



ALL PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP FOR

**CHILDREN**

**Are children and young people getting  
the opportunities they want?**

**Report on the inquiry organised by the All Party  
Parliamentary Group for Children 2012-2013**

**June 2013**

## Foreword by Baroness Massey of Darwen, Chair of APPG for Children

The All Party Parliamentary Group for Children (APPGC) chose the theme "Are Children and Young People Getting the Opportunities They Want?" for 2012-2013.

Children and young people have been strongly affected by the slow recovery from the recession. There are record number of young people not in education, employment or training, increasing costs for university tuition, and a shrinking job market. It is therefore vitally important that we enable our youngest citizens to have the best possible start in life and fully access opportunities that will support their transition into adulthood.

Four key themes arose from the inquiry sessions we held with children and young people and a range of professionals working in children's services:

- 1) There are many children and young people living in disadvantage who are not able to fully access their rights and entitlements;
- 2) Children and young people's access to key services, including education, health and social care needs to be improved, particularly in terms of identification of need and coordination;
- 3) Positive relationships with family, friends, and professionals can support children and young people's personal development, which in turn encourages them to develop aspirations and plan for their future;
- 4) There is an immediate need to revisit youth policy. It is particularly striking that many young people lack critical support during the passage to adulthood.

We have proposed recommendations on page 6 that we believe will improve equality of access to opportunities for children and young people. We hope that this report will be read by politicians, practitioners and those who work with children.

We would like to thank all those who gave their time to give evidence, especially the many children and young people.



**Doreen E. Massey**

### **The Officers of the APPG for Children:**

Chair: Baroness Massey of Darwen

Vice-Chairs: Baroness Walmsley of West Derby, Jessica Lee MP for Erewash, Baroness Blood of Blackwatertown, Baroness Berridge of the Vale of Catmose, Bill Esterson MP for Sefton Central

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## The All Party Parliamentary Group for Children

The All Party Parliamentary Group for Children (APPGC) holds regular meetings on issues relating to children and young people, and members of the Group work strategically to raise the profile of children's issues in Parliament. The Group also works extensively to hear directly from children and young people and take their views into consideration as often as possible. The APPGC regularly invites representatives of child-focused voluntary and statutory organisations and Government departments to attend meetings.

All Party Parliamentary Group for Children mission statement:

*'To raise greater awareness in the Houses of Parliament on aspects of the well-being of the nation's children aged 0-18 years, and our obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child; and to work with children, young people, children's organisations, and politicians from all sides to promote first-class government policy for children'.*

The National Children's Bureau provides the secretariat for the All Party Parliamentary Group for Children.

Registered Charity Number 258825. [www.ncb.org.uk](http://www.ncb.org.uk)

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# 1. Introduction

This inquiry set out to investigate the question 'are children and young people getting the opportunities they want?' It aimed to gather the views of children, young people and those who work with them in order to better understand the extent to which opportunities are available, within a challenging economic environment. This report seeks to establish the barriers that prevent children and young people from taking up the opportunities they want due to the lack of a 'level playing field', and also to determine the types of opportunities children and young people are offered in terms of living a healthy life, getting a good education, asserting their rights, and pursuing their future.

Following an open call for evidence, the inquiry received 38 written submissions (see Appendix 2). The inquiry heard oral evidence from 41 witnesses, at a series of 5 meetings which considered opportunities for children and young people in relation to: financial security; health; education; relationships; and rights and respect. Witnesses included a number of children and young people, professionals working with children and young people and academics specialising in this area. (For a full list of witnesses see Appendix 1.)

The inquiry considered the core question of what constitutes 'opportunity?' For example, Newcastle City Council Children's Rights Team provided evidence from a project which identified different factors influencing access to a range of life chances in finance, culture, recreation, education and health. A number of speakers also drew reference to the fact that children, like adults, can not always be expected to know what they want until they have experienced a range of opportunities – and even then, what they want and what they need or deserve might not be the same thing.

This report aims to highlight some of the central themes in relation to whether children and young people are properly supported to ensure that they are able to take up the opportunities they want, and to examine the types of the opportunities that they are offered. It also considers the way in which the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) sets out the opportunities that children and young people should be offered.

The following inquiry meetings took place during the 2012-2013 parliamentary year:

- Financial security and opportunity- 21<sup>st</sup> May 2012
- Good health - 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2012
- Ensuring young people enjoy school and continue in learning beyond 16 - 17<sup>th</sup> December 2012
- Good relationships - 14<sup>th</sup> January 2013
- Rights, respect and everyday life: are children and young people respected in our society? - 11<sup>th</sup> March 2013



## 2. Summary of recommendations

This report analyses the evidence gathered in response to the inquiry in order to highlight good practice and to make recommendations regarding areas where change is needed:

- The Department of Health, NHS England and Public Health England should take action to implement the recommendations of the Children and Young People's Health Outcomes Forum (the Forum) in full and should report back to the Forum on progress
- The Government should introduce a legal obligation for public bodies to have due regard for children's rights, as set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, in making decisions affecting children and young people
- Schools should ensure that they offer a range of personalised, tailored, flexible support with an appropriate focus on developing children and young people's communication skills, and should ensure that children and young people have guaranteed access to Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education
- A cross-Government youth strategy should be established, building on *Positive for Youth*, and driven by the Department for Education, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, Department for Communities and Local Government, Department for Work and Pensions and Department of Health.

## 3. Financial security

*UNCRC Article 27: Every child has the right to a standard of living that is good enough to meet their physical, social and mental needs.<sup>1</sup>*

### **What stops children and young people from getting the opportunities they want?**

The inquiry received evidence which demonstrated the way in which the challenging economic climate within the UK has affected the opportunities available to children and young people. Alison Garnham, Chief Executive of the Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG), informed the inquiry that children and young people today are living in families affected by high levels of stress, high inflation rates, real terms cuts to wages, benefit cuts and welfare reform. It is now clear that the 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review hit the youngest and poorest very hard, and child poverty is likely to increase by 800,000 by 2020. Whilst there are complex and varied interpretations of how we define poverty and how it is caused, evidence

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<sup>1</sup> Unicef (2012) Summary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child [http://www.unicef.org.uk/Documents/Publication-pdfs/betterlifeleaflet2012\\_press.pdf](http://www.unicef.org.uk/Documents/Publication-pdfs/betterlifeleaflet2012_press.pdf)



collated by CPAG has identified the detrimental impact of child poverty on opportunities for children and young people:

- By the age of three, poorer children are estimated to be, on average, nine months behind children from more wealthy backgrounds
- Children from low income families are more likely to die at birth or in infancy than children born into richer families
- Children living in poverty are almost twice as likely to live in bad housing. This has significant effects on both their physical and mental health, as well as educational achievement.<sup>2</sup>

### ***What helps children and young people to get the opportunities they want?***

Alison Garnham recommended that reminding people of their welfare rights can help to support those living in or at risk of living in poverty. CPAG have conducted policy research and media activity to raise awareness about the benefits families are entitled to. Local authorities provide Welfare Rights Services to provide families with free, confidential, impartial advice and support on accessing welfare benefits.

CPAG welcome locally focused strategies to address child poverty. Research with young people in five local authorities identified that despite commonalities in the support that low income families need – better housing, improved wages, free leisure activities, subsidised healthy food – strategies work best when they respond to specific needs of the local community<sup>3</sup>.

## **4. Health**

*UNCRC Article 24: Children have the right to the best possible health care<sup>4</sup>.*

### **4.1 The health system**

#### ***What stops children and young people from getting the opportunities they want?***

Witnesses addressed the effect that children and young people's health can have on their ability to access opportunities. Dr Chris Hanvey, Chief Executive, Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH) informed the inquiry that:

- The UK has the worst all-cause mortality rate for children under 14 in Western Europe with 1500 excess deaths per annum compared to the best performing countries

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<sup>2</sup> See Child Poverty Action Group's website - <http://www.cpag.org.uk/content/impact-poverty>

<sup>3</sup> Farthing, R (2012) Young People's Thoughts on Child Poverty Policy  
<http://www.cpag.org.uk/sites/default/files/CPAG-Youngpeoplesreport-1212.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Unicef (2012) Summary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child  
[http://www.unicef.org.uk/Documents/Publication-pdfs/betterlifeleaflet2012\\_press.pdf](http://www.unicef.org.uk/Documents/Publication-pdfs/betterlifeleaflet2012_press.pdf)



- Children with disabilities still experience fragmented care
- 1 in 3 children at the age of 11 are either overweight or obese. It is estimated that this figure will be 50% by 2020.

### ***What helps children and young people to get the opportunities they want?***

Dr Hanvey stated that health professionals, politicians and those working with children and young people have a duty to improve children's health care and to make sure they are getting the opportunities they want. In relation to this, he raised concerns from the RCPCH around the increasing risk of fragmented children's services following the Health and Social Care Act 2012. To counter these concerns, RCPCH welcomes the Secretary of State setting up the Children's and Young People's Health Outcomes Forum in 2012 to advise Government on how the current round of health reforms can deliver better outcomes for children and young people. The RCPCH is clear that the Government should ensure recommendations from the Children's and Young People's Health Outcomes Forum are implemented as far as possible. Six recommendations were particularly endorsed to help ensure that children and young people get the opportunities they want:

- Reconfiguration of health services: to ensure that children are seen in the right place at the right time, by the right health professionals
- Improving training for all primary care professionals
- Supporting the transition between child and adult care: all organisations within the system should take a life course approach to address the different stages and transitions that children and young people go through
- Expanding academic child health research
- Providing an effective outcomes framework for children and young people
- Representation of children and young people in shaping health services

RCPCH wants the Government to commit to putting children and young people and their families at the heart of what happens in health services. Dr Hanvey drew particular attention to the contribution that children and young people can make to debates about the future development of health services; RCPCH has published *Not Just a Phase* to support health commissioners and practitioners in working with children and young people.<sup>5</sup>

## **4.2 Long term health conditions**

### ***What stops children and young people from getting the opportunities they want?***

The inquiry heard evidence about how specific long-term conditions can affect the way in which children and young people access opportunities. Epilepsy was looked

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<sup>5</sup> Royal College for Paediatrics and Child Health (2010) Not Just A Phase  
<http://www.rcpch.ac.uk/what-we-do/children-and-young-peoples-participation/publications/not-just-phase/not-just-phase>



at as an indicative case study: Professor Helen Cross informed the inquiry that epilepsy affects up to 112,000 children and young people in the UK. Problems arise as it not a single diagnosis; there are many different types and causes and there is no single diagnostic test. Therefore, the misdiagnosis rate is high and there is no single treatment. Difficulties experienced by many children and young people include a lack of access to specialist care to get an accurate diagnosis and early treatment. A recent RCPCH led Epilepsy12<sup>6</sup> audit found that:

- Only 60% of newly diagnosed children and young people who had criteria to see a specialist paediatric neurologist had done so
- Only 53% of services in the UK had a Clinical Nurse Specialist and only 46% of newly diagnosed children had seen one in their first year since diagnosis
- Only 18% of services had a transition clinic to support the transitioning of care for young people into adulthood
- Data suggests that emergency admission rates of children with epilepsy are highly variable throughout the UK – showing that there is variation in the specialist services available.

### ***What helps children and young people to get the opportunities they want?***

#### **Evidence from children and young people: Young Epilepsy**

**Ian from Young Epilepsy:** stated that he has had epilepsy and diabetes since he was 4 and he is now 19. He can not deal with his condition by himself and he has found that professionals and carers have been getting things wrong by not giving him the right medication. He feels they have not been listening to him and that they do not understand his condition. He would like professionals to be educated around his condition so that they get it right.

**Rhys from Young Epilepsy:** stated that he has suffered from migraines since the age of 7. He started having partial seizures from the age of 12 and then developed chronic seizures from the age of 13. His diagnosis was a very long process. By the age of 16, he had developed chronic fatigue syndrome. Difficulties within his treatment have included:

- Feeling constantly doubted throughout his medical history and not believed or trusted until medical proof was available. His family has always had to push for further investigation into his symptoms
- Waiting times of 6 months between seeing specialists, being left in the dark with his GP who has poor knowledge of epilepsy or his medication
- Since diagnosis, his medication has changed around 4/5 times. Disagreements between professionals have contributed to this and medical summaries of his appointments have been inaccurate.

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.rcpch.ac.uk/epilepsy12>

With regard to his education, Rhys has no formal qualifications and feels that it is crucial for adolescents with conditions like his to get extra help in order to achieve qualifications for future life. He feels that:

- Teachers failed to believe in his symptoms. Throughout his time having partial seizures, he was considered as being disrespectful and not paying attention in class
- His schools were reluctant to make changes to accommodate his condition: whilst more visible conditions received attention, conditions such as epilepsy were not taken seriously
- There was no help offered with catch up for missing school – copying a class-mates notes is not the same as being in a lesson. Using Skype to access lessons by video would have been useful for him but this facility was not made available.

### 4.3 Mental Health

#### ***What stops children and young people from getting the opportunities they want?***

A number of organisations and individuals gave evidence on the mental health of children and young people. Dr Hanvey from RCPC drew attention to the fact that half of all people with lifelong mental health problems first experience problems under the age of 14. When presenting the findings from a report on services provided by Childline from 2011-2012<sup>7</sup>, Mark Bajer stated that there has been a large and significant increase in the discussion of mental health issues. This includes self-harm, depression/mental health and suicide, all of which appear in the top ten main concerns discussed in counselling interactions during 2011-2012. Analysis of data for this period has shown that:

- self harm counselling interactions increased by 69%
- suicide interactions increased by 39%
- self harm referrals increased by over 100%
- suicide was the main reason for external referrals, representing 53%
- depression and mental health concerns feature in the top five concerns for 16 and 17 year olds
- multiple issues are often reported alongside each other: family relationships; self harm; and depression/mental health were talked about in over 75% of counselling interactions where the main concern was suicide.

Childline's online services were launched in 2009, and evidence suggests that young people find it easier to discuss issues such as depression, mental health, self-harm and suicide online, rather than on the phone.

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<sup>7</sup> NSPCC (2012) Saying the Unsayable: What's Affecting Children in 2012?  
[http://www.nspcc.org.uk/news-and-views/our-news/child-protection-news/12-12-04-childline-report/saying-the-unsayable-pdf\\_wdf93130.pdf](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/news-and-views/our-news/child-protection-news/12-12-04-childline-report/saying-the-unsayable-pdf_wdf93130.pdf)



## ***What helps children and young people to get the opportunities they want?***

### **Evidence from children and young people: Young Minds mobile phone app**

Last year, 'State of Mind: Young Londoners Manifesto for London'<sup>8</sup> was launched by Young Minds. The key message arising from young people was 'tell us where we can go when we need help.' In response to this, Young Minds have teamed up with NHS London and My Health London to develop the WellHappy App to help young people in London search for local support services including mental health, sexual health and substance misuse services<sup>9</sup>. The mapping of mental health, sexual health, well-being and drug/alcohol services in London is currently taking place.

*"There is currently a gap around knowledge of mental health for young people and more education is needed to help young people understand how to help themselves or their friends."* Cat Cormack, Young Minds

### **Evidence from children and young people: The Wells Unit, London**

The Wells Unit is a 10-bed, secure, adolescent, NHS inpatient mental health unit for young men up to the age of 19. Most young people are transferred from young offender's institutes and other secure settings for treatment of mental health difficulties. Most of the young people in the unit have experienced psychosis.

**Reece:** is in the process of leaving the Wells Unit and is now working at a city farm. He stated that:

- Negativity, junk food and drugs are bad for mental health
- Support and motivation to access gyms and other sports, including yoga and tai chi, are supportive of mental health, as well as having somewhere safe to live and someone to talk to
- There should be more access to phones in prisons, more time allowed out of cells and the opportunity to talk to someone for support. There should be more company and fresh air.

**Don:** spent eight months at the Wells Unit. Since leaving he has had a successful placement with the Princes Trust. Don was in prison for 2½ years and feels that he did not get any support until he got sent to a mental health hospital and then to The Wells Unit. He had been involved in gang-related problems since he was 11 and went to prison when he was 16. When he got into fights in prison, he was put into isolation for a couple of months at a time with no-one to talk to and no phone calls to his family. He was stressed all the time. When he was at the Wells Unit he found it useful to have people talk to him and ask him how was. He was not locked up in a cell and could go to the gym. He spoke to his family and saw them every week.

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<sup>8</sup> Young Minds (2012) State of Mind: Young Londoners Manifesto for London.  
<http://www.youngminds.org.uk/assets/0000/1205/state-of-mind-manifesto.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.myhealth.london.nhs.uk/london-living/health-apps/well-happy>



Don feels that:

- Not having support and not knowing who to talk to about problems can be very negative for the mental health of young people in prison
- Being in isolation for 23 hours a day is really bad for your mental health. There needs to be adults to talk to about how you are feeling, even if you are put in isolation
- Gang-related problems are really stressful
- There needs to be more access to family in prisons
- There needs to be more information about mental health available in prison.

Other young people in The Wells Unit informed the inquiry that:

- Prison is bad for mental health – it's stressful and scary and there is no-one to help
- There should be other community options instead of prison
- Too much time on your own is bad. There should be more time out of cells doing activities, more family contact and more phones
- There should be more support upon release – otherwise you go straight back into prison
- Prison staff need to be trained in looking after young people and not shouting.
- There should be more opportunities to succeed in life: jobs, apprenticeships, mentors, careers advice
- Young people should not be judged by their reputation
- Young people should have healthy food and a safe place to live
- Role models are positive – especially for young people who have no father
- There should be more support for families so that young people do not go into the care system
- There should be things to do to keep young people out of trouble, and support in schools.

## 4.4 Body image

### ***What stops children and young people from getting the opportunities they want?***

Caroline Nokes MP presented the findings from an inquiry led by the All Party Parliamentary Group on Body Image<sup>10</sup>. This found that almost half of girls and a third of boys aged 8-12 have a fear of becoming overweight and have dieted. Girls as young as 5 were found to be worried about their size and their weight, and much of the negativity towards body image in this young age group was found to come from mothers. Academic work on body image shows that it is a key and increasing component in self-esteem: the value we put upon our appearance is becoming

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<sup>10</sup> All Party Parliamentary Group on Body Image (2012) Reflections on Body Image  
<http://www.ymca.co.uk/bodyimage/report>



much greater and is disproportionate to other aspects of self-esteem and personal value. A poor self-image is more likely to lead to depression, eating disorders, and self-harm. An undermining of self-confidence leads to a reluctance to participate in health, education and social activities and can lead to wider societal problems. The report states that 70% of teenage girls do not participate in activities because of body image anxiety – for some, this included not wanting to go to school because of how they look.

### ***What helps children and young people to get the opportunities they want?***

Recommendations from the report on body image focused on the need for children to be enabled and empowered to feel confident during the process of growing up. This could include the development of programmes for parents which allow them to engender better self esteem and a greater understanding of body image in their children, mandatory lessons in school and better teacher training. Caroline explained how the media and the advertising industry bombard young people with images that are unrealistic and impossible for the average person to achieve. Whilst the average Body Mass Index of the general population is increasing, the size of fashion models is decreasing. The use of airbrushing, photo shopping and retouching mean that many images are not real.

*"I am not advocating for obese children – but for children to be happy and confident whatever their size, whatever their shape, whatever they look like."*  
Caroline Nokes, MP

A written submission from Brook<sup>11</sup> drew on the opinions of a group of young people when they were asked what they want and need in order to be as sexually healthy as possible, both physically and emotionally. It was concluded the constant media portrayal of unrealistic body types and relationships contributed to negative physical and mental health. As a result, Brook recommends that the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) should review current media guidelines in order to:

- Better encourage accurate representations of 'normal' bodies and relationships by the media
- Challenge stereotypical gender roles in order to support the healthy development of children and young people's self-esteem
- DCMS should also provide funding to support campaigning for more accurate, representative images to counter the media's lack of self-censorship and lack of willingness to portray 'normal' body types and relationships.

This view was also conveyed within a written submission from the All Party Parliamentary Group for Children's Media and The Arts, which commented on the negative impact of the media in relation to the 'on-going battle that girls have with body image.'

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.brook.org.uk/>

## 5. Rights, Respect and Everyday Life

*UNCRC Article 12: Every child has the right to say what they think in all matters affecting them, and to have their views taken seriously.<sup>12</sup>*

This area of the inquiry explored children's place in society and how their rights and entitlements are being respected. Much of the evidence was based around the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), and how this is implemented in the UK to ensure children and young people get the opportunities they want.

### **What stops children and young people from getting the opportunities they want?**

Paola Uccellari, Director, Children's Rights Alliance England (CRAE) discussed the *State of Children's Rights*<sup>13</sup> report produced by CRAE to review the development of children's rights over the past year (2012). Through this report, CRAE established that children and young people are often not given the opportunities they are entitled to based on the UNCRC. When the UN examined how well the UK is providing children's rights in 2008, it said that the Government needed to make improvements in 118 areas. Of the 118 recommendations from the UN, the report finds that the UK is:

- i. Moving backwards in relation to 31% of the recommendations, for example:
  - Child poverty is getting worse<sup>14</sup>
  - The most disadvantaged families are to be worst affected by changes to benefits and tax
  - The cuts faced by local authorities mean that they are finding it more difficult to help families who are in need.
- ii. There has been no significant change in relation to 43% of the recommendations, for example:
  - In England, children as young as 10 can go through the criminal justice system. This is the youngest age in the whole of Europe. There is no evidence that changing the age of criminal responsibility is on the Government's agenda
  - There is no evidence that the Government plans to legislate to stop parents from smacking their children.

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<sup>12</sup> Unicef (2012) Summary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child [http://www.unicef.org.uk/Documents/Publication-pdfs/betterlifeleaflet2012\\_press.pdf](http://www.unicef.org.uk/Documents/Publication-pdfs/betterlifeleaflet2012_press.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> Children's Rights Alliance for England (2013) State of Children's Rights in England 2012 <http://www.crae.org.uk/assets/files/s%20Rights%202012.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> The Institute for Fiscal Studies projects that by 2020 a quarter of children in the United Kingdom – 3.4 million – will be living in relative poverty. <http://www.ifs.org.uk/comms/r78.pdf>



- iii. There has been progress in relation to only 25% of the recommendations, for example:
- Reform of the Children's Commissioner: the Government has introduced legislation through the Children and Families Bill to give the Office of the Children's Commissioner (OCC) greater powers and to enhance its independence
  - The Government has spoken about improving outcomes for children who experience care
  - There has been a 21% decrease in the number of children who are in prison this year.

CRAE would like the Government to make a firm commitment to improving children's rights and putting in place a systematic approach to doing this. In 2010, the Government made a commitment in Parliament to give due consideration to the UNCRC when making new policy and legislation. However, investigations by CRAE into what Government departments are doing to implement this have resulted in a disappointing response; the only department which provided any meaningful analysis was the Department for Education. The Department for Work and Pensions, HM Treasury, the Ministry of Justice and the Home Office were not able to provide CRAE with information about how they assess the impact of what they are doing on children's rights. CRAE believes it is now time to recognise that political commitments aren't enough. A wide coalition of organisations working with children and young people are lobbying for a legal obligation to be placed on the Government to consider children's rights when making decisions.

### ***Opportunities for all?***

Young People from Newcastle City Council Children's Rights Team discussed their *Change-makers* project in which children and young people in Newcastle were asked if they thought there was enough to do in the area and if they had the opportunities that they wanted. The majority said yes. However, it was felt that young people fell into three categories: high achievers who get a lot of opportunities through school; vulnerable young people who are targeted for extracurricular support; and a large group in the middle, who do not have opportunities advertised to them. Therefore, they concluded that it is important to consider this group in the middle and make sure that there are obvious opportunities for everyone. Young people were also asked how opportunities should be advertised to them – 76% percent said interactive advertising through Facebook and the internet were the best methods.



## ***What helps children and young people to get the opportunities they want?***

### **Evidence from children and young people: Children's Rights Charter**

The Children and Young People's Charter<sup>15</sup> was created by 'CRAB' (Children's Rights Are Brilliant) at Newcastle Council Children's Rights Team. This provides a more relevant version of the UNCRC, as it was felt that some rights within this are more specific to developing countries. School road shows took place, where children's rights were explained and existing knowledge was discussed. There was positive feedback from these sessions; CRAB emphasised that it is important for all children and young people across the country to be informed of what their rights are.

Take-over days have taken place at Newcastle City Council, run by the Children's Rights Team. The Children and Young People's Charter was introduced to staff and they were asked to consider this in their decision making. Feedback sessions took place and pledges promising what would be done to consider young people were signed.

### **Evidence from children and young people: North Tyneside Children in Care Council**

Candy, Alan and Katie explained that North Tyneside Children in Care Council is a group of young people who have experience of being in care. North Tyneside Children in Care Council is the voice of all children in care, providing their opinions on the services that children in care receive. It has a very important role as it makes sure that the right things are being done:

- The Children in Care Council has been involved in the training of social work students about listening to children in care.
- Children in Care Council champions become key contacts in different areas, such as: leaving care; education; employment; and fostering. Champions support the recruitment and selection of staff within the local authority. This has included social workers, a participation officer and a disability manager. This was an enjoyable experience and the champions felt they were listened to when making recruitment decisions.
- The Children in Care Council raised an issue about contact with their families. They felt that they were often being taken to places that were unsuitable - such as crèches when they were too old - because there was nowhere else to go. They decided to take on the issue and apply for space and funding. They were awarded £11,000 and were given a new room for contact with families. They worked on the room diligently: this included stripping it bare, designing, redecorating and cleaning it. They are proud of their work and were given a positive behaviour award.

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<sup>15</sup> [http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/sites/drupalncc.newcastle.gov.uk/files/wwwfileroot/education-and-learning/young\\_people/childrens\\_rights\\_team\\_newsletter.pdf](http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/sites/drupalncc.newcastle.gov.uk/files/wwwfileroot/education-and-learning/young_people/childrens_rights_team_newsletter.pdf)



- The Children in Care Council has been involved in other projects, such as a project to get children more involved in cultural activities.
- A newsletter is sent to all young people in care so that they know what the Children in Care Council is working on. This also gives young people the chance to get in touch about projects taking place.

Baroness Onora O'Neill, Chair of the Equality and Human Rights Commission, commented that securing better protection for children's rights is a complex debate: each time you try and expand the remit of one right, you must make sure you are not 'shaving' another right. Challenges may occur when considering who holds which duties and obligations to uphold children's rights, for example: which rights belong to families? Which are public obligations? Which sorts of interventions by which sorts of public authorities are permissible or required when families fail?

## 6. Relationships

*UNCRC Article 15: Every child has the right to meet with other children and to join groups and organisations, as long as this does not stop other people from enjoying their rights.*

Evidence to the inquiry revealed the importance of the relationships that children and young people build with their families, peers and their communities. Witnesses emphasised the core role that positive relationships play in the healthy development of children and young people from the earliest stages of life, for instance through pre-school education, play and the home learning environment. The need for positive role models, stability, support and continuity in their relationships were key themes throughout. This was made clear by Cherry Healey, a television presenter and writer, who gave evidence on her experience of how to provide children and young people with the opportunity to build healthy relationships, having discussed relationships with experts and families from many different backgrounds when making television documentaries.

### 6.1. Families

#### ***What helps children and young people to get the opportunities they want?***

Cherry Healey described the ways in which parenting can be challenging for people from all walks of life. She raised concerns about the lack of support for those who may be struggling. She stated that the issue is not just a lack of facilities, but also a case of society not recognising the importance of being supported within relationships.

Cherry's view is that there is a 'cycle of chaos' which is passed down within families. She recommended that support should be provided to families in order to break this cycle - such as conflict resolution and better communication. She told the



inquiry that action should be taken to remove the stigma around receiving help and support with family relationships, particularly through providing these services with a higher profile in the media.

## **6.2. Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (PSHE)**

### ***What helps children and young people to get the opportunities they want?***

Whilst families provide the foundation for positive relationships for children and young people, schools and additional services play an important additional role for modelling and teaching positive behaviour, particularly when a strong foundation is not provided at home. PSHE education contributes to children and young people's personal development by helping them to build their personal identities, confidence and self-esteem, make career choices and understand what influences their decisions including financial ones.

Staff and pupils from Goose Green Primary School discussed the positive effects for the school of signing up to the PSHE Association's School Charter for PSHE Education<sup>16</sup>. Having previously been in special measures, the school has now been transformed and has achieved a 'good' Ofsted status across all areas. Ofsted commented positively on the dedication of staff to the well-being and learning of children and endorsed the rich curriculum with a strong emphasis on social and moral development for children. The school's head teacher, Sharron Marsland, put this largely down to the emphasis on PSHE within the school, which she described as the 'hidden curriculum.'

Children at Goose Green are given access to good relationships within the school through:

- Half-termly parent meetings, assemblies and productions to build on relations with the community. Visitors from the local area are regularly invited to the school
- 'Golden time' is earned by children throughout the week, which allows them to mix with who they like in activities they have chosen
- Staff behaviour and relationships are considered a model for good relationships for children
- Staff coordinate games during play time to model leadership, team work, support and problem solving. Staff also eat with children to enable more relaxed discussion out of class.

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<sup>16</sup> <http://www.pshe-association.org.uk/content.aspx?CategoryID=1129&ArticleID=1082>

### **Evidence from children and young people: Goose Green Primary School**

Pupils shared their views on what they think is important about PSHE:

- Peer supporters: children from each year are always there to talk to if you do not want to talk to a teacher
- A 'friendship stop' sign in the playground where children can go if they need someone to play with
- Comfort zones to go to be alone or get support when finding it hard to control emotions or feeling stressed
- Adults you can talk to
- Opportunities to do fun extra activities like holding the Olympic torch
- Teachers are friendly and will help you make progress on skills you might be stuck with

Pupils put together lists of relationships they thought were important, and what they would like in these relationships, these included:

- *Parents:* trust, care, love, grateful, respect, motivation, confidence, passion, happiness, patience, pride
- *Relatives:* love, respect, patience, passion, care, trust, honesty
- *Friends:* honesty, tolerance, support, care, commitment, acceptance, equality
- *Teachers:* trust, safety, patience, honesty, respect, care, look after you, acceptance, tolerance
- *Neighbours:* safety, respect, trust, honesty, acceptance, support

PSHE education includes sex and relationships education and social and emotional aspects of learning. A written submission to the inquiry from Brook<sup>17</sup> drew on the opinions of a group of young people when they were asked what they want and need in order to be as sexually healthy as possible, both physically and emotionally. Following this, it was concluded that good quality, age appropriate sex and relationships education should be implemented in all schools, including academies, as part of statutory PSHE lessons. This education should be delivered by professionals who have been appropriately trained through accredited courses, or by accredited trainers.

The inquiry also heard a range of evidence about the way in which growing up and building relationships in an increasingly digital age affects children and young people. The online world can provide a number of risks as well as opportunities in relation to online conduct and engagement. Witnesses made recommendations about ways to help children be good 'online citizens'. Access to the support and learning provided by schools as part of the PSHE curriculum was recommended as

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<sup>17</sup> <http://www.brook.org.uk/>



an effective way of addressing the risks presented by online bullying and viewing inappropriate conduct.

### **Evidence from children and young people: Get Money Savvy campaign**

Teri-Ann spoke about her involvement in the *Get Money Savvy* campaign, a partnership project between the Personal Finance Education Group (PfEG) and Young NCB.

The *Get Money Savvy* campaign<sup>18</sup> focused on getting high quality personal finance education into every school. The campaign was launched at an All Party Parliamentary Group on Finance Education for Young People event, and since then Young NCB has been working with PfEG to develop a campaigning toolkit called '*Our Money, Our Future*'<sup>19</sup>.

*"When it comes to feeling financially secure, to me this would mean knowing how much money I have and knowing it's in a safe and secure bank that I have easy access to. Knowing when I could afford to move out of home and what is expected from me to pay out... There are links between finance or having money and the opportunities you get in life, especially for children living in different families and circumstances."*

Teri-Ann Watson, Young NCB member

A written submission from 'A National Voice'<sup>20</sup> also drew attention to the importance of training to manage budgets for young people leaving care, as 'it is vital for them to be able to manage their own money in order to achieve financial security.'

## **7. Education**

Education is vitally important for children and young people in providing the foundation for their future development and learning. Children and young people spend seven hours a day at school; the qualifications they gain frame their futures in an increasingly competitive and meritocratic job market. Opportunities provided by education can impact on the social, emotional and academic development of children from the early years onwards. As stated by the Government, 'Education allows individuals to choose a fulfilling job, to shape the society around them, to enrich their inner life. It allows us all to become authors of our own life stories'<sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/getmoneysavvy>

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.youngncb.org.uk/PDF/Our%20Money%20Our%20Future%20Toolkit.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.anationalvoice.org/about/about-anv>

<sup>21</sup> Department for Education (2010) The Importance of Teaching.

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/175429/CM-7980.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/175429/CM-7980.pdf)



## 7.1 Young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET)

The main focus of this area of the inquiry was on the secondary education of children and young people and their learning beyond the age of 16. This is a pertinent topic given the new Government initiative to raise the age to which all young people in England must continue in education or training<sup>22</sup>. Furthermore, the UK has a high number of young people aged 15-19 who are not participating in education, employment or training ('NEET'). These numbers are affected by economic conditions and employment opportunities, as well as by the effectiveness of education systems in preparing young people for the transition to work. A UNICEF comparison of 29 of the world's most advanced economies shows that the UK has the 5<sup>th</sup> highest 'NEET' rate with approximately 9.5% of young people aged 15-19 falling into this category. The UK also has the 3<sup>rd</sup> highest rate of teenage pregnancy<sup>23</sup>.

### ***What stops children and young people from getting the opportunities they want?***

Dr Barry Percy-Smith, Reader in Childhood and Participatory Practice at the University of the West of England, provided evidence from recent research exploring the experiences of young people who at the time were not in education, employment or training ('NEET'). He explained that this group often has needs and realities which are very different to those of other young people, and which do not fit neatly with the standard model of education and work trajectories. In order to understand what they need, we need to understand what is going on in their worlds, on their terms. There is a huge gap between policy and practice and the realities of young people who are NEET.

### ***What helps children and young people to get the opportunities they want?***

Dr Percy-Smith challenged assumptions about what is needed for young people who are, or who are at risk of becoming NEET, arguing that education is not always the right solution for many young people and the 'academic gold standard' does not suit everybody. Alternative options should be opened up in order to ensure young people get the opportunities they want. Young people often end up NEET not because of a lack of educational opportunities, but because traditional school has not benefited them. Staying longer in education is unlikely to change this: we need to think differently. Rather than try and fit these young people into a normative model of education, the system needs to have more flexibility built in to respond better to the diversity of young people's needs. This means understanding and

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<sup>22</sup> This requires young people to continue in education or training until the end of the academic year in which they turn 17 from 2013 and until their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday from 2015. Young people currently in Year 11 and below are affected. They will be able to choose one of the following options post-16: full-time education, such as school, college or home education; an apprenticeship; or part-time education or training if they are employed, self-employed or volunteering full-time (which is defined as 20 hours or more a week).

<sup>23</sup> UNICEF (2013) Report Card 11: Child Well-Being in Rich Countries

<http://www.unicef.org.uk/Latest/Publications/Report-Card-11-Child-well-being-in-rich-countries/>



responding to the reasons why young people find it difficult to engage and achieve in school.

The main themes to arise from the research included:

- *Legacy of early disadvantage* – the young people interviewed had similar dreams and aspirations to the wider population, but were starting from a very different context, characterised by various types of disadvantage
- *Education is not the only priority* - for some, education is not a priority e.g. a young mother's immediate priority is to be a good parent, despite also having future career aspirations
- *Inappropriate educational provision* - school does not suit some young people: emphasis on an academic curriculum alienates many young people; vocational and creative curriculum offer more appropriate alternatives for some
- *Alternative / complementary education* – evidence shows that complementary education is a productive experience
- *Education/labour market barriers* – difficulty in finding work due to lack of opportunities/employer prejudice towards young people; difficult to find apprenticeships; unhelpful career guidance professionals; difficulties accessing courses.

Recommendations from Dr Percy-Smith's research included:

- Strengths-based approaches responding to young people as *people* not labels, which help them discover their own interests and abilities and respect context
- Improved pastoral support in schools, especially for young people with complex issues and more effective early intervention
- Investment in wider services and support for young people with complex issues to support the work of schools
- Need for a diversity of educational provision, in and out of school to meet a variety of educational orientations and learning styles, including vocational / creative options and complementary learning
- Approaches to information, advice and guidance need to be more responsive to young people's realities
- Need for a drive to create real opportunities for young people including apprenticeships, opportunities to gain experience and incentives for employers to take on young people.



### **Evidence from children and young people: Langdon School, Newham**

Evidence from a group of young people from Langdon School in Newham supported many of the recommendations made by Dr Percy-Smith. In particular, they stated that having a good careers officer to provide information about different colleges, courses and universities is very useful. They also commented that not all students are academically able to learn and vocational courses are good for these students. Therefore, not all students should stay in education until they are 18 and alternatives should be provided.

## **7.2 Good quality education**

Susan Gregory, National Director of Education at Ofsted, outlined how Ofsted is supporting educational opportunities and experiences within the context of significant changes to the education system. She explained that the role of Ofsted is to hold schools to account in order to find out 'how good the deal is' for the children and young people in their care. A new inspection framework introduced in September 2012 expects that every school should now be a 'good' school as every child and young person deserves *at least* a good quality education. When inspecting a school Ofsted will consider:

- What is it like for pupils at the school, and what is their achievement like?
- Behaviour, personal development, and how safe a school is for pupils
- Teaching – what is teaching like across a school and across year groups?
- The strength and the quality of leadership

Inspections give particular emphasis to:

- How schools are narrowing the gap for the most disadvantaged pupils: the recently introduced pupil premium provides additional funding for the most disadvantaged pupils. Ofsted will now question a school on how much money they receive, how they have spent it, and the difference it is making.
- How schools teach basic skills: too many pupils leave school without basic skills within subjects such as English and Mathematics. Nationally, schools are not managing to reduce the wide educational achievement gap which is present for disadvantaged pupils from a young age: the quality of provision for disadvantaged pupils across schools and colleges is too variable.
- The quality of teaching: this forms the heart of Ofsted inspections and is key to pupil's engagement and enjoyment across nursery, primary, secondary school and college.

Susan Gregory informed the inquiry that providers of post-16 education face particular challenges around improving the quality of education, particularly basic skills teaching for English and Mathematics and making sure that teaching is as good as it needs to be. The recent Ofsted Annual Report stated that teaching in colleges is not improving quickly enough. College leaders should be focusing on improving teaching and provision should be monitored scrupulously.



## 7.3 Speech, language and communication

I CAN is a national charity supporting communication skills in all children and young people, particularly those who have difficulties such as speech and language needs. The importance of good communication for opportunities, outcomes and life chances is central to the mission of their work:

- 10% (1.2 million) of children and young people in the UK have quite significant speech and language communication needs – numbers are higher within disadvantaged groups, meaning that many more of these children have difficulty accessing the school curriculum.
- Longitudinal studies show that language skills at age 5 are the strongest predictor of successful outcomes in adulthood.
- Spoken language skills are key to many aspects of a child’s learning – e.g. written language skills, developing social and emotional skills, and developing relationships.
- 60-90% of young people involved with youth offending have poor communication skills – many of these go unrecognised.
- 88% of unemployed young men have language difficulties.

### ***What helps children and young people to get the opportunities they want?***

Two recommendations for the current education system were put forward by I CAN:

- A curriculum offering personalised, tailored, flexible support with an appropriate focus on developing children and young people’s communication skills
- School staff and practitioners who understand the importance of speech and language communication, and who are able to identify children with difficulties

### **Evidence from children and young people: ICAN**

Two pupils from Dawn House, an I CAN School in Nottinghamshire, discussed their experiences:

**Sam:** explained the challenges he faced as a child with speech and language needs. People would ask him to repeat what he said and did not understand him as his speech was unclear. He could not make all the important speech sounds and it was hard to form words in his head and let them flow into a sentence. People would talk to him then look at his mum to answer for him. He wanted to talk but people put him to one side. Children at school did not interact with him or play with him at break time, or invite him to parties. Teachers at his first mainstream school knew what he was going through but did not know how to help him in his school life. His education did not meet his needs as he struggled with basic skills such as reading, writing and knowing what to do.



When Sam went Dawn House the school staff and speech and language therapists helped him to improve his speech, understanding and basic skills. He had speech therapy every day. Over the years his speech improved, he was able to make friends and he gained more self-confidence. It made him a happy child and he learnt to read and write. Maths is still tricky but he is really good at PE which makes him feel great about himself and his ability. He is now a qualified first-aider, can travel independently and has been involved with planning and setting up events for school. He wouldn't have achieved all this without the help, support and 1:1 speech therapy he received.

**Priya:** explained that Dawn House School has helped her to learn and communicate better. She has problems with speaking clearly, understanding what people say, explaining things, remembering things, reading and spelling. Speech and language therapy helps her to learn, to slow down so people can understand her, to keep conversation going and understand what to do. Small classes and the staff also help her.

## 8. Youth

Youth policy and services was a recurring area of discussion when considering opportunities for children and young people.

### ***What stops children and young people from getting the opportunities they want?***

Not only has the recession led to an increasing number of young people not in education, employment or training, but it has also led to significant cuts to the public and voluntary sector services providing support to young people<sup>24</sup>. Parliamentarians and professionals in attendance at meetings expressed concern that youth policy is not taken seriously enough, in particular given comments made by Education Secretary Michael Gove at an Education Select Committee evidence session, during which he stated that youth policy is a local not a central Government priority<sup>25</sup>.

### ***What helps children and young people to get the opportunities they want?***

Evidence provided by London Youth, a membership of 400 youth clubs across London, working with 75,000 young people, promoted the value of youth work to support young people at a time when many odds are stacked against them. Rosie Ferguson, Chief Executive of London Youth, explained that an evaluation of their 'Positive Change' programme providing interventions for young people involved in gangs and preventing young people from getting involved in violent behaviour, has

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<sup>24</sup> The large reduction in overall grant from central government to local authorities and the cuts to the Early Intervention Grants mean that the sector is facing a number of challenges. Local government [statistics](#) published by the DfE show a fall of 10.4% in planned total expenditure on services for young people between 2011/12 and 2012/13. Outturn expenditure published in January 2013 report that local authority spending on services for young people fell by 26% in the space of just a year.

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmselect/cmeduc/uc853-i/uc85301.htm>



shown that positive outcomes were achieved through bonding and positive relationships with programme leaders. While it is difficult to establish the exact intervention which results in successful outcomes within youth work, positive experience and good outcomes are often about relationships built with youth workers.

### **Evidence from children and young people: London Youth**

**Igor:** discussed his experiences of attending and volunteering at a youth club in Stockwell, South East London:

- He was 8 years old when he started attending the youth club, which he enjoyed, but as he got older, he became mixed up in bad behaviour.
- A youth worker showed him that the direction he was going in was not a good path and gave him support that he was not getting anywhere else – not from school, college, or from home.
- His youth worker asked if he wanted to start volunteering at the youth club, which he agreed to. He wasn't sure about volunteering because of his troubled background, but his youth worker gave him a lot of support to succeed within the role.
- Over the years, he has realised that he was not the only young person struggling with the crime and gangs that are in his area. He now wants to give something back to the community and show young people that there is support out there within youth clubs all over London, which are safe, supportive and inspirational environments.

**Kay:** discussed her experiences of attending and volunteering at a youth club in Guildford:

- When she started going to the youth club, she was on a destructive path. When she met a youth worker, she found it hard to trust him. But he got her into a boxing course, from which she learnt a great deal and her relationships with adults began to change as she started to realise that adults can help her in her development.
- She trained to become a boxing tutor and is now also a youth worker.
- Kay feels her experience of being on both sides means she can be a good role model to young people. Youth work provides informal learning for children who might not get on at school, and a different environment in which to develop social skills.

Rosie explained that London Youth are currently leading on the *Talent Match* programme focusing on young people who have been unemployed for over a year, in particular those with additional needs such as care leavers. Consultations with these young people have clearly and continually highlighted a lack of consistent personal support within their lives. Therefore, London Youth are looking to provide one:one support for young people up to the age of 25 in the way that a parent or carer might. Consistency and continuity are central to relationships for young



people and society must look at ways of building strong networks within our communities to support them.

### **Evidence from children and young people: Newcastle Children's Rights Team**

Young People from Newcastle City Council Children's Rights Team provided oral evidence on specific youth services within their community. Whilst they informed the inquiry that funding cuts have meant some of the services they use have been cut, they also discussed some innovative projects and low cost alternatives. These included:

- Space-2: a project designed because there was not a space designated for children and young people in the city. It aims to provide a safe place for young people, where they have an element of control around what activities take place. It is a low cost alternative to the youth service which has been cut.
- Key-fund: set up to fund activities that cannot be afforded by youth groups. It is also designed to develop skills for young people, encouraging team building and community action – young people can apply for money directly and projects must be designed to develop local communities.

### **Case Study: Girlguiding UK**

Since 2009, Girlguiding UK have been collecting evidence on the opinions of girls within the Girls Attitudes Survey, which aims to canvass opinions throughout the UK to find out about: what matters to girls within their lives; how they feel about things; and how they see the world. Julie Bentley, Chief Executive of Girlguiding UK, discussed the findings on relationships:

- Parents, close family and friends were the most important role models to girls. 60% of girls considered their parents to be good role models for relationships. 25% of girls aged 11-16 said they would appreciate a positive influence to help them deal with smoking, alcohol and drugs. Only 8% of girls said they did not need role models in their lives.
- As girls grow older they stated they need role models in a number of areas including: careers; education; relationships; sex; work-life-balance; friendships; body image; and health.
- A narrow range of positive role models is linked to a limited range of aspirations for the future and can affect expectations of what normal behaviour is. Celebrity culture plays an important part in this. Many girls struggled to name a female sportsperson or a non-celebrity businesswoman, but many could name pop-singers and actresses. Some girls justified smoking and drinking behaviour as a result of television programmes normalising the behaviour.

To help counter negative role models, GirlGuiding UK have produced a series of videos which highlight 12 inspirational women from a range of backgrounds and careers, including several industries dominated by men.



**Bijal from the Girlguiding UK Advocate Panel:** explained that being a member of Girlguiding UK has helped form the way she views herself: she has gained confidence and self esteem and has been helped to see her potential to achieve in life. She has had the opportunity to get to know new people and has built a great group of friends. Whilst still considering her parents and family to be strong role models in her life, Bijal has found many strong role models within Guiding, in particular, her Guide Leader who has been inspirational and has greatly encouraged her to achieve. Bijal thinks it is important to have as many people around to talk to as possible when growing up and this very important for relationships and all areas of life. Many of the skills she has learnt within Guiding will be useful for building relationships within her future career, such as communication, leadership and confidence.

**Rachel from the Girlguiding UK Advocate Panel:** explained how Guiding has supported her within her relationships by providing a supportive environment in which she can develop herself, her skills, friendships, self-esteem and self-confidence, and grow as an individual. She has learnt skills and opportunities which have helped her to build relationships outside the organisation both socially and professionally, and has been provided with many positive role models which have shown her that as a woman, she can succeed in a range of different careers.

## 9. Conclusion

It is clear from the evidence reviewed during the course of this inquiry that some children and young people are afforded greater life chances and access to opportunities than others.

Following the examination of opportunities during childhood and adolescence, a number of barriers were identified:

- Many children and young people living in disadvantage or experiencing challenging situations are not able to fully access their rights and entitlements;
- Slow identification of need and coordination of services is impeding children and young people from experiencing good mental and physical health, and a positive body image;
- Supportive and fulfilling relationships are vital: greater emphasis is needed to ensure children and young people are supported to develop attachments with their families, peers and community.

The All Party Parliamentary Group for Children heard from many children and young people who felt they are getting the opportunities they want and need; and where barriers exist restricting their access to opportunity and positive lifestyle, they presented solutions to address these.

Evidence illustrated how current policy and practice can hinder children and young people's access to opportunities and the respecting of their rights and entitlements.



As support can be patchy and inconsistent, and issues relating to children and young people's rights and well-being are often not treated with the level of urgency these deserve, far too many children and young people are prevented from accessing opportunities that they want.

The APPGC maintains that youth policy, and establishing positive relationships that allow young people to make positive choices, is a high priority for Government. The inquiry has identified the need to ensure that youth workers are able to make a positive contribution to the lives of children and young people. One cannot expect to change the lives of young people, or to make progress in addressing issues that concern us in society, without ensuring that support is available in the community to help young people.

The All Party Parliamentary Group for Children recommends the following action to improve the quality and access to opportunities and life chances for children and young people:

- The Department of Health, NHS England and Public Health England should take action to implement the recommendations of the Children and Young People's Health Outcomes Forum (the Forum) in full and should report back to the Forum on progress
- The Government should introduce a legal obligation for public bodies to have due regard for children's rights, as set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, in making decisions affecting children and young people
- Schools should ensure that they offer a range of personalised, tailored, flexible support with an appropriate focus on developing children and young people's communication skills, and should ensure that children and young people have guaranteed access to Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education
- A cross-Government youth strategy should be established, building on *Positive for Youth*, and driven by the Department for Education, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, Department for Communities and Local Government, Department for Work and Pensions and Department of Health.



## Appendix 1: List of Witnesses

Alison Garnham, Chief Executive, Child Poverty Action Group  
Celia Allaby, Education Policy and Development Director, Personal Financial Education Group  
Teri-Ann Watson, Young NCB  
Dr Chris Hanvey, Chief Executive, Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health  
Caroline Nokes MP, Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Body Image  
Professor Helen Cross, The Prince of Wales's Chair of Childhood Epilepsy  
Kat Cormack, Project Manager, Young Minds and My Health  
Ian, Reece and Arthur from Young Epilepsy  
Dr Molly Bodinetz, Clinical Psychologist, and Jo Bownas, Family Therapist, from the Wells Unit – accompanied by Reece and Don  
Mark Bajer, Senior Supervisor, Childline London and South East  
Susan Gregory, National Director for Education, Ofsted  
Dr Barry Percy-Smith, Reader in Childhood and Participatory Practice, University of the West of England  
Mary Hartshorne, Head of Quality and Outcomes, I CAN, accompanied by Sam and Priya  
Young people from Langdon School, Newham  
Cherry Healey, television presenter and writer  
Sharron Marsland, headteacher, and Melonie Syrett, PSHE Coordinator and chartered PSHE teacher, from Goose Green Primary School, East Dulwich - accompanied by Year Six children  
Julie Bentley, Chief Executive of Girlguiding UK – accompanied by Bijal and Rachel, Senior Section members  
Rosie Ferguson, Chief Executive of London Youth - accompanied by Igor and Kay  
Baroness Onora O'Neill, Chair of the Equality and Human Rights Commission  
Paola Uccellari, Director, Children's Rights Alliance for England (CRAE)  
Candy, Alan and Katie from North Tyneside Children in Care Council  
Lusi, Steph, Eleanor and Leah from Newcastle City Council Children's Rights Team

## Appendix 2: Written Evidence

### a) List of written submissions:

A National Voice  
All Party Parliamentary Group for Children's Media and The Arts  
Brook  
Transition to Adulthood Alliance

### b) Responses to call for evidence:

Think Global  
NSPCC  
Caspari Foundation  
InterAct Chelmsford Ltd  
Katie Clarke  
University of Leicester and the Letterbox Club  
Girlguiding UK



I CAN

London Youth

Newcastle City Council

North Tyneside Children in Care Council

Lucy Sweetman - Consultant, Trainer and Writer

Máire Stedman, Consultant Systemic Psychotherapist

MeWe Arts

Mellow Parenting

National Association of Independent Schools and Non-Maintained Special Schools

Norland College and Norland Nursery

The Children's Society

WAVE Trust

The Communication Trust

Young Epilepsy





NCB's vision is of a society in which children and young people contribute, are valued, and their rights respected. Our mission is to improve children and young people's experiences and life chances, reducing the impact of inequalities. NCB aims to:

- reduce inequalities of opportunity in childhood
- ensure children and young people can use their voice to improve their lives and the lives of those around them
- improve perceptions of children and young people
- enhance the health, learning, experiences and opportunities of children and young people
- encourage the building of positive and supportive relationships for children and young people with families, carers, friends and communities
- provide leadership through the use of evidence and research to improve policy and practice.

NCB has adopted and works within the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

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