKE MERRY HILL, THERE'S A ROOM WE USE TO TALK. IT'S BETTER BEING THERE, IT'S MORE **PRIVATE**.



THE YOUNG PEOPLE LISTED DIFFERENT WAYS THEY LIKE TO SPEAK WITH THEIR SOCIAL WORKER - FACE-TO-FACE, INSTAGRAM, EMAIL, VIDEO AND TELEPHONE CALLS.



'HEAR MY STORY, HEAR MY VOICE' CONTAINS MESSAGES FROM OUR VERY OWN CHILDREN IN CARE COUNCIL, TELLING US ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCES OF THEIR PERSONAL JOURNEYS IN CARE. IT'S TAKEN A LOT OF COURAGE, AND THE MESSAGES SHARED HAVE BEEN VERY POWERFUL.

WE WANT TO MAKE SOME ASSURANCES TO OUR CHILDREN IN CARE ABOUT THE SERVICE WE AIM TO PROVIDE FOR THEM, AND THIS WILL HELP INFORM DUDLEY'S PLEDGE TO ITS CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE.



WE ASK THAT YOU TAKE A COUPLE OF MOMENTS TO COMPLETE A SURVEY AND SHARE YOUR PERSONAL PRACTICE PLEDGES WITH THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN DUDLEY.

PLEASE CLICK ON THE LINK BELOW TO ACCESS: -

www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/hearmystoryhearmyvoice



THIS HAS BEEN DEVELOPED BY VICKI SILVESTER-GRANT FROM THE CENTRE FOR PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE AND THE DUDLEY CHILDREN IN CARE COUNCIL