

101 children aged 8-18 about family guidance

NEEDS TO HELP FOR US



CHANGE FACTORY

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Changefactory Knowledge Centre

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The photos are of participants in the survey

THANK YOU

THANK YOU, dear, wise, good, brave, kind children and young people who have given important advice about how family guidance needs to be done! Thank you for taking part in making changes for so many other children in Norway. No one knows better than you how family guidance needs to be done for it to be safe and useful for children. You are absolute GOLD and this report wouldn't have existed without you.

From the bottom of our hearts, thank you from us who have been lucky enough to meet you. Thank you for doing this for those who come after you.

We hope that your experiences and advice are taken seriously by national authorities, politicians, students and all professionals across the country who work to give family guidance.

A MILLION THANKS

The qualitative survey in brief

Main questions

What does it take for family guidance to feel useful
What is needed for it to feel safe to get family guidance
Have children been given the chance to say something about the fact that the family is getting family guidance
Have children been given the chance to say something about what is difficult/challenging at home
Have children been given the chance to say something about what kind of family guidance their family should receive

Main themes

The goal of family guidance
Information before, during and after family guidance
Have been asked before, during and after family guidance
Useful help and not useful help
Adults who give guidance
Opportunity to say the most important thing
Recipe for Norway when families need guidance

Invited from

The children who participated were invited from municipal child protection services, state child protection services (MST, FFT), child protection institutions, Children and Adolescents' Psychiatric Outpatient Services (BUP), municipal mental health services, family welfare offices, the police, Blue Cross and Alternative to Violence.

Sessions across the country

The children participated in sessions in Lillehammer, Hamar, Tønsberg, Lørenskog, Oslo, Kristiansand, Arendal, Stavanger, Grimstad, Tysvær, Eigersund, Bergen, Bodø, Tromsø, Harstad, Mo i Rana, and Trondheim.

Each child decided whether or not they wanted to participate. The first meetings with the children were in sessions with several children or in one-to-one conversations. Some of the children were then asked if they would like to participate in second sessions. 20 of the children

were spoken with twice. The goal was to secure in-depth answers to what, after the first round, were the main findings in the report and to ensure that the researchers didn't interpret or misunderstand the data material they had collected.

Spoken with

69 girls
27 boys
5 non-binary

All the children who participated have had family guidance. This was confirmed beforehand or afterwards by the researchers.

The words family guidance

The children have described family guidance as a course the parents have been given, help to become better parents, help for things to become better at home, parental guidance and family guidance. In meetings with the children, the researchers have used the words the children have used.

Knowledge directly from children

Knowledge directly from children, which is presented in the report, is a summary of the answers that were repeated by many children. Each percentage is calculated based on how many children answered the question. The knowledge is not interpreted by adults or linked to theory.

THANK YOU TO YOU ADULTS

Thank you to those of you who have recruited children for this important survey. Thank you to those of you who understand that children know best what family guidance feels like, and that we need to hear from children for family guidance to feel safe and be useful for them.

Norway needs brave adults who take children's knowledge seriously.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

TO YOU WHO
DECIDE



Dear you who decide

When our parents are given guidance, it has to be done in a way that's right for us.

Don't you need to know from us if it is useful and if you're using your resources correctly?

The way it is in Norway today, we aren't asked in research or when new methods for family guidance are created, whether it's useful for us or how it should be.

Those of you who decide the framework for how those who give family guidance should work have to make sure that our rights are respected. It can't be up to each individual adult.

There are many children in Norway who get family guidance. We need you to make changes so that it will be useful for us.

We ask you to take our advice into your hearts.

NATIONAL TROUBLE

In this section, employees in Change Factory have looked at how the knowledge from children challenges the way family guidance is done today.

Children's rights aren't secured well enough

This qualitative survey shows that when family guidance is given, many children lack information about the guidance given to their family. Children may lack information about who's giving guidance, what's being done in the guidance and why the adults are getting guidance.

Many children haven't been asked what they needed to make things better at home. They also weren't asked throughout whether they felt the guidance was useful, whether it made any difference or whether things got better at home.

Children have procedural rights according to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. This means that for all actions and decisions that concern them, what is in the child's best interests must be considered. To be able to assess the child's best interests, the child must have been given information, the child's privacy must be secured and the child must have been allowed to express themselves freely. Giving guidance to a family is an act that concerns children. Whether family guidance should be given is a decision that concerns children.

Several challenges in the current knowledge base, system and practice stand in the way of securing children's rights in family guidance. To ensure children's rights, changes need to come. In these changes, there are also many opportunities to be able to provide safer and more useful help to children.

Lack of knowledge from children about the usefulness

Today, family guidance is the most widely used measures of assistance in the Child Protection System, and is also to a large extent given in mental health services both in municipalities and in BUP.

Family guidance is provided throughout Norway

Family guidance is provided throughout the country, in these services: family welfare offices, BUP, child protection systems, centres for children and families in Bufetat and private practising psychologists. Many health nurses at health centres or in the school health service also provide family guidance.

Changefactory hasn't found any research on family guidance where many children have been talked to and asked about its usefulness. The research we find usually focuses on the parents' perception of how things have turned out after family guidance, whether they feel like better parents or whether they've noticed a difference in how children behave. Some research has also asked teachers or others around children. When research doesn't ask children how it's turned out for them after family guidance, we can't know for sure whether it has made things better for children or whether they've felt that the help has been useful.

Norway knows little about whether children experience family guidance as useful

How many children experience that their everyday life gets better from family guidance?

How many children find that they feel better after family guidance?

How many children find family guidance useful?

How many children experience family guidance as safe?

As far as we know, Norway doesn't have answers to any of these questions from children. How can we know for sure that family guidance is useful for children?

Standardisation can give the wrong help

Various methods are used in family guidance. These often have clear standardised descriptions of the kind of help to be provided. The method is adapted to the individual child to a lesser extent.

For help to be useful for a child, the help must be based on what is important to the child. If help is given without starting with what a child themselves expresses that they need, it can also make it worse for a child, in that what is really the problem doesn't come to light. The help can focus on the wrong things because the child isn't being collaborated with about what is important.

If help is to be useful for children, it must be created in collaboration with each individual child. Then the help needs to be adapted based on what each child says they need to get better.

NATIONAL SOLUTIONS

Introduce a clear national goal

In national guidelines, guides and similar, family guidance is mentioned as a recommended measure in both child protection and mental health services. These recommendations do not include any national guidelines for what family guidance should contain. Nor have we found a clear and overarching goal for family guidance in Norway.

The individual methods used have goals. Seen from the knowledge of children, these goals aren't good enough. Most of them either point to the child's behaviour improving or to parents mastering the parenting role better.

For family guidance to focus on what is most important for children and for children to do better, family guidance must have a clear overarching goal in Norway. The knowledge from children is clear, the goal of family guidance must be for children to feel better and safer at home. With a goal like that, Norway can to a greater extent ensure that services that provide family guidance work according to and are measured by what is seen from the child's point of view, which is the most important thing for family guidance to be safe and useful for children.

Proposed goal based on knowledge from children

CHILDREN SHOULD
FEEL BETTER INSIDE
THEMSELVES AND
FEEL SAFER AT HOME

Children's procedural rights must be ensured

The knowledge from children is clear that for family guidance to be safe and useful for children, it is crucial that children are collaborated with. Collaboration is fundamental for children to have trust in adults, and for adults to be able to know how to help the child in a way that feels useful to children. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that children have rights as to how they should be met. The procedural rights of children must be secured.

In 2020, the Storting adopted two important unanimous resolutions

The Storting asks the government to review the health legislation to ensure that it is in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child's principles on children's right to be heard, decisions in the best interest of the child and children's right to privacy.

The Storting asks the government to ensure that the proposals for a new Child Welfare Act and a new Children's Act are in line with the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child on children's right to information, to be heard, decisions in the best interest of the child and children's right to privacy.

The Storting followed this up in 2021, and clarified the procedural rights at the start of the new Child Protection Act in § 1-3 The child's best interests and § 1-4 The child's right to participate.

When procedural rights become a clearer part of the legislation, those who provide family guidance have a greater opportunity to work with children and give them help in a way that is perceived as safe and useful for children.

Guidelines, guides, routines and methods for family guidance must be based on knowledge from children and safeguard children's procedural rights. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child commits Norway to this. It will be crucial for those who are going to provide family guidance to know how to proceed to ensure these rights in all actions and decisions that concern the child. National guidelines and guides in the field of health and child protection that deal with family guidance should therefore be reviewed. Methods and routines must ensure the procedural rights.

KNOWLEDGE
FROM
CHILDREN



MAIN FINDINGS

Whether children were given information

53% of the children haven't been told that they've had family guidance
34% of the children have been told about the family guidance from the people who've given it

Whether children got to talk alone with the adults

57% of the children have talked alone with the adults who have given help
43% haven't gotten to talk alone with the adults

Whether children were asked

78% of the children haven't been asked what they needed for things to become better at home
69% of the children haven't been asked if it has helped

Whether children noticed guidance

88% of the children have noticed that their parents have been given help
12% didn't notice and did not know that the parents had been given help, and they didn't know about the guidance when they answered the survey

Whether children noticed a difference

44% of the children haven't noticed any difference at home after the guidance
31% have felt that it got worse
25% have felt that it got better

Most of the children who have participated in the qualitative survey have known that they've had family guidance. The services have invited mainly children who have known about the family guidance. We can therefore assume that the number of children in Norway who don't know that their family receives guidance is higher than what appears in the report.

THE GOAL OF FAMILY GUIDANCE

Children have given answers to what they think the goal of family guidance should be.

These answers were repeated:

- children should feel better
- children should feel safe in their own home
- children and parents should understand each other better and be better together
- the family should communicate better and trust each other
- parents should collaborate better with each other
- parents should understand that there are reasons why children do what they do and know how to talk about those reasons

CHILDREN SHOULD
FEEL BETTER INSIDE
THEMSELVES AND
FEEL SAFER AT HOME

CHILDREN'S RECIPE FOR

FAMILY GUIDANCE

Give us information

- ♥ give us information before the family guidance starts
- ♥ give us information alone
- ♥ use words we understand
- ♥ be honest with us
- ♥ let us know:
 - ♥ that guidance is being given and why
 - ♥ why it's being given
 - ♥ who's giving it
 - ♥ what will happen
 - ♥ that we can take part and say what we think

Be adults we feel safe with

- ♥ get to know us
- ♥ ask us where we want to talk
- ♥ build trust
- ♥ show that this is about us
- ♥ show that you listen to us
- ♥ take what we say seriously
- ♥ check with us before you share information

Give useful help in collaboration with us

- ♥ talk to us alone about the help before the guidance is decided
- ♥ ask us what we need for things to be better at home
- ♥ include us when it's being decided how the guidance should be
- ♥ avoid consequences that can feel like punishment
- ♥ ask us if it helps throughout the guidance
- ♥ find solutions together with us if we feel like it isn't helpful
- ♥ help us so there's someone following up on how we're doing after the guidance is finished

Advice on how family guidance can be done in a safe and useful way for children, is described in the following pages. The advice elaborates on the recipe described above.



ADVICE

Give us information

The children in the qualitative survey have been asked about what they need to know about family guidance, in order to feel safe when getting help, and how this information should be given.

Give us information before family guidance starts

- tell us about yourself and what you like to do
- get to know us before you read any papers about us
- tell us about the guidance and make sure we know enough before it starts

Give us information alone

- talk to us alone
- ask us alone first if you think that parents or other adults should be in the conversation, and ask us how it can be done safely

Use words we understand

- use words and examples we're familiar with, without grownup words
- ask us if we understand or if you should explain it in a different way and be sure that we understand what you say
- be patient if we don't understand what you say, so we don't feel stupid

Be honest with us

Tell us honestly about the family guidance, so we can properly understand why we are getting help. The information has to come from you. If it comes from our parents, what we get to know could be random. In that way it can be safer for us. We know very well what it's like at home and we can handle hearing it. It's better to be honest with us than to find out later and lose trust in adults. What we don't know can be very scary.

We need to know

What adults aren't allowed to do

- so we know what adults aren't allowed to say or do to us or our siblings
- so we can tell someone if adults are doing something they're not allowed to do

That the guidance is being given and why

- so we can know why our parents change
- so it doesn't become scary when something changes
- so we can pay attention to whether it gets better
- so we don't blame ourselves because someone has to help the family

Which adults are giving it

- so we know you're there to try and help us
- so we know who we can tell, if things don't get better

What the guidance is about, what will happen and when

- so we can say something about it when you ask
- so it can feel safe for us
- so we can trust you more
- so we know that it can take time before it helps

That we can say what we think and have a say in decisions

- so we can tell someone if something doesn't work
- so we can agree or disagree about how the help should be
- so we can feel that we're part of making things better at home

What's being said in the guidance

- so we don't have to be unsure and feel like we're losing control in our own lives

Be adults we trust

The children in the qualitative survey were asked what the adults who give family guidance have to be like and what they can do to make it safe for them.

Get to know us

- get to know us so we can tell you the most important things
- tell us if you're having a good or bad day
- please say and show that you have feelings
- ask us what we like, try to understand and be engaged in what we say
- go for a walk, or do something else we want, to get to know us
- joke with us and show that you have a sense of humour
- show that you're not perfect

Ask us where we want to talk

- ask us where it might be safe to talk, if it's at home or somewhere else
- talk to us in a place where we feel sure that anyone we don't want to hear what we say, can hear
- ask us if we want to bring someone we feel safe with

Create safety

- do things at our pace
- be patient with us and say that we don't need to talk about everything right away
- move forward slowly if we say we need to go slow
- say that you'll support us even if it takes time for things to get better
- say sorry if you do something that feels bad to us

Show us that it's about us

- talk to us and not just the adults
- show with emotion that you care about us
- tell us that the help is supposed to make it better for us
- ask what's important for us to talk about
- show that you want to create a bond with us

Check with us before you share information

- tell us before we start talking that what we say won't be shared without our knowledge
- check with us first, if you think you need to tell someone else
- find out with us how it should be done, if something has to be shared
- stick to what we've agreed on, and don't share information without our knowledge

Listen to us

- listen to what we're saying, it's nice if you nod and smile
- ask follow-up questions to check that you've understood
- show us that you want to collaborate and need to hear what we think
- let us finish talking so it becomes easier to say what we want
- show that you're listening to what we're saying by doing something about it

Take us seriously

- see us as a human being, not just as a child
- show us that what's most important to you is that we are well
- draw up what we're talking about if it helps us understand
- check whether you've understood what we're saying correctly
- tell us that it's important for you to understand us and support us, no matter what

Show that you care

- try to be happy when you talk to us
- sit leaning forward and preferably not with your arms crossed
- look into our eyes with warm eyes when we're talking
- speak calmly and be calm, even if we aren't calm



Give useful help in collaboration with us

The children in the qualitative survey have been asked how family guidance has to be done for it to be right and useful for them.

BEFORE THE HELP

Talk with us alone

- so it can be easier for us to talk honestly
- so there's a greater chance that we can say what we really mean
- so that parents can't interrupt or object
- so that parents can't get upset or angry with us afterwards
- because it's less scary

Ask us before you ask our parents

- so that we're not influenced by our parents
- because our parents can tell a completely different story than us

Ask us what we need

- because we know best what it's like to be a child at home
- because there's no recipe that's right for all families
- to find out what we think the family actually needs help with

Ask us what we want to have a say in deciding

- so we can have faith that the guidance will work
- so we can trust the adults
- so it feels like we're on the same team
- so we can feel that it's fair
- remember that what we say has to be what's most important

DURING

Avoid consequences that can feel like punishment

- work on what hurts instead of hiding the problem
- don't give us consequences for the way we show that we're hurting
- tell our parents that there's a reason why, when something bad happens
- remember that you can't know how rules and consequences feel

Ask us if it helps

- ask if things have gotten better at home
- ask us how often we want to be asked if it helps
- ask again, even if we've said it's all good
- ask us several times, things can change very quickly
- remember that our parents can say something completely different about how things are going and that we can see it very differently
- remember that you have to ask us in order to know whether things have gotten better for us

Find solutions together with us

- ask us what we need for things to get better
- make suggestions, but be open to our reaction
- find other solutions together with us, if things don't get better

AFTER

Make sure we're doing well

- after a while, ask us how we're doing, if things have gotten better and if our parents are still doing what they should
- continue to check with us how things are going, after the help is finished
- if possible, tell us that we can contact you at any time if we need to
- make sure we have someone we trust who we can tell if we need more help

In the next part, summarised experiences from children about family guidance are presented. These are children's own explanations of how family guidance has felt and been for them.



EXPERIENCES



The reasons for family guidance

The children have been asked if they know why the family is getting family guidance. Just over half of the children have known or thought it was because of their parents. Just under half have known or thought it was because of themselves or their siblings.

Summarised experiences

When children have known or thought that they've had family guidance because of their parents, the reason has been arguing, drugs, illness, violence or neglect. Children have felt that:

- it's been strange or wrong that they haven't been allowed to say anything about what the parents have needed help with
- it's been nice when the parents have received help with what they needed help with
- it's been difficult when the parents have been given help for something other than what they needed help with
- sometimes things have gotten better and sometimes they haven't

When children have known or thought it was because of them, they've been told that they or their siblings have problems with how they behave, are difficult or dangerous. Children have felt that:

- they've been viewed as difficult
- the parents got confirmation that they were the problem in the family
- they've started to view themselves as a problem and have started to think badly of themselves
- the adults have focused on what the children have done and not how they've been feeling
- it hasn't been possible to get help for what they've needed
- the adults wanted to have control over them
- they've been experimented with
- it's been difficult to understand that it was actually supposed to be help

Information

The children have been asked if they've been told about the family guidance, what they have been told and who told them.

53% of the children haven't been told that their parents have been given guidance

34% of the children have been told that their parents have been given guidance by the counsellor giving the guidance

Summarised experiences

Children who haven't been told anything

haven't known:

- that they've had family guidance
- why they've had family guidance
- what family guidance is
- what the family guidance was about
- what was going to happen

then it has felt:

- strange when they've noticed that their parents have behaved differently
- uncomfortable that strangers have come to their home
- scary and unsafe when they've noticed that things are changing but haven't known why
- hurtful that it's been done behind their backs

Children who have been given little information

have learned that their parents have attended a course or spoken to some adults, but haven't known:

- why they were there
- what they talked about
- how it was decided that they should have family guidance
- who was going to give the family guidance
- enough about what the family guidance was about

then it has felt:

- scary when they haven't known what has happened and what was going to happen
- like not good help
- as if changes have come too quickly
- as if they haven't known enough
- like it hasn't been about them
- hurtful and like a bother in their life

Some children have been told about the guidance because they've asked adults themselves.

Children who have been told by parents have:

- been told because they've asked what the parents were doing
- been told because the parents have chosen to tell the children
- been told by parents a long time after the family guidance was finished

When children have been given information from their parents, it's been random what children have been told.

QUOTES

No one has said anything to me. (...) Didn't find out why she was there. (...) I had never met her before and she was just there in my house. It was weird, because I didn't know anything.

I had no idea that my mother got help. Doesn't really feel right that I was the only one who didn't know. Fucking awful. Because nobody likes it when someone's keeping secrets from you. It's not to protect us. You become afraid.

When you're kept in the dark, you feel less valuable, you don't feel like a human being. When you don't get enough information to say your opinion.

I think it's absolutely horrible, I haven't thought about it until now, I'm so used to not getting information.

I felt like there was too little contact with me, little follow-up with me, and then it won't be much help.

I didn't know at first and then I found out. Or I asked my therapist at BUP. It was very weird and then it kind of became a little unsafe. (...) inside me I just had to go "ok what's happening now or have I done something strange". Before I found out it was family guidance.

It gets scary, all you know is that your mom is getting help and needs to practise this, and you have to practise this. Wasn't told what, who, how.

They should actually help, (...) they spoke to me once, nothing more (...) I didn't know anything, it doesn't help much when they don't have contact with me.

When I didn't know what they did, why should I, as a teenager who struggles with addiction and is scared of being home, why and how should I bother to change when I don't get to know that they're changing.



About the help

The children have been asked whether there's been a change at home after the family guidance, whether some things have gotten better, some things have gotten worse, or whether they haven't noticed any difference.

44% of the children haven't noticed a change after family guidance

31% have felt that it has gotten worse

25% have felt that it has gotten better

Summarised experiences

Children who haven't felt changes have:

- not known that the family has gotten help
- felt that it's been exactly the same at home after they got help
- talked to those who are giving the help but not gotten anything out of it
- not felt that their parents have understood them better afterwards
- not experienced any better communication with their parents afterwards
- noticed a difference for a few days or weeks, but then it's gone back to the same as before the help
- lost hope that things can get better at home

Children whose situation has gotten worse have:

- stopped trusting their parents, because they've behaved differently
- thought that their parents no longer care about them, because they've changed
- thought that their parents have pretended that they've been perfect parents
- felt that the parents have acted differently when other adults have been around
- felt that the care and safety their parents have shown, disappeared
- lost hope that things can get better because their parents haven't wanted to accept help
- had more arguments and it's become unsafe at home
- not been able to say the most important things to those who gave the help
- gotten help for the wrong things
- started thinking their opinion isn't important, because they haven't been asked what they and their family have needed help with

The parents of these children have kept an eye on the children more, become stricter, ignored them, stopped comforting them when things have been difficult, forced the children to do things they don't want or can do or used consequences for things the children have done.

Children whose situation has gotten better have:

- felt that their parents have changed
- trusted their parents more because they've become better parents
- had a say in what the help should be like
- had parents who wanted to accept help
- thought that the boundaries that have been set at home have been good because it's become quieter or safer at home
- had better routines and known more about what will happen
- felt like they can be children and not have to worry so much about their parents

The parents of these children have started doing housework, become more orderly, calmer, argued less, gotten better at listening, understood better what the children needed help with, communicated better with the children, gotten better at controlling their anger or told the children off less and become kinder.

QUOTES

He didn't get himself together as much when the Child Protection System wasn't there. (...) Maybe he's become a little bit aware of what he should do, but that doesn't fix everything, sort of.

It was actually really horrible before, but it was exactly the same when they stopped getting help too.

It was still bad at home. So I was out with my friends a lot. Because it didn't feel safe at home because of the measures.

We had such nice times and I knew that I could sort of talk to my mother about quite a lot. But after family guidance, it sort of wasn't the good times anymore, because then she wasn't being herself.

Those are not the parents I know (...) It's the same feeling as when you lose a person in your life, like who's this, that's not mum anymore.

Communication between mum, stepdad and me has become much clearer. Or, it went from sort of outbursts of anger from both parents to kind of being more solution oriented.

After guidance, he's changed in a way. Not much, but a little changed. He's not as hard as he used to be.

I think it's good because then they know how to be to the children. I feel I'm safer because they're not as strict as they were before.

Not useful help

The children who've felt that the help hasn't been useful haven't noticed changes, or felt like their situation has gotten worse. Children have answered that it hasn't been useful, because they haven't been asked what they need before guidance, haven't gotten to talk alone, haven't been asked along the way whether the guidance is working, or haven't been taken seriously. Some have known that they've been given help, but it's gone back to how it was before the help after a short time. Here are the explanations of what it's been like for children.

78% of the children haven't been asked what they've needed help with

69% haven't been asked whether it's worked or how things have turned out at home throughout the guidance

Summarised experiences

When children haven't been asked what they need help with:

- the adults have talked about what the children needed without them getting to say something about it themselves
- the adults have missed important answers from children about what they needed help with
- the help came too abruptly
- adults have made rules without knowing what children needed
- children have become annoyed, upset and felt unsafe about the adults who have given the help
- they've felt that they aren't important, even if the adults have said that they are
- they've felt like they're a problem
- they've thought that adults only listen to other adults about what children need
- they've felt that the family has gotten help with the wrong things

When children haven't been asked if it helps:

- they haven't been allowed to say anything about whether it's gotten better, worse or whether something's changed
- those who gave the help haven't known whether things at home have gotten better for children
- the help hasn't been improved upon along the way if they've needed it
- it's been random whether children have gotten to say whether the help has worked

When children haven't gotten to talk alone:

- they haven't dared say honestly what they think, because their parents or others have been in the room
- it's been hard to listen to their parents say something different than the children about how things are at home
- it hasn't felt safe to talk in front of the whole family
- it hasn't felt like it was about them
- it's been awkward and uncomfortable to sit in a room with their parents
- they've been afraid of what might happen afterwards if they say things honestly in front of their parents
- their parents have gotten angry with the children after the meetings
- they've started arguing more with their parents after the meetings
- they've wished they could talk alone with the adults who give help
- they haven't wanted to meet the people giving help because it hasn't been safe enough

When children have felt that the benefit of the help hasn't lasted

Some children have felt that the help worked well for a few days or weeks, but that it went back to how it was before afterwards. Children have felt that the adults have stopped helping too soon and haven't followed up for long enough. Then it's helped for a little while, but it hasn't changed anything in the long run.

QUOTES

It's a bit unfair, you're not listened to. They're so occupied with it, it doesn't feel that way.

Apparently it was only me who became the problem, that's how they made it sound, never talked to me and what I think.

Because I was only put there with my parents, (...) What should you say then? Isn't always safe with everyone in the room.

I got an offer, but didn't dare say no, I want to leave. They said "is it okay for your mother to join or do you want her to leave". It wasn't really possible to say yes.

It was very hard for me that they were going to be there, because of the bad relationship that we had. The fact that they sat there and sort of lied to the people from MST right in front of me made it even more difficult. That's mostly what made me unable to finish that meeting.

I can't tell them everything with the family there because then they'll know about it. When the family isn't there, I can tell without being afraid that they'll say something about it and that they'll tell others.

I think it's bad that they didn't take me and my little sister to the side, like they should know what we thought and so on. But it never happened.

I felt like if I'd said something wrong, I would've been beaten by my stepdad, there would have been an argument, it was always my fault. Nobody believed me.

The family guidance might've helped in the moment, but they didn't solve anything.

It was actually good and I thought it would continue like that and we talked to them for half a year. But almost immediately after we stopped having contact with them, it was kind of the same again.



Useful help

The children who've felt that the help has been useful, have had their lives improved. Children have said that it's been useful because they've been asked what they needed before the help, they've been asked throughout the guidance whether it works, and because they've had a say in decisions.

Summarised experiences

Children who've been asked beforehand

have been asked:

- about what they've needed
- about what they think should get better

then it has felt:

- like their opinion has been important
- like the help has been more right for children

Children who've been asked along the way

have been asked:

- whether the help has been good
- what's happened at home since the last time
- whether there's anything the adults could do to make it better
- how often they wanted to be asked if things were getting better
- several times how things have been
- in normal conversations with the adults who have given the help

then it has felt:

- good that the people giving the help have known how it's going, so that they can help better
- like the people who gave the help cared about them
- useful that the adults have suggested changes after listening to what the children think

Children who've had a say in decisions

have had a say in deciding:

- what was going to happen in the guidance
- whether they would talk alone or together with parents
- what rules they should have at home

then it has felt:

- like it's been about them
- like they've had a say about their own lives
- like they've collaborated with the people who gave the help
- safer to get help

QUOTES

He asked what I think about how things are at home and he asked several times.

They've asked if things are better at home. Very ok when they ask because there are some things that still don't work. The people in the Child Protection System ask very often if there is anything they can do. That's good, I think.

It's nice that they check and then try to give suggestions depending on what I answer.

I felt like my opinion mattered. I felt that now I could finally feel like a person.

I felt safer at home because I also had a say in deciding how things should be for me at home. Then it's not like a dictatorship kind of, it's not just parents who decide.

I don't decide everything. But good enough that my voice matters. That alone can make a big difference. We work as a team.

I was there a few times and could choose a little then. I could choose whether I wanted to be there alone or with my mother.

Adults who give family guidance

Adults who feel safe

The children who've felt that the adults were safe, have said that they've met them alone, that they've been kind, that they've gotten to know them a little, and that they've been able to trust them. Here are some of the explanations about how the adults have been and why these things have been important for them.

47% of the children have gotten to talk alone with the adults who have given help

53% haven't gotten to talk alone with the adults. Some of them didn't know who the counsellors giving family guidance were

Summarised experiences

When children have gotten to meet the adults alone:

- it's felt safer to say what they've needed and how things are going
- it's felt like they've been collaborated with because the adults who gave the help spoke to them before their parents
- they've gotten to know the adults and felt safe with them
- it's felt safe that the parents haven't been there and heard what they've said about them
- it's felt like they've been able to be open and honest with the adults
- children have been allowed to choose for themselves whether they want to talk with parents or siblings, or completely alone

Some have gotten to talk to those who help in a café, on a walk or in their office. When they've met outside the home, children have felt more safe that their parents haven't heard what they've said, and have been able to talk honestly.

The adults who have felt kind have:

- said and shown that they've tried to help them
- smiled at them
- had kind eyes
- truly listened when children talked
- asked how children have been lately
- remembered things children have said before, or last time
- tried to understand what the child means
- asked if there's anything they need

Adults who have gotten to know children a little have:

- talked about other things, like how school is going and what they like
- asked about children's hobbies and shown that they're interested
- been more interested in the child than the reasons why they're there
- done things together with the child, like crocheting, drawing or playing
- told a little about themselves and why they do what they do for work
- talked about their own lives
- played games about feelings, which has made it easier to talk about feelings

It's been important for children that they've known the adult. Then it was easier to tell the most important things that the adult needed to know in order for their situation to become better. It has felt good when the adults have said that the most important thing is that things should get better for them. For children, it's been easier to open up once they've talked about other things. When children have been able to tell that adults have trusted them, it's been easier for children to trust them.

Children have trusted the adults who have:

- said they are there for children when they need it
- done things they didn't have to do
- said they can be called after work
- been honest about what may happen in the future
- shown that they keep what they promise
- said they wouldn't share what children have said without asking
- been honest when there's something they haven't known
- let children choose who they want to talk to



QUOTES

What they did, which was nice, they talked to me alone before my father came in. Like, we planned what was going to happen and stuff like that. It felt much safer then.

I talked with them alone and then my sister came later. I got to choose whether I wanted to bring my sister. It was reassuring that I could choose for myself.

They listen a lot to not just personal things, good things like which school I go to and things like that. They didn't just focus on the bad things. They cared more about me than the reasons I was there.

They seem okay if they smile or just seem nice.

When she gives trust, she'll get trust back. When she showed that she trusted me, it was easier to trust her. We didn't do everything right away, but little by little and step by step.

She didn't go right into the case, she spent time getting to know me as a person so she could make adjustments for me.

It's important to get to know her, because then I feel safer with her. If not, I wouldn't have dared say what I wanted to say to her and then I could've gotten a stomach ache.

That's what made me really trust her. She was always like, if you need me (...) Those aren't not the kinds of things she has to do. That's how you see, in a way, that they really care.

Adults who didn't feel safe

The children who have felt that the adults weren't safe have said that they haven't trusted the adults, that the adults have shared information with others, that they haven't gotten to know them well enough, and that they've felt the adults haven't taken them seriously. Here are the explanations for why it hasn't become safe and how it felt.

Summarised experiences

When children haven't had safe adults, it's felt:

- scary because the adults have had a lot of power
- like the adults haven't cared when they've tried to contact the adults, but haven't gotten an answer
- unsafe to tell how they're doing
- scary when they've met in rooms with completely white walls
- like their voice and opinion didn't matter

Children haven't trusted the adults because:

- the adults haven't talked honestly about what will happen
- they've been afraid that the adults will share information with others
- they've been afraid to say something "wrong" that could lead to them being moved away from home
- they've felt that the adults have only pretended to listen when they haven't done anything with what they've told them
- they've changed adults often, and it's felt like adults abandon them
- adults haven't kept what they've promised
- it's turned out wrong when the adults have interpreted what the child has said, and used their own words to describe the child to others
- it's felt like the adults have blamed the child for things being the way they are

When parents have been told what they've said, children have:

- felt that it's become more difficult to talk honestly
- felt that it's become uncomfortable or scary at home
- become angry or upset and stopped trusting the adults
- felt tricked by the adults who were supposed to help

Children who haven't gotten to know the adults have:

- not known enough about who the adults were and what they could do
- felt that it hasn't been safe when the adults haven't told anything about themselves, but expected the children to tell
- felt that it is impossible to talk about important things

Children have felt that they haven't been taken seriously when the adults have:

- listened more to the parents than the children
- used difficult words that children didn't understand
- decided things about their lives without checking with them - children have then given up on thinking they can get good help
- said that children have to keep trying even if they've said that the help isn't working
- said that children's problems aren't that important

QUOTES

I didn't feel safe with the Child Protection System, so I didn't say how things were at home. Haven't told anyone because it hasn't been safe.

Scary because everything looks so perfect in that office. Everything is so white-white.

Haven't spoken in like a year. I send texts and she never replies, so she backs off pretty hard.

Feels like they think they know what's best for me without talking to me. I hardly know anything about the contact person, and then they're somehow supposed to be able to make a plan about how I should develop.

Talking to them is like walking on eggshells. You don't know if it's way too serious and if they have to call my parents.

Because I was moved around so much, I was very quiet and stuff. I was scared that if I said something was wrong, I'd be moved. That's what always happened. That's why I always said things are good at home.

For me, the trust is completely lost. The thing is, I've had people who have been terrible at being present, or told so little about themselves and expected me to tell so much. Have had four contact persons in 2 years.

I found out that parents knew what I was talking about when I hadn't told them but to the counsellor we were talking to. Afterwards it was very uncomfortable because then I hated her. Isn't exactly allowed to do what she did, I felt I lost trust.

I wasn't there long enough to dare. It takes a very long time before I dare to say deep things like that to people.

I suddenly have to drop school because I have to go to BUP or the Child Protection System or MST or a lot of big words I don't care about. They think they know what's best for us, but then it's not what's best for us. They talk to us so little.

Other reasons can influence

Some of the children have or haven't been able to tell what's most important to the adults for reasons other than how the adults have met them.

Summarised experiences

The children who have been able to tell have:

- thought that they can trust all adults
- thought that the adults have experience with their jobs and know what they're doing
- felt that it's been easy to talk about difficult things regardless of what the adult did
- felt that they didn't have a choice
- decided to tell even if it didn't feel safe, so things could get better for them
- felt it's been easier to talk to someone other than their family

Children who haven't been able to tell have:

- lost trust in adults so many times in the past that it's been impossible to trust any adults
- been afraid of what would happen with what they told
- not wanted to meet the adults
- noticed that what they've said has been written down or filmed
- felt like what they've said didn't mean anything anyway
- been worse off in life when adults previously have shared things with others

QUOTES

Everything, small or big, everyone else has decided for me and I'm tired of it.

I didn't trust anyone anymore and then it went too far. So I just became very concerned with not being able to endure things being like that anymore. Became more concerned with getting help, than getting to know the adults.

It's a little difficult to trust them no matter how nice they are when everything's written down. I don't want it to be there for the rest of my life.

I don't trust anyone, no matter who it is, actions speak louder than words. They have to prove that I can trust them. They have to show that we're on the same page. You can't come into the room and say 'you have to respect me'. Respect has to be earned.

CHILDREN
HAVE
THEIR
OWN
RIGHTS



Children's rights

The Convention on the Rights of the Child gives children procedural rights. These are rights that describe how children should be met in all actions and decisions that concern them. These rights must be secured before what is in the child's best interests can be assessed.

The Constitution, the ECHR and the Convention on the Rights of the Child take precedence over other legislation. This means that if a legal provision that affects or concerns children can be interpreted in several ways, the solution that most effectively safeguards the child's best interest must be chosen.

Across Norway, students in education programmes for work in kindergartens, schools, health, child protection and the police explain that they learn little about children's procedural rights and how they should be used in their professional fields. At the same time, professionals explain that they haven't learned much about how the child's right to information, the right to respect for his or her privacy and to express themselves freely shall be secured in practice - and that these procedural rights must be secured before the child's best interest are assessed either.

Children's procedural rights must be secured

When different services are going to offer guidance or follow up on families who receive guidance, children's procedural rights are important tools. The rights make it possible to meet children in a way that ensures that they can tell what's most important. In this way, the child's trust in adults can be maintained, the rights secured and the help determined in a way that is useful.

Children's procedural rights must be safeguarded before, during and at the end of the guidance. National authorities and everyone who works with children have a duty to know about and contribute to ensuring children's procedural rights.

The child's right to information

(UNCRC art. 12 in relation to the child being allowed to speak freely)
The UN Children's Committee states that children have the right to receive the information necessary to be able to express themselves freely.

When a family is going to be given guidance from a service, this is an action that affects the child and the child must therefore be given information about:

- that family guidance is going to be provided
- why family guidance is going to be provided
- what family guidance is and what it entails
- what happens with the information the child shares
- which decisions will be made and which alternative solutions exist

The information must be given in an understandable way, it must be repeated when there is a need for it and the child must be given new information during the family guidance. The right to information is a prerequisite for the child to be able to speak freely about the actions or decisions that will be taken, and is therefore an important prerequisite for the rest of the process.

The child's right to express themselves freely

(UNCRC art. 12 and the Norwegian Constitution § 104)

Children have the right to express themselves freely in all actions and decisions that concern them. The child's right to speak freely is an independent right for the child, and is therefore not dependent on the consent of parents or other caretakers. As a general rule, the child's best interests cannot be used as justification for children to not be heard in different processes.

The word "freely" implies that adults must provide an environment where the child feels respected and safe when they are going to express themselves. To make it safe, children should, as far as possible, be allowed to talk to an adult they trust. The child must also be allowed to express themselves in a place that feels safe. Expressing oneself freely also means that the child:

- will not be exposed to manipulation, influence or pressure
- must express their own opinions, not those of others
- is given enough and comprehensible information to be able to speak freely
- is allowed to speak directly to the decision-maker, alternatively it must be ensured that the child's statements reach the decision-maker safely and honestly
- has the right to think what they want and say what they want. This must be included in the assessment of which measure is in the best interests of the child
- the child's statements are given weight in accordance with the child's age and maturity

If the child's statements are not going to be given decisive weight, the assessment must be justified and what consequences it may have for the child to act contrary to the child's views must be documented. The assessment of whether the action or decision has such a beneficial effect on the child, that it clearly outweighs the disadvantages of acting contrary to the child's views, must also be justified and documented.

The child's right to respect for their privacy

(UNCRC art. 16, the Norwegian Constitution § 102, ECHR article 8)
The Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Norwegian Constitution and the ECHR state that no child shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with their privacy. In practice, this means that professionals cannot automatically share information from or about the child within the service, with other services, or with parents or other caretakers.

Sharing of information must be in accordance with law, and the intervention in the child's privacy must be necessary. In many cases, information is shared, from or about the child, without the child's right to privacy being assessed. If information is shared without the child's knowledge, the child may lose trust in the adult who passes the information on.

Before information about the child is shared with others, the child must be involved in the process. Children must know what information is intended to be shared, with whom and why. The child also needs to know what can happen to what the child shares, before an adult starts talking with a child.

In situations where professionals have a legal basis for sharing, and are considering sharing information from or about the child with others, it's an action or a decision that affects the child. Adults must therefore inform the child that they're considering sharing information, and they must let the child express themselves freely about it before the information is shared. This applies to all children regardless of age. It must also be assessed whether it's in the best interest of the child to share the information, and finally whether sharing the information can be considered necessary.

How to assess what is in the best interests of the child (UNCRC art. 3.1 and the Norwegian Constitution § 104)

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Norwegian Constitution state that the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration in all actions and decisions concerning children. Family guidance is such an action. The principle of the best interests of the child applies to actions concerning both one or several children, and both directly and indirectly. The word "concerning" is a broad term that encompasses a lot. For example, the principle of the best interests of the child also applies in situations where the measure in question is not aimed at the child, but which nevertheless has an effect on them, including measures put in place where parents are the reason for the family guidance.

All children and all families are different and have different needs. In order for family guidance to be in the best interests of the child, a concrete and individual assessment of the circumstances of each individual child must be made. Methods for guidance and assistance, without them being adapted to each individual child, do not ensure the child's human rights according to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Norwegian Constitution.

In order for the family guidance – as it is provided through different measures and services – to be in the best interest of the child, the services must ensure that the child has been given sufficient and understandable information about the guidance, that the child is free to express their opinion about the guidance, and that the child's right to respect for their privacy is secured.

The child's view of the measure or the guidance must be given considerable weight and be the starting point for the decision about which measure should be put in place. If these rights are not secured, it will become arbitrary whether the help is useful and in the best interests of the child in the specific situation.

These are children's procedural rights, which must be secured before the service can decide what kind of help will be in the child's best interest.

Other rights for children in family guidance

The child protection service's measures must be in the best interests of the child, § 1-3

Chapter 3 of the new Norwegian Child Welfare Act, deals with support measures that the Child Protection System shall offer and implement for children and parents. The chapter regulates voluntary support measures, voluntary placement and measures given following an order from the Child Protection and Health Board.

Voluntary support measures shall be introduced when the child has a "special need" for help due to their care situation or behaviour, according to the new Child Welfare Act § 3-1 first paragraph. In order to find out whether the child has special needs, the child's needs must be specifically assessed in each individual case. Assessing whether a child has a special need is an action concerning the child, and the best interest of the child must therefore be a primary consideration. The child's procedural rights must therefore also be secured when the child protection service are assessing whether the conditions for support measures are met. This means that the child must be informed about the fact that measures are being considered, the child must be allowed to speak freely about it and the child's right to respect for their privacy must be secured. The child's view about the measures must also be given due weight.

The support measure must be suited to meet the needs of the child and the parents, and contribute to positive change within the child or family. In the preparatory work for the new Child Welfare Act from 2016, it appears that "support measures" are knowledge-based measures that the child protection service believes can contribute to improving the situation. If the child is not given information, gets to express themselves freely and is ensured respect for their privacy, it will be difficult for the child protection service to figure out what kind of measures will be in the best interests of the child. The child also loses their right to express their opinion on relevant measures. It emerges from the new Child Welfare Act § 1-4, that children who are able to form their own opinions have the right to participate in all matters concerning the child. Family guidance is such a matter, and the child protection service's measures must therefore be in the child's best interests, according to the new Child Welfare Act § 1-3.

Patients' and users' right to participate, Patient and User Rights Act § 3-1

In national guidelines, family guidance is more or less described as recommended measures for child protection and mental health services.

Referrals to family guidance can come from different services. Often it is the Child Protection System that makes the referral, but nurses and BUP etc. can also make referrals. Parents themselves can also contact places that provide family guidance. When family guidance is provided by healthcare personnel, the Patient and User Rights Act applies.

According to the Patient and User Rights Act § 3-1 first paragraph, the patient or user, who is the child, has the right to participate in the implementation of health and care services. The child also has the right to participate "in choosing between available and appropriate forms of service and examination and treatment methods." This means that the child must be given information about the various examination and treatment methods and forms of service before a specific type of treatment or method is introduced. It appears from the last sentence of section 3-4 first paragraph of the Patient and User Rights Act that "Children who are able to form their own views must be given information and be heard. Emphasis must be placed on what the child thinks, in accordance with the child's age and maturity."

When it is going to be decided whether family guidance should be given, it is an action or decision that affects the child. Which method of guidance is given must be decided after the child has received sufficient and comprehensible information about the guidance, the child must be allowed to express themselves freely about the guidance, and the child's right to respect for their privacy must be secured. What the child thinks about the method or the guidance to be given, must be given great weight and the guidance that is put in place must be in the child's best interest.

If guidance is given to the family without the child being informed and having been allowed to speak freely about it, the child's rights according to the constitution and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is not secured.

MORE
ABOUT
"NEEDS TO
HELP FOR
US"



Method of data collection

The qualitative survey "NEEDS TO HELP FOR US" was carried out in the period September 2021 to February 2022. The report presents summarised knowledge directly from 101 children aged 8-18. The average age was 14.5 years.

The sessions were conversations with the children alone or together with other children, and were carried out across the country. The meetings were held in group rooms in libraries, meeting rooms in hotels, cafes, rooms borrowed from the municipality, and in Changefactory's offices in the different regions. The researchers tried to find premises in the immediate environment of the children, in a room or space that felt safe for the children.

The children were given information about why the survey was being carried out, that what they said was treated anonymously, that they could choose how much or little they wanted to say, and what their answers would be used for. They were also told that they could withdraw at any time. Based on knowledge from children, the researchers spent time at the beginning of the sessions to make it safe for the children to participate. This was done by the researchers and the children getting to know each other a little, through play and talk.

Out of consideration for privacy and the individual participant, the researchers worked to ensure that the children's history or family didn't become the focus in the sessions. The focus was on their encounters with the systems, and advice for these. Consent was obtained in accordance with current regulations.

The researchers had a semi-structured interview guide and method tools in the sessions. The method tools were linked to different parts of the interview guide. One-to-one conversations were carried out as in-depth interviews without the use of method tools. It was assessed from session to session whether method tools would be used. The researchers were flexible and at times made changes to the method to suit each individual group and each individual child spoken with. The adjustments were made without straying far from the starting point.

Recipe for family guidance

The children were given a poster, drawing materials and stickers, and were tasked with designing a poster with a recipe for Norway for how family guidance needs to be done in a way that feels safe and useful for children.

Good-bad-drawing

The children drew what was good about family guidance and what was not so good. They were given drawing materials with stickers and could choose whether they wanted to draw or make bullet points that they would later explain to the researchers.

Good-bad picture

The children took pictures to show what was good about family guidance and what wasn't that good. They used their own phone to take pictures and equipment such as chairs, tables, blackboards and other things in the rooms they were in to illustrate. After they'd taken the pictures, the group gathered and the children showed and explained to the researcher what they wanted to say with the pictures.

"Feels like" drawing

The children could choose whether they wanted to draw or write bullet points to explain how family guidance felt like to them. After they had finished drawing, they presented and explained the drawing or points.

"Feels like" picture

The children took pictures of how it felt when they were allowed to have a say in the decision to get family guidance, and how it felt when they weren't allowed to have a say in that decision. Afterwards, the children explained the pictures to the researchers.

Summary of the knowledge

The material collected was continuously anonymised. Once everything had been collected, the anonymised material was thematically sorted into a joint document. The answers that were repeated from many children, in many places across the country, were systematised and summarised as the main findings in the report.

The children's own explanations are used in the summaries of experiences and advice. The researchers who gathered the knowledge, systematised the answers and counted how many of the children answered the same. The children's own explanations were used to summarise the knowledge. This was done without interpretation from adults. Changefactory has consciously decided to not interpret the knowledge to ensure it comes directly from the children. By interpreting, one risks losing the clear message from children.

Recruiting children for the survey

The researchers contacted different services and asked for help in inviting children to the qualitative survey. The services have been asked if they could show the children an invitation film and other information material they've been sent, and if they could ask the children if they could give the children's contact information to the researchers so they can explain more. The researchers have also sent an information letter and consent form to the childrens' caretakers.

Changefactory has been in contact with a total of 39 government services/institutions who haven't been able to recruit children for the qualitative survey. BUP, family welfare offices, MST teams and state child protection institutions have been asked.

Changefactory has been in contact with 62 services within child protection and municipal mental health that haven't been able to recruit children for the qualitative survey.

Child Protection Systems: Stavanger, Tysvær, Eigersund, Østensjø, Rana, Holmestrand, Øst-Agder, Bardu, Hustadvika, Nordstrand
BUP: Harstad, Kringsjåtunet

Mental health services in the municipality: Family service Rana municipality, Sandnes resource centre for children and families

The Blue Cross children's station has also contributed to the recruitment of children for the qualitative survey. Some of the children in the survey were recruited through other participants.

Experiences directly from the researchers

Most of the services have been positive about the qualitative survey itself, but have had challenges related to recruiting and inviting children. The services have had different reasons as to why they haven't been able to do this. The most common answer is that the counsellors don't meet the children, and therefore don't get to talk to them. Some services have really tried, and asked us to call back, but have not picked up the phone when we called to follow up. Some services have said that there hasn't been any point in talking to the children in their service because they don't know about the family guidance. Some have said they have no children who are relevant for the survey.

Because it was challenging to recruit children to participate in this qualitative survey, we visited several upper secondary schools. Some pupils from these schools have participated.

Our most important experience from this qualitative survey is how absolutely all of the children who have participated have, in different ways, shared wise and important knowledge about how family guidance needs to be done. Children who have known a lot, children who have known little, and children who have known nothing have all helped to give important advice. Many have said that the survey has felt important, and that it has been a good experience to give advice.

We now hope that Norway will make use of this knowledge. We also hope that everyone who decides and works with family guidance, collaborates with the children when families need help at home.



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



Talking safely in the Child Protection System

Advice from 110 on what has to be done for children to be able to talk safely



Understand what's most important

Advice from 110 children on what the Child Protection System has to do for children to be able to talk safely



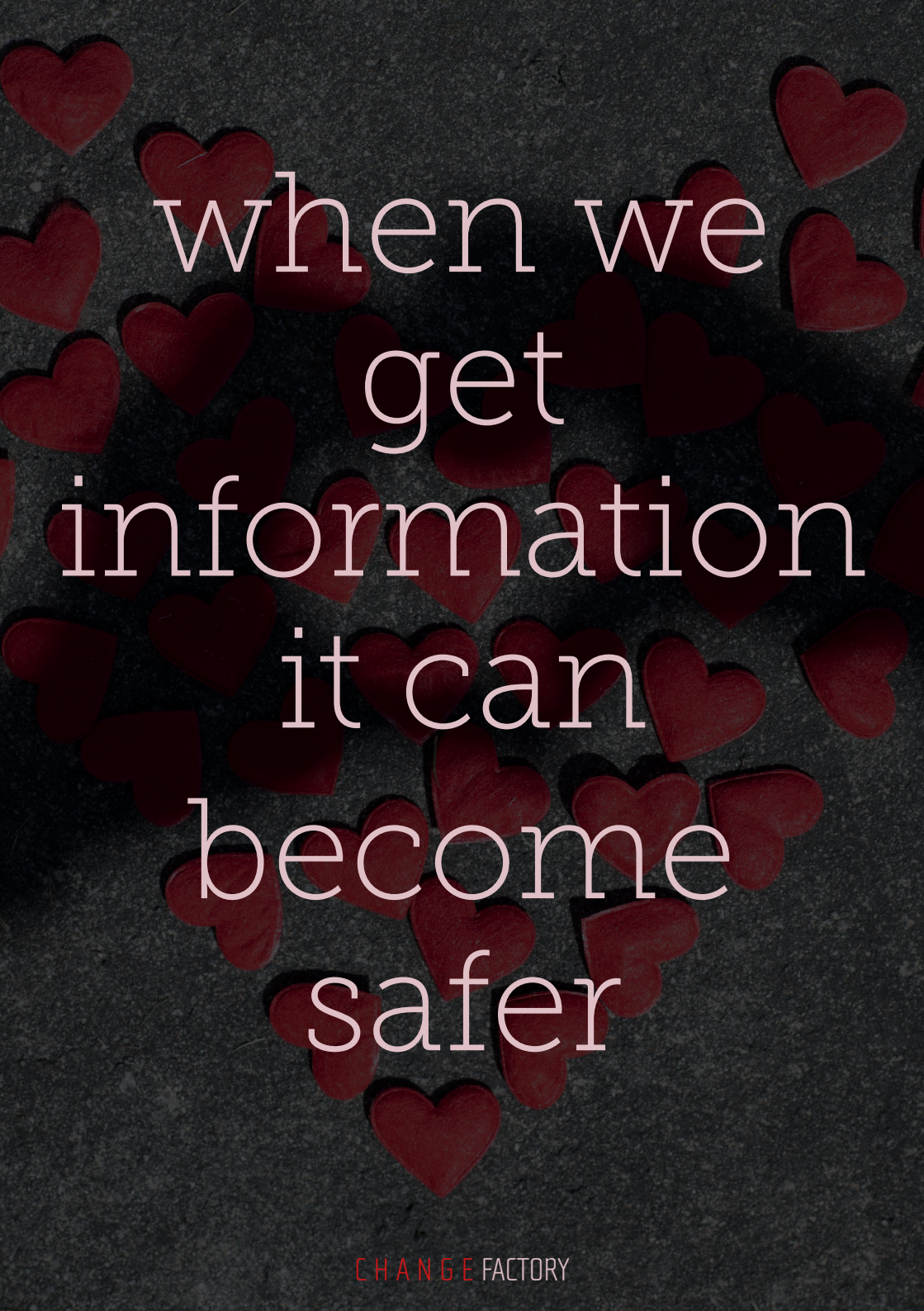
Angry on the outside, hurting on the inside

Advice from 101 children on how to meet children and young people who are angry and use violence



Talking kindly

Advice from 900 children on how public health nurses can make it safe for children to talk to them



when we
get
information
it can
become
safer