

research
in practice



Listening to young people with care experience

Learning from Carefree's approach to
working with young people



Acknowledgments

This report was made possible by the young people who make Carefree what it is; who passionately promote the rights and needs of care experienced people in Cornwall and more widely. Many thanks to all of the young people, volunteers, and employees of Carefree who have contributed.

Authors

This report was written and edited for Research in Practice by Oli Preston and Lorna Trend.

© Research in Practice, 2020

Research in Practice is a programme of The Dartington Hall Trust which is registered in England as a company limited by guarantee and a charity. Company No. 1485560 Charity No. 279756 VAT No. 402196875 Registered Office: The Elmhurst Centre, Dartington Hall, Totnes TQ9 6EE

Carefree

Carefree is a charity working across Cornwall to improve the lives of people aged 11 to 25 with care experience. Their work involves positive activities, events and projects that help young people develop their social and emotional skills so that they have a better chance of growing up into positive and healthy citizens.

The charity was established in 2005 by a group of six young people and a youth worker. Carefree has two roles; as a charity delivering youth work to young people aged 11-25 years; and the statutory delivery of a Personal Advisor (PA) service supporting care leavers aged 16 and above. The staff team currently comprises of a small management team and 22 members of staff, including seven PAs and four apprentices. Around 30% of Carefree's staff team are care experienced themselves and some were supported by Carefree as young people.

Research in Practice

Research in Practice is a charity working across England and Wales to help organisations and individuals to access, understand and apply evidence in their work with children, young people, adults and families. By bringing together academic research, practice expertise and the experiences of those engaging with services, this knowledge is applied into a range of resources and learning opportunities.

The Listening Fund

This report reflects a research partnership between Research in Practice and Carefree, funded by **The Listening Fund**; a collaboration between the Big Lottery Fund, the Blagrove Trust, Comic Relief, and Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, which aims to *“invest in learning and scaling practice at an organisational level that enables young people to be agents of change, listens to and responds to their needs, and analyses the difference this makes.”*

About this report

Carefree and Research in Practice formed a research partnership in 2018, supported by funding from the Listening Fund. Through a number of workshops and further conversations, Research in Practice has captured evidence related to Carefree's approach to supporting young people and young adults with care experience. This report aims to distil this evidence and deliver key messages on ways in which other organisations can improve the lives of people in and leaving care, adding to the growing number of initiatives across the sector supporting participation, such as The **Care Experienced Conference** and Hear By Right framework (Badham & Wade, 2010). In particular, we hope that this resource can support:

- > Social care teams covering fostering
- > Leaving care teams
- > Corporate parenting boards
- > Voluntary organisations working with young people with care experience
- > Foster parents

Collecting evidence

The partnership between Carefree and Research in Practice was conducted between 2018 and 2020. In the first phase of work, Research in Practice facilitated a workshop involving young people, volunteers and employees of Carefree, utilising a range of creative approaches to understand and document the Carefree approach to supporting people with care experience. Subsequent work has involved working with Carefree's Participation Team, and shadowing Carefree as they hosted a Corporate Parenting Board meeting at Cornwall Council. This work also incorporates the wider evidence related to supporting people with care experience, and draws conclusions related to practice.

For this work, Research in Practice has taken a flexible approach to ensure we are able to gather the views of young people and Carefree stakeholders in a positive, appropriate way, whilst also retaining methodological rigour and gathering useful evidence. As such, in this event a range of different activities were used, many of which were alternative to traditional research methods, which aim to capture honest, engaged feedback from participants in the context of Carefree and their activities. These methods included:

- > **Photo and image-related tasks:** Using imagery to guide conversations about complex topics.
- > **Filming:** Using video interviews to capture the views of young people.
- > **Drawing / timeline tasks:** Using a timeline and drawing to capture support and experiences in different contexts and from multiple people.
- > **Games:** Both to improve relationships and communication related to research questions, and to make the research process more engaging and fun.
- > **Observations:** Shadowing Carefree in their work with the Cornwall Council Corporate Parenting Board to better understand the nature of this relationship and impact of young people in the corporate parenting process.

Throughout this partnership, Research in Practice and Carefree took great care to protect the young people who participated in this work; including gaining informed consent for any research activities, and anonymising all research outputs.

Although the research partnership has only been able to capture the views of a select group of young people, volunteers, and employees of Carefree; the detailed nature of this approach has provided a rich body of evidence which has enabled conclusions which may be of value to a range of professionals and organisations working with care experienced people.

'Listening'

In keeping with the aims of the Listening Fund, who supported this work, the key focus of this resource is listening; and in particular, listening to the views of young people with care experience. As an overarching theme, this might be considered relatively broad and subjective. Therefore, a key part of the work with young people involved with Carefree has been focussed on reaching a definition of 'listening', and in particular, what it means to be listened to as a young person with care experience.

There are many practical and academic definitions of 'listening' in the literature. For instance Worthington and Brodie (2017) define listening as *"a multidimensional construct that consists of complex (a) affective processes, such as being motivated to attend to others; (b) behavioral processes, such as responding with verbal and nonverbal feedback; and (c) cognitive processes, such as attending to, understanding, receiving, and interpreting content and relational messages."*

This report builds on a definition of listening to define 'good listening' through the eyes of care experienced young people. Young people from Carefree talked about their experiences of being listened to, including from the volunteers and employees of Carefree, their family, and wider experiences; and their views were refined into these 'twelve rules for being a good listener'.

The twelve points below which make up this definition help shape the remainder of this resource. In and of itself, it may also be a useful starting point for those professionals, volunteers and researchers who work directly with care experienced people.

Crucially, listening is not just about the listener hearing what is said; but also about how they make clear that they are listening, and agree together what outcomes or actions will take place as a result. In other words, listening is a collaborative, two-way process.

1. Create a safe, open space to talk
2. Give your full attention, stop what you're doing, remove distractions
3. Use positive body language – nod and make eye contact
4. Show that you care and are interested in what is being said
5. Use simple language and speak clearly
6. Use silence at times and don't interrupt
7. Respond to what is said
8. Be respectful to people's views
9. Hold back judgement and consider different views
10. Repeat back key points to clarify
11. Give honest feedback, but be positive
12. Make an action plan, explain what you're going to do next

Young people discussed listening and being listened to in multiple contexts. This could be with a carer or foster parent. It could be with support workers (such as the volunteers, peer mentors and employees of Carefree). It could also be how they are listened to by local services and those who have a responsibility to offer care and support services.

Ensuring that the voices of young people are listened to at a service level is perhaps more complicated than the rules for being a good listener set out by young people (however, they are still an essential part of the process). The cultural conditions within an organisation can inhibit or promote effective engagement with young people and influence the listening process. Reflection is necessary for professionals to consider how they view young people as well as how they view their own roles as professionals (experts, rescuers, and / or enablers) and to consider what impact this has on listening to young people and how they are heard (Atkinson et al., 2015). In addition, effectively listening to young people also requires clear opportunities for listening to occur, and positive relationships which facilitate this.

Listening to young people with care experience is an essential underpinning for co-production at many levels; from decision and policy making to co-design and delivery of specific services. Projects such as The Care Experienced Conference facilitated workshop discussions, a report and resources listening to individuals with care experience and provides an example of co-production in setting the research agenda. In the case of Carefree, the relationship between young people with care experience and the Corporate Parenting Board at Cornwall Council offers a supported and facilitated means by which young people can have their voices heard at a strategic level. The next section discusses this approach in further detail.

Listening at a corporate level

Carefree support young people with a variety of backgrounds and previous experiences, including many who have had traumatic experiences in their lives. As such, there is also variance in the extent to which these young people wish to engage with statutory services. Nonetheless, their views and opinions are central to designing and offering effective social care which fulfils its statutory duty to uphold and fulfil the rights and wellbeing of children and young people.

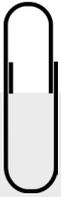
Ensuring *all* young people with care experience have the opportunity to be listened to is therefore a challenging task.

It cannot be assumed that providing an open invitation to engage with services is enough to capture all voices; nor can it be assumed that the views and opinions of a few young people represent the diverse experiences of all care experienced young people.

Indeed, there is a question of ‘volume’ when it comes to listening to the voices of lived experience. How do we ensure that all voices have equal volume, and that decisions are not made based on the loudest voices? At a corporate level, a democratic approach to listening is therefore central to ensuring young people have an opportunity to contribute to decision making. This might involve systematic ways to generate topics to focus on, such as regular workshops or surveys, and developing multiple ways for young people to engage with these topics. It might also include delegating the role of communicating with services to a few young people who can be supported to represent the interests of their peers as well as advocating for their own views.

Carefree offers a model of how this approach can be coordinated by an organisation for the benefit of young people across a wide geographical area, and with a wide range of experiences. This approach, described below, is one model of listening in this context which may be of value to organisations wishing to strengthen their processes for listening to the voices of experience in their services; however a number of alternative national and local initiatives exist (e.g. Badham & Wade, 2010).

Developing relationships	Providing opportunities	Scheduling communication	Feedback	Sustainability
<p>Carefree works with a range of young people by offering multiple ways to engage and build relationships.</p> <p>These might be one-to-one support, mentoring, group work, activity-based / outdoor opportunities, and residential trips.</p>	<p>Throughout activities, and via structured groups, Carefree speaks to young people about their experiences and priorities. Groups such as Carefree’s ‘Voice 4 Us’ distil these messages into areas of focus.</p> <p>Empowerment is central to this approach, where young people feel able to make changes, are in control of their work, and not patronised by adults.</p>	<p>Carefree organises opportunities for young people from their groups to engage with decision makers, such as the local Corporate Parenting Board and national leaving care events (such as via the National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum).</p> <p>These events ensure young people’s views are on the agenda; normalising the process of young people being involved in strategic decision making.</p>	<p>Interactions with corporate services can feel intimidating. This might be exacerbated for young people with care experience. The Carefree approach is to work as a group, whereby young people are supported in voicing their views.</p> <p>Conversations about topics are ongoing, and challenging issues or long-term changes are worked through as a group rather than feeling like individual responsibilities.</p>	<p>A key part of the Carefree approach is developing young people’s confidence and ability to make positive changes. This includes supporting young people to take on additional responsibility for changing services, including through progression to peer mentoring, and volunteering as they leave care, and gaining employment if they choose to.</p> <p>This progression is a fundamental part of building a system which has the voice of lived experience integrated throughout.</p>



Case study: An observation of the Cornwall Council Corporate Parenting Board

Research in Practice attended a Corporate Parenting Board meeting at Cornwall Council's offices in early 2020. Cornwall Council have arranged with Carefree for young people from the Voice 4 Us group to chair this meeting and set the agenda twice a year.

The group of young people from Carefree had a good amount of time to settle, have lunch and prepare in the council offices before the meeting. They were also able to discuss the practicalities of these meetings, such as thinking about how future meetings could be improved; for example by fitting with school hours and around transport restrictions. All of these details were noted for bringing up in the meeting.

The young people had elected someone to chair the meeting, and they took this opportunity to go through the agenda, including who would introduce each point and any questions they had for the Corporate Parenting Board regarding progress.

The group had several specific ongoing pieces of work which they were requesting updates from. There was a very positive power dynamic. Young people took the lead in planning for the meeting and throughout, with focus being on asking for updates on changes the young people felt were important. The Participation Lead from Carefree took a back seat throughout, enabling young people to lead the conversation. One young person noted before the meeting however, that if they lost their words they could just look at a staff member who would help; indicative of support being available when needed.

Working as a group, the young people were at ease in their surroundings at the Council buildings, and the atmosphere in the group was casual and comfortable. The group already knew each other, but also had their own areas of interest for the agenda.

The chairing of the meeting was carried out by one young person, who directed questions to the Corporate Parenting Board. There was not a 'them-and-us' feeling, in part due to positive relationships and some representation from Carefree on the Board itself. Young people were able to challenge areas where they felt progress had not been achieved; and Board members responded respectfully as they would to colleagues.

One example of the positive communication style was on the matter of free public transport for care leavers, in acknowledgement of the sometimes inhibitive cost of public transport in rural areas of Cornwall. The Council had previously not been able to make progress on this idea, which young people at Carefree had spoken passionately about. However, Carefree had secured funding for a pilot from a charity, and discussion at the Board focussed on how this could be used as a trial to show the value of future council funding for free public transport.

The feel of the meeting in general was positive, with Board members expressing the challenges faced in clear terms to young people. The Board were also able to feedback news from the council related to previous work. A clear example was the matter of 'contact' between young people in care and their birth families. Young people at Carefree had wished to change the term 'contact' and surveyed many other young people to come up with the preferred term of 'Get2gether'. This change had prompted an internal review of how the council arranges Get2gethers, the teams involved, and the venues used. Social care representation on the Board noted how the name change had given workers the freedom to think things differently and now 'workers feel they have permission to do things differently'.

During the meeting a large number of topics were covered. There was a sense that this became overwhelming for young people at times, and that there could have been a break at some point. However, young people were certainly treated as equals in the meeting and as having valuable opinions. As well as public transport and Get2gethers, some further areas that the group explored were:

- > A culture card project, being led by one of the Participation Team at Carefree, which would enable young people with care experience to access cultural venues for free. Members of the Board were able to make suggestions of other people to contact regarding this project in order to increase the range and number of organisations offering free access.
- > The annual care leaver questionnaire and newsletter, which the Board agreed to support with some financial incentives for people completing it. A mental health resource which Carefree compiled was also discussed in detail; the Board made some suggestions regarding content and requested permission to circulate this at Cornwall Council.
- > Improvements that Children's Social Services were making to their life story work, including employing three new life story workers, which was as a result of Carefree's input into how to improve life story documents for young people in and leaving care.

There are a number of learning points from the relationship between Carefree and Cornwall Council's Corporate Parenting Board which other areas might consider for their own interactions with young people with care experience:

1. Set clear time points for engaging with young people, such as a quarterly meeting. Try to build this into pre-existing meetings and not as stand-alone events, so that the voices of young people are included routinely as 'business as usual'.
2. Ensure formal meetings are not the first time young people have met other attendees, or have someone they know representing them in a board on a continual basis to break down barriers.
3. Create a dynamic where young people are empowered and in control of the interaction, such as by delegating the role of chair and following their agenda.
4. Allow young people to set the agenda in advance and ensure there is a chance for them to have a practice run before the meeting.
5. Create opportunities at times and locations which are appropriate for young people, considering school / education and travel limitations.
6. Have breaks during meetings and consider focussing on certain topics so that they do not become tiring or feel overwhelming.
7. Write a list of actions and deadlines that services will follow up with and send these to young people afterwards so they can see how their views have been listened to.
8. Reflect on previous work and revisit previous changes to show young people the difference their voices have made.

For Cornwall Council and Carefree, having a charity which is already working very closely with young people with care experience greatly facilitates the process, enabling clear dialogue between young people and the council.

Carefree is in the position of being an independent and critical friend to Cornwall Council; as well as being an advocate of young people, by helping them listen to and speak for one another through their various groups and activities.

Importantly, this interaction between the corporate parent and young people is facilitated by a third party, in this case Carefree, who help bring together the views of young people with care experience and work through issues to improve care services. Through this relationship, young people have the time and support to plan for their interactions with social services and decision makers and consult their peers for additional views.

Running an organisation that listens

The interactions between a select few young people and the Corporate Parenting Board, mentioned above, are just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to building these relationships; an organisation representing the needs and views of people with care experience is a far more complex organisation to run. Carefree offers several examples of ways in which relationships with young people can be developed and in turn how these young people can be empowered to have their voices heard and evoke changes in services:

- > **Values-based:** Develop a group with a set of core, strengths-based values, including openness, care and support. Carefree have developed a group with a familial feel, which young people are encouraged to see as something not just for the immediate, but as a group of people and support system for the future (see '[Listening like a family](#)' below).
- > **Young person interview panels:** Young people at Carefree sit on interview panels for new members of staff, including the Personal Advisors employed by Carefree as part of a contract with Cornwall Council. This is part of a long-term approach to building an organisation which young people feel belongs to them, rather than one which simply gives them support.
- > **Developing young leaders:** The long-term approach of Carefree to build an organisation belonging to care experienced people involves a programme of apprentices, young volunteering, opportunities for young people to be involved with projects, and through to employment.
- > **Develop ways to gather the views of young people:** These should aim to capture the views of a wide sample of young people. For example, using a structured survey of young people to identify priority topics and then focussing down to develop ideas from this; then offering young people further opportunities to vote on ideas. Carefree utilise a bi-annual newsletter to young people in care to capture views. Whilst the survey is produced by and returned to Carefree, the Local Authority distribute the survey/newsletter to all young people in care in the county ensuring the opportunity to feed into the process is as wide as possible.
- > **Build formal relationships with statutory services:** Look for opportunities to create routine contact between young people and decision makers in social care and related services, breaking down 'them and us' views and creating a dynamic where young people feel that their views are being listened to – even if it might be a more challenging process to make changes.

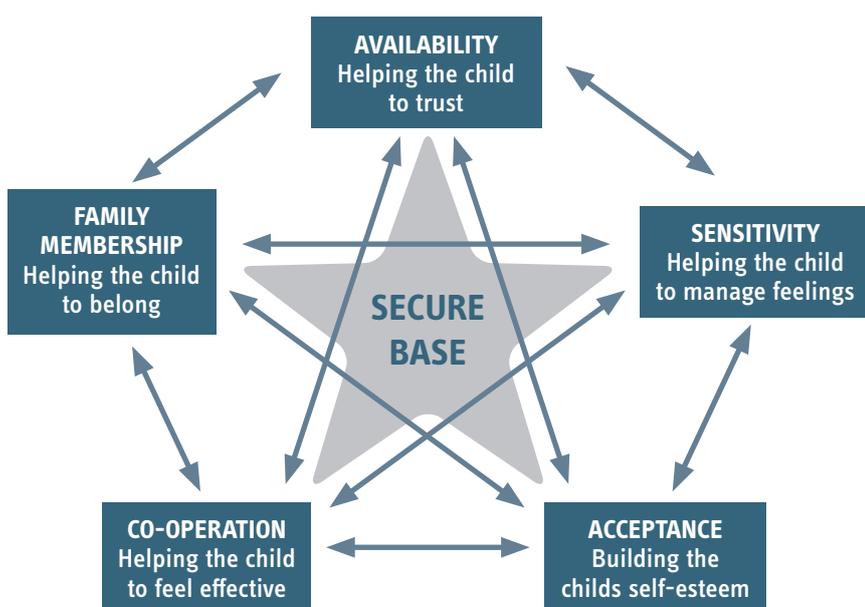
Carefree's wider remit of providing positive activities, events and projects which encourage the development of social and emotional skills¹ also provides informal opportunities to listen to a wide range of views from young people. Utilising these informal approaches alongside formal participation activities supports young people to participate "*on their own terms and in ways they feel comfortable with*" (Badham & Wade, 2010).

¹ Carefree website: www.carefreecornwall.org.uk

Listening like a family

In early work between Research in Practice and Carefree one clear theme emerging from conversations and activities with young people was the concept of Carefree as an extended family. Young people, volunteers and staff spoke about the feelings of belonging, of having a secure group of people that they could feel a part of, and of acceptance to similarities and differences. These concepts very much echo the University of East Anglia's *Secure Base Model*² (Figure 2), a strengths-based approach which aims to develop young people's ability to manage the outside world and complex relationships by providing a supportive and stable base.

Figure 2: Secure Base Model (University of East Anglia)



Relatedly, there is a body of evidence on *social identity theory* (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) which also chimes with the views of Carefree stakeholders. Several studies suggest that stable group identification and membership (i.e. being a part of the "Carefree family") is associated with better outcomes in health, employment, stress and wellbeing (Haslam, Jetten, Postmes, & Haslam, 2009; Haslam & Reicher, 2006; Van Dick & Haslam, 2006). Furthermore, there is evidence of groups of marginalised people forming strong group identities and benefitting from the protective factors of this (Schmitt, Spears, & Branscombe, 2003); this may apply to the experiences of feeling different to other young people because of their care experience that some people spoke about during interviews.

Carefree might therefore be seen as a Secure Base and social group for many stakeholders. This group is in addition to their other family networks (such as biological family relationships and foster parents), but one which remains stable where other family systems might shift over time in the context of the care system. There are protective factors of this membership in terms of positive individual and group outcomes, and Carefree might be seen as providing a psychological framework for people who would otherwise be socially isolated or lack stable relationships throughout their childhood.

Young people have a range of options for remaining involved with Carefree as they reach an age where transitions in care start to create change in their lives and potentially increase the risk of negative outcomes and vulnerabilities where statutory services may fail to support them (Holmes & Smale, 2018). Opportunities to engage in volunteering roles, peer mentoring, apprenticeships, and paid employment allow young people to take on more adult roles in this 'family', whilst continuing to have the support and security from staff and mentors themselves. This community approach to transitioning into adulthood is part of a holistic system which helps young people to achieve the best outcomes possible.

² www.uea.ac.uk/providingasecurebase/the-secure-base-model

Conclusions

This resource has explored practice related to listening to the views of young people with care experience, utilising the case study of Carefree and the work they carry out with young people in and leaving care in Cornwall. It has covered the way young people with care experience define 'being listened to', ways that organisations can listen to and act upon their views and experiences, and it has provided an example of positive work between young people and corporate parenting services.

Carefree is one clear example of where a third sector organisation can support young people to have their voices heard through offering a common purpose, building positive relationships, and using this to amplify the voices of many young people through established relationships with decision makers.

Listening, as it was defined by young people with care experience, is threaded throughout the process; by the way that young people can share their views with volunteers, peer mentors, and staff; through the empowerment seen in their relationships and opportunities to share their views; and in the growth and responsibility offered in the form of progression opportunities. Those people whose voices may be quieter than others are offered alternative ways to be listened to, such as through one-to-one work and surveys.

The approach of Carefree is just one way in which a local area might listen to the voice of lived experience, and other areas may consider different ways to engage young people in the decision making around service provision; however, the Carefree approach offers an example of this which not only helps services in improving the support they provide for young people in and leaving care; it also enriches the lives of many of the young people involved by strengthening their sense of belonging and family.



Considerations for practice

Areas considering ways to further incorporate the voice of young people with care experience in their service development may wish to consider the following points:

- > How can pre-existing groups supporting young people with care experience be integrated into decision-making at a corporate level? Could this be through 'takeovers' of key meetings, or through involvement in corporate recruitment panels?
- > When young people with care experience are consulted, how are their views captured, clarified, and confirmed? Do services provide clear action plans for young people and hold themselves accountable by reporting back to them?
- > How might young people challenge the language currently used by services, and how might addressing this change the approaches taken in practice?
- > What are the priorities for care experienced people in your area? How do you know? And do the voices heard represent the wider population of care experienced people?
- > How will the impact of young people's views on services or decision making be monitored to evaluate what has been acted upon?

References

- Atkinson, M., Binns, M., Featherstone, B., Franklin, A., Godar, R., Hay, J., ... Wright, A. (2015). *Voice of the child: Evidence Review*. Retrieved from <https://www.researchinpractice.org.uk/children/publications/2015/december/voice-of-the-child-evidence-review-2015/>
- Badham, B., & Wade, H. (2010). *Hear by right: standards framework for the participation of children and young people in*. Retrieved from www.nya.org.uk/hearbyright
- Haslam, S. A., Jetten, J., Postmes, T., & Haslam, C. (2009). Social Identity, Health and Well-Being: An Emerging Agenda for Applied Psychology. *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 58(1), 1-23. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1464-0597.2008.00379.x>
- Haslam, S. A., & Reicher, S. (2006). *Stressing the Group: Social Identity and the Unfolding Dynamics of Responses to Stress*. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.91.5.1037>
- Holmes, D., & Smale, E. (2018). *Transitional safeguarding: adolescence to adulthood*. Retrieved from <https://www.researchinpractice.org.uk/all/publications/2018/august/transitional-safeguarding-adolescence-to-adulthood-strategic-briefing-2018/>
- Schmitt, M. T., Spears, R., & Branscombe, N. R. (2003). Constructing a minority group identity out of shared rejection: the case of international students. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 33(1), 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.131>
- Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1979). An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. In & S. W. W. G. Austin (Ed.), *The social psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 33-37).
- Van Dick, R., & Haslam, S. A. (2006). Stress and well-being in the workplace. In S. A. H. Jolanda Jetten, Catherine Haslam (Ed.), *The Social Cure: Identity, Health and Well-Being*.
- Worthington, D. L., & Bodie, G. D. (2017). Defining Listening: A Historical, Theoretical, and Pragmatic Assessment. In D. L. Worthington & G. D. Bodie (Eds.), *The Sourcebook of Listening Research* (pp. 3-17). <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119102991.ch1>

About the evidence discussed in this report

Research in Practice has worked alongside Carefree over a period of 18 months to capture evidence related to their approach with young people. The key evidence referenced in this report relates to two key research events; a workshop with young people, staff and volunteers; and a day observing the Voice 4 Us group running a meeting of the Cornwall Council Corporate Parenting Board.

Research workshop

A mixture of individual tasks were used to gather evidence from Carefree stakeholders. Due to the various ages of people at the event, we aimed to use short tasks (no longer than 45 minutes each), and a mixture of visual tools to guide the activities:

- > **Photo task:** Young people and Carefree staff were presented with a selection of approximately 80 different postcards, each with pictures of different scenes or objects. Their task was to choose a postcard which best represented Carefree to them, and write on the back why they had chosen it.
- > **Interview questions:** Throughout the day young people and Carefree staff were given the opportunity to answer 4 or 5 questions about Carefree and the care system more widely as part of a TV-style interview which was turned into a short edited film. The questions were:
 - What does it mean to be listened to?
 - What does Carefree mean to you?
 - What's the most important thing that Carefree does?
 - What do you wish you could change about 'care'?
 - What's the most important thing when someone leaves care?
- > **Listening to young people:** In groups, attendees used a large A1 template to write down the things that Carefree currently does and the things it could do better to listen to the views of young people. This was laid out in a grid (see the Appendix), so that these views could be split into three categories:
 - How can young people be listened to?
 - What are the signs Carefree should look out for (including non-verbal communication)?
 - How can Carefree make young people's voices heard?
- > **Good listening, bad listening:** Young people in care and care leavers listed the components of good and bad listening, using the metaphor of a baking recipe to help them think about the subject and drawing their answers on a large sheet of paper.
- > **Ideal support for young people:** On a visual timeline (age 11 – 25; the ages of young people Carefree supports), young people and Carefree staff were asked to draw the different types of support that young people ideally receive throughout their time in care and after leaving care. This support was grouped by whether it came from Carefree, the local authority, or other organisations.
- > **Additional games:** Games related to listening and communication were spread throughout the days to maintain attention and enjoyment, whilst also staying on topic.

Corporate Parenting Board

Research in Practice met with the Voice 4 Us group and a Participation Worker from Carefree prior to the meeting. Young people had been previously consulted to check that they were happy for Research in Practice to attend the meeting. Additional written consent was collected from young people for Research in Practice to observe the meeting and take anonymous notes.

The pre-meeting involved discussion of the agenda and planning for how the meeting would be chaired. Young people discussed their objectives for the meeting and what outcomes / actions they wished to achieve.

Corporate Parenting Board members were also asked to provide written consent for Research in Practice to observe the meeting and to follow up with any further questions. During the meeting the researchers were able to ask clarification questions and capture additional background information on topics being discussed. Notes were taken related to the nature of projects that Carefree and the Corporate Parenting Board were working together on, as well as some light thematic and discourse analysis through detailed note-taking.

Following the meeting, Research in Practice spent some time with young people discussing the meeting, how they felt it went, and what outcomes they were hoping for. This ended with a conversation about reflections on the relationship with the Corporate Parenting Board.

Ethics and data protection

For all filming, interviewing and observations which took place during the research workshop, all participants gave written permission and, if under 16, written permission was also obtained from their carer. For observations, young people gave their written permission to have Research in Practice attend the Corporate Parenting Board and take notes and had the opportunity to ask questions before and after the meeting.

All other evidence collection was anonymous, and no identifiable details have been captured without the permission of participants. People's direct experience of the care system was not explored by Research in Practice due to the open nature of the events and the absence of a therapeutic environment in which to discuss these matters further if necessary.

Carefree staff were always present and due to their relationship with the children and young people in attendance Research in Practice worked together to respond to individual children and young people's needs as they arose. For example, if a young person wanted an additional break, a member of Carefree staff could accompany them on a short walk.

Research in Practice considers all data related to young people very carefully when storing and processing, and always in line with data protection legislation and internal policies. Signed consent forms were stored in locked filing cabinets and digital data on appropriately protected servers. All data were anonymised wherever feasible.

research in practice

Research in Practice helps organisations and individuals to access, understand and apply evidence in their work with children, young people, adults and families. By bringing together academic research, practice expertise and the experiences of those engaging with services, we apply this knowledge into a range of resources and learning opportunities.



www.researchinpractice.org.uk



ask@researchinpractice.org.uk



[@researchIP](https://twitter.com/researchIP)

Research in Practice
The Granary, Dartington Hall
Totnes, Devon, TQ9 6EE
tel: 01803 867692

© Research in Practice, 2020