

NOT SEEN, NOT HEARD

A report on child safeguarding and health care for looked after children in England

WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR YOU?

Children and young people have the right to get the care that they need, when and where they need it. It doesn't matter who you are or where you live.

Healthcare services and other organisations that work with children and young people have a responsibility to keep you safe. The Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspects health services and we make sure they are keeping children safe and healthy.

Over the last two years, we've visited different areas across England to find out just how well health care services are helping children in care to be healthy and happy, and whether they are helping all children to be safe from harm. We make sure that we talk to children and young people during our inspections, and we ask them about their experiences. We want to share with you what we have learned so far – especially how different services work together to make sure they're always doing the best they can for children.

Although many areas are doing a good job, many others need to improve so that all children and young people get the same good care and are protected from harm. This is what we found:

- 1. Two out of every three young people we spoke with told us they didn't feel involved in their care.** They told us they didn't have much say on what was going on with their health. We said that health services need to really listen to children and young people to find out what they want and need, and to find the best way to keep them safe and well.
- 2. Most areas that we visited couldn't prove to us that they were making a difference to children and young people.** We said they need to make sure that what they do is actually improving things. Children and young people told us the thing that makes the biggest difference to them is when the health professional they're speaking to actually listens to them, and shows them that they really care.
- 3. Health staff need to improve how they share information with the right people at the right time** so that children don't get lost in the system. They also need to be better at **noticing the dangers to children that are not so obvious** – like when a child's parents are unwell, or when adults take advantage of young people.



“My counsellor was amazing. He told me about his experience and background and showed he cared. The first day I met him I felt I could tell him how I feel.”

4. **When young people are old enough to leave children's care services it can be very difficult for them to move to adult services.** The same goes for children in care who are moved to another area or leave care, such as when they're 18 or are adopted. They often don't have information about their past or don't know how to find health services and support in the future. We said that **young people in care need much more support at this tricky time in their lives.**
5. Most mental health problems for adults started when they were a child. We know that getting the support that young people need, when and where they need it, makes a big difference to how quickly they get better. Unfortunately, because so many people need mental health services, they are struggling to keep up with demand, and it means that they're letting young people down. **They need the staff and support to be able to do their job properly,** and not have to turn people away.
6. The people who run care services can make a difference to you. They can make sure that **the right people are doing the right job, are well-trained, and are properly organised to deliver care,** so that you get the quality services that you need when you're not well or need help. But not all areas are getting this right.

You can help CQC to find out where care needs to improve. We need you to tell us what things are really like in your area by telling us about your experiences of health care – both good and bad – so we can take action to make sure that services improve.

Our Children and Young People's Advisory Group meets to talk about experiences of care, which also helps us to do our job better. Find out more about us on our website www.cqc.org.uk

"When we've been moved out of borough, the care we're getting suddenly gets cut off then we have to start again when we go somewhere new, usually at the end of the waiting list."

"I don't know why the system thinks a 16 year old is an adult. Kids in care haven't even had a childhood. How can we be an adult at 16?"

GET INVOLVED!

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