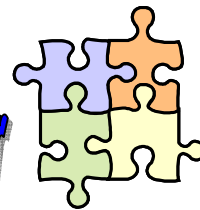


# *Making the lives of young people in care better*



This research was carried out and written by young people.

November 2008



# Important Information

GLUW came together as a group in November 2007. Since then we have been working to do this research. We need a little bit more time to finish the report. This is a draft copy of our report done for the Young Researchers conference at Warwick University. **Please do not copy or use any information from this draft report.** We hope to finish and publish our report early next year. If you would like a posh printed copy please email [norrina.rashid@bradford.gov.uk](mailto:norrina.rashid@bradford.gov.uk)

Thanks  
GLUW

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# Thank You

We would like to say thank you to all these people.

All young people in care, who filled out our questionnaires, came to the focus groups & did the interviews.

All young people working with leaving care, who filled out our questionnaires, came to the focus groups & did the interviews.

Angela Duggan from the Leaving Care Team – Shipley because she really cares about young people and she helped young people to get involved with the research.

Bradford Youth service who are now called Integrated Youth Support- Localities for letting Anji & Norrina work with us and helping us sort out everything we had to do.

Emma Collingwood Leaving Care Team Manager for helping us sort our focus groups out.

Fostering & adoption unit for sending out information and questionnaires to all foster carers

Lisa Swain from the Looked after Team four for encouraging young people to join in the research

Young Researchers Network for all the training & the cash!

Wasiq Khan Member of Youth Parliament for Bradford West who helped us to sort out the themes and focus group questions

# Who We Are

## Elizabeth Goldsbrough

Hiya I am Elizabeth and I'm 16 I live in a residential home in Bradford. I enjoy going to college because I have chance to see my friends and getting a chance to move on with my life which is getting my qualifications.

GLUW is a chance for young people in care to get their point across. I came to GLUW because I wanted the chance to help other people to voice their opinion across to others that may need to know to help change things that are going on in the care system . I also came to make new friends and have a laugh I enjoy doing the work because I know at the end of it I will be rewarded with my accreditation and I would have helped others. If I could change anything it would be making everyone equal and making sure everyone has an equal chance in life. I also agree that people should also have the right not to have racist comments or gestures thrown at them and I would make sure everyone had a safe and secure place to live.

## Haley Jones

Hi my name is Haley Jones. I live in Idle with my new foster carers Katherine and James. Living in care is not what I expected but at the end of the day I have a roof over my head and food to eat so I'm not that fussed. School is boring but at least we have a school and sometimes I just have to bite my tongue and deal with it.

GLUW is about a group of young people expressing their feelings about living in care and what they don't like about it, so GLUW tries to make others feel comfortable by talking to people about how they would like to change where they live.

## James

Hi, my name is James, and I am 17 years old and I live in East Morton which is in the country. It is ok where I live because there are no gangs hanging around streets. I am studying hospitality and catering at Craven College, I also work at 'The Dalesway' in the kitchen. My ambition is to become a qualified chef and to work on cruise ships.

The GLUW group finds out information about what young people think it is like to live in care. I came to the GLUW group because I wanted other young people to have the same opportunities that I have had. I also wanted to make new friends.

## Anthony Read

I am Anthony Read and I am 19. I have been fostered and adopted but I liked living in the care home because I got treated very well and the living space was really good.

I go to Bradford College and I'm doing the first year diploma in painting and decorating, I would like to go on and do the third year in advanced painting and decorating then I would like to go to university and do a HNC or a HND in construction management then go on a get a really high qualified job and be a really good business entrepreneur.

I joined GLUW for one reason, because I'm interested in helping and finding out about young people that live in care or in the care system. I personally have been through it all and I have a lot of different experiences. I just want to make it better for children and young adults because I feel that I can help and hopefully make a difference in at least a few peoples lives. I just wish I had some one that would have done it for me when I was fully in care. So all I want to do is just give out a positive and good attitude to all the young adults and children that are in the care system and need that bit of support or a confidence boost.

## Introduction : GLUW – Get The Life U Want

Some of us met a youth worker called Norrina at an event and some of us just knew her through the Youth Parliament. She told us about a group she was setting up for young people who were in care or had lived in care. She wrote to us and we met her in town, she brought us a coffee to sweet talk us. She told us the group was for looked after young people to change things and said it was up to us what subject we wanted to base it around. We met five times to talk about what we wanted to do and what we wanted to change. We also had to decide a name for the group. Our group is for young people who are in care or have been in care so we talked about what it was like being in care and we decided that our group should be called ' GLUW ' – Get The Life U Want. This is because when you live in Care it is hard to get the life you want because you may have a lot of problems and you always have something missing. Like the Jigsaw pieces we've used for our logo. To get the life you want you have to get all the jigsaw pieces together.



We think that if we do our research it will help young people in care to get the life they want.

## The Launch – Warwick

We went to Warwick University for the Young Researchers Network launch. It was interesting because we met other groups who were doing research. We went to lots of workshops to help us learn about different ways we could do our research. We learnt about using Lego, photos, questionnaires, videos and lots of things. It was interesting learning about how photos can say a million things, also it helped us to decide what we wanted to research and how we was going to do it

It gave us the chance to get to know who else was in the networking team, meet the workers from the NYA and find out about the steering group. The steering group is where a member from each group attends to see how the research is going and make plans for the future

## Training

We have been to places like Birmingham and Leicester for training about our research and met other groups. People have come to Bradford to do training to help with their research. It was good because it helped us to know what we were doing and how it could be improved. It gave us the chance to share our questionnaires & see what people thought before we sent it out and make changes to improve it.

## Our Research Aim

We wanted to make young people in care have better education and better support and counselling. Our research questions were:

What are the experiences of education for young people in care?

What are the experiences of support & counselling for young people in care?

## Our Plan

- Talk to young people in the Bradford District who live in the care system or have been in the care system about their lives and experiences of being in care.
- We wanted to find out about their experiences of education support and counselling
- We wanted to talk to young people over the age of 11 and up to 21

- We wanted to get all the information together that young people told us and pass it on to the people that can change things.

We wanted to do this research because some people think we are different because we are in care and we are not. Doing this research we can change how other people treat us. The changes we make may make young people's lives better whilst in the care system. For example adults might have a better idea of how we feel and what goes on in our heads. They can then find different ways for different people to learn because we all learn differently. We would like young people in care to have better life

## Methodology

We did a training session that made us think about qualitative and quantitative research methods. We got taught that when doing our research it's not just the quantity of information that is important. It is also the quality that is very important. By doing the interviews and focus we could back up the statistics we got from the questionnaires. This made our research stronger.

Based on this we decided to do questionnaires because it was an easy way of getting everyone's opinion and thoughts about the topics. We also decided to run focus groups and do one to one interviews because it would give us a chance to talk to young people and get more information about the statistics that came up in the questionnaires. It also gave them chance to go in to detail about their experience in the care system and talk about a topic that we had not mentioned in the questionnaire.

## Questionnaires

We got the questionnaire together by coming up with questions that we thought were specific and relevant to education, training, support and counselling. We then talked about what we wanted to find out about based around these topics. We then came up

with some questions and answers which we could put in a tick box form. We then had to decide what order to put the questions. Once we had decided all this we did a draft of the questionnaire and asked BKYP to read it to see if it was good enough we looked at what they said and we reviewed it. Then we went to a training session and asked people to complete it, they gave us feedback and said it was good and short and clear. Then we came up with our final questionnaire.

## **Focus Groups**

A focus group is a group of young people who are asked questions by one or two people around a specific topic or subject and they can give their opinion and discuss it in the group. We read the questionnaires and then decided what questions we wanted to ask. Most of the time much gets said so as well as making notes you also record it with their permission so you can come back to it later and make sense of what had been said at the time. I thought the focus groups were interesting and useful because you can compare people's experiences and see if what they said more than one person agreed with. You can also see how young people's experiences were similar or different and how they dealt with it. We ran two focus groups and each one had five young people in it.

## **Interviews**

We decided to do interviews based around the results on the questionnaires and focus groups because we were particularly interested in what some young people had said and we wanted to expand on it. We also decided to do interviews because you cannot always say what you want on a questionnaire because there is not always enough room to do so. I thought the interviews were very useful because we could ask them more questions from what they had already said so we could find out more information. Altogether we did twelve interviews.

## Who We Invited.

As a group we had a brainstorm and made a list of all the people we thought would be able to help us with our research. We sent questionnaires out to all of them and asked if they would ask young people to fill in the questionnaires. Here is a list of all the places we sent the information to:

All young people in care

All young people working with leaving care

All the residential units

The Fostering and adoption unit and all the foster carers

Leaving Care Service Shipley

Leaving Care Service Odsal

Looked After Team

Seen and Heard

When we sent the information out we asked young people if they wanted to take part in an interview or focus group. **Altogether 128 young people did questionnaires, 10 did the focus groups and 12 did the interviews.**

## The Questionnaire & Who Took Part

We had a high response to the questionnaires more than we expected got returned and looking at the facts at figures some of them are shocking to be honest. E.g. how many people that didn't know about their PEP. When I personally read some of the comments the young people had written it made me shiver because you don't actually understand what it's like for someone else to be for example away from their families until they actually tell you. Doing the research made me have a better insight of what young people felt about their education and about support and counselling and how they can change where their life is going and why it is important to finish this research and inform people of what is needed.

Altogether one hundred and twenty eight young people completed the questionnaire.

Next is some information about young people who took apart in the questionnaire

### Ages of young people taking part in the questionnaire

Age	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
No.	3	7	15	10	17	15	22	18	11	4	4	2

### Gender of young people taking part in the questionnaire

Male	Female	No Answer
60	66	2

### Young people with disabilities taking part in the questionnaire

With a disability	Without a disability	No Answer
12	93	23

### How young people described themselves

<b>White</b>	
British	67%
Irish	2%
<b>Asian or Asian British</b>	
Indian	1%
Pakistani	3%
Other Asian Background	5%
<b>Black or Black British</b>	
Caribbean	1%
Other Black Background	1%
<b>Dual Heritage</b>	
White and Asian	8%
White and African	2%
White and Caribbean	5%
Other Dual Background	1%
<b>Prefer not to say</b>	4%

## Themes

After we read all the questionnaires, did all the focus groups and interviews, we talked about what young people said. Everything was typed up. We started to put similar things together that young people said and came up with some themes.

Theme one - **Where you live can make things hard**

Theme Two - **Splitting brothers & sisters up had a bad affect on young people**

Theme Three - **Placements are too short.**

Theme four- **Young people want people to love & look after them.**

Theme Five - **Young people don't feel 'normal'**

Theme Six - **Young people in care need role models**

Theme Seven - **Leaving care is hard.....**

On the next few pages we have written what we think about the themes

## Theme one – Where you live can make things hard

*"All my family live in ----- & I just get so caught up in doing nothing, I just don't have the motivation to get up & do anything, it's like catching a cold everyone gets it. It's not about following everyone else or anything like that, sometimes its just like you need a role model but then where I am everyone's just screaming & that you can't drag yourself away from it"*

I think they are right in what they say because it is hard when you live in a rough or run down area because the life style lived in those areas are strong and if you move in you are influenced without realising. You can get involved with something you don't want to because it's all around you and you have no power or motivation to get away from it.

From doing the focus groups and interviews with young people and also reading the questionnaires I think that young people in this situation would not have a very good future because they don't have any role models and young people are easily influenced on what others do and say to them. They can not settle either because they want to be involved and want to fit in because they don't have any thing else and its all around them.

From listening and reading what the young people have told us I think they would be influenced in a better way if they would find a role model from a nice area and live up to what they have done with their life. This would give the young person a better start in life and they could get away from the bad influences on them. This is actually what some young people wanted

## Theme Two – Splitting brothers and sisters up had a bad affect on young people

*‘Don’t split us up from our brothers and sisters, at the end of the day you grow up with someone together and they know you and it’s like you are taking half of us away, it’s not nice is it? What if I came and just took your brother or sister away and you never got to see them ever again, it’s not fair really ‘*

It’s not fair splitting brothers and sisters up because it affects people in different ways .Some people take the wrong turn and some people stay on the right track but they are a bit wobbly or some young people start using drugs and then you cannot concentrate at school.

A lot of young people talked about this in the focus groups and interviews. Some of them felt they were getting punished for what their parents or families had done. Splitting up brothers and sisters has a really bad affect on their education because they don’t know what’s going to happen next in relation to their families so their mind will be focussed on that instead of their education and people can take advantage of young people as well and it is really easy to make the wrong choice.

## Theme Three – Placements are too short.

'Don't move us around make placements longer so we can get to know people and make friends'

The problem with short term placements is that you have to get to know people all over again and make friends in the neighbourhood and school. People cannot get settled and they are unable to cope with moving all the time. They find it hard to build good strong relationships. You can't get to know the person that you are living with and you need to build up a relationship with them to make the placement last.

When you move to a new school you always seem to worry about fitting in instead of listening in lessons. You don't know where you will get moved to next so you think its okay to muck around at school and you might not have many friends because you have moved so many times and can't build a relationship. You can mess up in school and in your exams if you can't get your head down. Then you might not be able to do what you want to do in your life.

From what we have found out from the young people in the focus groups, interviews and from the questionnaires I think that when we start a new school or education training programme they know we're "the kid in care." And they have already labelled us and they also feel we won't do well because of our background when actually all we want to do is fit in with the other young people and have an education, because of this we just think we may as well live up to this standard and not bother.

## Theme four – Young people want people to love & look after them.

‘To find people that care for them & know that they do’

Everyone needs someone to care about them before they can care about what they do. I think that this is why sometimes young people muck about at school and in their placement. It can really affect your education because when you are at school you will be thinking whether or not your foster carers will have a go at you when you go home or if you will be treated like a family member or be made to feel like an outsider.

I think for young people in care they need to know there is at least one person who cares about them in order for them to do well in their life because they have someone to turn to and talk to when they need to and they don't feel alone. If you know that there is one person in your life that does care for you then you will start caring about you as well. This is because there is that role model there to show the correct way in life. You also have a chance to do better in your education because there is help and support available for you.

You don't think you should care about your self because nobody else cares. So you muck around because you think that it doesn't matter if you don't get far in life because nobody would care even if you did go far.

## Theme Five – Young people don't feel 'normal'

'Have more opportunities to be normal and less complicated lives. For example, separation from siblings, and not having to have CRBs when having friends round'

Young people are put in a category and this may make them feel left out and it can make them feel different to their friends. They want to be treated as if they are not in care they don't want to be treated differently. They don't feel normal because say if they were living at home all their parents would need to know is the address and number and they would just decide, may be just go visit them. This is very difficult because we do have to think about the safety of young people and that is the main reason for doing a CRB check. So some young people said everyone who has children in their house to sleep over should have a CRB check even if they are not in care.

They are made to feel different not necessarily through their own choice but because they are in care. You don't really want your friend's house to be checked by the police just because they want to stay over because this will affect their friendships with other people. It makes young people feel bad in themselves and have no confidence and some young people feel depressed and have low self esteem.

## Theme Six – Young people in care need role models

'We need people who have been through our experiences (care system) to sit down & talk to us because they know how hard it is, at the same time it inspires us because we think if they been where we have we can do it too'

Adults who have been in care speak the truth and we need to know how they survived but if you don't have that chance to learn from them and get advice it's like being in a forest without a compass.

Young people in care need role models to help them in life because sometimes you don't feel normal and there are loads of problems like we have mentioned before like nobody to talk to and they feel different, they get kicked out too early when they don't know how to survive in the "big wide world".

## Theme Seven – Leaving care is hard.....

'I come from children's homes, I haven't been to school. I left when I was 15 and got put in a B&B with some idiots. When you are about sixteen or seventeen they encourage you to move on. But I remember that I was being stupid and I wanted to leave. I was going on and on about it to the staff and my social worker. They moved me into a B&B, gave me some money and just left me. I ran out of money and did stuff to get money. Social care are like my mum & dad aren't they? If I was living with my mum and I had a big fight she wouldn't get me a B&B, give me money & say good luck. She would have told me I was stupid and made me stay at home. I mean at 15 you shouldn't really leave home even if you want to'

I think this is true because social services are supposed to be like your parents and you need to have a chance to sit down and talk about it and then if you still really want to move out you should at least be taught some life skills and you should not be able to move out even if you want to until social services really know you can manage. Social workers should review the situation before letting a young person move out and they should make decisions as if the young person was living at home or it was their kid. You should be found a suitable placement relevant to your needs and what you want in the future. Like Stepping Stones a lot of young people thought this was good support for them.

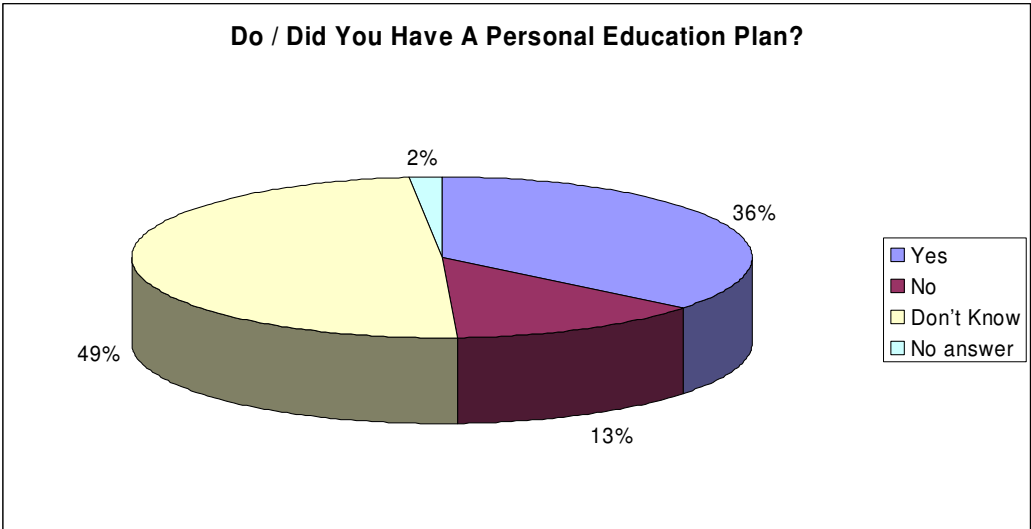
# The statistics – Young people’s responses.

Do / did you enjoy your education?

Yes	No	No answer
56.3%	40.6%	3.1%

From what we have found out the majority of young people enjoyed their education. But there are still a high percentage of young people who did not enjoy their education and we need to improve this because if they enjoy their education they may do better.

Do/ did you have a personal education plan?



The statistic told us that the majority of young people did not know about their PEP. In our focus groups we had ten young people and seven out of ten told us that they did not know what one was and one of those young people told us that they did have one but it did not get followed. So the focus group supported what the statistics told us.

This looks bad because if more young people knew about their PEP and workers spent a lot of time making it an important part of their plans then they might know what they want in life and where they want to go. This could be a possible reason why 40% of young people did not enjoy their education.

Young people did not see their PEP as being important and said that family, placements and friends are more important. This could be a reason why they don't know about their PEP. This means that we need to sort out their family problems, placements and make sure they have good friendships because this way they might be more bothered about sticking to their PEP and making a plan for their education.

Have you ever been excluded or gone to an alternative education programme?

Yes	No	No answer
33.6 %	63.3%	3.1%

To say that the Majority of young people didn't like school they still stuck at it. Also the 33% that did get excluded or went to alternative could be the same yp who said they did not like their education

Do/ did you have a say in your education?

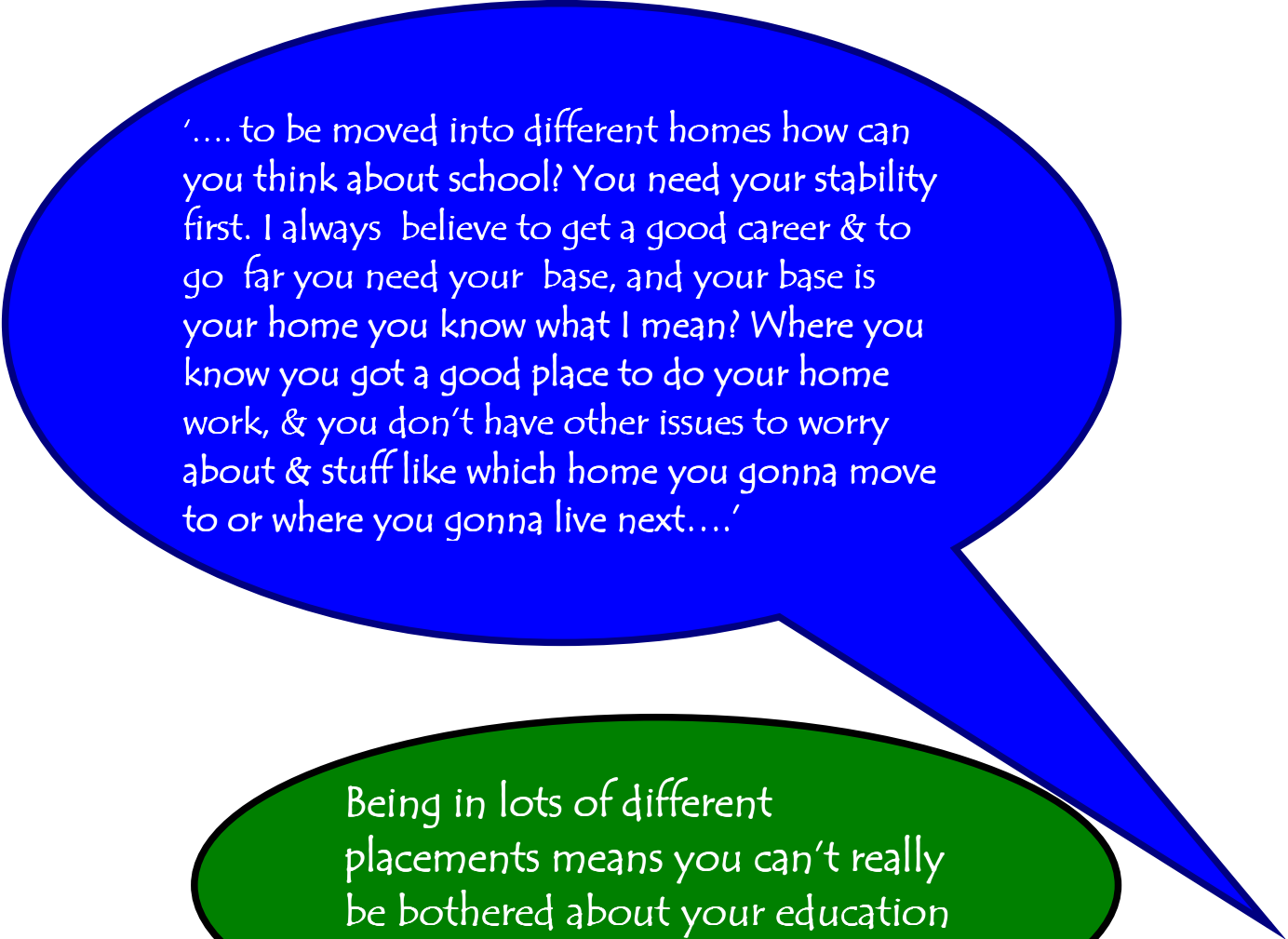
Yes	No	No answer
46.1%	49.2%	4.7%

Forty nine percent of young people said no, they did not have a say in their education, these could be the people who did not know what their PEP was. We know that by law every young person in care is suppose to have a PEP so like we said earlier because of all the problems young people have they do not get involved with planning their education.

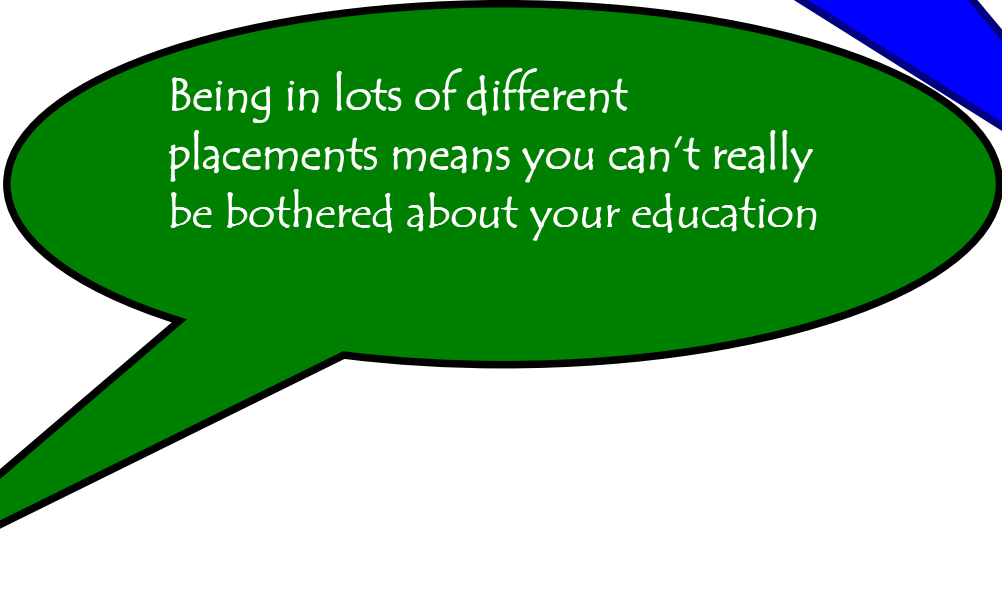
Do you feel your problems stop you doing well with your education?

Yes	No	No answer
73.1%	16.7%	10.2 %

The statistics show that 73.1% of young people said that they feel their problems stop them doing well in education. This backs up what we have found out so far. For example 33% of young people have been excluded this is probably because of problems they have, 49% said they did not have a say in their education may be because they were worried about problems such as family, placements and friends and this is possibly why the majority of young people don't know about their PEP

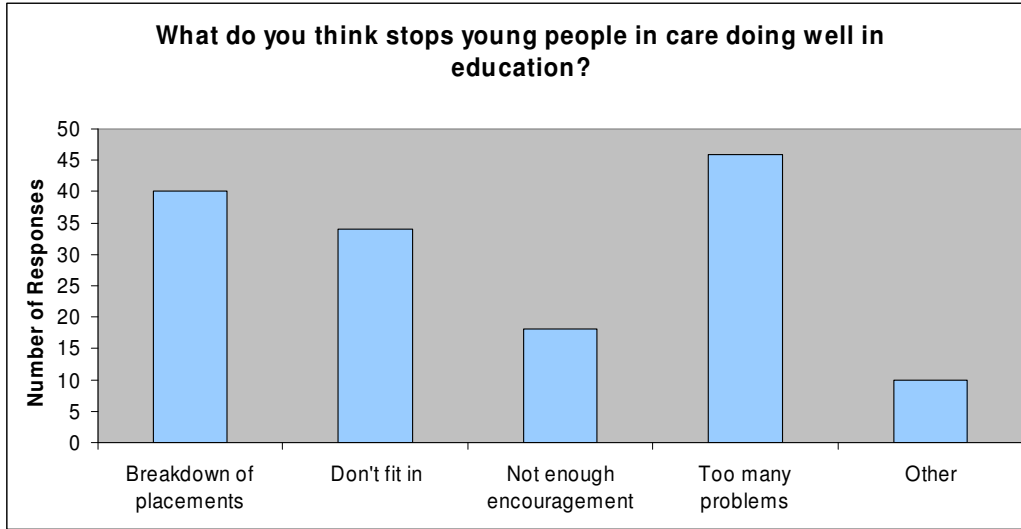


'.... to be moved into different homes how can you think about school? You need your stability first. I always believe to get a good career & to go far you need your base, and your base is your home you know what I mean? Where you know you got a good place to do your home work, & you don't have other issues to worry about & stuff like which home you gonna move to or where you gonna live next....'



Being in lots of different placements means you can't really be bothered about your education

## What do you think stops young people in care doing well in education?



The statistics show us that the top three reasons stopping young people from doing well in education are

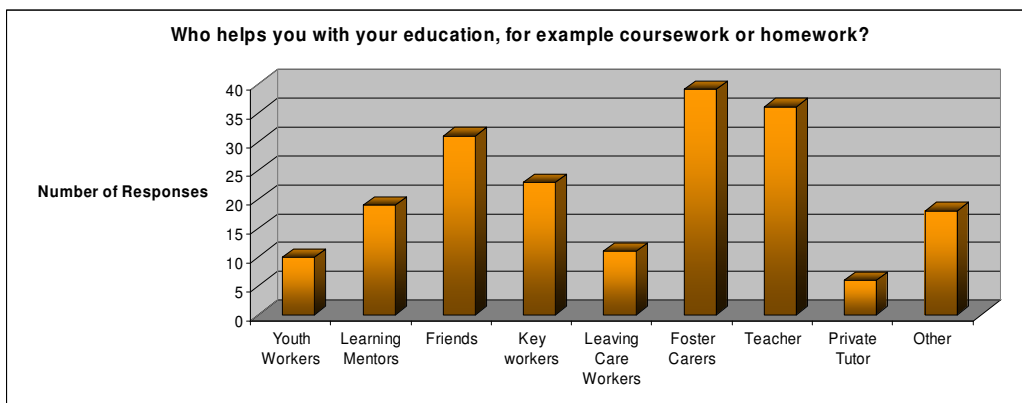
- Too many problems
- Breakdown of placements
- Don't fit in

When we did the focus groups and interviews young people told us similar things

You just meet the wrong people,  
& they think you're rubbish cos  
they know you haven't got a  
family so you think you're  
rubbish so you don't bother  
with school & that.

Young people need stability, help families – let them stay together in the same unit, then when they are stable they will be alright in school

### Who helps you with your course work?



We found out that the top three people who help young people with their course work were

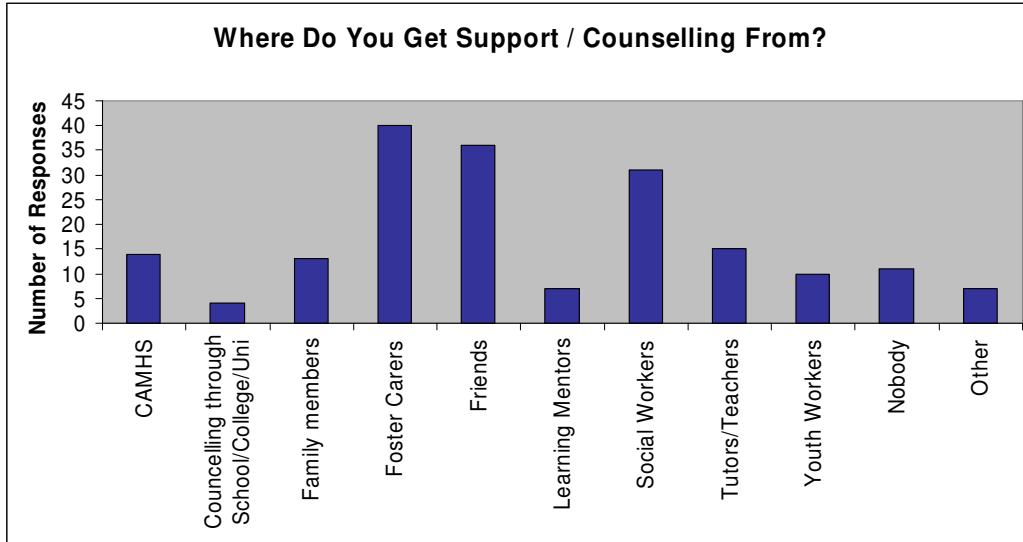
Foster carers

Teachers

Friends

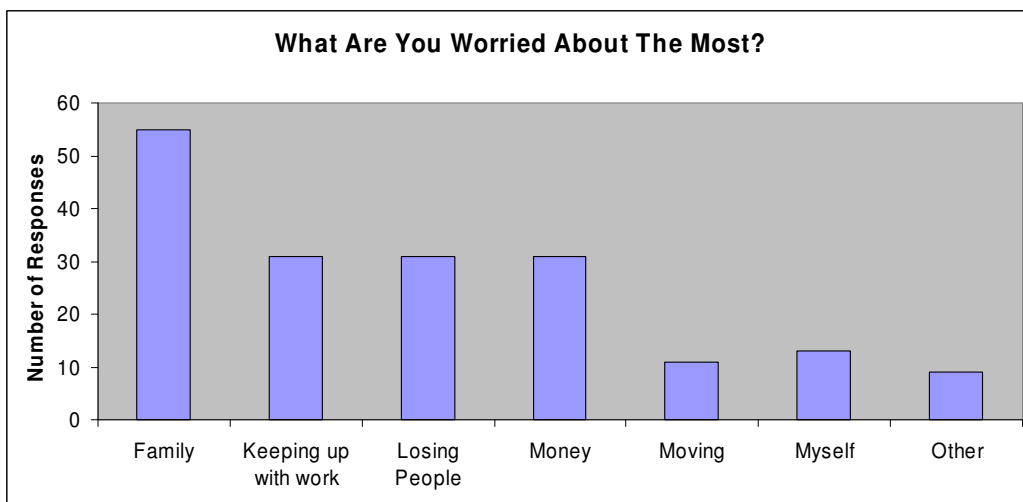
It is a good sign that foster carers and teachers help young people with course work. But when we asked questions in the focus groups and interviews young people told us that it was mainly their friends that helped them.

### Where do you get support /counselling from?

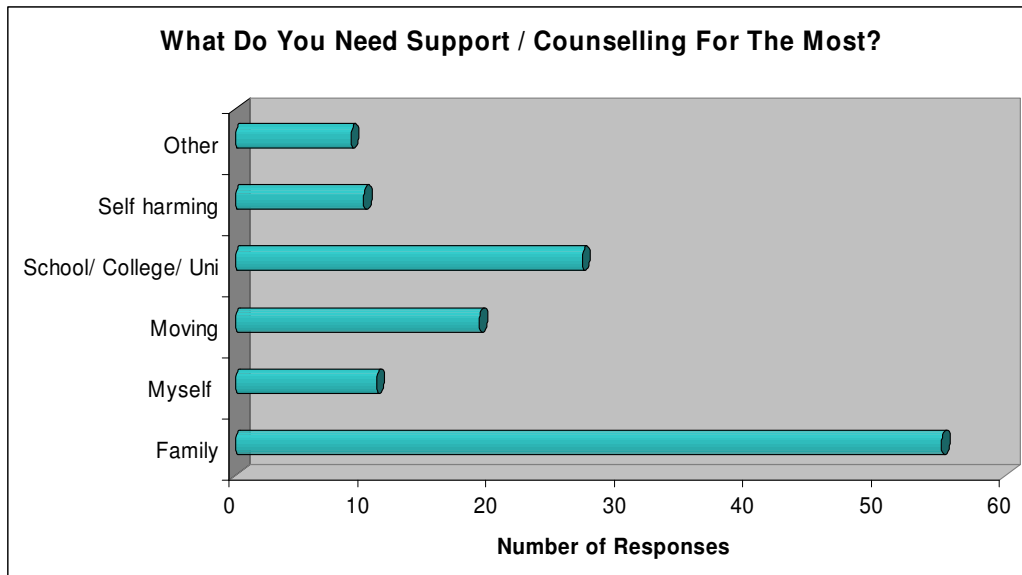


According to the statistics most people get their support from foster carers, friends and social workers. In our focus groups and interviews young people told us social workers didn't care but the statistics prove differently. In the focus group and interviews young people also told us that they get support & counselling from foster carers and friends and the statistics back this up.

### What are you worried about the most?

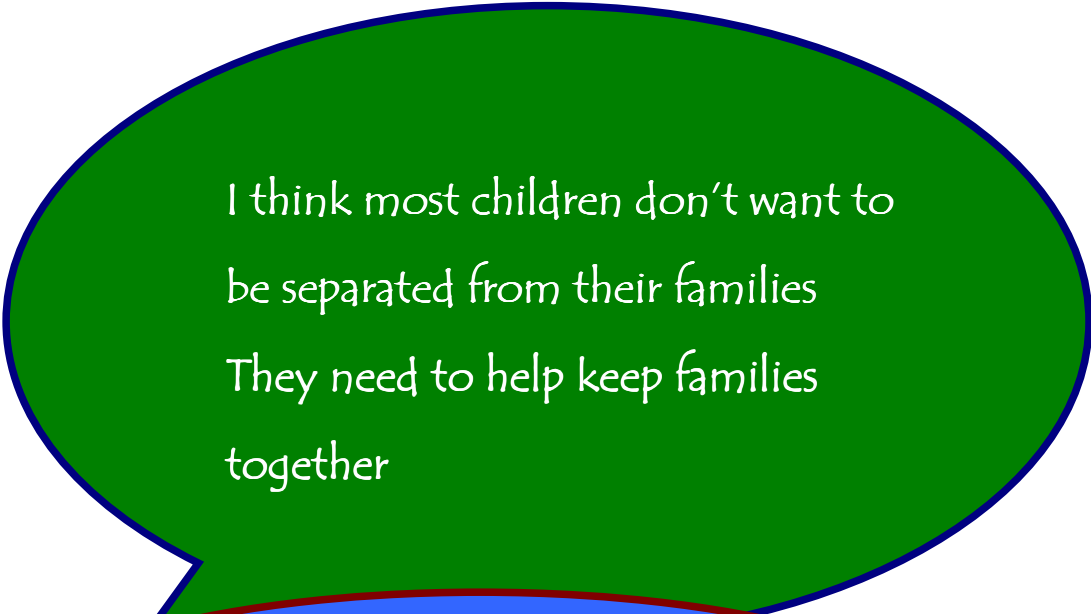


## What do you want support & counselling for the most?



When we asked young people what they were worried about the most they said family and this was the same when we asked them what they needed support and counselling for the most they said family again. So these two things are linked and also from what we have said already young people are really worried about their families and this could be why they are not focussed on their education.

To be able to live a normal life and have stability to stay where they are and if they do have any family then for them to keep in contact with them.....



I think most children don't want to  
be separated from their families  
They need to help keep families  
together



Help people with relationships  
with families

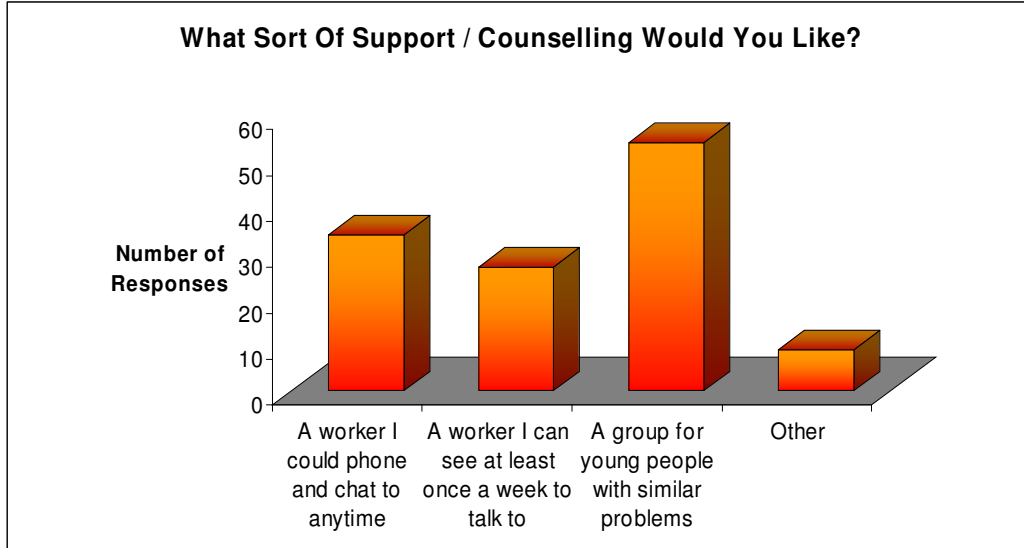


To see my Family so I can  
settle down



Make sure families come to see  
them so they can sort it out

## What sort of support & counselling would you like?



The majority of young people said they would like a group for young people with similar problems they told us the same thing in the interviews and focus groups.

For young people to know that they are not alone & meet other young people like them

They haven't got no family most of them & they haven't got anyone to talk to, so they should have groups where they can meet & talk to people with the same problems who haven't got family.

You open up more in a group cos like they got the same problems as you and they don't take the p---s & you don't feel like a ----head'

## Conclusion

The most important things that we found out were what young people told us and this is how we got our themes. These are our themes.

Theme one - Where you live can make things hard

Theme Two - Splitting brothers & sisters up had a bad affect on young people

Theme Three -Placements are too short.

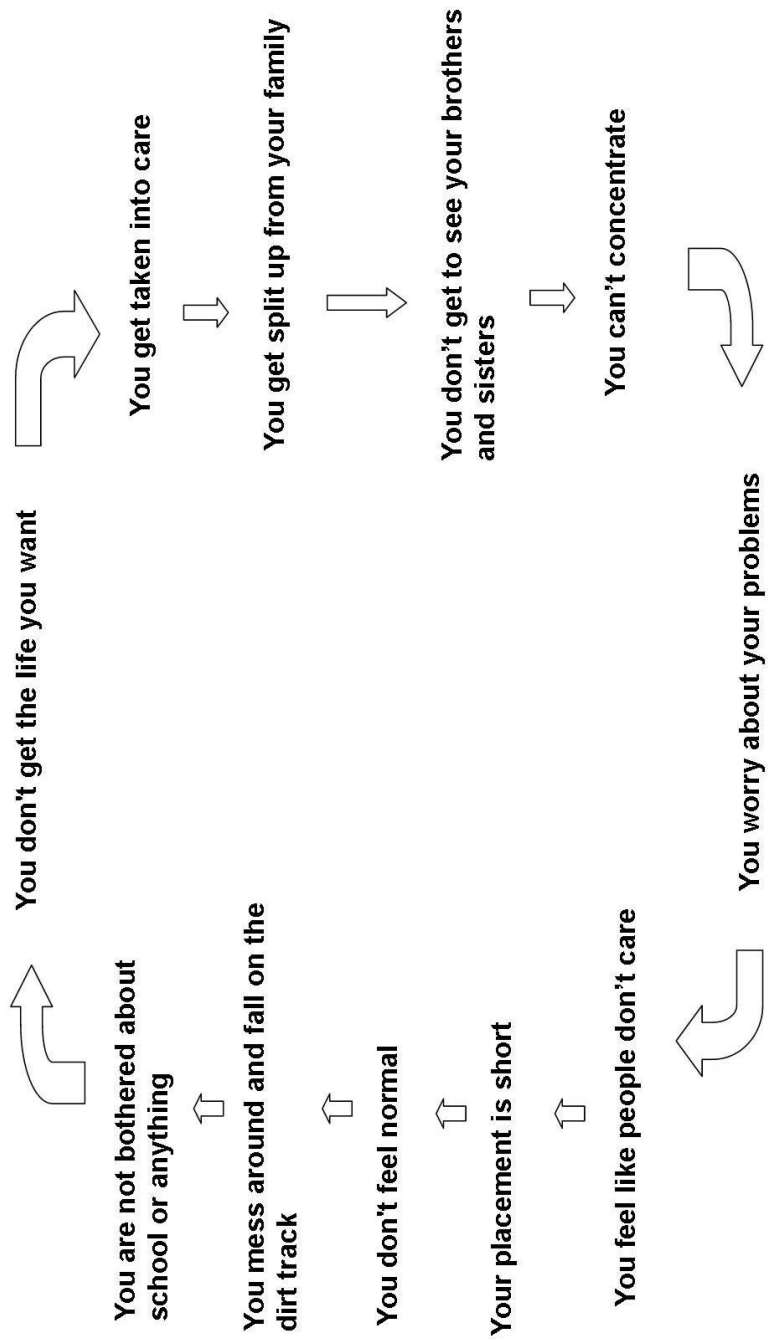
Theme four- Young people want people to love & look after them.

Theme Five - Young people don't feel 'normal'

Theme Six -Young people in care need role models

Theme Seven - Leaving care is hard.....

These themes are really important because they can affect someone's life in lots of ways and they are all connected. There is a circle and for the circle to be broke there has to be something done or it can go on for ever. For example see below



The theme that stood out the most was the one about splitting up brothers and sisters lots of young people mentioned this in the questionnaire, focus groups and interviews.

It's not fair we got split up because  
our mum is lazy

I didn't do ought wrong & they  
didn't do ought wrong so why  
should we get split up? It's like we  
getting punished for what our  
parent done

I've got 2 sisters that got took off  
me - & I lost that bond , it's too  
late now

I mean how am I supposed to get  
to Australia to see my little sisters?  
I think they should be in West  
Yorkshire

Don't split us up from our brothers & sisters, at the end of the day you grow up with someone together & they know you & it's like you are taking half of us away, it's not nice is it? What if I came & just took your brother or sister away & you never got to see them ever again, it's not fair really

I got brothers & sisters & I see 4 of them but my baby sisters I don't even know if they get my letters

I've been split up from my sisters, I don't know where they are, I don't know who I am, they are a part of me & they are not here

Contact once a week isn't really fair

It would be good if we could see our families more because it's not fair we are split up

Keep them in contact with siblings so they've got some family left, & they can still have a relationship with family rather, than not knowing each other

If you get split up from your brothers & sisters it's really bad

Don't split brothers & sisters up

## Recommendations

After listening to young people and discussing it in our group we think some of the things below will make the lives of young people in care better. It will give them a better chance of doing well in education and the support & counselling will help them stay off the dirt track.

- Young people in care should be allowed to see their brothers & sisters at least once a week because they will feel like they have someone in their life and this could make a big difference to them, their education and life.
- More activities at weekends because this will keep their minds occupied when they are worried and keep them off the dirt track
- Need to keep placements as long as possible so they have a chance to settle down, make friends and fit in.
- Get a group of adults who have been in care to run small groups for young people in care because then they can talk about the problems with each other and see how they got through it.
- Set up a group of young people who have been in care who are 18 -21 to talk to younger people in care so they can relate to them.
- Have groups for young people in care who have similar problems
- Young people should stay in their placement until they are ready to leave and have the right life skills and their bed should be kept open for as long as possible so they have somewhere to fall back on.
- Their needs to be more places like Stepping Stones

## What Next

The GLUW group will:

- Invite people to a event at the Media Museum and tell them about the research.
- Go to the BKYP ( Bradford Keighley Youth Parliament) Public meeting to tell them about the report.
- Go to the Champion for Children's Board and ask them to discuss our report and think about making the recommendations we have suggested.