

DECIDE WITH EACH OF US

advice on family guidance from young people with minority backgrounds



CHANGE FACTORY

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

*there's no connection between the participants' experiences and the
placement of the photos

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ABOUT THE ADVICE COLLECTION

Background

The advice collection DECIDE WITH EACH OF US was conducted in 2024. Advice was collected from 40 young people with minority backgrounds, aged 13–20, with an average age of 17. The young people had experience with family guidance, one of the most commonly used measures in child protection in Norway.

Changefactory conducted the advice collection in order to:

1. Contribute to a good knowledge base for child protection leaders, teachers in child protection studies and students, with advice from young people on how adults can collaborate with children and young people with a minority background in families receiving family guidance.
2. Contribute with advice on how adults can meet children and young people with minority backgrounds in good and safe ways, when their family receives family guidance.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child applies to everyone under the age of 18

The advice collection was conducted based on Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which gives all children the right to express themselves freely on matters affecting children individually and as a group. Family guidance is a matter that affects children and the answers from children and young people in the advice collection can be used to make decisions in this area at individual and group levels.

About the participants

All the participants have minority backgrounds and experience with family guidance through child protection. The young people lived in Vestland, Troms, Finnmark, Agder, Rogaland, Innlandet, Vestfold, Trøndelag, Telemark and Oslo.

The participants were on average 10 years old when they first encountered child protection.

25 of 40 participants identify as she

14 of 40 participants identify as he

1 of 40 participants identify as they/them

About the method

To collect and systematise summarised experiences and advice from children and young people, a participatory and practice-oriented qualitative method is used. Changefactory has called it the Changemethod. Professor of political science Marit Skivenes is responsible for the methodology on Changefactory's board, and oversees and ensures the quality of Changefactory's work with all knowledge acquisition in collaboration with professor of community medicine Arild Bjørndal.

The Changemethod was developed in close collaboration with children and young people. It takes very seriously children's right to express their opinion, in ways that are experienced as safe for them. The method consists of process descriptions and tools that contribute to the participation of many different children and young people. It's closely based on a participatory method used in action research, called Participatory Learning and Action (PLA).

Questions and themes

A semi-structured interview guide was designed. This was based on answers from children in previous knowledge collections and on questions from professionals and politicians.

Questions asked:

- How do you/did you experience family guidance?
- What can child protection do to give help in a safe and useful way?
- How should child protection take culture, religion and language into account?
- What do young people have to receive information about and get to have an opinion about, before parents receive guidance?
- What should child protection do if family guidance doesn't help at home?

Professionals went through the interview guide and gave input to ensure that the knowledge that professionals need was collected. The questions were tested in collaboration with children and young people. The interview guide was adjusted before the advice collection began.

The facilitators also developed a methodology for the consultations. They linked different methodological tools to the specific questions, to ensure that all young people would have the opportunity to share experiences and give advice.

The word “family guidance”

In this advice collection, we have chosen to use the term family guidance to refer to both family guidance and parental guidance. We have chosen to use the word guidance when the young people have talked about family guidance or parental guidance. The young people who have participated have used the word help to refer to family guidance, parental guidance, assistance measures and other help from child protection.

Invitation and information

The participants were recruited through schools, leisure clubs, organisations and through Changefactory's existing network of Pros, and the Pros also invited friends or other people they know to participate. They were invited based on a wish for a diversity in age, gender and geographical affiliation. The young people were given information before the consultations.

The young people were given information about:

- what Changefactory is
- why the advice collection was being conducted
- what their answers would be used for
- that what they said was written down and processed anonymously
- that they could choose how much or little they wanted to answer
- that no answer was right or wrong
- that all their answers are equally important
- that they could withdraw if they wanted to

Privacy

A privacy impact assessment was prepared prior to the start of the project. The risk is considered to be medium. In the advice collection, consent was obtained from the young people, and caregivers for young people under 16, in order to save their names and contact information in a closed document while the advice collection was conducted.

The transcript didn't include the names of the participants or other information that could help to identify people directly or indirectly, such as names of third parties, names of places or names of child protection services. The facilitators who conducted the consultations are well trained in this practice.

Out of concern for the privacy of the individual participant, the facilitators worked throughout the consultations to ensure that the young people's history, family or other adults, didn't become the focus when they gave their answers. The focus was on their experience with family guidance, and advice to adults in the Child Protection System.

All photos in this advice collection have been approved for use, and written consent has been given for this. There's no connection between the young people's experiences and the placement of the photos.

Conducting the consultations

The advice collection was conducted using both qualitative and quantitative methods. Quantitative questions aimed to map the participants and their experiences. Qualitative questions were open-ended and focused on in-depth explanations. The qualitative approach was most important in order to bring out a range of experiences, and to ensure in-depth understanding.

28 consultations were conducted. The consultations lasted approximately 1 hour, and were conducted both in person and digitally, both in small groups and one-on-one. During the consultations, it was requested that no adults other than the facilitators be present, both in person and digitally. The goal was to make it as safe as possible and to ensure that the answers were collected in the same way in all the consultations.

The facilitators actively participated in giving of themselves and asking questions. In addition to talking, creative and visual tools were used, so that as many young people as possible would be able and willing to answer.

Tools used:

Sorting notes: The young people were given notes that they sorted under different headlines

Green and red: The young people were given a green and a red sign, to answer quantitative questions

Figures for cases: The facilitators used figures to visualise different cases

Four corners: The young people were given four statements, and they were to go to the corner that represented the statement they resonated with

Summarising the knowledge

The experiences and advice that were collected were sorted thematically. Answers that were repeated the most were summarised as knowledge from children and young people. The main answers are in headings, and in-depth explanations are summarised in paragraphs and bullet points. The knowledge from children and young people isn't tied to theory. The percentages are calculated based on how many young people have answered the question.

THANKS TO THE YOUNG PEOPLE

A THOUSAND THANKS TO ALL OF YOU WHO
HAVE GIVEN ADVICE. THANK YOU FOR
GIVING IMPORTANT ADVICE TO WHAT CHILD
PROTECTION CAN DO TO MAKE FAMILY
GUIDANCE FEEL SAFE AND BE HELPFUL.
THANKS FOR GIVING ADVICE ON HOW
FAMILY GUIDANCE HAS TO BE DECIDED
AND FOLLOWED UP, SO THAT THE HELP IS
HELPFUL FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE.



CHILDREN HAVE RIGHTS

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) gives children some procedural rights, which describe how children should be met, in all actions and decisions that concern them, so that adults can assess what's best for the child.

Children's right to information

- Implicitly follows from UNCRC art. 12 cf. CRC no. 12 sections 16, 25 and 41

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child states that children have the right to receive all the information necessary to be able to express their views freely and determine what's best for them in the situation. The right to information is a prerequisite for the child to be able to express their views freely about actions and decisions to be taken.

Children's right to express their views freely

- UNCRC art. 12 and Norwegian constitution (GrL.) § 104

Children have the right to express themselves freely in all matters that concern them, and their opinion shall be given weight. The authorities have a duty to secure this right for all children, without exception. This is an independent right that children have, it has no age limit and neither parents nor other adults can restrict this right.

Children's right to privacy

- UNCRC art. 16, GrL. § 102 and ECHR art. 8

No child shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with their privacy. This means, among other things, that adults cannot automatically share information from or about the child with other adults, in a service, with other services or with parents. There must be a legal basis that permits sharing, and the interference with the child's privacy must be necessary.

The best interests of the child

- UNCRC art. 3 and GrL. § 104

After the child has been given information, the opportunity to express themselves freely and their respect for privacy has been ensured, an assessment can be made of what's in the best interests of the child. The UNCRC states that the best interests of the child shall be a fundamental consideration in actions and decisions affecting a child. What's best for the child must be decided based on a concrete assessment. The child's own opinions should be a central factor.

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS UNDER THE NORWEGIAN CHILD WELFARE ACT

The rules in the Norwegian Child Welfare Act also give children rights regarding how children should be treated, in all actions and decisions that concern them, so that adults can assess what's best for the child. Children's rights under the UNCRC must be used in conjunction with the Child Welfare Act, but where the UNCRC gives children more or better rights than the Child Welfare Act, the UNCRC takes precedence.

Section 1-4. The child's right to participation

A child who is capable of forming their own opinions has the right to participate in all matters concerning the child pursuant to this Act. Children have the right to speak to the Child Welfare Service regardless of the parents' consent and without the parents being informed about the conversation in advance. The child must receive sufficient and suitable information and has the right to express their opinions freely. The child must be listened to, and due weight must be given to the child's opinions in line with the child's age and maturity.

Children must be informed about what information provided by the child can be used for and who can access this information. The child has the right to express their opinion before it is decided that the information is to be shared, and due weight must be given to the child's views in line with their age and maturity.

In meetings with the Child Welfare Service, a child may be given the opportunity to be accompanied by a person in whom the child has particular trust. This person of trust may be subject to a duty of confidentiality.

Children have the right to express their opinion alone and to participate in the decision to share information from the child

Child protection must facilitate and inform children that children can express their opinion completely independently of whether parents consent and whether parents know about the conversation. Children also have the right to be cooperated with when child protection services are considering sharing information from the

child with others. The assessment of whether information shall be shared is also an assessment that affects children and must be in the best interests of the child. This means that the child's opinion should be a central element in the assessment of whether information should be shared or not.

The child's opinions must be given weight

The Child Welfare Act § 1-3 states that the child's opinion is a central element in the assessment of the best interests of the child. According to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, adults cannot assess what's in the child's best interests before they have allowed the child to express themselves in a safe manner. The "Participation Regulations" that provide guidance for the law require that child protection authorities document what the child's opinion is and what weight the opinion has been given in relation to other considerations. This also applies to whether the child has agreed to the rendering of the child's opinion in documents.

Safety advocate

Children have the right to choose their own safety advocate and must be able to express their views safely and freely about their choice, art 12 (General Comment no.12 paragraphs 22-23). The Child Welfare Act doesn't set an age limit for when the child should be heard or choose a safety advocate themselves; the key is whether the child is able to express themselves freely on the issue (general comment no. 12 paragraphs 20-21). Child protection shall inform the child as early as possible about the possibility of a safety advocate. The information must be understandable and sufficient.

The right to information includes information about:

- that all children can have a safety advocate
- what a safety advocate is
- that a safety advocate must be over 18 years of age
- that parents cannot be a safety advocate
- that the child can choose a safety advocate themselves
- what happens to what the child tells the safety advocate
- what different solutions exist if the child chooses a person whom child protection considers unsuitable and what consequences the different choices can have

GOOD WAYS TO DECIDE FAMILY GUIDANCE

This is written based on knowledge from the advice collection, the UNCRC and the Norwegian Child Welfare Act

GIVE THE CHILD GOOD INFORMATION

- Give information before the family guidance
- Give information alone
- Explain what rights children have
- Explain what kind of help you can give
- Explain what adults cannot do to children
- Explain what the child says will be used for
- Explain who can be told what the child says
- Explain what can happen in the future
- Explain that the child can be involved and say their opinion

GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER, SHOW THAT YOU WANT TO UNDERSTAND

- Spend some time getting to know each other
- Ask the child where they want to talk
- Explain to the child that you want to understand, and show it to the child
- Show that you are listening through body language
- Don't change the subject too quickly when the child is speaking
- Don't take someone else's side, ask in-depth questions
- Show that you are listening, for example by asking more

LET THE CHILD TALK SAFELY

- Have a kind and pleasant voice and body language
- Explain that nothing the child says is wrong or stupid
- Let the child choose where you talk
- Let the child choose whether you talk alone
- Explain to the child that they can have someone they trust with them
- Avoid making the child feel guilty
- Don't be strict or angry

TALK TO THE CHILD BEFORE SHARING INFORMATION

- Tell the child before you share any information about them with others
- Explain to whom you want to share the information and why
- Ask the child what they think about this being shared
- If the child wants to, figure out with them how to share the information
- If the child doesn't want to, try to understand why they don't want to
- If the child explains more, consider whether it's in the child's best interest to share something they have said or done

LET THE CHILD DECIDE AS FAR AS POSSIBLE

- Talk to the child alone about the guidance before the guidance is decided
- Ask the child what they need for it to get better at home
- Include the child when deciding what the guidance will be
- Take the child very seriously and make sure the child understands
- Explain that you can find solutions together
- Listen carefully to what the child says, to understand what the child means
- Ask the child along the way if things are getting better or worse
- Find solutions together with the child when the child says that it's not getting better, or getting worse
- Follow the child's opinion as far as possible when something is decided
- Talk to the child if you have to decide something against the child's will
- Try to always follow something the child wants
- Take what the child has said seriously and do something about it

USE THE CHILD'S OPINION ABOUT CULTURE, RELIGION AND LANGUAGE AS A STARTING POINT

- Ask what kind of relationship the child has with their culture, religion and language
- Talk to the child about what's important to consider regarding culture, religion and language
- Give weight to what is important for the child
- Follow the child's opinion as far as possible when something is to be decided about the child's culture, religion or language
- Try to always follow something the child wants
- Facilitate their language so that it's as safe as possible for the child to talk and express their opinion
- Offer an interpreter if language is a challenge, the interpreter has to be someone the child and the family doesn't know

KNOWLEDGE FROM CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

ADVICE FOR STARTING FAMILY GUIDANCE



CONSIDERATION OF THE CHILD'S OPINION ABOUT CULTURE, RELIGION AND LANGUAGE

CONSIDER THE CHILD'S OPINION ABOUT CULTURE

In order for child protection to consider the child's culture, they have to be open, show understanding and give weight to the child's opinion about their own culture.

Be open and show understanding of the child's culture

- understand that when children are from a different culture, they can do and say things differently
- get to know the child and ask before you assume anything
- talk in a kind way
- tell them that you want to learn about their culture
- don't judge the child based on where the child comes from or what they are wearing
- show that you are interested and ask questions
- show that you care and want to understand
- show respect in the way you act

Give weight to the child's opinion about culture

- give weight to what the child thinks is important about culture, and if there's something the child thinks isn't important, it should not be given weight
- ask the child what they think about their culture
- ask the child how they experience their culture
- ask the child what they like and dislike about their culture
- try to understand what's common and not common in the child's culture
- show that you care about the child's opinion about this

CONSIDER THE CHILD'S OPINION ABOUT RELIGION

In order for child protection to consider the child's religion, they have to be open, show understanding and give weight to the child's opinion about their own religion.

Be open and show understanding of the child's religion

- understand that people are different and can believe in different things
- get to know the child
- talk in kind ways
- ask about how things are done, and don't assume things
- learn a little about the religion and gain more knowledge about it
- show understanding and ask questions
- show that you care and are interested
- show respect in the way you act

Give weight to the child's opinion about religion

- give weight to what the child thinks is important about religion, and if there's something the child thinks isn't important, it should not be given weight
- take into account the religious traditions, customs and holidays that are important to the child
- ask the child what they think about their religion
- ask the child how they experience their religion
- ask the child what they like and dislike about their religion
- try to understand what's common and not common in the child's religion

CONSIDER THE CHILD'S OPINION ABOUT LANGUAGE

In order for child protection to consider the child's language, they must consult the child and give weight to the child's opinion about their language.

Talk in a way that the child can understand

- find ways to talk so that you understand each other
- use words that the child understands
- show patience when talking to the child

Make it possible for the child to talk in their language

- ask the child which language the child wants to talk in
- make it as safe as possible for the child to talk and express their opinion
- offer an interpreter, so that the information is clear and understood
- facilitate the language if the child wants to, then there will be fewer misunderstandings

SUMMARISED ADVICE ON CULTURE, RELIGION AND LANGUAGE

In order for it to be safe to talk about culture, religion and language children have to meet adults in child protection who first get to know the child. Adults have to use words that the child understands and provide an interpreter if the child needs it. Children need to be met by adults who are open and show understanding for the child's culture, religion and language. Adults have to give weight to what the child thinks is important when considering the child's culture, religion and language. If the child thinks something isn't important, it should not be given weight.

DECIDING FAMILY GUIDANCE

DECIDE THE GUIDANCE FOR CHILDREN IN A SAFE WAY FOR THE CHILD

In order for it to be safe for children to receive family guidance, child protection has to talk to the child in a safe place and get to know the child. Children need good information and be able to be involved in deciding the help. It feels safer when the child is allowed to participate in decisions, and it's easier to accept help.

Talk to the child in a safe place

- talk to the child first, before talking to parents
- find a safe place with the child outside the office, for example going for a walk

Get to know the child

- get to know the child and take your time, then the child can build trust in you and it will be easier to be honest and tell
- talk to the child about things other than what's difficult, for example what the child is interested in and likes to do
- it can feel safer to talk to someone the child has something in common with, for example a younger person

Give information about child protection

- say who you are
- say what you already know about the child
- say that you will not share any information about the child with others, without talking to the child about it first
- give information about what child protection can help with and how
- give information about how the child can contact child protection themselves

Give information about what's allowed and not

- explain what parents are allowed and not allowed to do
- explain, with examples, what physical, psychological violence and abuse is

Give information about what kinds of guidance can be given

- say what child protection think the problem is, or what's difficult in the family
- say what type of guidance child protection can give to the child and to parents
- say what type of guidance child protection thinks the child and parents should get and why
- say who can give the help
- say what can happen if parents don't want the help

Make it safe for the child to express their opinion

- give the child the opportunity to have a safety advocate with them in conversations
- have an open and calm body language, don't look strict or stressed
- smile, use a kind voice, and improve the mood by saying kind things about the child or telling some jokes
- listen carefully to what the child has to say and try to understand
- don't pressure the child, give the child time to answer without feeling stressed or forced

Let the child be involved in deciding guidance

- ask if the child wants their parents to get guidance
- ask what kind of guidance the child wants their parents to get
- ask where the guidance should be given
- ask if one or both parents should get guidance
- ask who should give guidance
- ask what the goal of the guidance should be
- take what the child says seriously, don't seem dismissive
- listen carefully to the child, and show that you understand what the child is saying
- find solutions and make decisions together with the child
- when the child tells you something that is difficult or wrong with the guidance, the guidance has to be adapted based on what the child says

Agree with the child before sharing information

- talk to the child before sharing any information about the child
- talk to the child and agree on what can be shared, before you tell anything to parents or other adults
- let the child read through notes, transcripts and papers before you share them further



DECIDE THE GUIDANCE FOR PARENTS IN A SAFE WAY FOR THE CHILD

In order to decide guidance for parents in a safe way for the child, child protection has to give good information to the parents and the child. Child protection has to ensure that it's safe for the child when deciding guidance for parents.

Give parents information about child protection

- give information about what child protection is and what they can do
- give information about what will happen next
- explain that child protection doesn't move children without reason

Give parents information about what's allowed and not allowed

- give parents information about what's allowed and not allowed
- offer parents the opportunity to talk to someone who has lived in Norway for a long time, to get help understanding what's common in Norway
- talk about cultural differences and how it can affect the child, so that parents understand and can help the child

Give parents information in an understandable way

- offer an interpreter if needed
- the child can't be an interpreter for parents
- make sure that information is understood, so parents don't worry
- make sure that both the parents and the child receive enough information about the help

Get to know the parents

- talk to the parents in a safe place, then it will be easier to tell
- get to know a little bit about the parents, for example take them on a walk or for a cup of coffee
- it can be easier to tell someone you have gotten to know a little

Talk to the child when guidance is decided

- give the information you give to the parents to the child, then the child will not have to wonder what's happening
- don't share information about the child with the parents without talking to the child about it first
- if you are going to share information about the child with the parents, agree with the child on what will be said
- explain to the child how the guidance can be given
- ask the child what parents need guidance about
- ask the child about how parents should get guidance
- talk to the child and ask about how the child and parents can talk together
- come up with solutions and alternatives, if the guidance doesn't help
- it will be safer for the child when they know what kind of guidance parents get and how it's given

SUGGESTIONS FOR DIFFERENT KINDS OF HELP CHILDREN CAN GET

To find out how children can get the best possible experience while living at home, each child has to be asked. Children know what kind of help they want. Children also have advice on what kind of help should be available. Here are some suggestions for different kinds of help for children.

Different kinds of help for children

- an adult with whom the child can hang out with
- an adult with whom the child can talk about unsafe or painful things
- an adult the child can talk to who doesn't work in child protection
- meeting other children and young people who receive family guidance
- an extra family the child can go to when they need it and when it's unsafe at home
- getting information about the possibility of moving and share their opinion on it
- making a plan with the child for what the child specifically needs help with in order to become independent

SUGGESTIONS FOR DIFFERENT KINDS OF HELP PARENTS CAN GET

To find out what kind of help child protection should give parents, each child has to be asked. Children know what kind of help they want their parents to get. Children also have advice on what kind of help should be available. Here are some suggestions for different kinds of help for parents.

Different kinds of help for parents

- advice on how to handle different situations
- help with understanding the child's needs
- courses and guidance on how to treat children, for example how to show love
- help to look within rather than blaming the child
- help to learn, talk about and deal with their feelings
- talk about things they have experienced
- courses on how to feel better about yourself and at home
- opportunities to talk to or get help from someone outside of child protection

KNOWLEDGE FROM CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

ADVICE FOR FOLLOWING UP FAMILY GUIDANCE



FOLLOW-UP

WHEN GIVING FAMILY GUIDANCE

To find out if the guidance is making the child feel better at home, child protection has to ask the child. In order for the child to answer honestly, child protection has to make it safe for the child to answer.

Get to know each other and build trust before asking

- tell the child that they have the right to a safety advocate
- talk to the child to get to know each other
- start by talking about something other than the guidance
- ask how things are going at school and in their free time
- talk about how the child is doing
- make an agreement with the child before sharing any information about them to parents or other adults

Talk to the child regularly about the guidance

- check in with the child regularly about how the guidance is going
- check in with the child regularly about how things are at home
- ask the child how often you should talk to the child about whether the guidance is working

Ask if the guidance is helping and if anything needs to be changed

- do you feel that the guidance is helping you?
- do you think the guidance has been taken seriously by your parents?
- has things gotten better at home?
- has anything changed, or has anything new happened at home?
- has it gotten better for you?
- has it gotten worse for you?
- can anything about the guidance be improved?
- is there anything about the guidance that has been bad?
- do you want to continue with the same type of guidance?
- is there anything that should be changed about the guidance?
- do you want other types of help?

WHEN CHILDREN SAY THAT FAMILY GUIDANCE IS NOT MAKING THINGS BETTER

It's particularly important to find out what child protection should do when a child says that family guidance isn't making things better or that things are getting worse at home.

During the consultations, the young people were given cases with different ways in which child protection could solve this situation. The young people were asked to consider the different ways in which child protection could solve the situation. For each case, the young people who wanted to, gave answers as to whether it felt safe or unsafe, and the reason for this.

Suggested solution: child protection talks to the parents and asks them why things aren't getting better

40 out of 40 think it's not safe, because:

- the child isn't talked to
- the parents get to tell their version of the situation, not the child
- the child can be blamed and seen as the problem
- parents can get angry and scared
- the child can suffer consequences and it can become dangerous at home
- the child can lose trust and it can be difficult to tell

Suggested solution: child protection talks to the parents and finds out with them what they can do differently

9 out of 40 think it's safe, because:

- parents are asked what they need help with
- parents get to think about what they can do differently
- what can be done differently and better is decided with parents

31 out of 40 think it's not safe, because:

- the child isn't talked to
- the child doesn't get to tell their side of the story
- parents can get angry at the child
- the child can lose trust and it can be difficult to tell

Suggested solution: child protection talks to the child without parents and finds out with the child what should be done differently

39 out of 40 think it's safe, because:

- the child is talked to and there can be less misunderstandings and mistakes
- the child gets to explain what went wrong and why
- the child gets to have their say on what should be done differently
- the child gets to help decide and find solutions together with child protection
- the child can gain trust and it can be safer to tell

Suggested solution: child protection talks to the child and those who give help together, without the parents present, and find out what can be done differently

32 out of 40 think it's safe, because:

- the child gets to explain what went wrong and why
- the child gets to hear the opinions of those who give the help and child protection
- the child gets to be involved in decisions and find solutions together
- there are several adults listening to the child

8 out of 40 think it's not safe, because:

- it's not safe to tell in front of several adults

Suggested Solution: child protection decides that they will not make any changes now, and that they will let the help continue for a while

5 out of 38 think it's safe, because:

- things can get better if adults continue to give help

33 out of 38 think it's not safe, because:

- the child isn't talked to
- the child isn't taken seriously
- child protection doesn't give guidance based on what the child says
- the child isn't allowed to be involved in decisions and find solutions
- things can get worse at home

Suggested solution: child protection stops the help, and decides on starting a new help without talking to the child about it

38 out of 38 think it's not safe, because:

- the child isn't talked to
- the child isn't allowed to be involved in decisions
- the child doesn't get help with what they need
- the child can feel that the adults don't care
- the child can feel that the help isn't leading to anything

Suggested solution: child protection stops the help and doesn't give more help

7 out of 39 think it's safe, because:

- the child doesn't want further help

32 out of 39 think it's not safe, because:

- the child isn't asked if the help should stop
- the child doesn't get the help they need
- the child can feel that the help didn't lead to anything
- the child can feel that the adults don't care

WHEN THE HELP SHOULD BE CHANGED

When it has been decided that the help should be changed because the child says that things are not getting better at home, child protection has to ensure the child's rights in order to figure out what should happen next. Children have the right to information, to express themselves before information about them is shared, to express themselves freely and to have their opinion be a central element in the decision. Then it will be safer for children.

Give children information

Give clear and understandable information

- tell the child that it's okay to feel that the guidance hasn't helped
- give information about how important the child's opinion will be when deciding what to do next
- give information about what guidance has been given and how the guidance has been given
- give information about what the process will be like going forward
- give information about the different ways that child protection can give help, including those that child protection think will not work for the child

Give information that is easy to understand

- spend plenty of time explaining and make sure that the child understands what's being said
- talk in words that the child understands and explain what a term means if you use it
- adapt language and vocabulary if the child needs it
- ask if the child wants to bring an adult they trust who can help with the language
- ask if the child wants to talk in another language
- let the child know that you can explain in English if the child wants
- find a sign together with the child that they can use if they don't understand, it can be easier to show a sign than to use words

Make it possible for the child to talk safely

Find out who the child feels safe with

- ask the child openly about who the child feels safe with
- notice if there's someone the child talks to more and feels safer with and ask if there's a person who the child feels safe with

Make sure that the child can talk in a safe place

- ask where the child feels safest
- ask the child alone, don't ask in front of their parents
- make suggestions for places where the child can talk, like on a drive, in a café, in the office or another place
- even if the child likes being somewhere, it doesn't mean that it feels safe to talk about difficult things there, therefore the child has to be asked

Be careful not to pressure or influence the child

- don't tell the child what they feel, or say how a situation is for the child
- don't move on to the next topic, when the child isn't finished talking
- don't use age as a reason not to listen to the child, for example: "you are only 12 years old, so you don't know what's best for you"
- don't say things that make the child feel like they have to say yes or that they agree with you, for example: "it's okay that I tell your parents this, right?"
- don't end the conversation when the child tries to explain what they mean, for example: "but we've talked about this before", "we're a bit short on time" or "can we do it next time?"
- don't change body language from pleasant and gentle to strict and stressed
- don't lose focus on the child to other things in the room

Be open in body language and voice

- show that you care
- show that you want to understand
- show that you want to help
- talk to the child in ways that make the child feel that they are just as valuable as the adult
- show with body language that you are open to talking, then it feels safer to tell
- avoid using sudden movements, it can feel scary

Consider the child's culture, religion and language, if the child wants you to

- ask openly if there's anything about their culture, religion or language that is important
- show that you are curious and ask when you hear things the child says about their culture, religion or language
- avoid assuming, and don't be afraid to ask about the child's culture, religion and language
- if there's something the child thinks is important about culture, religion or language, child protection has a responsibility to take it into account. If the child says no, then child protection should not take it into account

Agree with the child before sharing information

Agree with the child what can be shared

- before the child starts talking, give the child information about what has to be shared
- talk to the child first if something needs to be shared
- explain to the child why something the child says needs to be shared
- give the child the opportunity to express their opinion about this
- ask the child what they want or don't want to be shared
- ask the child if there's something serious that needs to be shared
- agree with the child about what will be shared and how
- if adults share something without agreeing with the child, the child can lose trust
- if adults share something without agreeing with the child, the child may not dare to speak up if the guidance is not helping

Let the child's opinion be a central point

Ask the child what they want to happen

- talk to the child alone
- tell the child that they know best what works for them and that you therefore need to hear from the child
- the child has to be involved in decisions about the help
- ask what the child thinks will help and why
- ask what kind of help the child wants and what it should be
- ask the child whether they want help or not
- ask the child whether they want help at home or if they want to move
- ask the child who should give the help
- it's easier for children to express their opinion when they know that their opinion will be included in the decision

Pay attention to what the child says when the child and parents disagree about the help

- work with both the child and the parents to try to find solutions that they can agree on
- take as a starting point that the child knows what's best for themselves and what the parents need help with
- ask the child for their opinion and why the child thinks their suggestion is better
- give more weight to what the child says, unless what the child says is dangerous
- remember that it's the child's life and this will have the greatest impact on the child
- if the child wants to move, but the parents think otherwise, child protection has to listen to the child's wishes
- if the child is against a measure, child protection has to stop and find out the reason for it
- if the child's wish is followed, the child can be more positive about getting help

Find out what kind of consequences it could have for the child if something's decided against the child's wishes

- tell the child that it's important for child protection to hear what the child thinks might happen if something is decided against the child's wishes
- explain to the child if child protection authorities want to decide something the child doesn't want
- ask the child how this feels and why they don't want the help that is suggested
- ask what the child thinks might happen if this is decided

Try to meet the child in the middle

- explain why if what the child wants isn't possible, so the child doesn't think that there's no point in saying what they think
- try to find solutions where you meet the child in the middle
- try to include parts of what the child wants in the decision

Children
know best
what's
important
for them

KNOWLEDGE FROM CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

EXPERIENCES



ABOUT CHILD PROTECTION

EXPERIENCES WITH CHILD PROTECTION

The main answer from the young people in the advice collection is that when the adult tried to get to know them and help, the young people experienced that child protection did something good. When the young people didn't get the help they needed or when trust was broken, the young people experienced that child protection didn't do anything good.

What young people have felt that child protection has done well

Tried to help

- felt that they have helped in some situations
- felt that they tried to make the situation at home better
- felt that they gave help that helps

Tried to get to know the young people

- felt that it became safer to trust the adult when they made time for the young person
- the adult did activities with the young person, for example going out to eat

QUOTES

They have done a little bit well, but that they are so determined to follow rules and follow a system.

He helped a little bit with how I should think in difficult situations when I have panic attacks.

They were the ones who helped me move in with my aunt. In a way, they were the ones who helped, yes, that's the only thing.

They should change their views, because they are really good in many settings, but just in this setting here it didn't work so well.

What young people have felt that child protection hasn't done well

Didn't give the young person the help they needed

- felt the help didn't work
- felt that the adult didn't provide good enough follow-up

Did things that made the young person lose a little trust

- shared things without having talked to the young person
- felt that the adult didn't take the young person seriously
- felt that the adult was trying to see if the young person was lying or not

Didn't build enough trust in the young person

- didn't feel that the adult listened to what the young person wanted or needed
- felt that the adult didn't take enough time to get to know them and build trust
- felt that their opinion was not taken seriously and that the adult decided

QUOTES

I'm just scared, I don't think they do much. They just have, I'm the one listening to them, they don't listen to me.

You never know what they can do, because it feels like they have so much power, or they decide so much.

They had already painted a picture for themselves that all my problems were because I was a teenager in a hate-your-parents phase.

It didn't work. Didn't know what it was, didn't know I had it.

My case wasn't taken seriously, like early enough.

Experiences with child protection

0% have experienced that child protection has done a lot of good
52% have experienced that child protection has done a little good
32% have experienced that child protection has done nothing good
16% find it difficult to answer

TRUST IN CHILD PROTECTION

The main answer from the young people in the advice collection is that young people gained trust in child protection when they had a contact person who spent enough time getting to know them and building trust. When child protection didn't spend enough time getting to know them, gave too little information and didn't listen to the child, it became more difficult for the child to gain trust in child protection.

Why young people have felt a certain amount of trust in child protection

Developed trust

- felt that they had a contact person they trusted
- felt that the adult in child protection took the time to build trust with the young person

Unsure of the adult

- didn't feel sure whether the adult took them seriously

QUOTES

She is different from the one I have had before. She works to make sure I'm doing well, not for the system to work.

I talked to them about what happened and was quite honest about it and said what I wanted, which was to get help for my family.

Why young people have felt little trust in child protection

Didn't give enough information

- felt they didn't receive good enough information
- felt that the adult wasn't completely honest
- felt that the adult didn't keep their promises

Didn't listen to the young person

- felt that the adult didn't give the help they wanted
- felt that the adult listened more to parents than to the young person

Didn't make it safe

- felt afraid of being moved
- felt unsafe and felt a kind of hopelessness

Didn't get to know the young person enough

- felt that it was difficult to gain trust when the adult didn't do enough for the young person to get to know the adult
- felt that the adult didn't tell them enough about themselves

Why young people haven't felt trust in child protection

It became difficult to trust the adult

- experienced that child protection did things that made them lose trust
- didn't feel that the help helped
- felt that it was difficult to trust child protection

Didn't do what the young person wanted

- was not asked for their opinion
- felt pushed away from their family
- felt decisions were made without being talked to
- experienced that things were shared without being talked to

QUOTES

I don't trust child protection because even if you have said how fucking awful things are, there's nothing they can do. It was because everything had to go through mom. And mom is the problem.

I don't know them, and they never told me about themselves, so I didn't have much reason to trust them in a way.

When you don't meet the contact person regularly, it becomes kind of unsafe. because you don't really know who you're meeting.

They are more concerned with removing us from a home where there are problems rather than fixing the problem.

They did things in such a wrong way, I felt, because they didn't listen to what I had to say. So when I asked like, yes, but my parents will find out about this, they say "yes, but they will find out no matter what you say". And then I gained little trust in them.

I feel confidentiality is always violated, there are many who say they have it, but it's said a little here and a little there.

Trust in child protection

0% have answered that they have a lot of trust in child protection

15% have answered that they have some trust in child protection

50% have answered that they have little trust in child protection

35% have answered that they have had no trust in child protection

ABOUT FAMILY GUIDANCE

BENEFITS OF FAMILY GUIDANCE

The main answer from the young people in the advice collection is that young people felt better when adults spent time on them, and helped them. For some it didn't get better, and for some it got worse, when the help made the young people feel unsafe and experienced that the help didn't work for them.

Why young people felt that things have gotten a lot better

Spent time with the young person

- the adult did things together with the young person, for example going to places
- felt they got help to stay away from bad things

Why young people have felt that things at home have gotten a little better

Gave help

- the adult helped the young person handle difficult situations

QUOTES

I think it has gotten a little better, because then they have sort of understood a little more, how to handle things.

Spends time with you, keeps you away from bad things.

The way they relate to you, you don't have to hide anything.

Why young people felt that things haven't gotten better

Didn't get help that helped

- felt that the guidance was not followed up on
- felt that the guidance didn't help as it should
- felt that the adult didn't follow up the young person well enough

Didn't feel that the adult cared

- didn't feel that they got enough information
- felt that the adult was holding things back
- didn't feel safe with the adult
- felt like the adult was taking the easiest way out

QUOTES

I just feel that things haven't gotten better because they came up with a lot of measures, but no way to follow the measures.

They give the parents more understanding than you, somehow. Child protection is ruining it by saying more things that they haven't told the parents.

They put in MST and it went to hell. They just put in a man. They didn't talk to us much beforehand.

I understand they're worried, but they don't always know what's best for you. Today I'm still afraid that I couldn't open up about it.

Why young people felt that things have gotten worse

Didn't get better for the young person

- felt the guidance and measures made things worse at home
- felt there was more arguing and shouting at home

Became more uncertain and unsafe for the young person

- felt that child protection didn't know what to do to help
- the adult shared things that the young person had said or done without talking to the young person about it first

QUOTES

Instead of getting better, it just got worse, because they didn't understand what to do.

Things just became unstable, I didn't know what would happen next and there were so many big things that could happen.

There were a lot of misunderstandings. They didn't spend much time understanding, it was portrayed like they were hitting all the time at home.

The family didn't understand why they had to go there and what they were doing wrong. There was a lot of arguing at home and it only ended up getting worse.

They think things are happening, but then nothing is happening. It's like that, some need it and some don't, but they don't know what to do.

I said "don't tell mom and dad" and "I can't talk to them about it". So she went to meet with them right after and told them everything.

Benefits of family guidance

- 5% have felt that things got a lot better for them afterwards
- 10% have felt that things got a little better for them afterwards
- 36% feel that things didn't get better for them afterwards
- 49% have felt that things got worse for them afterwards



CHANGEFACTORY KNOWLEDGE CENTRE

Why knowledge directly from children?

Children and young people have to feel that schools, kindergartens, support services, the police and the 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 representative groups of children and young people, when frameworks and what constitutes good practice are to be determined, locally and nationally. Therefore, it has to be brought in to a much greater extent. Knowledge from children and young people, together with other knowledge, has to be part of the knowledge base for research and practice, in order to develop good initiatives and measures for children and young people, and in the work of further developing schools and services.

More than 10 years of knowledge acquisition

Changefactory (CF) has for more than ten years 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. The goal was to collect knowledge from children and young people in different life situations, about the public systems created for them, in the best possible way. As far as we know, there are few knowledge centres in Europe whose main purpose is to collect and disseminate knowledge directly from children and young people, about the systems they are in. CF is now seeking collaboration with similar organisations in other countries.

Participatory and practice-oriented method

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 Change Method. The Change Method has been developed in close collaboration with children and young people. It takes children's right to express their opinions, in ways that are felt safe for them, very seriously. The method consists of process descriptions and tools that contribute to the participation of many different children and young people. It's closely based on a participatory methodology 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 at consultations or in interviews. The consultations are organised with an emphasis on ensuring that they are experienced as engaging, important and as safe as possible for the children 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 answers from children about how adults have to be, in order for children to be able to tell honestly.

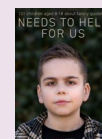
Experiences and advice are summarised

Experiences and advice from the consultations 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 from children.

Children and young people present

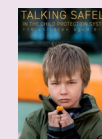
The knowledge from children is presented in reports, films, podcasts, books and online. Participants in surveys can also be invited, as Pros, in dissemination and professional development work. The Pros present knowledge directly from children to politicians, national authorities, professionals and students.

Selected publications from Changefactory



Needs to help for us

Advice from 101 children on how family guidance has to be for it to feel safe and helpful for children



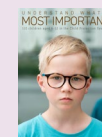
Talking safely in the Child Protection System

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



Safe with a safety advocate

Advice from 51 young people to the child protection system about safety advocates



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



Trust is crucial

Advice from 211 young people on how adults in help services and police can make it safe for children to trust them



CHANGE FACTORY