

# Keeping myself safe.

Practitioner's toolkit  
for developing effective  
relationships with  
vulnerable young people.



‘We would like to thank the young people who took part in this research either through discussion groups or interviews. Their words can be heard throughout this toolkit. We would also like to thank the Action for Children colleagues who helped make this research happen.’

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Images: the children featured in this toolkit are from a range of Action for Children services but not residential care

# 1 Keeping myself safe practitioner's toolkit

This research is important because it enables young people in, or leaving care, to explain what helps them to build their resilience and manage risk in their lives. It looks at those aspects of the relationships they form with Action for Children staff that most help them to keep themselves safe.

The Keeping Myself Safe Practitioners Toolkit is produced by Action for Children and York Consulting. You can find out more about us and how we produced the Toolkit in Appendix A.

This guide is intended as a tool for practitioners and managers to support the process of developing effective relationships with vulnerable young people to help them keep themselves safe. It looks at professional relationships between young people and Action for Children staff, focusing on safeguarding issues such as suicide, risky relationships and self-harm. The guide highlights the qualities and skills identified by young people that staff, and the organisations that employ those staff, need to display to be most effective in promoting resilience in young people so that they are able to manage their own risk.

Improving outcomes for young people in, or leaving care, is a priority, both for the organisations that work with young people and politically across the UK. Young people leaving care are one of the most vulnerable groups in our society:

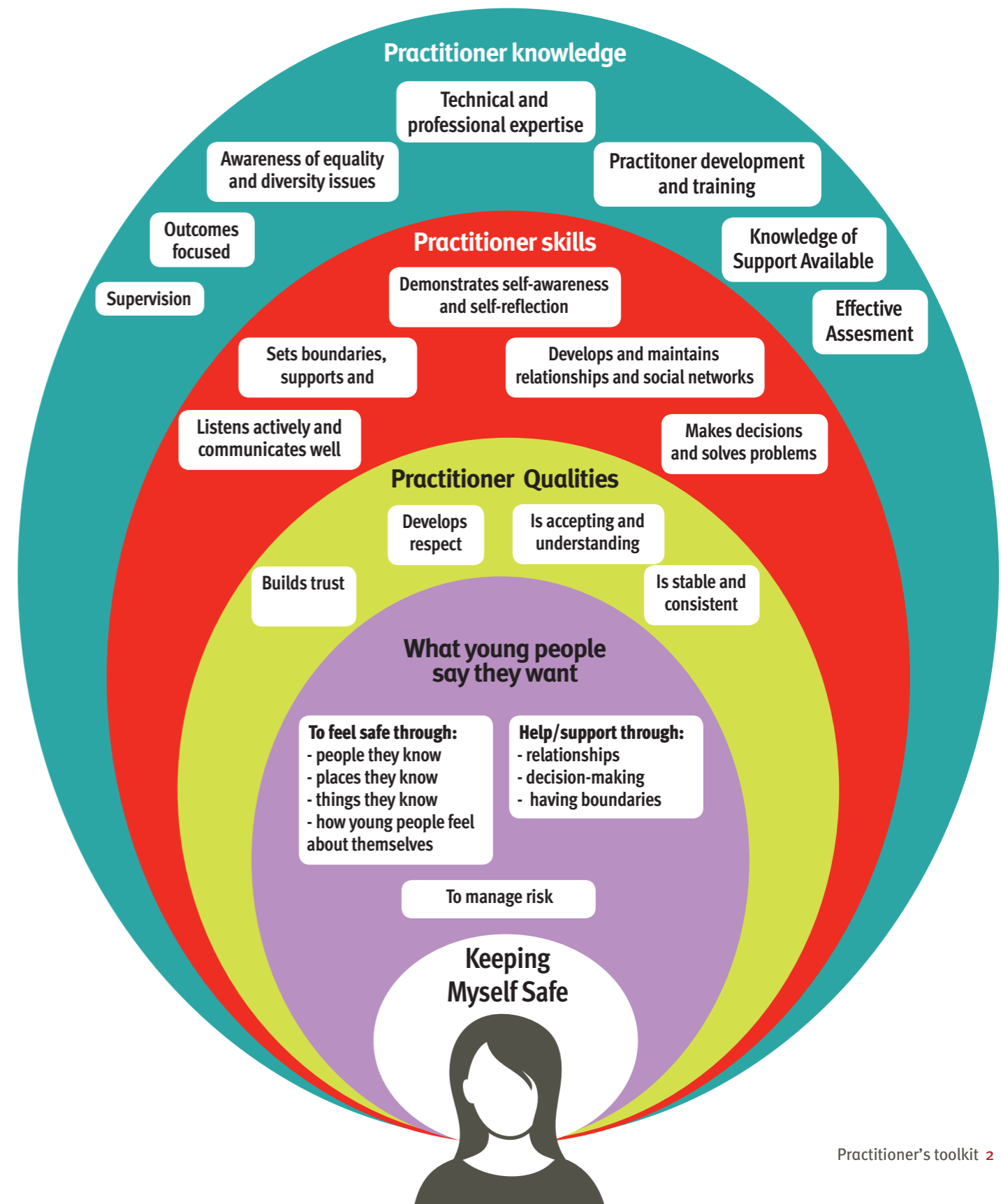
- ▶ they are four times more likely to have a mental health disorder
- ▶ they are five times less likely to achieve five good GCSEs, eight times more likely to be excluded from school and less likely to go to university
- ▶ one in five homeless people are care leavers (DFES, 2007)
- ▶ children who go missing and/or are in care are at heightened risk of sexual exploitation (CEOP, 2011)
- ▶ Young people leaving care are four times more likely to commit suicide in adulthood (ITV, 2013)

By presenting the views of young people and highlighting the value of sustained professional relationships, this research contributes to the

debate around 'what is care for?' By looking at the value of professional relationships in relation to building resilience and managing risk with young people in the care system a clear gap in the evidence base is addressed.

Figure 1: What's in the keeping myself safe practitioners toolkit?

- ▶ what young people say they want to help them stay safe
- ▶ the qualities of practitioners that enable them to support young people to stay safe
- ▶ the skills required by practitioners that enable them to support young people to stay safe
- ▶ the underpinning knowledge and support needed to work with young people and keep them safe



## 2 What the literature tells us about what helps young people to keep themselves safe

Developing resilience amongst vulnerable young people is linked with improving outcomes, including moving on to employment, training or education and stable accommodation on leaving care.

**R**esilience, high self-esteem and self-efficacy are crucial in enabling young people to keep themselves safe. Resilience concerns people's ability to 'bounce back'; doing well against the odds, coping, and recovering (Rutter, 1985; Stein, 2005). Masten et al (1990) define resilience as "the process of, capacity for, or outcome of successful adaptation despite challenging or threatening circumstances".

Allowing young people to take risks, with support, helps to build their resilience. Practice which helps to develop resilience in young people generally takes a strengths-based and solution-focused approach. This begins with the belief that all individuals have or can develop strengths and are able to use past successes to address problem behaviour and enhance functioning and happiness. It focuses on what people do right rather than what they do wrong (Applestein, 2012).

Newman (2004) identified effective strategies for developing resilience in adolescence and early adulthood (13 to 19 years):

- ▶ strong social support networks
- ▶ the presence of a least one unconditionally supportive parent or parent substitute
- ▶ a committed mentor or other person from outside the family
- ▶ positive school experiences
- ▶ a sense of mastery and a belief that one's own efforts can make a difference (self-efficacy)
- ▶ participation in a range of extra-curricular activities
- ▶ the capacity to re-frame adversities so that the beneficial as well as the damaging effects are recognised
- ▶ the ability or opportunity to make a difference by helping others or through part-time work
- ▶ not to be excessively sheltered from challenging situations that provide opportunities to develop coping skills

This provides a useful framework for practitioners who want to support vulnerable young people to build resilience and help them to keep themselves safe.

Self-efficacy, the belief in your capability to succeed, is critical in making effective decisions. Self-efficacy means that young people are:

- ▶ less likely to get into difficult situations
- ▶ less likely to be targeted
- ▶ more likely to recover and learn

If young people believe they can keep themselves safe, this can help them to avoid danger or effectively manage their risk taking behaviour.

Research has shown that young people with high levels of self-esteem are more willing to learn from their mistakes, take positive risks and ask for help. In contrast, those with low levels of self-esteem are more likely to take negative risks; are less likely to have an accurate assessment of their abilities and are more likely to blame external factors for their failure.

Attachment theory also provides useful insights into keeping young people safe and can be linked back to the research on resilience. Young people are more likely to take positive risks when they have a secure base which is stable and consistent. Young people who are insecurely attached are more likely to take dangerous risks because they do not feel that they have a secure base. It is important to remember that developing such a secure base for vulnerable young people is likely to take time and can be extremely challenging.

In practice this means that young people need to know that practitioners will:

- ▶ be there for them
- ▶ listen and understand how they are feeling
- ▶ allow them to experience emotions in a safe way

## 3 What young people say they want

**W**e asked young people what made them feel safe and where they look for help and support. They told us:

- ▶ people they know
- ▶ places they know
- ▶ things they know

**People they know:** Young people felt that these relationships helped them stay safe because they were able to discuss things that worried them. They go to friends, family or staff for advice, information and for help in making decisions. Young people emphasised the importance of having someone trustworthy who will give them, or help them navigate, appropriate boundaries.

**"If I had any worries or concerns I'd go to someone in the office, it's their job. They deal with it the best".**

"I sit in my room and feel safe; no one can get through the door".

"If you feel good about yourself you're less likely to put yourself in a risky situation".

"They give us boundaries – we can't go past certain places".

**"They [staff] make me feel safe because they're big and grown up and can help me. If I'm in trouble they can help me".**

**Places they know:** Certain spaces were important for making young people feel safe, for example their rooms.

For older young people, it was important to know where was safe and unsafe in their neighbourhood:

**"I know places to go and where not to go".**

Staff helped younger young people understand what safe boundaries were for them within their local area.

**Things they know:** Young people also identified that the things they knew helped them keep safe they recognised that "you need to understand the risks" and that whilst school tried to teach them about the risks "you don't always listen".

**How young people felt about themselves:** Young people believe that feeling good about themselves also helped keep them safe (i.e. a strong sense of self-worth and high levels of self-esteem):

**"If I don't want to do something I won't do it, I control myself".**

# 4 Practitioner qualities

4.1 Builds trust

4.2 Develops respect

4.3 Is accepting and understanding

4.4 Is stable and consistent

## 4.1 Builds trust

### Why is this important for keeping young people safe?

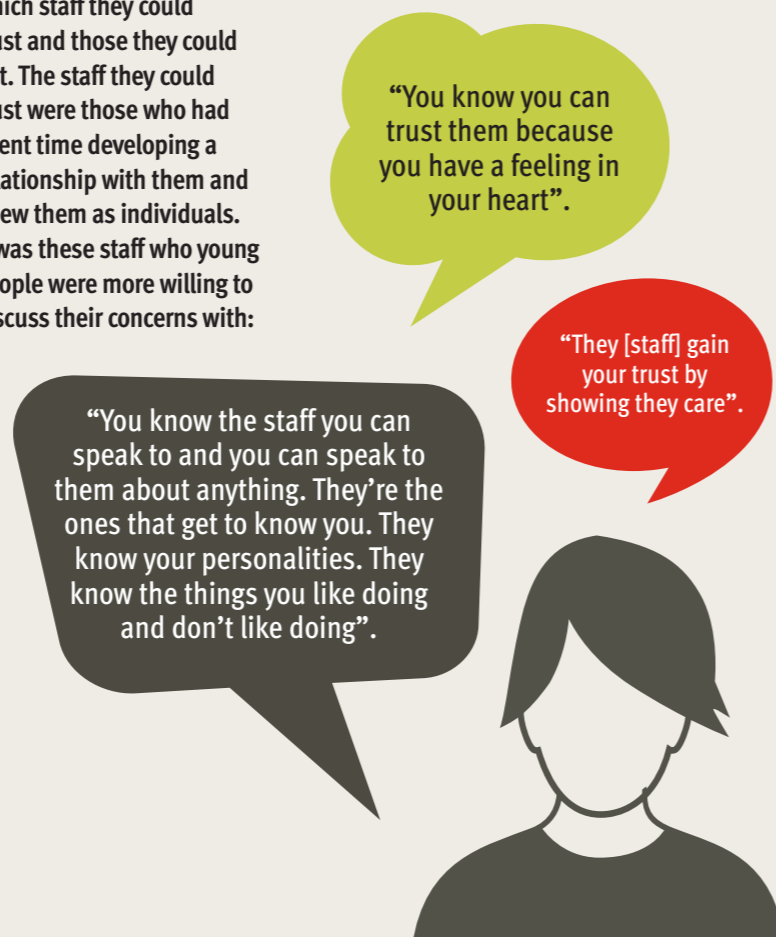
Young people said staff could help keep them safe by developing their trust. By developing trusting relationships young people are more willing to talk to staff about keeping themselves safe and discuss risk-taking behaviour.

### What do young people say?

Young people were clear that if they had a trusting relationship with staff they were more willing to discuss their issues and concerns:



They were also clear about which staff they could trust and those they could not. The staff they could trust were those who had spent time developing a relationship with them and knew them as individuals. It was these staff who young people were more willing to discuss their concerns with:



Importantly, developing a trusting relationship with staff was seen as a two-way thing by young people. They said that in addition to developing trusting relationships with staff, staff also needed to trust young people and demonstrate this in the things they did and said to them:



Being able to rely on staff and be confident that they would do what they said they would do was very important for young people and had an impact on how they felt about themselves:



The worst things young people felt staff could do to break their trust were: not following up on things they had promised to do; not being reliable; breaking a young person’s confidence; and/or not treating their views seriously enough:



Young people were more likely to tell someone they were being harmed if they could tell someone they already knew, trusted and were friends with.

### **Builds trust: what's the evidence from the literature?**

Evidence from the literature is clear that developing a trusting relationship with vulnerable young people is critical in helping keep them safe.

Research with young people in care and those who have left care identified that if young people are going to tell someone that they are being harmed they need to be able to trust that person not to pass on information they do not need to pass on (Ofsted, 2011). Young people were concerned that they could not trust social workers not to pass on information that was confidential but not needed for safeguarding. If that had happened to them in the past they were less likely to trust their social worker again. Furthermore, young people were scared to say things to their social worker about their carer as they felt they could not trust their social worker not to tell their carer.

Young people in the Ofsted (2011) research also said that they needed time to get to know professionals and develop a trusting relationship before opening up to them

about safeguarding concerns: "They need to get to know us; you can't expect us to tell them things when we don't know them. Trust is something you build up," This is backed up by research undertaken by the Office of the Children's Commissioner on good practice in safeguarding and child protection in secondary schools (Lefevre et al., 2013).

The setting was also important (Ofsted, 2011). Young people felt that it was easier to talk about harm somewhere informal and casual. Young people also said that, in addition to face-to-face contact, they needed different ways of telling someone; for example via a website or email.

The reliability of professionals was important for developing trusting relationships with young people and keeping them safe. Young people said that frequent changes of social worker, social workers having their decisions overridden by managers, young people not being able to get in touch with their social workers and professionals not turning up for appointments all damaged the vital trust and relationship needed between professionals and young people to keep them safe (Ofsted, 2011). Young people in this research also indicated that they needed more than one person they could trust and go to if they were worried about something.

'Being trustworthy' and 'having a commitment to children and families' were identified by young people who use social work services as the most important values that social workers should have (Action for Children, 2010). Providing practical support also helps to build trust, for example help when young people were ill or assistance with their homework (Action for Children, 2008a).

### **Guidance for practitioners**

In order to build trusting relationships with young people to keep them safe, practitioners need to:

- engage on a person-to-person level and be down to earth
- demonstrate a genuine interest in young people
- empathise in a realistic way and avoid patronising responses
- be reliable – do what you say you will do
- be mindful of the sharing of sensitive information



## 4.2 Develops respect

### Why is this important for keeping young people safe?

Young people said staff could help keep them safe by treating them with respect, as this makes them feel valued and helps develop their sense of self-worth. Having a strong sense of self-worth means young people are less likely to feel pressured into engaging in risky behaviours.

### What do young people say?

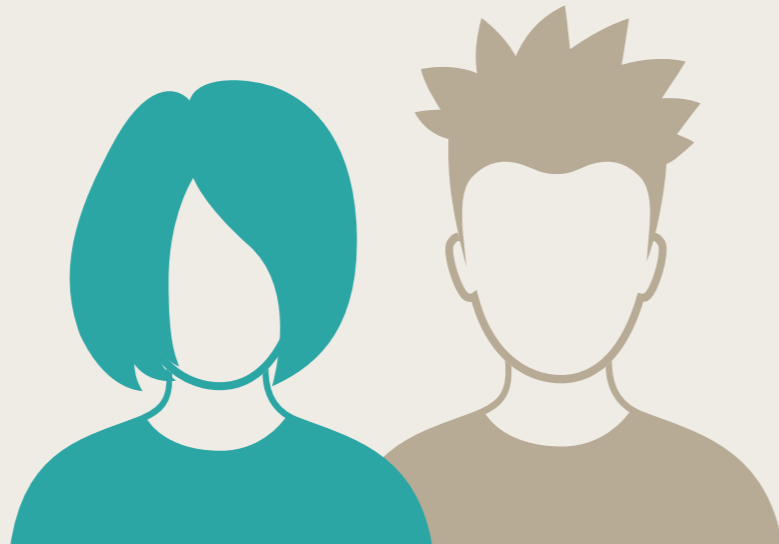
Young people said that in order to keep themselves safe, staff need to ask for and value their opinions, as well as respecting their wishes and showing they care:

“Ask my opinion and how I’m feeling”.

“They know when to leave you alone and they know when you want attention”.

“Say thanks when we do things and show their appreciation”.

“Tells me I’m good at things”.



They valued and were more likely to confide in staff who:

“Treat you with respect”.

“Teaches me self-respect”.



A sense of fairness and equality was also important for young people:

“Being fair with us”.

“We’re all on the same level, staff and young people. There’s no hierarchy. If we’re on the same level, when I’m stressed I’m more likely to speak to a member of staff. Staff obviously speak to you like you’re an adult too, ‘cos we’re on the same level, so I’m more likely to listen and not put myself in danger”.

This view was reiterated by staff who felt that they gained the respect of young people by being ‘fair and giving young people boundaries’. A sense of fairness is important as young people feel they are being treated equally and thus with respect.

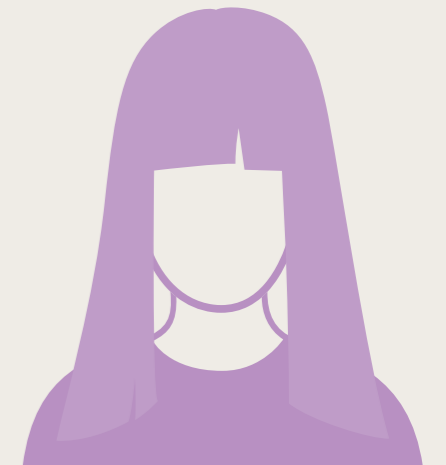


The way staff behaved with young people was also important. Young people said they knew staff respected them because of the way they treated them and this was reflected in their body language and the things staff encouraged young people to do. For example in terms of developing their self-esteem and self-worth:

“By the things they encourage you to do”.

“They’re nice and kindly”.

“Putting out their body language. They come down at your level, not pointing in your face”.



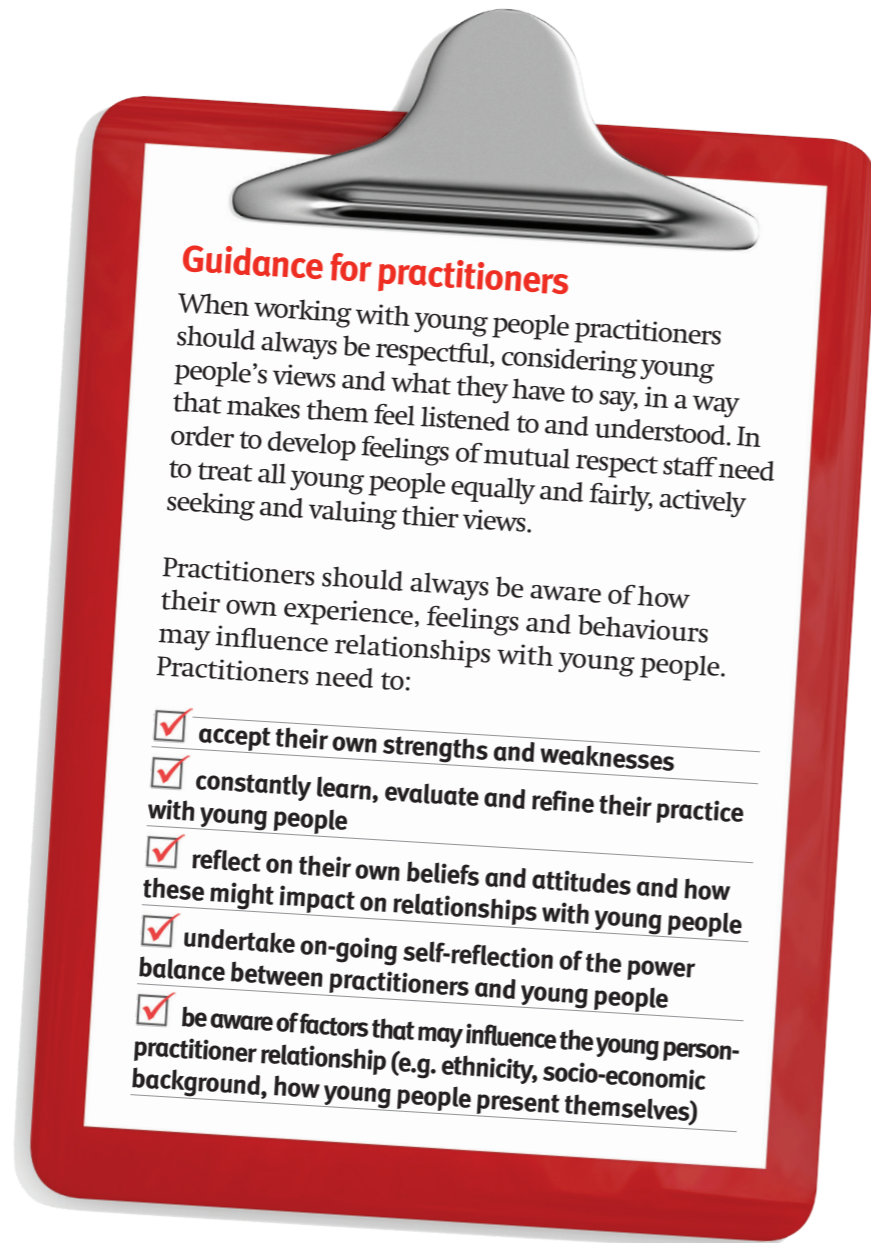
## Develops respect: what's the evidence from the literature?

Developing respect is closely linked to developing trusting relationships. The need to treat young people with respect helps young people develop secure and trusting relationships with others, which in turn can help keep them safe. The importance of valuing young people's opinions and understanding their view of the world is highlighted in the literature. For example, recommendations to workers from young people who have been affected by sexual exploitation clearly exemplify the importance of respecting their viewpoint so workers can understand and make sense of the challenges they face:

**“Respect the way we see our own situation. It's much better for us to understand why something is wrong than to be told by someone else that it is”** (Association for Young People's Health, 2013).

The importance of respecting young people's views and preferences to help develop a sense of self-efficacy and raising self-esteem (both associated with developing resilience and keeping young people safe) is highlighted in the literature (Bostock, 2004).

Findings from national consultation events with young people in care suggest that to improve young people's self-esteem social care services should “recognise, respect and reward the unique and special skills and talents of all young people” (Bostock, 2004). Staff also need to **‘lead by example’** in the working relationships formed with young people **“so they incorporate a sense of mutuality, empathy and respect”** (New Economics Foundation and Action for Children, 2009).



## 4.3 Is accepting and understanding

### Why is this important for keeping young people safe?

Accepting and understanding what young people have been through can help keep them safe. It means that staff can empathise with young people and appreciate why they do things and engage in some risky behaviours. Accepting young people as individuals also helps them develop their self-esteem and confidence, which in turn is linked to developing their resilience.



### What do young people say?

Young people said that in order to keep them safe, staff need to understand why they engage in particular behaviours:



Young people felt that in order to keep themselves safe, it was important that staff could pick up on their individual behaviour and understand what that might mean, for example recognising when young people might be in need of additional support or help.



Young people felt that it was important that staff treat young people as individuals. Remembering important things about them showed them that staff cared. Young people also felt that staff needed to like working with young people, show an interest and have empathy with young people.





“Don’t make assumptions. We are more than what you read in case files” (Action for Children, 2013).

### Is accepting and understanding: what’s the evidence from the literature?

Evidence highlights that staff need to be able to work with a young person’s agenda; expect and anticipate problems; and respond in a ‘non-emotional’ way (Street, 2008). Staff working within a multi-disciplinary context need to appreciate and understand that:

**“No one person or idea is right and everybody has a contribution to make. The fast pace of the work ... requires that different ways of understanding behaviour must necessarily be adopted when there is considerable stress and change. Consequently, they are very aware that no one view can dominate or be seen as being the concrete explanation of what has taken place”** (Street, 2008).

Street goes on to suggest that successful projects and practitioners working with vulnerable young people should also demonstrate “a clear desire not to engage in stereotypical views and prejudices and in this way [demonstrate] an approach of ‘not simplifying’ individuals or situations.” (Street, 2008). Literature reporting young people’s views also highlights the importance of treating young people as individuals and not making assumptions about them or their situation:

**“One of the worst things is being treated like a ‘case’. If you tick all the boxes you’re OK”** (Office of the Children’s Rights Director, 2012).

Young people also need to know that their opinions count and that they are going to be believed by adults, particularly around safeguarding concerns. Not knowing what will happen next can also stop young people talking:

**“Children and young people said they don’t necessarily tell people if they’re scared or afraid they won’t be believed or if their confidence will be broken ... Before telling someone [they were being harmed] they needed to be clear that they are**

**going to be believed and would get support afterwards”** (Ofsted, 2011).  
**“Children and young people said there was a tendency for professionals to believe adults rather than children and young people – need to make sure look into all sides of the story ‘it doesn’t matter if you tell people, nothing will be done”** (Ofsted, 2011).

The literature also suggests that young people’s wellbeing can be promoted by taking a co-production approach to service delivery. NEF and Action for Children’s (2009) guide looks at how practitioners can use co-production to develop their practice and facilitate behaviour change, driven by young people’s goals and aspirations. Valuing young people as assets and celebrating young people’s contribution are two of the four key principles of a co-production approach.

Valuing young people as assets:

- ▶ **“Work to identify and put to use young people’s assets – starting from who young people are and what their interests are**
- ▶ **Enable young people to work out what they are good at and how they are able to influence events and situations**
- ▶ **Assets can include life experience, knowledge, skills, talents, energy and enthusiasm and need to be incorporated in the design and delivery of services”**

Celebrating young people’s contribution:

- ▶ **“Provide positive feedback and praise for things young people have done well and tried hard at**
- ▶ **Build opportunities for positive experiences and rewards into budgets**
- ▶ **Ensure a balance between extrinsic rewards ‘treats’ and intrinsic rewards e.g. working with young people to identify goals to help them work towards”**

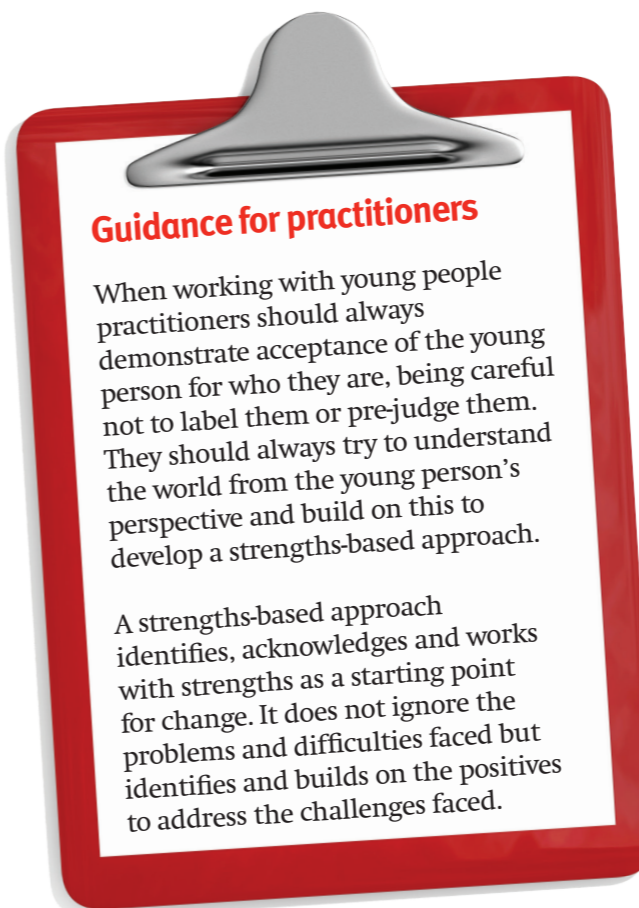
Qualities of empathy and unconditional positive regard are also highlighted in the literature, as well as the need to ‘stick with young people’ and not give up on them (Action for Children, 2010).

Self-esteem comes from secure attachments but can also be enhanced by participation in valued activities:

**“Children who are not loved at home may nevertheless develop feelings of self-worth if a relative takes an interest, a teacher appears concerned and caring, or a residential worker responds with kindness and consistency”** (Gilligan, 2000 quoted in Bostock 2004).

Practitioners need to show young people that they care and value them, for example remembering birthdays (Bostock, 2004). Findings from National Voice (2003, quoted in Bostock 2004) consultation events with young people in care suggest that the following is needed to help improve their self-esteem:

- ▶ **social work education should actively promote a positive image of young people from care**
- ▶ **social services departments should recognise, respect and reward the unique and special skills and talents of all young people**
- ▶ **young people should have access to other groups of young people from care**



**Guidance for practitioners**

When working with young people practitioners should always demonstrate acceptance of the young person for who they are, being careful not to label them or pre-judge them. They should always try to understand the world from the young person’s perspective and build on this to develop a strengths-based approach.

A strengths-based approach identifies, acknowledges and works with strengths as a starting point for change. It does not ignore the problems and difficulties faced but identifies and builds on the positives to address the challenges faced.



## 4.4 Is stable and consistent

### Why is this important for keeping young people safe?

Providing a stable and consistent relationship with a practitioner gives young people the opportunity to develop a trusting relationship so they are more likely to discuss risk-taking behaviour. In addition, if young people know different staff will respond to them in the same way this gives them confidence and can help provide a template for the relationships they themselves develop with others in the future.

### What's the evidence from the literature?

There is strong evidence which shows that stability is central to achieving positive outcomes for young people in care and that there is a need to avoid circumstances where placements break down in an unplanned way (Action for Children, 2013; Stein, 2005). Stability and security are important in making young people feel safe. The importance of stability also extends to the relationships young people have with professionals, particularly in relation to keeping them safe:

**“For many of the young people interviewed, a consistent, long-term relationship with a professional throughout the referral and safeguarding process was the most important factor in disclosure and protection”** (Rees et al., 2010).

The above shows that young people were willing to talk about safeguarding issues because they had the opportunity to develop a relationship with a professional they trusted.

**“Making sure young people have a secure base where they can be assured of unconditional emotional and physical support has been shown to be important in promoting resilience”** (Research in Practice [RIP], 2006).

The evidence also shows that looked after young people can develop secure attachments with foster carers even when placed at a relatively late age. This

### What do young people say?

Consistency is important for young people: consistent messages from staff demonstrate that they treat all young people fairly and equally. A consistent response also shows young people that staff know what they are talking about, instilling confidence in their relationship with staff.

“If you ask one member of staff something and then you ask another you'll always get the same response. It's like they've all had the same training and they're all singing from the same hymn sheet”.

“Don't change staff constantly: “then you can develop a relationship with them”.

Having a stable relationship over time provides the space to develop trusting relationships with practitioners. It means that staff get to know young people and what is important to them.

“Be in it for the kids not the money”.

“Someone who's interested in me”.

“They should remember important things like my birthday”.

Young people said that they were more willing to talk to workers whom they had known for a period of time and therefore had time to develop a trusting relationship with. Whilst recognising that some staff will change, they highlighted the importance of always having one or more person they could go to. Again this was those staff that they had known the longest.

“I've had the same workers a long time, we're friends now. I can talk to them. I go to the ones I've known longer”.

“They show you they care. They look after you and are nice to you”.

attachment has been shown to prevent offending behaviour. For strong attachments to develop a young person needs routine within the care setting. They need someone nearby who they feel is important to them and who will show an interest, encourage, reassure, explain things and give them their time (RIP, 2006).

The evidence suggests that young people who successfully leave care and are in safe, settled accommodation are likely to have had stability and continuity in their lives, including secure attachments and relationships (C4EO, 2009).

Staff we spoke to highlighted how being consistent, honest and fair with young people meant that they were more likely to discuss their worries and concerns:

**“Trust is developed from your relationship with a young person and being consistent and being fair”** (Staff focus group).

**“Honesty: don't promise what you can't deliver. That leads to the development of trust”** (Staff focus group).

**“Being consistent – they're looking for fairness”** (Staff focus group).

Consistency in approach, in terms of both relationship continuity and consistent messages from staff, are important in creating open and honest relationships with greater commitment to action:

**“Providing stability and continuity may be as important as secure attachment, depending on the age of the young person on entry to care and their history”** (Stein, 2005)

**“Stability is a key factor in achieving positive outcomes for young people and is strongly linked to attachment, resilience and positive health and educational outcomes for young people looked after away from home”** (Macdonald and Cruickshank, 2013)

Young people want openness and honesty in the relationships they develop with professionals. Young people wrote a letter to professionals and asked for “someone who is straight forward. Don't give cryptic or confusing messages” (Burgess et al., 2013).

Young people also highlight the need for stability, security and consistency in the professionals supporting them, particularly in relation to keeping themselves safe. When young people in care were asked what should be done to keep them safe, they said that if they are speaking to someone about dangers or harm to themselves they need to be able to speak to the same person each time so they do not have to repeat their story and to ensure that their words were not twisted (Ofsted, 2011).

The research shows that young people in care continue to experience a lack of consistency, continuity and stability in their support, including experiencing issues with contacting their social worker and frequent changes of social worker (Action for Children, 2010; Ofsted, 2011 and Burgess et al., 2013). “If there are so many social workers why can't we have one?” (Burgess et al., 2013).

These issues clearly have implications for keeping young people in care safe. Young people need a secure and stable professional relationship (ideally with more than one professional) so that they always have someone to talk to who knows them. Young people said that it was very important that they could get hold of someone when they needed to talk: “you need someone that is there when you need them” (Ofsted, 2011). They also noted that having someone to talk to was important in preventing problems, not just when they already had a problem.

### Guidance for practitioners

When working with young people practitioners should always ensure that they:

- act on the things that they said they would
- interact consistently and respond to individuals in the same way
- offer continuity and consistency of support

# 5 Practitioner skills

- 5.1 Makes decisions and solves problems
- 5.2 Listens actively and communicates well
- 5.3 Sets boundaries, supports and challenges
- 5.4 Demonstrates self-awareness and self-reflection
- 5.5 Develops and maintains relationships and social networks

## 5.1 Makes decisions and solves problems

### Why is this important for keeping young people safe?

Involving young people in decision making and problem solving helps empower them to take ownership of their lives and develop solutions to the problems they face. It also gives them a greater sense of self-efficacy. A feeling of control over their lives and that they can determine what happens to them. Developing young people's self-efficacy also promotes their resilience which means that young people are in a better position to deal with the problems they face.

### What do young people say?

The young people we spoke to were clear that they wanted more involvement in decisions about their lives and felt that this would give them skills to help keep themselves safe. Young people felt that in order to keep themselves safe staff need to:

“We need to make decisions”.

“Give young people opportunities to make decisions and learn from mistakes”.

“Don't speak to me like a kid. Speak to me like a human being. Ask my opinion and how I'm feeling ... giving options, we want to be offered options”.

“Discuss problems and look at the young person's point of view”.

“Need to get away from folk making decisions for you like in Children's Hearings”.

“Give us choices”.

“Plan for the future – ask them what they can do with their lives”.

Young people identified that staff gave them opportunities to make decisions and, importantly, trusted them to make decisions for themselves which made them feel that they had control over their lives:

“They've never actually said to me 'you have to do this.' 'They always say 'we'd like you to do this'. I go to college on a full-time basis but they would never remind me that it's college day. They just expect me to be there. They don't tell me. They know that I am going, they trust me. They don't put too much pressure on me, that's important”.

“We get to choose where we want to go when we get out and about. We chose where we went on holiday once. Being allowed to choose is cool, it makes you feel like you have some control over your own life. Even the little things”.

Young people highlighted how staff played an important role in helping them solve the problems they faced and helped them learn from the mistakes they made within a safe and supportive environment:

“The staff are good at solving problems. Not long after I moved in I was being bullied by some people but it got dealt with straight away. I had to go and explain to staff and it felt easier than keeping it all to myself. It was the way that it was dealt with so quickly that really meant a lot. They gave me advice too. They told me not to retaliate, just keep myself to myself”.

“Here is a good environment to learn from mistakes. I can reflect. There's been times when I've been in arguments with people and they try to get you to solve the argument yourself with the person. They make us sit together and you think about the things that you've done wrong and the other person thinks about what they've done wrong. You talk about the things that the other person did wrong and they talk about what you've done wrong. The worker sits with us, it's calm. It ends well. You realise that you are both in the wrong. You learn to try and avoid that situation happening again”.

“Staff find the solutions to make it easier for me. Sometimes we come to the solution together, sometimes they give me advice and it's up to me to make the choice. I usually take their advice. Their help does help me make the right choice”.

The professional becomes less of a fixer of problems and more a facilitator of solutions – supporting young people to put their abilities to use.

### Makes decisions and solves problems: what's the evidence from the literature?

The literature highlights the importance of developing self-efficacy among looked after young people and how this can improve outcomes for young people in care. The focus is on young people's participation in effective decision making and problem solving. This participation alongside self-efficacy helps young people address and learn from the issues they face, be less likely to get into difficult situations or be targeted.

Stein (2005) notes that for many young people entering care their self-efficacy is very low and their lives are controlled by others: "abandoned by family, excluded from school, put into care, sent to a children's home, assessed by social workers, placed with foster carers". Although most of the stigmatising practices seen in the 70s and 80s have stopped, children and young people might still feel stigmatised by having to get permission and police checks for sleepovers.

Strategies for developing young people's self-efficacy include encouraging young people to:

**"Declare preferences, set personal goals that give a sense of what the future might hold and develop plans for how to reach them"** (RIP, 2006).

**"A sense of direction is very important for young people in care because it gives them a sense of stability and control so involving them in planning their care is critical to that"** (Bostock, 2004).

The value of taking a co-production approach to delivery is highlighted, as well as the role of the professional in shaping the conditions for co-production to take place (NEF and Action for Children, 2009). This emphasises doing things with young people, rather than to, or for them. It recognises that young people have their own skills, knowledge and experiences which they can contribute. It goes beyond giving young people a 'voice' (i.e. beyond consulting with them in decision making) and gives them the opportunity to "be the change" by focusing on young people as "part of their

own solution" (NEF and Action for Children, 2009). The focus is on things that are working well to create positive experiences and sustainable behaviour change driven by the young people's goals and aspirations.

Developing self-efficacy helps the "development of influence, negotiation and problem-solving abilities and discouragement of 'learned helplessness'" (RIP, 2006). It is also linked to improving resilience: "helping young people develop their self-efficacy – being helped to plan, solve problems and feel competent – will also promote their resilience" (Newman and Blackburn, 2002 quoted in Stein, 2005). Involving young people in problem solving activity and decision making helps develop their resilience and the skills they need to respond to challenging situations.

Stein (2005) shows that too many looked after young people fail to experience the gradual transition from care which other adolescents experience, such as entry to further or higher education. Care leavers are expected to enter 'instant adulthood', which means they do not have the opportunities to prepare for the 'risk' society within a relatively supported environment or the option of going home if things go wrong:

**"[Transition] is a stage that is critical to the promotion of resilience through opportunities to reframe adversities, so that the beneficial, as well as the damaging effects, are recognised, and through exposure to challenging situations that provide opportunities to develop both problem-solving abilities and emotional coping skills – key resilience-promoting factors identified in the international literature"** (Newman and Blackburn, 2002).

Young people are clear about the need and their desire to be involved in decision making about their lives, particularly in terms of helping them tell someone if they are being harmed:

**"You need to ask the children and young people what they want to happen and discuss it, not just do it"** (Ofsted, 2011).

### "Ask me things"

(Action for Children, 2008a).

Young people also stress the "importance of taking into account individual needs and choices" (Bostock, 2004). They felt adults responsible for their care often decide 'what is best', regardless of whether they themselves viewed it as the best option for their situation.

Research with young people (Cossar et al., 2011) has shown that they do not want to hand over their worries to a professional to sort out; rather they want to share their worries and work on a way forward with a trusted adult. This allows young people to maintain a sense of control, which promotes their self-efficacy. It is acknowledged that this is a difficult balance for social workers to achieve because at times they need to take action which young people do not agree with to protect them (Cossar et al., 2011).

### Guidance for practitioners

Empowering and enabling young people to work in partnership to address and take ownership of their issues is important for keeping young people safe. Practitioners need to help young people work through their problems and make the right decisions in often difficult and challenging circumstances. When working with young people practitioners need to:

- ✓ focus on increasing young people's independence and self-reliance
- ✓ help young people define what they want to achieve and be actively engaged in reviewing progress towards meeting those outcomes. Tools like the Outcomes Star can provide a valuable framework for young people to evidence their journey of change
- ✓ work with young people to build skills and resilience, supporting them to overcome challenges
- ✓ provide opportunities and support for young people to practice new skills or behaviour
- ✓ be clear about the expectations of young people - seek commitment
- ✓ work with young people to prioritise and generate options for dealing with issues
- ✓ work with young people to make joint decisions (where appropriate and possible)
- ✓ provide new information or a different way of looking at situations to help young people move forward
- ✓ lead by example in working relationships formed with young people so they incorporate a sense of mutuality, empathy and respect

## 5.2 Listens actively and communicates well

### Why is this important for keeping young people safe?

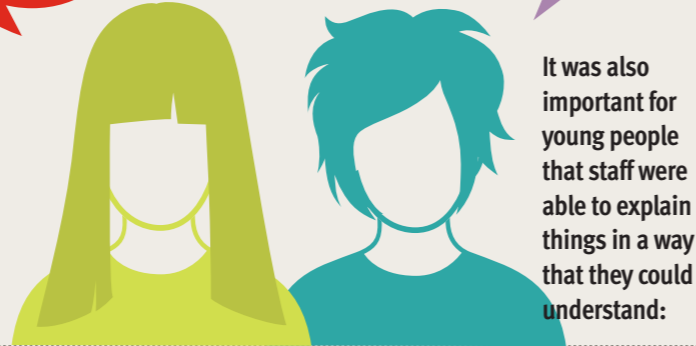
Effective communication skills, especially being an active listener, are important for keeping young people safe. If young people feel listened to and that their views are taken seriously by practitioners they are more likely to share their worries and concerns.

### What do young people say?

Young people spoke of the need for staff to listen to them in order to help keep them safe:

“If they listen, they can help you”.

“There has been one time where staff explained something and I just didn’t understand. They saw I didn’t get it so they flipped it around and explained it in a different way until I understood”.



It was also important for young people that staff were able to explain things in a way that they could understand:

Young people also felt it was important that staff showed they were listening and explored reasons for their behaviour:

“They need to listen to you and give you eye contact”.

“Give them alternatives like one to one attention”.



While staff asking too many questions could be annoying for young people, most felt that it was a sign that staff were listening to young people and gaining a better understanding of the problems they faced:

“Asking too many questions about one thing could be annoying, but a few questions is okay”.

“I would disagree that staff asking too many questions is a bad thing. If somebody asks more questions it shows that they’re listening to you ... When they ask me questions about my family or if they see I’m stressed, it’s always best if they ask me questions about it. Then they get to the bottom of the problem. There’s been a few times when I’ve been upset and my key worker actually stopped and asked me things. If I’m telling someone my life story and they’re like ‘oh yeah, yeah, yeah’ it would come across to me that the person isn’t really interested. They need to ask questions for me to know that they’ve listened. Then I know I can trust them with things. It shows they care and I’m far more likely to talk to them”.

“I don’t really mind being asked questions. Sometimes they do it to find information about me. It doesn’t bother me. Questions are a good thing”.



How staff spoke to young people was important for keeping them safe as young people were more likely to listen if staff spoke to them calmly:

“Speak to me, don’t tell me”.

“Speaking to me calmly on the same level. If someone shouted at me I’d feel angry and I just wouldn’t listen. I wouldn’t listen to their advice to keep me safe”.

“[They need to] talk to you in a calm manner”.

“Get away from a lecture”.



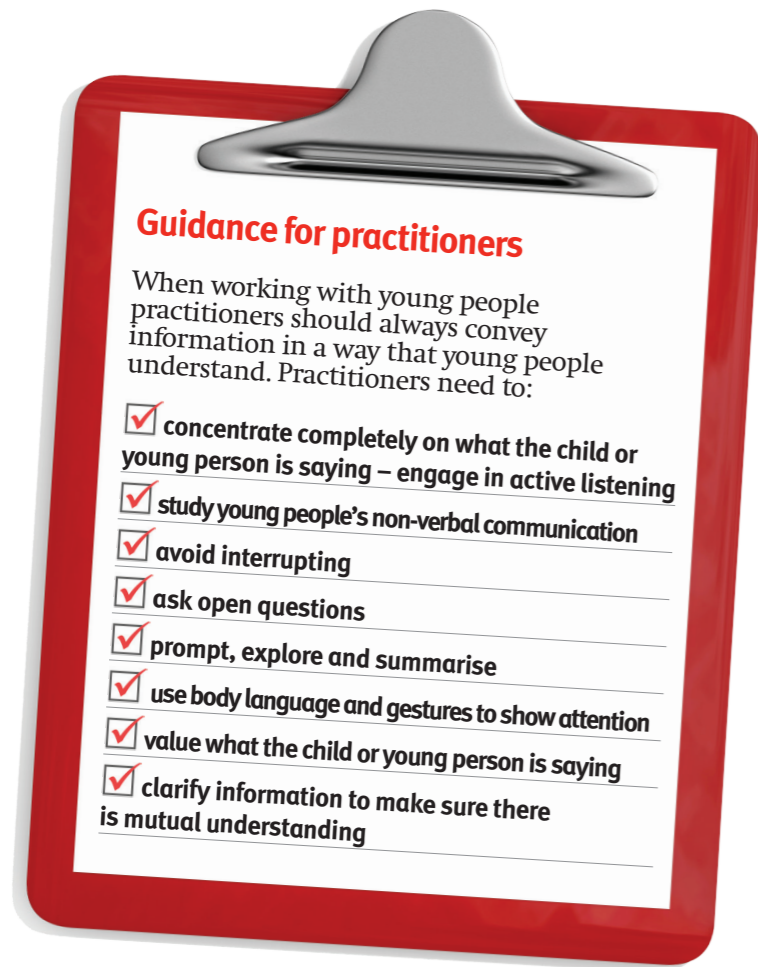
**Listens actively and communicates well: what's the evidence from the literature?**

The literature highlights the importance of listening to young people to help keep them safe:

**“Listening properly to young people and their worries and concerns helps keep them safe ... Young people who don't feel listened to might self-harm”** (Ofsted, 2011).

**“Listen to what children have got to say and work with them”** (Cossar et al., 2011).

Young people appreciated workers who would listen carefully before coming to a judgement or offering advice (Cossar et al., 2011). Young people in the literature reiterate the views of the young people we spoke to about the importance of practitioners understanding the real reasons for young people's behaviour in order to keep them safe. Young people said they would like social workers to note the following:



**“Sometimes some of us run away from home and school. You need to realise that we're trying to tell you something when we do this. Try asking something other than 'are there any problems? because we'll probably just say 'no'”** (Burgess et al., 2013).

**“We'd like you to listen and look out for signs of children being in need of attention – like being bullied or showing behaviour that is risky for them”** (Burgess et al., 2013).

**“You get angry sometimes when they tell you things, but that's because we're upset. They need to handle that, because we still have the right to know what's going on”** (Office of the Children's Rights Director, 2012).

Young people said that it was important that practitioners communicated with them in a way that was appropriate for their age:

**“I don't like people looking down on me and I don't like people looking up at me like I'm an adult. I like people talking to me for my age”** (Cossar et al., 2011).

Young people highlighted how important it was that adults really listen to them and act on what they tell them. This is particularly important for safeguarding:

**“Young people get tired of never being listened to and the fact that, even when they are listened to, nothing ever changes”** (Bostock, 2004).

**“Adults should listen to children otherwise children never get a chance”** (Action for Children, 2008a).

**“Adults should listen to children because what children have to say is really important”** (Action for Children, 2008a).

However, the research suggests that looked after young people do not feel listened to.

Research by Cossar et al. (2011) did not use the language of risk but asked young people about their worries or what might make them feel a certain way, such as angry, sad or shocked. Young people talked about a range of professionals who they could talk to about their worries. Older young people were more likely than younger children to name a range of professionals involved, whereas younger children were more reliant upon their social workers. Young people appreciated workers who would listen carefully before coming to a judgement or offering advice.



Young people consulted with by the Children's Rights Director for England (Ofsted, 2011).

### 5.3 Sets boundaries, supports and challenges

#### Why is this important for keeping young people safe?

Young people who experience care often have lower self-esteem than their peers making them more vulnerable to peer pressure, engagement in risky behaviours and self-harm. Staff can help young people stay safe by providing appropriate boundaries and supporting and challenging young people to manage the risks they face, including 'having difficult conversations'.

#### What do young people say?

Young people felt that the support and advice staff provided helped keep them safe:

"If you're ever unsure of a situation and you ask them for advice, quite a lot of them give you an honest opinion of what they think you should do. So again getting an adult's opinion of what you should do will help me make the right decision. It's someone to turn to".

"They do give us advice, they explain 'that this is like so-and-so'. So you have to be careful, or that's a place where that happens, so don't go there".

"They advise you and talk you into a way of not doing it".



Young people noted how important it was that staff did not challenge them in front of other young people:

"They give us more leeway. They gave me more leeway with my free time when I had to be in at 11pm. I respected them for that. They didn't have to do that. We chose the new curfew together".

"Sometimes we can negotiate rules. When I was 15 all my friends were going to a party and were staying until 2am. The home were like 'that's definitely too late, but what we'll do is we'll let you go until 12. Then we'll pick you up at 12 and make sure you're home safely'. I thought that was pretty good. When I was 15 I had to be in for 10.30pm so them letting me stay out 'til 12 meant a lot, even if it wasn't until 2am".



They were also aware that the boundaries staff put in place helped them stay safe:

"I think the rules we do have are fair. The only one I can think of is coming in. That's safe by having a time to come in".

"Some people don't stick to all of the rules. If you don't ... there's consequences. It's good it teaches us that we can't do that stuff".

"They watch you from the gate to check you are ok".

"If we didn't have rules, what would happen? They do keep us safe".



Young people also noted that staff challenged them when this was required, which in turn helped them stay safe:

"It's important they take us to one side. If I've done something wrong I wouldn't like everyone to know about it. So they don't do that in front of everyone which is pretty good. For example, if I was in the kitchen having my supper and the staff come in and was like 'why did you do this?' and I have to explain in front of everyone, they wouldn't do that. They give you an opportunity to come to the side and get spoken to rather than everyone knowing your business. I'm glad about that because it gives me the opportunity to have a one-to-one with them".

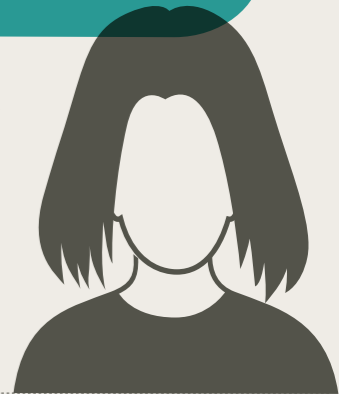
"Quite often we're challenged by staff. But they won't do it in front of all of the other kids, they'll ask me one-to-one. They'll pull us over and say 'why did you do this? What happened?'"



Young people also noted that staff challenged them when this was required, which in turn helped them stay safe: Young people noted how important it is that staff do not challenge them in front of other young people.

Staff need to be "firm, not a pushover ... if you get everything you want there's no respect".

"Staff have a laugh but know when to say 'stop this is wrong'. Set boundaries so you know where you stand".



Importantly, staff were also giving young people opportunities to manage the risks they face and negotiate boundaries;

"If you're a certain age we should be able to stay up later. You feel like a kid. I feel small".

"Sometimes it is difficult with the rules because we are over 18. Having to be in your rooms at night when you wouldn't have to be if you lived on your own, that's tough".





### Sets boundaries, supports and challenges: what's the evidence from the literature?

While clearly practitioners do “need to tell young people what is right and what is wrong to keep themselves safe” (Ofsted, 2011), the research also shows that young people feel over protected whilst they are in care. Young people spoken to as part of Ofsted’s (2011) research felt that young people in care were kept safer than other young people but they did not always agree with how this was done. They provided examples of not being allowed out, not being able to open windows in the home, not being allowed to have their class photo taken or go to a sleepover. They said that young people in care rebel against these limits and end up putting themselves in more danger.

Similarly, young people spoken to as part of research undertaken by the Office of the Children’s Rights Director (2012) and Cossar et al. (2011) confirmed that social workers were still asking for CRB checks to be completed on members of friend’s households before giving permission for the young person to stay there.

Young people’s views were that they were over protected while they were in care and then when they leave they are expected to do everything on their own. In order to keep themselves safe they felt that young people in care need training to leave care and to do it gradually. They did not feel that leaving care when young people are 16 or 18 is safe when many young people live at home into their 20s. Even when they leave home young people who are not in care have the safety net of going home but looked after young people do not have that option (Ofsted, 2011).

Research on resilience highlights that too much support depresses the development of resilience by insulating children from the competency enhancing experiences of exposure to risk (RIP, 2006). Similarly, Newman (2004) highlighted that in order to support the development of resilience in adolescence and early adulthood (13 to 19 years) young people should:

**“Not be excessively sheltered from challenging situations that provide opportunities to develop coping skills”** (Newman, 2004).

This view was reiterated by young people spoken to as part of Cossar et al.’s (2011) research:

**“Be lenient with children, let them do things, but be there for them and let them know you’re there”** (Cossar et al., 2011).

Staff spoken to as part of this research highlighted the challenges they faced in supporting young people to take risks, learn from their mistakes and develop appropriate boundaries:

**“If you’re not in a good place it takes time to learn from your mistakes. You need to learn from your mistakes as well as your successes. They [young people] need to be self-reflective and think about what’s gone on. But we as staff can be restrictive on their ability to take risks. We let our own children take these risks but can’t let these young people take the same risks”** (Staff focus group).

### Guidance for practitioners

When working with young people practitioners need to provide support and challenge to resolve issues, improve outcomes and move forward. They need to:

- help young people to understand, recognise and take ownership of issues and solutions
- make clear assessments about child protection concerns
- be direct about concerns and the consequences of safeguarding issues
- offer ideas and solutions
- be realistic about what can be achieved, clear about what support is on offer
- be assertive and consistent
- challenge resistance to positive solutions and ideas
- recognise positive achievements, build confidence



## 5.4 Develops and maintains relationships and social networks

### Why is this important for keeping young people safe?

Looked after young people often suffer issues of attachment, loss and lack of trust. This can undermine their ability to build productive and positive relationships with peers and adults, increasing the chance of them being socially isolated and increasing their vulnerability because they are unable to share their feelings, accept help and develop positive relationships (Griffiths, 2013). Thus, if staff can help young people to develop and maintain positive relationships and social networks they are going to help reduce their vulnerability and keep them safe.

### What do young people say?

Young people described how staff helped them develop new social networks with their peers:



"They've helped with my confidence. One of the ways they helped was introducing me to more people because I've not got very good confidence in talking to new people when I'm not sure who they are. Especially here, there's so many new people. They helped just by introducing me to them, by getting me to come out of my shell a bit more. That's really happening now".

Young people said that staff supported them to go on sleepovers or to parties with their friends, thus helping them to maintain and develop their social networks.

"Knowing staff for a long time does help my confidence because you can go and talk to staff about stuff, I'll talk to my key workers".

Continuity of relationships with trusted members of staff were also important for young people in helping to develop their confidence, which in turn made them more open to talk about their worries and concerns:



"It's better if you see the same worker a lot, but I've only been here two months so it's early days. But I have a good relationship with my new key worker, she listens. She seems to know a lot about me already".

Where young people had to move placement, they valued the fact that their new key workers had worked hard at developing a relationship with them and already knew a lot about them:



Young people also valued the interest and support provided by staff in helping them to engage in positive activities, exploring their future aspirations and goals and when they were taking their exams:

"I wanted to start a music course and the staff helped me. They were supportive and so I went and I enjoyed it".

"I want to go into the army and my case worker has been helping me research it. It's nice, She's taking an interest".

"There was a time when I was struggling with my exams and I kept saying 'I'm going to fail, I'm going to fail' but staff kept saying 'you're not going to fail'. They kept me going, verbally and physically. If I was doing homework they'd sit with me and give me a hand. They'd make sure I had time to revise. They recognised that I was stressed and helped. They always ask me if I'm struggling".



Staff remembering important things about young people and their families also helped develop stronger relationships between young people and staff. Staff also helped young people address the issues they faced with relationships with their families:

"There's been times where there's been problems with my family and they've helped me to deal with it. Staff helped me get through that. They knew the anniversary was coming up and they remembered to be there for me".

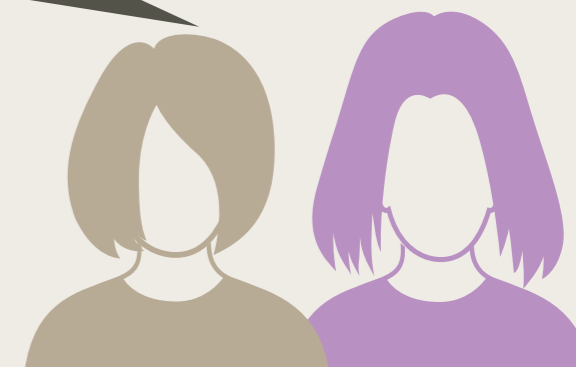
"They do remember important things, like my favourite food. When I'm sad they make my favourite food. They know my birthday but sometimes I'm not here for my birthday. But they always write a card, that makes me happy".



Staff showing an interest in young people and picking up on their mood and how they felt made young people feel good about themselves:

"It's so important that staff are interested in us".

"If you've got a good relationship with workers, even one member of staff, they can pick up on when you're down or when you're happy. There's been a few times when I've been really quiet and they've said 'is there anything I can help with?' They've been really nice".



The ability of young people to manage change in their lives is also linked to having a strong and supportive social network (Action for Children, 2013). This is likely to be particularly important for looked after young people, given the number of changes that many of them experience in their lives.

### **Develops and maintains relationships and social networks: what's the evidence from the literature?**

Schofield et al. (2012) highlighted the importance of developing and maintaining young people's relationships and social networks, particularly when these are linked to secure attachments, stability and engagement with the community.

**"[Good care] Promotes security, resilience and pro-social relationships. It is particularly effective when secure attachments and stability are available and young people's engagement with the community is promoted"** (Schofield et al., 2012).

Schofield et al. go on to observe that:

**"Late entry into care in the teenage years has the greatest chance of success where it capitalises on the protective strengths of relationships and involvement in constructive activities"** (Schofield et al., 2012).

Similarly, Newman (2004) highlighted that strong social support networks and engagement in positive activities (both in and out of school) helps support the development of resilience in adolescence and early adulthood (13 to 19 years). Conversely, the impact of the loss of these relationships should not be underestimated:

**"Relationships are important to young people. This can be with family, friends, workers, and other young people in care. The impact on young people when relationships are taken away from them is significant and should never be underestimated"** (Macdonald and Cruickshank, 2013).

The research also highlights the benefits of practitioners taking a resilience based approach, which focuses on maximising positive outcomes by "building a protective network" around young people (RIP, 2006). The emphasis should be on:

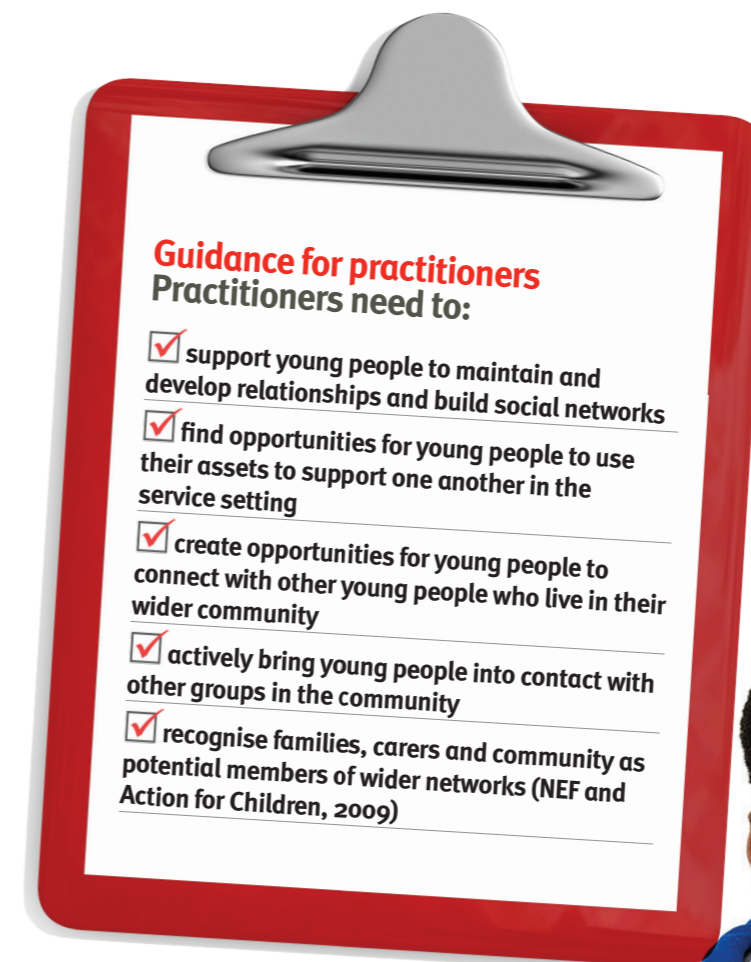
**"Engaging, accessing and using the resources available to the child/ young person (both within themselves and around them) – only adding professional support when necessary"** (RIP, 2006).

The evidence suggests that the focus needs to be on what a young person can do to develop these relationships and networks as there is a danger of:

**"Over-reliance on what professional caring services can do and an under-use of protective influences within the child him/herself, extended family, neighbours, school, friends and other members of the community in which the child lives"** (RIP, 2006).

When young people were asked what helped them 'succeed against the odds' the most frequently mentioned factors were: "help from members of their extended family, neighbours or informal mentors, and positive peer relationships, rather than the activities of paid professionals" (Newman, 2004). The role of professionals must therefore be, where possible, to create and nurture these relationships (Glover, 2009). Street (2008) reiterates the important role professionals can play in maintaining these relationships:

**"Of particular importance for most young people is help with their relationships with their family and this is achieved through the integration of work undertaken with parents and other family members. A feature of this work involves managing relationships and contacts with family members"** (Street, 2008).



# 6 Practitioner knowledge

Here is a summary of the underpinning knowledge and support required by professionals in keeping young people safe.

## Technical and professional expertise

The technical knowledge and expertise required by professionals to perform effectively in their role.

Practitioners need to:

- ▶ understand relevant law and policy areas relating to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of young people and how it is applied in the organisation;
- ▶ understand what is meant by safeguarding and the different ways young people may be harmed, including knowledge of the signs of sexual abuse;
- ▶ understand their own role in safeguarding and when information can be shared;
- ▶ understand child development;
- ▶ understand the young person's position in respect of their foster-family, their birth family and the importance of family influence in achieving outcomes.

## Awareness of equality and diversity issues

When working with young people practitioners should always have an understanding of how issues of equality and diversity may influence support.

Practitioners need to:

- ▶ be able to identify and reflect on diversity issues;
- ▶ understand young people's cultural context;
- ▶ reflect on own stereotypes and attitudes to ensure that this does not have a negative impact on support;
- ▶ consider how the gender and cultural background of professionals may influence engagement with young people.

## Knowledge of support available

When working with young people practitioners should always have knowledge of other services that are available to support young people.

Practitioners need to:

- ▶ have a sound awareness of local services available to support young people;
- ▶ understand how the roles, remits and type of support offered by other professionals may assist own practice;
- ▶ actively seek opportunities to build knowledge of other services.

## Effective assessment

When working with young people practitioners should always be working with them to identify and assess their needs.

Practitioners need to:

- ▶ make sure assessments are child/young person centred;
- ▶ focus on strengths of child/young person as well as weaknesses;
- ▶ deal with personal information in a sensitive manner;
- ▶ recognise child/young person's existing skills/knowledge;
- ▶ use observation and experience to pick up more subtle messages from young people – read, understand and analyse situations;
- ▶ get behind the labels e.g. "bad kids";
- ▶ avoid making hasty judgements about young people – acknowledge when initial judgements and decisions are wrong.

## Outcomes focused

Outcome focused practice is where the focus remains on the young person progressing towards their goals and achieving change. It keeps the focus on the young person when providing support and provides insight into whether the support provided has made a difference. It supports the reviewing and planning of services.

Services should:

- ▶ have an organisational ethos and supervision which equates success with progress towards achieving young person outcomes;
- ▶ clarify data that needs to be collected for monitoring and evaluating outcomes;
- ▶ use evidence based recognised tools to measure the outcomes that young people want to achieve;
- ▶ use information to shape and improve services;
- ▶ actively involve young people, practitioners and other stakeholders in consultation about service delivery.

## Supervision

An opportunity for practitioners to openly reflect on issues, emotions and achievements to enable effective practice.

Supervision should:

- ▶ be an open and honest opportunity;
- ▶ allow sufficient time for reflection on achievements and challenges;
- ▶ maintain a focus on facilitating outcomes for young people;
- ▶ allow managers to challenge practitioners and test practice to improve outcomes;
- ▶ be delivered by managers who have supervisory training and appropriate skills and experience.

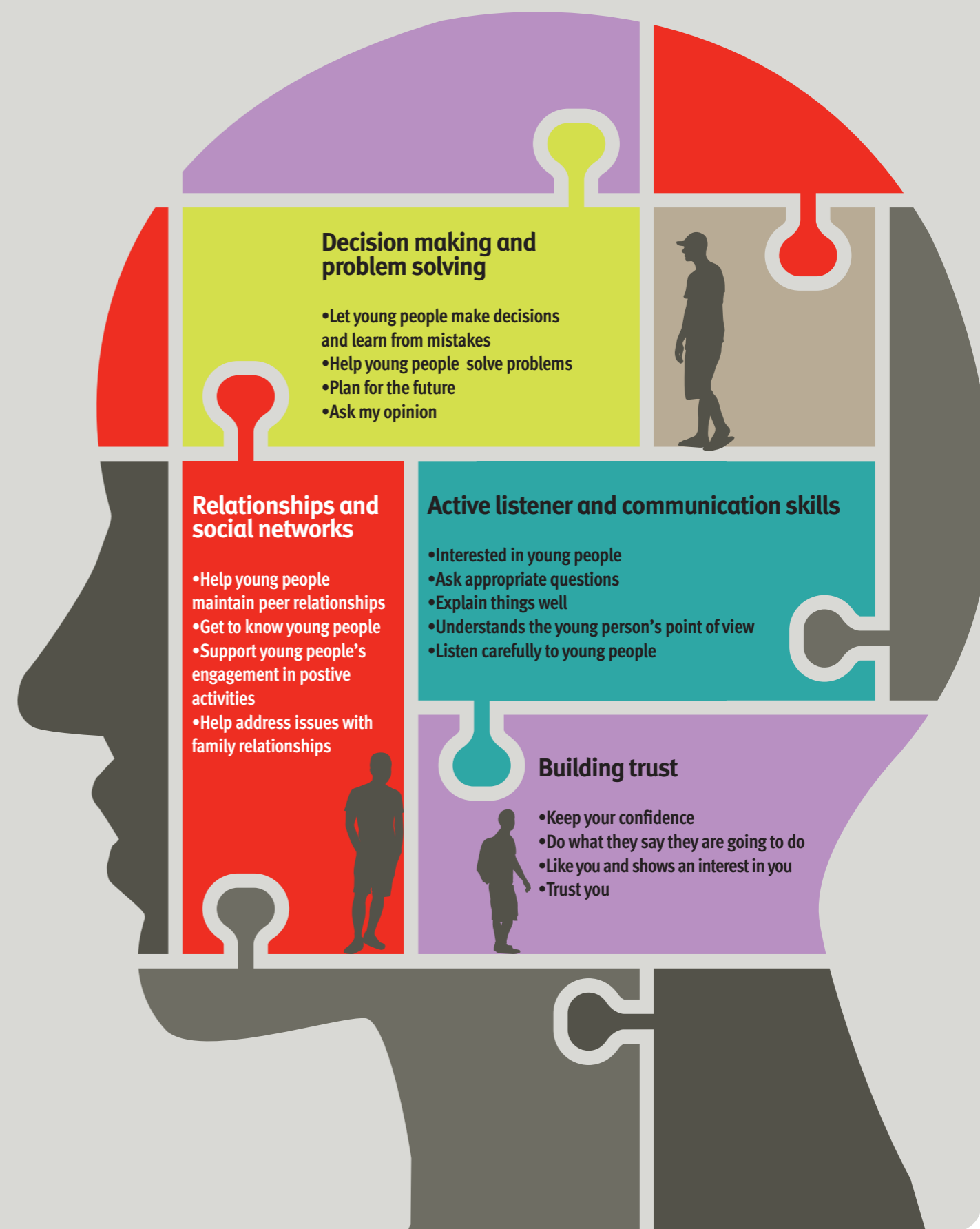
## Practitioner development & training

Identifying and supporting the development of the skills, qualities and knowledge of practitioners to deliver effective support to young people.

Services should:

- ▶ effectively use a training needs analysis;
- ▶ provide opportunities for staff to engage in informal training opportunities including shadowing and practice sharing;
- ▶ cascade learning to other staff to build team experience and knowledge;
- ▶ proactively seek training opportunities through links with other agencies;
- ▶ encourage practitioners to identify and engage in development opportunities;
- ▶ provide training that is focused on effective processes, including theoretical knowledge, which can be applied in practice.

# 7 Top practitioner qualities and skills identified by young people



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## 9 Appendix A

This research was undertaken by Action for Children and York Consulting. Action for Children is a national charity working in local communities throughout the UK to protect and support the young and vulnerable, as they grow up. We support children and families at different stages of their lives. We run over 650 services, from children's centres to intensive family support, from fostering and adoption to respite care for children with disabilities. Every day, we reach out to help and protect more children and their families than any other children's charity in the UK and we have been doing this for over 145 years.

Over the last 25 years York Consulting has established a strong track record in delivering high quality policy research and evaluation at both the local and national level, for a broad range of public, voluntary and community sector clients across the UK. Much of our work has focused on providing effective support and improving outcomes for vulnerable children and young people and their families. York Consulting's work has focused on evaluating and supporting initiatives that aim to engage and develop the skills of vulnerable young people and children and ensure that their voice is heard. York Consulting also has experience of undertaking research on a wide range of sensitive issues including substance misuse, domestic violence, mental health and debt, and working with young people who are looked after or have been in the care system.

### Methodology

This guide has been developed from the following elements:

- ▶ evidence from previous successful skills frameworks for practitioners developed for Action for Children by York Consulting (Action for Children, 2011)
- ▶ focus groups with young people undertaken across the UK (York Consulting and Action for Children)
- ▶ feedback from young people based on early designs and ideas (Action for Children)
- ▶ feedback from practitioners based on early designs and ideas (York Consulting and Action for Children)
- ▶ review of selected reports and articles identified by Action for Children (York Consulting)

The voices of young people are included throughout the guide. This includes direct quotes from our discussions with young people, along with quotes and analysis from referenced sources.

We spoke to a range of young people aged 10 to 21 at three Action for Children services. This included young people who were looked after and living in residential units and those who were not looked after but were living in supported accommodation. The research literature we drew on also included the voices of young people who were in foster care and those who were in residential care receiving support from social workers, key workers and other practitioners.

When we talk about practitioners we mean staff who work directly with young people as well as those who supervise and manage them. The research focused on residential settings and therefore on professionals who are experts in that field. However, this guide is applicable to most direct work with children and young people that involves a professional relationship.



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Action for Children is committed to helping the most vulnerable and neglected children and young people in the UK break through injustice, deprivation and inequality, so they can achieve their full potential.

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