

Children's Information: Improving lives through better listening and better data

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THE LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND POLITICAL SCIENCE

research in practice









Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion

Research at LSE





- Nuffield Foundation Strategic Fund (Oct. 2021 Sept. 2026)
- Aims:
 - and families is used in local and national government in England
 - diverse needs and voices of children, young people and families
- Collaboration between:
 - 4 Local Authority sites
 - 5 Universities
 - Research in Practice
- To:

 - Share with wider Learning Network, test, develop and learn
 - Inform local and national government policy

• to improve the way that information about and from children, young people • in order to shape the support and services provided to meet and respond to

• Co-produce and evaluate an 'information use project' in each LA site





Administrative information, data and voice

- Reliance on statutory data returns and administrative data: data items determined by government; purposes, uses and meaningfulness of data are questionable
- Richer information, including voice information, exists within local authority management information systems, including case records (Holmes, 2019)
- Voices of children & young people are not consistently included in official statistics: eg. parental voice often used as proxy (Office for Statistics Regulation, 2022)
- Children and young people in care feel they have limited opportunities to participate in decisions; those more vulnerable are less likely to be involved (van Bijleveld et al, 2015)
- Involvement of children and family in record keeping throughout care experience can be beneficial to them (MIRRA, UCL)
- Highly important to accommodate diverse voices within children's information (Capella & Boddy, 2021)

"To make other people's experience positive, always listen and don't presume you know how we feel." (Care leaver)







Data and information?

Data are quantitative and may be analysed statistically

Information is everywhere; it only becomes Data when selected, recorded and/or codified with intention to use Data can be quantitative and qualitative and analysed in many ways

Data are everywhere but only when interpreted/analysed do they become Information







Multiple Voices

- Children, young people, parents/carers, practitioners, managers, policy makers, wider community
- Diversity of voices within groups
- Voices at individual and collective levels

Voices AS information

Views, experiences, wishes and feelings included within children's information

Voice ABOUT information

Views, wishes and feelings about how children's information is gathered, processed, shared and used.

Recognising voices

- Explicit and implicit
- Accessible *and* more hidden/seldom heard
- Verbal and nonverbal or silent
- 'Sensible' and challenging
- Invited and spontaneous
- Expressed formally *and* in the everyday
- Relational, situated and mediated in contexts (which may enable, constrain and shift voice)
- Expressed individually and collectivelu and at scale
- Listened to (?) operationally and strategically





Voice and information



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GOVERNMENT

CHILDREN POLICY & PRACTICE LEADS

YOUNG PEOPLE ANALYSTS & RESEARCHERS

PARENTS & CARERS

PRACTITIONERS







Whose voices? When? Why? How? **Barriers? Possibilities?**

Voice throughout Information Pathways







- How can children's social care and their partner agencies most effectively and efficiently meet the needs of care leavers?
- What are the necessary support mechanisms to improve the outcomes, and life chances of care leavers?

Aims:

- improve quality and depth of data analysis
- bring more young person and family voice, and practitioner voice into the picture
- sharpen use of information to drive policy and practice
- evaluate impact to support further improvement
- share learning with wider network and receive further quality assurance
- learn from these activities to shape and inform national policy and practice

Information use project: Example



Activities

Short-term outcomes

Bringing together meaningful information from across different agencies and sources on the 8 topic areas

Information used in meetings of PA/YP to discuss 8 topic areas

Informs support offered by PA across 8 topic areas

Maximising the role of young people's voices in information use

Capturing & aggregating meaningful outcomes for care leavers on the 8 topic areas

LA has better understanding of cohort's needs across 8 topic areas

Informs commissioned services across 8 topic areas (practice/service) development in and after care)

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Long-term outcomes

Intermediate outcomes

YP feel valued

hopeful

YP feel equipped to leave the service when ready

In suitable employment Received appropriate education

In suitable accommodation

> Positive relationships

Improved wellbeing

Improved physical health

Able to manage daily life and finances

> Acceptable levels of risk

Support meets individual's needs across 8 topic areas

Services meets cohort's needs across 8 topic areas

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Early insights....

Observations

- practice model emphasises strong relationships and openness
- 'informal collection' of information while talking
- recording with young person as potential reader
- data collection processes change everyday relationships of care
- where young voices are integral to everyday practice and recording, they become more easily embedded within data

Emerging questions

- does variety of mechanisms (eg. surveys, Mind of My Own) offer possibilities to voice differently?
- 'meaningfulness' of existing/additional measures?
- Do young people trust of workers to record information accurately?

'It's all about relationships.'

"Getting away from you've got to sit down and fill out my form because that is entirely the wrong way.'

'Write it as if you're going to read it yourself in five years time..... Would you be happy if you were the young person reading that?'

