

THE WAY FORWARD

advice from 215 young people aged 18-25 on
how NAV-employees can give useful help



CHANGE FACTORY

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Changefactory Knowledge Centre
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The photos are of participants in the advice collection

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THANKS A MILLION!!

A huge thank you to you wise people from north to south, who have shared golden advice on how NAV can help young people to stand on their own two feet, and to join the community.

Thank you very much for making NAV smarter when meeting with young people and young adults.

We hope and believe that this advice collection can contribute to NAV professionals and politicians getting good advice on how young people can come into the warmth, and out in life.

THANKS A MILLION!!



ABOUT THE ADVICE COLLECTION

About the participants

215 young people aged 18-25 have given answers to this advice collection. Most were between 19 and 21 years old and approximately equal numbers of boys and girls have participated. The young people lived in Tromsø, Trondheim, Bergen, Oslo, Kristiansand, Stavanger and surrounding areas.

About the young people and Norwegian Labour and Welfare Organisation (NAV)

The young people have come into contact with NAV in different ways:

- through another system, like the Child Protection System, mental health care or school
- through contacting them on their own initiative, either by telephone, via their website or by showing up at NAV offices
- through family

The reasons for why the young people have come into contact with NAV were also different:

- they had lost their jobs
- they had been laid off or were on sick leave
- they have had a difficult time at home or they have moved because they can't stay at home anymore
- they have dropped out or left school

Voluntary participation

Everyone decided for themselves whether they wanted to participate. They knew from the start that they could withdraw at any time, without having to explain why. They were also informed that everything that was written down would be anonymised.

About themes and issues

Main themes:

- safe meetings with NAV
- receiving information about the most important things about NAV
- telling what's most important to NAV
- what makes the help helpful
- help out of alienation, and into community

The focus was on the young people's meeting with NAV and advice on how NAV can help young people in good ways. The participants were first given open-ended questions, and then in-depth questions linked to answers that were repeated. A semi-structured interview guide was used.

For the sake of privacy, and each individual participant, the facilitators worked to ensure that the young people shared advice to the systems, and not each individual's personal history. In this way it is also easier for Norway to use the advice to create a NAV that will be improved for many children and young people.

Most of the young people were spoken to several times. The advice collection was carried out September 2020 - June 2021.

Advice for councillors in NAV



FIRST MEETING

In order to achieve good collaboration, the first meeting with NAV is important. Being taken seriously determines a lot for the collaboration going forward. Getting good information and being greeted with warmth creates safety and makes it easier to work towards dreams and goals. Here is some advice on what is important in the first meetings between NAV and the young people.

ADVICE

Start with blank sheets

Say that what you have read about us in advance does not decide what you think about us. Give us the chance to explain who we are right now. Don't judge us for our pasts. Ask completely openly, without criticising looks: who are we and how can you help us in the best possible way. Then it may be possible to find good solutions.

Get to know us

In order for those of you who work in NAV to learn some of the important things in our life, we need to get to know each other a little. We need to know a little about you, in order to share. It makes it easier for us to trust that you care, and want to help us. Not everyone manages to answer everything you ask about in the first meeting. Understand that things may take some time. Show that you care, smile and pay attention during the conversation, then it will be easier for us to open up. Tell us that it's your job to get to know us and that there is much more you would like to hear about than finances. Then it might be easier for us to tell.

Show that you want to help

It can feel difficult to have to ask for help. Being met by a person we know really wants to help, means everything. Show that you are calm and kind, and have warm voices. When you show that you're trying to understand what we are feeling and thinking, it is easier for us to feel safe that you really want to help. Then it will be easier to collaborate on finding solutions.

Give us understandable information

We need understandable and accessible information. Set aside enough time to do this and explain what the information means, in words we understand. You are responsible for ensuring that we have understood the information. After meetings we need to know who we can ask or where we can find more information. Then we can figure out more things for ourselves and won't need help with all the little things. Understand that we are not that familiar with the system. When it feels like you expect us to know a lot about NAV and our rights, we may not ask about things we wonder about. We don't want to appear stupid.

Tell us what NAV is and what alternatives there are

Tell us what NAV is and what you can do to help us move forward. We need to know about the various measures you have and how they work. We need to know which laws and regulations apply and what we have the right to apply for. We need to understand that there are solutions just for us. When we know what we are entitled to, it will be possible to choose the options that suit us best. Tell us thoroughly about what we have to take care of ourselves and what we can do if we can't manage it. When we know more, we have fewer worries and can focus on the future.

Help us use NAV's website

It is nice if you do not assume that we understand everything that is written on NAV's website. There is a lot there that can be difficult to understand. If you do not explain, it might make us uneasy or afraid that we won't find the way forward. Set aside time with those of us who are new to NAV to go through what might be important to us on the website.

Remind those who are new in Norway that they are resources

It is important to make young people aware of how much strength they are capable of and how much they can do. It can be difficult to see this for yourself. Figuring this out can give a push forward. Being new in Norway we can have experienced focus on what we don't know and perhaps experienced being met with prejudice. Being reminded that we can do things therefore means a lot for motivation and willingness to take action.

Show that you take us seriously

It is important to feel that we are taken seriously. We notice if you meet us as valuable people, not as cases. We also notice if you are really listening. If you think we say something that doesn't make sense or doesn't add up, try to understand. Perhaps we are testing whether you are genuinely interested to collaborate with us. Deep down we know something we want. But to dare to hope and dare to talk about it, we need to know that some adults really want to help and take our thoughts seriously.

EXPERIENCES

Those who experienced the first meeting as SAFE

Young people have felt safe when:

- the counsellor has asked about things other than NAV
- the counsellor has felt warm, with warm eyes and smiles
- the counsellor has spoken to the young person about how they are feeling
- the counsellor has shown that they really care
- the counsellor has told a little about themselves, their own experiences
- the counsellor has spoken using ordinary words
- the counsellor has given good and understandable information

QUOTES

She is a very calm, relaxed person who most of the time is trying to spread as much joy and humour as possible.

She smiles, is pleasant and happy when she meets me. And I don't need to stress because I know she cares.

What was good about the information was that I got an answer to what I was wondering about, and that it took a short time to get an answer.

I got the information I needed because I asked questions and I was curious about what they could help me with.

She told me my rights and what choices I had. And she helped me figure out how to get out into working life, so that I didn't have to go back to school.

He is very understanding, and shows that he wants me to achieve things in life.

Those who experienced the first meeting as UNSAFE

The young person has felt unsafe when:

- the counsellor has not made eye contact
- the counsellor has not smiled or seemed kind
- the counsellor only wanted to talk about the case
- the counsellor has not given good information about possible help
- the counsellor has not given good information about rights
- the counsellor has not explained how to write an application or what happens to the application they submit
- the counsellor has expected the young person to know their rights

QUOTES

It's not helpful when he doesn't want to figure things out together with me.

In a way, it felt like I was just a checklist for her to go through during the day. A tick on a list.

She was probably nice, but it didn't feel safe to talk with her. She had a slightly angry look on her face.

She seemed so cold in a way. No eye contact, no smile, was just a paper in hand and then I could go.

I have not received information on how to write an application. Wish they would give me information about that.

he shows
that he
wants
me to
manage
things



COLLABORATION THROUGHOUT

Good collaboration between the adults in NAV and the young people is a must to find good solutions for each young person. To achieve good collaboration, counsellors who feel safe and available are very important. Here follows advice and experiences, about how the collaboration between NAV and the young people has to be.

ADVICE

Make it safe for us to tell what's most important

It can feel difficult to have to ask for help. Then it is important that you show that you are trying to understand when we tell you something. Show that you want to listen, if not we may feel like we are a bother. Find out what we think and what things are really about. Try to familiarise yourselves with it, to understand the big picture. When you show that you want to understand, it becomes safer to talk about what is difficult. Then we can work with the right challenges and find solutions together.

Do not share information without us knowing

We lose trust if you share information about our lives, without us knowing. This applies both to family and other professionals in NAV or in other systems. When we lose trust, it becomes difficult to collaborate, find solutions and get help for what we actually need. The help we are going to get has to be made in close collaboration with us. It usually determines whether it will be useful for us.

Talk to us first

Talk to us first, not other systems or people in the family. Find out what we are interested in and what we are passionate about. We have to know that what each of us thinks is important to you as counsellors. We have to know that our opinions are needed, when you are going to make decisions about us. Find solutions together with us.

Don't talk over our heads

Those of us who receive help from the Child Protection System may have experienced that contact between NAV and the Child Protection System goes "over our heads". This becomes unsafe, and we can stop telling you things. We don't necessarily want NAV and the Child Protection System to know the same things, then it can end up with us stopping telling both places. If the Child Protection System wants to give NAV information, you in NAV have to ask them about whether they have spoken to the young person about sharing information. When young people from the Child Protection System come to NAV, you have the chance to be an adult they can actually trust. We've already had it difficult as a child. Let us have a fresh and good start.

Collaborate with us on the help

Collaborate with us to find solutions. It is our future. The goal is for us to be independent and to move forward. Remember that everyone is different and you have to figure out how you can collaborate with each and every one of us. We know a lot about what works exactly for us. Collaboration can give us our faith in ourselves back. We can become more motivated to take hold of life and the way forward.

Work towards safe contact and follow-up

Work a little to make us feel safe with you. Having the same counsellor over time, can make it easier to tell and can therefore make the help better. Changing counsellors can create unsafety and it can take a long time to get back into it properly. When the counsellor has to be replaced, it helps to know in good time beforehand.

It often feels safer to meet physically than via chat. It's nice to have someone to fill in the forms with us. Meet us regularly, it will feel safer. If you can be available and make contact, we notice that you are extending yourself. The counsellor's phone number helps for trust. It is nice if you don't disappear from us, even if we get a decision.

EXPERIENCES

Those who experienced good collaboration

Collaboration was good when:

- the meetings became safe enough for them to be able to tell what was most important for the counsellor to know, so that they could get help with it
- they felt that the counsellor collaborated with them, and included them in decisions that were made about them
- they noticed that what they said meant something to the person they were talking to
- they felt that the counsellor gave good information, and asked questions about what they thought and wanted
- the counsellor was sometimes available outside working hours, so that the young people could get help if they really needed it

QUOTES

She takes me seriously and helps where I need help. Have just been met with understanding and a belief that I will manage.

She meets me with open arms, and if there are things that need to be taken care of, she does it in a way that makes it safe for me. And she does not have a stone face, but warm eyes.

I was able to tell NAV about everything I thought was important to me.

I have told what's most important because there has been good collaboration with my case manager. She has been supportive and she has listened well.

I have told because I have met someone I can trust because she shares some of her experiences.

Those who did not experience good collaboration

Collaboration was not good when:

- the counsellor did not ask about what was important to the young person, but focused on superficial things the young person told
- the counsellor had cold eyes and face
- the information was difficult to understand, because the counsellor used a lot of technical terms
- the young people became unsure of what happened with the things they told, and who else would find out
- they experienced an expectation that they should know a lot about NAV, and didn't speak up when they didn't understand, to not appear stupid
- they did not get an answer, even if they asked several times
- they experienced that the counsellors were disappointed when they did not manage something
- something they said was not addressed or taken seriously
- the counsellor did not understand or take seriously that the actions taken by NAV had a strong impact on young person

QUOTES

She was mad and told me off, it didn't make me feel good. It got worse. I became afraid to speak my mind, to be judged and to say something wrong.

They interrupted me. I'm not able to tell when someone interrupts me and talks about other things. It feels like I'm talking to someone who does not want the best for me.

I have asked several times if school counts as work, but still have received no response. I have read but found no information about it.

I asked a lot without getting an answer. It is very tiring, once you're there, you're dependent. The entire website is difficult to understand.

Never had the feeling that there was room for me there, that they wanted to help me. Then I haven't been able to say the most important thing.

There are so many rules that I don't know what mean, so it's not so strange that I become uncertain and don't know what to do.

ask what
we think
about
the way
forward



HELP FOR THE WAY FORWARD

If the help does not feel useful to each individual, it may be difficult to maintain motivation to get out into work, education or other activities. Here is advice on how NAV can give even more accurate help to young people and experiences from what it has been like to get help.

ADVICE

Start where the young person is at

In order for the help to be right and helpful, it is important to start where the young person is at. It doesn't help to push us, if we are not safe where we live or if there are other things that are unsafe or scary in our lives. Ask what is most important for us right now. It may be that we need help with food, electricity and rent. It may be that we need a job, education or something to do in our spare time. Ask us what is important to us for the way forward. Figure out with us what possibilities exist to get there. We need to talk to someone we feel safe with. When we are able to tell what is most important to us, we can get help in the right order.

Show that you have faith in us

We may not be used to people believing in us. We can be used to feeling that we disappoint ourselves, family and others. We know that you have faith in us when you see our strengths and talk about what we achieve. Don't give up, if we don't trust that you believe in us in the beginning. It is very nice when adults know how to share tools for thinking in ways that provide motivation and power.

Tell us we can have a normal life. Explain how NAV can be a support for a period in our lives. This support can provide safety if something goes wrong and at the same time faith that we will be able to become independent. You can push us, but with a lot of kindness and only based on the fact that you have faith that we can get things done.

Show us that there are several possibilities

It is different how much we are used to working or achieving. Regardless where we come from, show us that there are possibilities. Also, teach us how we can look for them ourselves. When you show that you believe in us, it will be easier to find the strength to work to get where we want to go. If we can't manage something, even after many attempts, show us that there are still possibilities.

If you think our goals seem unrealistic for us, don't prejudice. Explain to us why, if it can still be practically difficult to reach our goal. Figure out with us what we have to be extra careful about, in order for the goal to become possible.

Dare to speak honestly with us

Ask why, if something is difficult. Try to get into what is honest, with lots of kindness and warmth. Say you are trying to understand, so we can find solutions together. If we know that you want to understand, it will be safer when you challenge us. We can say that we are tired because we have a lot of pain inside. Then we need someone who wants to understand what lies behind the word "tired" and wants to hear what "tired" is really about. It can give strength and joy to learn that we get things done even when life is not easy.

Teach us to think kindly of ourselves

We may think that there is so much we cannot achieve. Maybe we do this because we have previously experienced not being enough. We may have heard this earlier in childhood. It can do a lot with the way we view ourselves. We ask you to dare to challenge this. We need to learn to think kindly of ourselves and give ourselves more chances. This makes it safer to try new things - and makes it not hurt as bad if something doesn't work out. It can be uncomfortable to be challenged if we are not used to it. But in the long run it can mean everything. To keep our trust, it is important to be challenged. It shows that you view us as valuable people who get things done and are important to society.

Teach us the joy of volunteering

Ask us what things we can do that give energy. It can be something voluntary, either with small children, animals, elderly people, or something else that feels valuable. We can feel that we get little power by just getting money, without doing anything and meeting anyone. Creating joy for others can make us feel that we have value. For instance, NAV can arrange a week where we meet to pick up rubbish, or a week to do activities in a nursing home. If we get to take part in this, we will find out more about what we are passionate about and what makes us happy. This is important to be able to find jobs that make sense to us.

Give us advice and tools about job hunting and finances

Make a plan with us on how to find a job or education and motivate us to make it. Tell us honestly that the first application is not always successful. Remember that several of us don't have much work experience. We need help finding job application courses, internships or for the application itself. This can make the process of finding a job less scary.

We often need financial guidance. Teach us to set up budgets and pay bills. Even though we have started up with work or work trials, don't just let us go. Make sure we get control over the finances ourselves, and that we can contact you if something were to happen.

Check if the help works

You have to consider if activities and plans work together with us, not just with colleagues or managers. Ensure that the decision is kept and that we get the help we have been promised. Keep in close contact with us after the decision has been confirmed. Remember to change what doesn't work. What way it should be changed, may be different from person to person. Make an agreement with us on how the follow-up should be done, and how often.

Follow us on the road ahead

It is most important to have someone or something we belong to. Without a community, it can be easy to feel lonely. If loneliness comes, it is easy to do something that is not good for us. We know this, so avoid giving us long "speeches" about it. Instead you can use your strength to help us concretely, for instance by creating overviews of places with activities and communities where it can be safe to meet others. You can get tips from young people who come by. Ask each young person about what interests they have, feel free to suggest many concrete things. Being part of a good community can give more motivation to work towards our goals.

We need you to check in with us properly. Avoid putting everything about finishing up in the last week or month. Find out with us what we need over the last period of time in NAV and whether there is anything else we need to manage afterwards. Tell us that although we are moving on in life, you will think of us and cheer for us anyway.

EXPERIENCES

Those who received help that felt useful

The help has felt useful when the young people got:

- help to manage themselves
- help to manage and have control over their own finances
- help to look for a job or get into work trials
- help to get started with studies
- help to find a place to live
- help to enter a community
- tools that made them more independent, less alone, and gained more safety in their lives
- opportunities to speak safely, and questions about how they were
- motivation and a good push to get it together and get out of the house
- quick help and things were dealt with quickly - then it became less stressful, and they worried less

she
told me
what
my
rights
were



QUOTES

I got money to live and I got good help from a job specialist who taught me a lot about how working life works. We have found a work initiative together that gives me a lot of joy and a little more faith in the future.

The first time in NAV was through a website, that's it, just felt that I had no motivation. But I got a lot of motivation when I was on a job application course. That helped.

I feel it was helpful when they pushed me to get a job. I wish they pushed harder. When they pushed I managed things in life and I was no longer inside and just feeling all the pain inside me.

If an 18-year-old boy is interested in cars, take him to a garage basement where they work on cars. Something that has something to do with their interests, not just what NAV thinks is wise. Suggest things they can join in on.

Where I have received help, there's a NAV counsellor who works with children and young people in particular, who knew a lot about which threads can put things into place. That was nice.

Those who did not receive help that felt helpful

The help has not felt useful when the young people:

- did not get help for what they themselves felt they needed
- felt pressured to do things that were not useful for them
- experienced that it took a long time before they got help
- did not get enough help to write applications
- did not get a job despite writing applications
- experienced that it was difficult to get in touch with professionals in NAV and that it took a long time for them to answer
- experienced that there were too many professionals to deal with
- experienced that NAV gave them a lot of different messages
- only received practical help that helped right then and there, for instance help to pay bills, but not help with how to manage without further financial support from NAV
- received too little help to move on in life and out of NAV, for instance to find a place to live, retake subjects or go to school

QUOTES

They said no to retaking subjects. They don't like that I want to get an education. But we need help to get back on our feet.

They were going to get me into working life. It took a long time so I left and applied for jobs myself instead of waiting for them.

They say they have to find employers who want to hire from NAV, if I make suggestions, I get a no. They say I don't fit.

They did nothing but ask me to submit the papers. Then I called several times, went through a lot of fuss and I was finally told that I didn't have enough money.

The young people want to be able to fend for themselves and would like to be part of a community. They want options for training, education, jobs or to do something they think is important. It can be difficult and scary to do this yourself. They would like help to make it happen.

Advice
for
managers
in NAV



ADVICE

The young people in the advice collection have shared advice on how NAV has to be, for them to get useful and quick help with the most important things, and get on in life. Some of the advice is about what each individual counsellor can do. Other advice is about what is important at each NAV office, and throughout NAV. Here is advice for those who are managers and can decide how NAV is organised.

Give information about NAV to all young people

It is important to know about NAV before we need help from them. NAV can give information to school classes or in workplaces. Use channels where young people are, such as Snapchat and Instagram. Then we can know how to get in touch if we need help and what we can expect more easily. It can also make it less taboo and embarrassing to get help from NAV.

Create a website adapted to young people

There should be separate information for young people on the NAV website. It has to say what NAV is and what young people are entitled to. It needs to be simple and understandable. A separate button for "YOUNG in NAV" would be wise. It can take us directly to important information we need. Young people have to be involved in creating the website. It has to be easy to find what we need to know.

Make it possible to have only one counsellor, over time

It can feel unsafe when we are suddenly contacted by someone other than our own counsellor, from another department in NAV. It is nice to talk to the same person about, for instance, money and work, not two different ones. When the counsellor we are in contact with changes often or we talk to several different ones, we have felt that it has become difficult to know who we should receive messages from, and who we should ask when we have wondered about something.

It takes time to build a safe relationship. When we have the same counsellor over time, it is easier to tell them what they need to know to be able to give us useful help.

Make arrangements to meet where the young people feel safe

An office can feel strict and unsafe. When we meet somewhere that feels safe - a park, café, basketball court, there is a bigger chance for us to open up and you get to see more of what we enjoy. Then it will be easier to find good solutions together, including those who are slightly outside the usual measures.

We usually want to meet counsellors physically. Phones and the internet make it difficult to show feelings and tell what we need. We may find it easier to chat than to talk. NAV therefore has to create different opportunities to contact them, so that we can choose what is safest and works best for us.

Create a NAV where counsellors can follow us closely

To know if what we are doing actually works, or if it is wrong or difficult, you have to check how things are going for us often. When you follow-up well, we feel like we are taken more seriously, and you show that it is important to you that the measures work. We also get to the finish line faster. That is why we want a NAV where counsellors have time for this.

Let counsellors help with free time and community

Although NAV helps mostly with finances and work, being a part of a community helps very much with how we feel in life. This can be a hobby, an organisation or another activity. Belonging to a place gives strength and courage to make good choices for ourselves, and get started with work or studies. NAV has to have the responsibility to tell us about the possibilities we have for leisure activities. Leisure and community are not just something "extra", but something that can provide more flow to all parts of life.

find
solutions
that are a
little outside
the box



CHANGEFACTORY

KNOWLEDGE CENTRE

Why knowledge directly from children?

Children and young people have to feel that the school, kindergarten, support services, police and legal system are safe and useful for them. Children and young people all over Norway have experiences from meeting these systems and advice on how they can be the best possible. Authorities, professionals and students often lack this knowledge from children and young people, when frameworks and what constitutes good practice are to be determined, nationally and locally. Therefore, it must be brought in to a much greater extent and, together with other knowledge, be part of the knowledge base, in order to develop and ensure the quality of good systems for children and young people.

More than 10 years of collecting knowledge

For more than 10 years, Changefactory (CF) has systematically collected experiences and advice from children and young people about how they experience school, kindergarten, support services, the police and the legal system. In 2017, the Prime Minister opened Changefactory Knowledge Centre, to collect knowledge from children and young people about the public systems. As far as we know, there are few knowledge centres in Europe whose main purpose is to gather and disseminate knowledge directly from children and young people about the systems they are in. CF seeks collaboration with similar organisations.

Participatory and practice-oriented method

In order to collect, systematise and disseminate summarised experiences and advice from children and young people, a participatory and practice-oriented method is used. CF has called it the Changemethod. The Changemethod has been developed in close collaboration with children and young people. It greatly considers that children have the right to express their opinion, in ways that feel safe for them. The method consists of process descriptions and tools that help many diverse children and young people to participate. It's based closely on a participatory method used in action research, called Participatory Learning and Action (PLA).

Safety is most important

The experiences and advice are collected directly from children and young people in sessions or interviews. The sessions are organised with an emphasis on ensuring that they are experienced as safely as possible for the children and young people who participate. The adults who facilitate are, among other things, trained by children to meet children and young people with openness and human warmth. This is based on the main findings from children about what adults have to be like, in order for children to be able to tell honestly.

Experiences and advice are summarised

Experiences and advice from the sessions are documented in transcripts and other written and visual documentation. The data is summarised and systematised. No links are made to theory. Experiences and advice that are repeated by many children and young people in many places in the country, become the main answers. We call this knowledge directly from children.

Children and young people present

The knowledge from children is presented in reports, films, podcasts, books and online. Participants in the qualitative surveys can also be invited, as pros, in communication and professional development. The pros present knowledge directly from children to politicians, national authorities, professionals and students.

Selected publications



Angry on the outside, hurting on the inside
Advice from 101 children on how to meet children and young people who are angry and use violence



Wisdom about drug abuse
Advice from 58 young people on how adults can meet drug abuse in safe ways



They think they know best
Advice from 152 children on how residential childcare institutions have to be for it to feel safe living there



Not mean
Advice from 103 children on how conversations, interrogations and punishment can be done in safe and helpful ways



Give us a chance
Advice from 105 young people with a refugee background give advice to schools

