

**PRIORITIES FOR
ABERDEEN CITY'S
CHILDREN'S
SERVICES PLAN
2017-2020**



ABERDEEN
CITY COUNCIL

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This is a report on how our consultation with children and young people has helped us decide what is most important for their services.

1. What is this about?

Every three years a plan called the Children's Services Plan is written. This plan talks about what services children and young people get to help them be healthy, happy and safe.

The people who write the plan are called the Integrated Children's Services Partnership (ICSP). We asked children and young people what they thought were the most important things to focus on.

225 children and young people aged 4 to 18 years told us what they think. They took part in groups in schools, youth groups, and clubs.

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2. What do children and young people think is important?

You said the most important things are:

- **Health and wellbeing**
- **Getting involved in activities and play in the community**
- **Being safe in the community**
- **Children and young people should be heard**
- **When children and young people need additional support they should get it**

In the next few pages we will tell you more about what you said about these things.

Health and wellbeing

Children and young people said that schools should help you talk about mental health. Schools need to notice any problems among pupils early, and make sure that more help and information is available.

“I don’t think people are comfortable talking about it...I know a few people who do have depression and anxiety, and they feel like they’re quite isolated, don’t really have anyone to talk to, apart from me and a couple of other friends...so I don’t think there’s much help.”

You also said that bullying in schools is a big problem.

“The person who is bullied tends to withdraw themselves. They isolate themselves, because other people have isolated them. They don’t really see a point in trying to reinstate their place with that group so they just isolate themselves further.”

You said that schools should help pupils to understand how behaviour can be hurtful and mean. You said older pupils can help younger pupils when this happens.

Healthy eating and healthy options in the canteen are also important.

More needs to be done to help young people to not get involved in smoking, drinking or taking drugs. Learning at school and in youth clubs would help. Learning from people who have had problems with alcohol or drugs can also help. It should be harder for young people to get tobacco, alcohol and other drugs.

“I think part of the problem is how easy it is to get cigarettes and alcohol because of older siblings and friends.”

Getting involved in activities and play in the community

Children and young people said everyone should be able to play in outdoor spaces that are safe and clean. There need to be more places to play, cycle and skate.

You said it was difficult to find places to spend time with friends because adults see young people as a 'nuisance' in public places. You also said that if you are young you cannot always get to activities or maybe you can't pay for things if they have a cost. It would be good to have safe, dry, warm places to hang out. It would also be good to know more about what is going on in the community.

"We need more community centres and stuff...there needs to be more publicity for community centres and youth clubs. There's a community centre near me and there's like no publicity for what goes on there."

You said that every local community needs things for children and young people to do. Getting involved in things helps if you are having problems in your life. Getting involved also helps you stay out of trouble and keeps you healthier.

"It's important to keep away from peer pressure. So many people just fall in with people who have bad habits like smoking or drinking or drugs...having a group to go to would help you to define yourself and discover what you love to do."

Being safe in the community

Children said that they did not feel safe going out to play alone. This can be because you see older children and teenagers starting fires, breaking glass bottles, fighting, and bullying younger children. Children also see teenagers and adults drinking alcohol and using drugs in public places.

“Near where I live, at night, like at the weekends, there’s like a lot of drunk people walking around and it doesn’t make me feel safe...there are children around there.”

You said you feel safer when you see city wardens and that we need more city wardens and police officers.

“We need more police...like walking around the streets...at night you hardly see any.”

To help children and young people be safe you said there should be better street lighting and patrol officers where you cross a busy road.

“Making roads safer or proper big lights or lollipop people or that [is important], because I can’t get to my friends because of that busy road near my dad’s and it’s really annoying.”

Most young people said that online safety was not an urgent issue and that adults exaggerate the problem. But some of you said that there was a need for more education on the topic, particularly because of online bullying or when you are worried or frightened by something online or on social media.

Children and young people should be heard

Children and young people said it was important to have opportunities to discuss their opinions, have their views taken on board, and have their say about their schools and communities.

Although many of you said that you feel listened to, others said that there are no pupil councils or suggestion boxes in their schools, that you are never asked about decisions in our community, or that nothing ever changes, even when you are asked.

“Sometimes we get a quiz, like about how to make the school better, like what you think of it, but nothing ever really changes after that.”

When you have your say, you said you want to hear back what has happened and if it has made a difference. This means you stay interested and feel more confident about having your say.

“It will show other people that younger people are trying, that they actually do want to do something, other than people just thinking, oh they just want to skive, play around. There are things they want, that are important and we could say that and maybe they’d [employers] take on people with no experience or younger people.”

When children and young people need additional support they should get it

Young people with ADHD and autism said work experience and getting involved in things like 'Young Leaders' was good. But it could be better, with all youth clubs and work experience places understanding your needs.

"Work experience was fun... I'm slowly getting out my shell."

"I'm not fond of clubs because I used to be in a club and there was a kid there, he was bullying me a lot and I didn't have a lot of friends there, so I'm not fond of clubs... I hardly go out much I just stay at home on the computer."

When it comes to care experienced young people (that's young people who are or have been taken care of or accommodated by the local authority) you said that there needs to be more staff who help and sort problems on time. You said you sometimes felt overlooked, disrespected and 'not listened to'. When it comes to living independently care experienced young people said they were often housed with older adults, in areas with poor street lighting, empty flats and a high level of drug use, making them feel unsafe.

We also heard from young carers (a child, young person or young adult who has a significant role in looking after someone in their family). You said you did not want your school to know about your caring roles because sometimes this means teachers want to talk to you about it, and you might not want to. You said it's also hard to talk to friends because they might not understand or judge you or your family. You also said that it's good to get together with children and young people with the same experiences and support each other.

Children and young people who have been in care or who are young carers want others to learn about disability, illness, equality and diversity.

Young people who take part in SHMU support programmes talked about being included

Young people who take part in the Early Interventions programmes run by SHMU said that some teachers do not understand or make allowances for different learning styles. When teachers don't understand it leaves you feeling stressed and anxious.

“Every pupil works at different speeds and not every pupil can keep up with the speed that you yourself work at... quite a few teachers start the lesson trying to keep at your speed and then before you know it they're flying ahead.”

Young people taking part in the Positive Transitions group at SHMU said it can be harder to find employment because employers ask for experience they don't have. You said you can feel 'let down' and 'pushed out' by school because they don't help with confidence or helping you to find your way.

“I felt like I was kind of getting kicked out of school... They told me to go to the careers advisor, but that's all they said to me. I had the feeling that the school wouldn't really compromise...I either had to just take two other subjects that I didn't care about or leave school.”

“Yeah I feel misrepresented or stereotyped quite a bit. It's like I don't want to work, or I'm lazy or things like that.”

Participants of the SHMU Youth Media Group said that schools could do more to help certain pupils develop their confidence and find their direction in life. Examples of what could be done include PSE lessons on developing life skills, such as paying bills and applying for jobs, and more tailored career guidance sessions. You also said that pupils with different needs and self-esteem or mental health issues need more understanding.

3. Conclusions

The views of children and young people have helped to decide on what are the most important things for the Children's Services Plan 2017-2020. They are:

- **Closing the Gap:** This means that all children and young people should have the same chances in life and no-one should be treated unfairly or have less opportunities)
- **Youth Engagement and Inclusion:** This means getting everyone included and helping every child and young person have their say.
- **Health and Wellbeing:** This means being as healthy and well as you can be, thinking about mental health and physical health.
- **Community Safety and Environment:** This means have communities where children and young people can play, where green spaces and parks are clean, where everyone get involved in activities and feel safe.

Thank you to all the children and young people who took part in this work!

Find out more and tell us what you think

To read the full Children's Services Plan, please click on the following link:

<http://www.aberdeengettingitright.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Aberdeen-City-Integrated-Childrens-Services-Plan-2017-2020.pdf>

For a summary version of the Children's Services Plan please go to:

<http://www.aberdeengettingitright.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/ICS-Plan-A5-3-leaflet.pdf>

If you have any comments or feedback, we would love to hear from you. You can do this by going to the Aberdeen Getting it Right Website:

<http://www.aberdeengettingitright.org.uk/contact-us/>

For more information about the consultation please contact:

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