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WORKING GROUP ANALYSIS

Two children and young people's advisory groups based in Belfast (St Ita's Primary School, Include Youth's Give and Take Programme, and Newstart Education Centre) informed key aspects of the project. This included, helping with the design of youth friendly information and consultation tools for use with children and young people across the partner countries, and also with the interpretation of the findings from the consultation and identifying key messages for professionals. Consultations were held in 6 European countries (Austria, Belgium, Germany, Ireland, Romania and the UK) with specific purposeful groups of children at risk of, or experiencing, violence, including: children in care, children in detention/ in conflict with the law, Traveller and Roma children, LGBT+ children, children living in high conflict communities, child migrants and refugees, and child victims of domestic violence. In total, 15 groups were convened that included 91 children and young people from the ages of 7-21 years (see Table 1, Consultation groups and participant details).

Table 1: CONSULTATION GROUPS AND PARTICIPANT DETAILS

COUNTRY	Group	Number of children	Age Range	M	F
Austria	Unaccompanied minors	4	13-17	4	0
				6	0
Belgium	Children in care	6	14-17	0	4
	Children in detention	4	15-17	0	4
	Child migrants/ refugees	8	15-18	4	4
Germany	Domestic violence	12	7-11		
	LGBTQ children	5	12-17		
	Child migrants/ refugees	6	9-17		
Ireland	Children in conflict with the law	5	16-17	5	0
	Children from travelling community	9	9-13	0	9
Romania	Roma/Traveller in support services	7	12-15	6	0
	Roma/Traveller children	8	12-15	7	1
	Children in care	3	14-16	0	3
UK (QUB)	Children and political violence	4	14-15	2	2
UK (UoN)	Children in conflict with the law	2	15-16	2	0
	Children in care	8	19-21	4	4
TOTAL	15	91	7-21		



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A project specific facilitation pack was developed to ensure consultation methods across countries were as standardised as possible. The pack also contained information on ethical recruitment and researcher conduct during consultations and a reporting template for partners to complete that contained information on how to manage, store and transcribe the data, and return it, in English, to QUB for initial analysis. During consultations the children and young people were asked about different behaviours and if they thought these constituted violence or harm; what they would do if they experienced violence; and whom they would most likely go to, to seek help. There were also asked questions on what they think would be most useful, in relation to what makes good support and service responses, if they did ask for help.

The children's data from all the countries were merged and the QUB researchers familiarised themselves with the information. This required reading each transcript several times and coding line-by-line to identified relevant information. Codes were compared and contrasted to reveal patterns across the children and young people's responses. Descriptive sub-themes emerged while reflecting on the patterns within the data and their relationship to each other, which on further analysis were clustered to form the overarching themes. The analysis was checked with partners to confirm understanding and appropriate use of country specific quotes. Importantly, a critical interpretation was also provided by the advisory group to further develop the analytical themes and generate key messages. It is these validated themes and subthemes that provided the framework on which the training manual and additional resources for professionals were developed (see Table 2, The Thematic Map).



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Table 2: THEMATIC MAP

THEME	CATEGORIES
<p>1</p> <p>UNDERSTANDING HARM</p>	<p>Visible and invisible hurt</p>
<p>2</p> <p>RELATIONSHIPS</p>	<p>With perpetrators</p>
	<p>With those who can help</p>
<p>3</p> <p>CHILD-CENTRED PRACTICE</p>	<p>Creating an enabling environment</p>
	<p>Communication</p>
	<p>Taking action</p>



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1. UNDERSTANDING HARM

Overall, the data present a variety of experiences that encapsulates how children understand violence and focuses on behaviours that they deemed tolerable or un/acceptable. All of the children unanimously agreed that physical abuse is most definitely violence.

“War, swearing, hitting, raising ones voice, scolding, setting fire, stealing, drowning in the ocean, blackmailing, biting, organ trafficking, kidnapping, pushing, not having any food, seeing horrible photos, not having a house, soliciting with children” (Refugees: Germany).

“Beating, screaming, swear words verbal violence physical violence, spit, shoving, offenses, pushing, slapping, through signs” (Social support: Romania)

“Beating with a saucepan, verbally aggressive, threatening, knife, hair pulling, grab throat, boxing, shouting, cursing, kicking, hitting” (Deprived of liberty: Belgium).

“Punching, stabbing, shooting, drink driving, killing, heroin and morphine, baseball bats, knuckle dusters, joy riding, throwing, punching, shoving, knives, tabs, hitting, running over, kicking and assault” (Political conflict: UK).

“He caught his fingers between the doors, struck his stomach....ironed on the head, arms and legs, haircut, forced to prostitution.....forced to beg, force a child, be arrested, jailed and drugged, torture a child,” (Children in care: Romania)

Violence is everywhere, it's just the way that it is.. (Conflict with the law: NI)

- **Visible and invisible hurt**

The vast majority of the children struggled to see emotional abuse, such as that which comes from bullying, neglect, forced immigration etc as legitimate forms of actual violence. This was mostly because there were no outward signs of hurt or visible scars and therefore did not constitute as a type of assault.

“No, it's not violent because they are not getting hurt”. (Political conflict: UK).

“Having to leave your own country isn't a form of violence – they're not being violated, d'ya know what I mean” (Traveller: Ireland F)

Particularly interesting was their attitudes to 'cyberbullying', since these children are one of the first generation to experience this phenomenon.



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Their attitudes draw attention to the faceless nature of the internet and an assumption that this can be easily avoided by employing the protection and privacy settings on technological devices.

"I don't think it's [cyberbullying] violence because it's via the internet. Because that is internet and after internet it stops". (Female, Children in Care: Belgium)

"This is even more stupid, don't answer, just block it. There are so many ways to just avoid it. People always make it such a drama, but there are so many ways to avoid it. Then block it. Do not answer, why do you let yourself be so snubbed?" (Deprived of liberty: Belgium).

"That's not abuse, bullying and teasing, isn't it?" (Deprived of liberty: Belgium).

"What's that? Cyberbullying? No, that's not violence", (Political conflict: UK).

"Actually, all these images are a kind of violence, but today we think of violence as 'doing' something, not something with words", (Female, Children in Care: Belgium)

It was accepted that this form of 'teasing' was commonplace and unimportant for most. The onus was placed firmly on children themselves to be able to manage their friends and their technology well and simply handle any cases of cyber abuse.

"No, then you are just stupid yourself, aren't you?" (F, Children in Care: Belgium).

Leading on from their understanding of no visible scars, the majority of the groups struggled to see 'neglect' as abuse. There was a similar perception amongst all countries and subgroups that neglect did not constitute violence.

"That's not really violence, it cruel, that's cruelty, that's what it would be' (Conflict with the law: Ireland)

"It's not like you're going over telling the child you can't wear shoes and that, maybe they can't, coz they're poor or something, that's not being violent, that's just life". (Conflict with the law: Ireland)

The group of children from Germany teased apart the concept of neglect further and defined it as being 'nasty' or 'when someone makes someone cry'. (Domestic violence: Germany) and were very aware of the consequences of what could happen when a child is left alone and unsupervised.

"If a mother loses her child in the crowd because she doesn't hold his hand".



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'A small child is left alone at home and she can fire the home'.

'When a child is sent to the shop in the dark and the police can fine him because he is a minor'. (Domestic violence: Germany).

However, the group from Romania, who were care experienced, thought that neglect was something that could be overcome with the proper support and resources, but if allowed to continue could negatively impact on other areas, in effect, a predictor of a life of disadvantage.

'It is the most treatable form of violence'.

'neglect is a form of violence because of neglect other forms of violence can be reached'

'A child may have had a disadvantage, perhaps it was not good enough for his mother and they left him in his mercy'. (Children in care: Romania).

In relation to sexual abuse, the majority of the children across groups and countries were aware of the personal violation and criminality associated with having sex with a minor and thus viewed sexual abuse as violence.

'Of course that there's what do you call it, violence (sexual), because if the child... if it makes the child uncomfortable to be touched somewhere. They don't want to be...so they are actually going to use force or violence to do it'. (Political conflict: UK).

'if someone makes sex just like that then you can also call the police and then come to prison'. (Domestic violence: Germany).

The children across all countries were able to describe a variety of sexual acts as abusive if it made a child feel uncomfortable or if they were violated by force.

"Touch the intimate parts (Social support: Romania).

"The girl is forced to have sex", (Social support: Romania).

"Yes, fucked", (Refugees: Austria).

"You are actually raped" (Children in care: Belgium).

"Where a man rapes a woman", (Domestic violence: Germany)

"To suck a penis is perhaps sexual violence", (Domestic violence: Germany)



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Some, however, struggled to associate pain with sexual abuse and likened sexual abuse with bullying in relation to invisible impact as opposed to carrying visible wounds.

'being sexually abused, that's not violence. Neither is cyberbullying because they are not being hurt physically'. (Political conflict: UK).

Interestingly, the Roma children from Romania were the only group to state unanimously that sexual abuse was indeed a form of violence.

One group from the UK summed up the impact of violence when they described how a child would feel, regardless of the type of violence inflicted,

Depression, it could cause depression and anxiety and mental health problems. And then like no confidence or dignity...like they won't feel happy about themselves...they don't have any enthusiasm or nothing. And no confidence. They wouldn't want to do anything. They wouldn't want to go outside or nothing.

They would be frustrated and all. And angry and sad. And they would be cheeky to their family or friends because they can't be cheeky to their bullies.

They would be lonely and take drugs and all because they feel so shit. And then they would fucking... And turn someone who is actually committing the violence into like a psycho. And they become a bully if they have been bullied, aye.

You wouldn't know what to do. Like you would feel that you can't tell anyone but you need to tell someone, and you wouldn't know who to go to.

Trapped. Like in domestic violence. The thing is, you can't get away from it. It is not just the one time, it is happening all the time. Aye. It fucks you up for life, like. Aye, when you can't get away from it then it is even worse. (Political Conflict; UK)

2. RELATIONSHIPS

A dominant feature in the data was the extent to which violence was normalised and tolerated by the children, and more importantly, from whom. Accepting abuse from another was dependent upon the relationship they had with the perpetrator.



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- **With perpetrators**

Most instances of abuse involved people known to the participants, such as parents, family and peers. When peers perpetrated violence, the children said that this was merely play fighting and associated this with finding their fit within their social friendship group.

'Yes, it's just how it is, happens every day'. (M, Refugees: Austria).

'I don't consider it [cyber mobbing] as violence because that's what happens at school in the break. We have a fight but afterwards we are friends again. That is not violence.' (Male, Refugees: Austria).

'No, that's just karma'. (F, Children in Care: Belgium).

When a family member perpetrated violence in the form of beatings and smacking, the children justified this as a parent's right to discipline their children for their own good because the child had done or said something wrong. Abusive parenting practices had filtered down from previous generations, were normalised and understood to be in the best interest of the child.

'No, if it is the father or the mother, it is something different. It is not violence. It is ok'. (M, Refugees: Austria).

'Because it is normal in Afghanistan. Smacking by the parents is normal'. (Male, Refugees: Austria).

'My father does it for my good, but the police just do it like that'. (Female, Children in Care: Belgium).

'My mother already beat me...many times when I do shit, she beats me...And I have often been hit'. (Domestic violence: Germany).

'My mom said that she saw her mother my grandma getting drunk and she had to take care of herself and (...) then she was also annoyed by the teachers because she did not have her hair properly (...) And my mom sometimes beats me when I'm not listening (...) then do not talk to my mom for a long time and then (...) Once my mum has hit my head on the wall while I was getting dressed...' (Domestic violence: Germany).

'Nah, because that is normal, like'. (Political conflict: UK).



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‘If parents do not do it intentionally, or they have no other options’. (Roma: Romania).

‘Sometimes when I do stupid things and get hits from my dad... Anyway, with us, this is normal when we get smacked when we do something’.... ‘For us that is our culture... We have a different mentality’. (F, Children in Care: Belgium).

‘Yes, if a child does something bad, he or she will be smacked. If a child does something bad to you, you might punish he/she by putting him/her in the corner. With is it is either you slap him/her with your hand or you slap him/her with a belt. This is just the way it is’. (F, Children in Care: Belgium).

There was an underlying acceptance that the parents of the child know what is best for them, and this could transfer to extended family members too in some cases.

‘My uncle? Then there must be a good reason. And if he hits me for nothing I’ll say to my dad’. (Female, Children in care: Belgium)

However, for offences that the children considered much more serious or criminal they would turn to the justice system for action.

‘In the case of sexual abuse, the mother can be the most important person in the life of the girl, but if the girl’s mother was involved, the police can take action’. (Romania)

The group from UK, with experience of political conflict, were able to detach violent and criminal acts from the person perpetrating them. They explained that in their experience the impact of substance abuse might cause people to become violent and commit acts that they would not do, or regret doing, when sober.

‘Because people be on drugs and then be violent’... Assault people and all, whenever they are on drugs. Like most people would do violence because they are on drugs or drink’. (Political conflict: UK)

However, in cases where the perpetrator did not have a close connection with the child, and was an ‘outsider’ to the family, such as a teacher, other peers, social workers, the police or other representative of the state, most of the children deemed their abusive behaviours as violence which was unacceptable. These people had no right to abuse them, whereas family could, in certain circumstances.



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'When my father screams at me, I don't think this is violence ... But when the police scream at me'. (Female, Children in Care: Belgium)

"Yes, yes. Look, if I would run away from home and dad gives me a blow, yes, okay, but if I would run away from the institution and there they give me a blow.... no no for me this is violence, because who are these people?!", (Female, Children in Care: Belgium)

In terms of how people treat each other, there was a certain amount of restraint shown towards a violent and abusive parent, family member or partner who was violent towards a child, but a clear lack of restraint shown towards an outsider who was violent to them. There was also little discussion of the impact of violence and the consequences of this on education opportunities and wellbeing as the majority of children focused their thoughts on who and how to defend themselves should this happen.

'if your family smacks you, yes, okay, it's just like that, you're raised in this way, but as soon as someone else hits you..... I was brought up like this by my real mother, She always told me to defend myself, if someone seeks a fight with you, you hit back. Do you understand? I was raised that way. If she would hit me, that's my mother, you know? But if someone else would hit me, he doesn't get the chance to beat me", (Female, Children in Care: Belgium).

'There might be no one caring for him at home like. He might have to sort himself out. It happens.' (Conflict with the law: Ireland)

'Like domestic abuse does happen to young people in relationships, especially if they don't really know what's right and what's not.' (Children in care: NI)

The majority of the children thought that child labour and a child being forced to leave their country was a form of violence because it was perpetrated by the state, warring factions or paramilitary organisations.

'Violence can happen during deportation but also the fact to be deported is violence'. (Male, Refugee: Austria).

'That happens in Afghanistan. That's violence'. (Male, Refugee: Austria).

'Yes, that is violence. They shoot at him. If he has to shoot himself, and he has to, that is worse'. (Female, Children in Care: Belgium).

'If he/she is forced, it is'. (Roma: Romania).



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The explanation given by the child migrants and refugees from Belgium was that this was due to politics and money.

'I think very, very big problem for violence is money and with money all of them come. So basically, everything is connected to money. So you want war, so politics do war, they send chemicals, bombs, everything to another country. Because they want like in Africa, they have diamonds. And people in Africa they have that, but they are poor, most of them. So what other countries do, because they want the goods from Africa, they start a war and they just take the goods. And it's mostly like that. It's for money'. (Child refugee: Belgium)

'Politics is also the problem, but it can also be the solution'. (Child refugee: Belgium)

- **With those who can help**

Aside from immediate family and friends, who all of the children said they would go to first for help, or to help them approach professionals, they were able to list lots of other adults and services they could avail of to help or support them. Overall, the vast majority claimed that friends and parents were their number one source for help and advice, however, if these were the perpetrators of the violence they knew who they should, or could, go to for help, but they may not as they did not wish to disrupt or be removed from their family.

'police and youth office just bring to children's home. Police should ask the child what they want'. (Germany).

'I think that social workers blab too much, sometimes you can't say nothing to them and they are on the phone.' (Children in care: NI)

'You'd feel like a tout. You wouldn't want anything being reported or made a big fuss out of.' (Children in care: NI)

'Social groups, but no professionals, just simple people, for example each of us has a problem and there are social groups where she can go and she can sit and talk with someone and share their problems and find a way from other perspectives'. (Child refugee: Belgium)

Whom the children said they should go to for help was dependant on the type of harm they experienced. For example, for issues associated with sexual violence and neglect they would go to a 'doctor, police or social service' (children in detention; Belgium). For issues associated



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with getting justice or wanting someone punished the children said they would turn to police, judges, and teachers. Health and social care professionals should be available for help and advice on physical or personal concerns. However, the migrant and refugee children from Belgium also added that they would not seek help from the family in order to avoid honour crimes.

'I prefer not to go to the family. Friends, yes, friends more because they are closer'.

'No family because maybe fight'. (Child refugee: Belgium)

While some children expressed trust in their countries systems, not all the children shared the same view. For them, professionals can sometimes get it wrong or were not able to offer any help.

'police can't always do something about it'. (children in detention; Belgium)'

'I went to the police and they didn't do anything (when in Afghanistan)'.

(Refugee/unaccompanied minors; Austria)

'They genuinely won't do nothing. There's nothing they can do. And you're just going to make things ten times worse on top of yourself. That's why I think brothers or cousins, be smart about it but do it your own way.' (Conflict with the law: Ireland)

'People can't help you unless they know what it's like to have been through something. Youth workers would know way more, they have been through it.' (Conflict with the law: NI)

The UK group who experienced political conflict reported having very little faith in any of their countries systems, particularly, their policing, health and social care services and the education services. These children had been let down on numerous occasions by each of these system when they had tried to seek help for their problems.

They don't listen. If it's something mentally...If I am [needing] help for stuff like sexual stuff and all, they do nothing. They wouldn't even give a fuck. No one helps you.

Well if I thought for a second I had mental health problems, I wouldn't turn round and tell no one because they would treat you like you were some sort of fucking balloon.



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You get addicted to the drugs they give you. Then then what else are you meant to do whenever you are at the lowest point in life you haven't the money to pay for the drugs you want. And then [??] kill people for money.

Taking tablets will not fucking help you. Only makes it worse. Mental health, take the tablets, going to make it worse. My brother has tried to kill himself. He was that bad he actually stole a car to get put inside.

People will get to the point where they just want to be in jail to keep themselves sweet. They don't want to be in like a fucking mental [??] to be treated like an animal. They want to be inside. (Political Conflict; UK)

This group and the group of Irish young people who had previously been in conflict with the law did however think that youth workers were more helpful for them as they were usually from similar community background and therefore understood their issues and lifestyles. This made it easier to get along with this person and strike up a supportive relationship, which makes it easier to disclose any information.

I hadn't experienced youth workers until I came here and it's like, you can tell people stuff you wouldn't tell people otherwise. Just tell them stuff and they have your back.

They don't tell....You build up a good relationship from going in and out of the club and then because I've been with him so long and I've been in and out of the club, I prefer to trust him rather than my ma and da, telling him stuff.

If you really wanted the help, aye. If I want the help, he would, but if I didn't, he would ask me if I want the help or not. And if I say nah, he'd be like, right. Yeah. And he would help me through it. That's what happened before. If he thought he would need help, he would try and encourage him to do it, but if he doesn't want to do it, he is hardly going to go and tell his mum and dad. He's going to listen to every word I have said. He has helped me through. And that's why I am here now. I am a whole different, changed person, like. Proper. I am just a fun company! (Political conflict; UK)

'[youth work organisation] has helped me the most out of everything I've done. I'm not even bullshitting'

'They have slag (banter) with us like'

'They know how to talk to us'

'They're not formal like, proper formal like'

'Like where were you all day'. (Conflict with the law; Ireland)



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The UK group claimed that babies, who suffered from neglect, might be better able to get help from the health and social care services, and that these systems are less likely to be able to help older children. The three groups of children from Belgium, who had experience of detention, residential care and migration, agreed wholeheartedly that they too struggled to get the help they needed in their country too.

'That doesn't exist – only you can help yourself'. (Children in detention; Belgium)

'only you can help yourself'....'No one can really help you – you are alone and you must look after yourself'. (F/ children in care; Belgium)

'You fall alone, then in the end you must stand up alone'. (Children in detention; Belgium)

'I think protecting yourself'. (Child migrant; Belgium)

The children from Romania also commented on the lack of help they received from social workers and suggested that while a social worker might be able to offer protection in an instance of cyber bullying, by giving advice, they could not help protect someone from sexual violence other than to advise them to leave the situation. Living daily under such circumstances draws attention to the vulnerability of some older children and a lack of focus on positive future goals for them, but also demonstrates an opportunity to foster a sense of independence and responsibility in others.

Across all countries, the children said that they would primarily turn to family, friends and maybe a social worker for emotional support and advice. Their ability to do this was due to i) an adult having already established a long term trusting relationship with the child, or ii) an adult entrusted with providing practical help in a time of need. For example, a group of unaccompanied minors who had travelled from Afghanistan to Austria said that a number of adults, unknown to them, in Austria had provided practical help, especially when compared to the state forces of the country they had just left. These children, who left violence in Afghanistan to seek asylum in Austria, greatly appreciated the practical help and immediate action of the adults who helped them get to and settle in their new country.

'My family helped me come here to Austria'. ...'Care givers helped me find house, school, food, teacher helped me learn'....'Police helped me when I came to Austria, brought me to an institute for unaccompanied minors'. (Refugee/unaccompanied minor; Austria)



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A group of children from Belgium who also had experience of migrant/refugee status agreed that family and police were a great source of help when they transitioned to a new country to start a new life.

'Belief that police can enforce the law'... 'Family is important to give hope and support'. (Child migrant and refugee; Belgium)

They stressed the importance of the attitude of the police.

'Let me explain. People from the police they should act like they are your friends and not only follow the rules. They look bad. Or they just say that they are going to open a case, have to go to a psychologist. You cannot say one small thing. It's important that the policemen has to listen and give his opinion without the law what he things you should do'. (Child migrant and refugee; Belgium)

Whereas, the group from the UK with experience of political conflict claimed that the state forces in their country were their oppressor.

'Police don't want to be involved, they abuse people"- police are the ones inflicting the violence- can't and won't turn to them for help'. (Political conflict; UK)

To qualify, as a trusted adult required showing patience and an ability to sooth and calm a child who was distressed. Related to this was a trusted adult's ability to a) listen attentively to the children's stories,

'he can listen and can help me to be safe' (Group One; Romania)

and importantly b) ask the right questions, as they might be traumatised and find it difficult to talk about the experience.

"Pain is a reason to remain silent, not wanting to repeat it over and over again, if the trauma is so bad you wouldn't want to think or talk about it again." (Residential care; Belgium)

'She doesn't want to talk, she is too ashamed to talk' (Children in detention; Belgium)

These qualities were considered by the children to be invaluable enablers to help them disclose experiences of violence; otherwise they may not be able to effectively express their feelings and accurately articulate what had happened. Although, the children were very



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aware based on their experience, that it is very difficult to find a trusted adult, who understands what they are going through.

'its hard to find someone you trust'. (Children in detention; Belgium)

'No one understands'. (Children in detention; Belgium)

'I didn't want to tell him my life story when I had only met him'. (Romania)

I don't trust much people. Trust is a huge thing, it takes years to get it but seconds to lose it. (Conflict with the law: NI)

It was agreed by the vast majority of the children that while some adults are in place to help

'there are good ones and bad ones'. (Children in detention; Belgium)

The underlying principles of respect and best interest also fed into their description of a trusted adult. This was apparent when children described how a trusted adult would ask the children what they wanted to happen in the situation, allow them space to reflect on this, and respected their wishes whatever they decided to do.

I've been doing community service for two years and I've like another 280 hours, and it has actually brought me close to my youth worker. And I could actually tell him anything and he won't go say fuck all. (Political Conflict; UK)

Many of the children said that professionals do not listen to them and include them in decisions made about them. Judges in particular make decisions about their placements and do not seek the children's views on this.

'Teachers can't do anything- not their job...' Juvenile judges have no feelings'. (Children in detention; Belgium)

'By at least letting you know what decisions they are making.'

'and why they're making that decision" (Traveller: Ireland)

'They need to give us a choice, it's us that has to live with the decision, not them.' (Traveller: Ireland)



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The children who were placed in detention were sometimes confused and angry about their placement, as they would be placed in the same facilities with older criminals and prostitute's etc. and they thought their offenses did not justify such harsh punishment and committal.

'you are living here with a group of persons, you don't know with whom you are living, you don't know these people and you don't know what they are capable of'.

'don't lock me up here because I haven't committed a murder'. (Children in detention; Belgium)

These children, in particular, thought that deprivation of liberty may not be helpful for children and that while in detention, they would be forced to miss out on their childhood experience.

'we cannot be a child, we must grow up too quickly'. (Children in detention; Belgium)

The children commented that the systems put in place, to supposedly help them, actually create barriers that make it very difficult for them to keep up essential supportive contact with their family.

'Justice, juvenile courts, counsellors, lawyers, they all destroy that connection. They literally build a wall between them'. (Children in detention; Belgium)

'All we need is people who are out there at that moment when we are having a hard time'. (Children in detention; Belgium)

3. CHILD-CENTRED PRACTICE

Many of the children described numerous negative experiences they had had with many professionals who they thought were ultimately in place to protect and support them. All of the children across countries and groups had similar advice for adults in relation to what they were doing wrong and what they could do better to engage with children who have experienced violence.

'I was forced by my juvenile judge to tell my life story, but I don't want that. I made that mistake once in my life'. (Residential care; Belgium)

The children from Germany, Belgium and NI said that from their perspective it was not always a good thing to dwell on the past, particularly if it was a chaotic past, and they much preferred



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to focus on their immediate situation, adopting the mantra to leave the past in the past, what has happened has happened.

'forget the past, focus on the person himself/herself and the present'. (Children in detention: Belgium)

- **Creating an enabling environment**

Involving and listening to children by allowing them to take part in decisions that affect their lives, and keeping them informed about decisions made, was consistently emphasised by the children across all countries and all subgroups as an important part of realising their rights.

Giving your opinion is good. You can ... how do you say it ... listen to opinions of children, what happens around the child. What happens with a child is not the same as what happens with older people. These are different kinds of opinions. It's nice that time is taken for children. (Child Migrant: Belgium)

Among the ten groups, all but two identified that listening to and talking with children and young people was a feature of an adult who understood what was happening in their lives. Viewed across the different groups as the operationalisation of respect, non-discrimination and being non-judgemental, this treatment by an adult was a fundamental enabler for children to disclose, and importantly, for adults to be able to act in the child's best interests. Spending quality time and showing an interest in their lives was identified as a protective factor to steer them away from violence, and a way of providing support if they do experience harm.

'That they listen to us (adults). That I have the feeling that they are listening. And that they try to understand'. (Female/15, Children in Care: Belgium)

'Yes! She talks a lot with the children'. (M/13-17, Migrant & Refugee Group: Austria)

'Let us talk about everything we care about'. (F/14-16, Children in Care: Romania)

'you are not discriminating, because you are listening to each of us, you are not commenting on us'. (F/17, Children in Care: Belgium)

'Listening, Heard. Treating someone the way you would treat... treating someone equally. Not being racist. Not being sexist. Religion. Sexuality'. (Political Conflict; UK)



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'Then they should tell you what they are going to do, not do stuff behind your back.'
(Children in care: NI)

However, solving problems takes time and the children from Belgium discussed how building-up trust happens in a step-by-step fashion and that both children and adults need to respect and accept this.

'give it time, she is going to grow and she is going to understand what is good for her and what is bad. She is going to learn the country she lives in'.

'you never can give a solution immediately'. (Child migrants: Belgium)

'First, become and be friends. She will get more confident. So be closer to her. So she can feel warm. So she can open up and she can trust you. (Child migrants: Belgium)

'It is mainly about your character. It's about, do we have the same character, do we belong together, do we have the same mentality, are we like-minded'.

'You can't show I'm a trustworthy person. You feel this. You just feel it from both sides. (Children in Care: Belgium)

Within the context of finding solutions to problems associated with experiencing violence, listening and including children's views was raised repeatedly in the consultations. Primarily this related to individuals' own situations, but some also suggested that they could provide insight to help address issues that would help other children in other contexts. For instance, a group of children from Austria offered possible solutions to the issues faced by other children living in the same care facility as them. However, the children from the UK, with experience of political conflict, suggested that those 'responsible' for protecting them, such as police, lacked understanding about their situation and were thus not able to empathise and help them at all when problems arose. They had to help themselves by self-medicating to prepare for the pain that was about to be inflicted on them.

'It was about punishment beatings and the paramilitaries...they were talking to some wee fella and he goes 'paramilitaries beat us for taking prescription drugs and selling drugs. But the only reason we take drugs is because we know we are going to get shot. And we don't want to have fear.' (M/14-15, Political Conflict: UK)

- **Communication**



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A strong feature in the data was the need for adults to uphold the children's right to information and more importantly to provide this in a way that was accessible. A few of the children were aware of some child friendly ways to communicate relevant information with them.

'Anti-rape comic man, doesn't use violence is nice and wants to help'. (Germany)

Some children identified the limits of the information they receive from adults.

'Because many children don't know what violence is so maybe having someone to explain what, but actually no, because he or she gives their own perspective of violence to the children. So the children must develop themselves and think what is better'. (Child migrant: Belgium)

They thought that adults should start with an explanation of their rights and emphasised the role of a parent or interpreter for support, translation and to explain things further to them.

'If she gets the information, she knows her rights, she knows what's around her. Talk with her mother maybe because that is her closest person that understands her because she knows the culture and what is happening'.

'Translation. Look for an interpreter. Look for a friend who can translate'. (Child migrant: Belgium)

The children said that adults should not be afraid to speak with them about consequences and the realities of the situation, as they needed someone to step in, act on their behalf, and keep them informed about the pros and cons and what exactly would happen.

'give information about law and rights'. (Germany)

It would help if the child can talk to someone they know and who understands them, someone that they already have a connection with, who they feel they can trust. It may take time to develop a relationship such as this (Residential care; Belgium).

'Don't judge them. Don't be just about enforcing rules – if that is the only way you communicate with child then why would child ever confide in you'. (Residential care; Belgium)

The children had lots of advice for professionals who work with children across many disciplines, e.g., police, social work, doctor, teacher, and psychologists. Pooling together the advice from the many groups across countries, highlights the traits that require development in adults to be adequately trained to understand the children's issues, pain and abuse,



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'how would you feel if it was your child?' (Traveller: Ireland)

'Exactly, like walk in our shoes' (Traveller: Ireland)

'speak gently, have patience and be more nurturing...calm us...talk to us...be more like a child....and more reasonable'. (Residential care: Romania).

'tell the child they can do it'. (Residential care; Belgium)

'Offer her support'. (Children in detention; Belgium)

The children also offered up their thoughts on things adults who work with children should not do. Do not insult the child or talk behind their back but take the child seriously, motivate and encourage them with your support. Try to understand the child from their perspective as they are disclosing something serious, which is a big deal to them.

'do not beat us, understanding and don't threaten'. (Germany)

To not slabber... be polite. Not being rude. Doesn't do something to harm you or assault you. No harm, Body language. (Political Conflict; UK)

In relation to communicating with the child, the children reiterated the importance of professionals speaking to their parents and family and others involved in the violent incident. This was for various reasons, that included,

'Get both sides of the story'. (Residential care; Belgium)

'Listen. Collect every single bit of information as possible and put it together. Make sure they've got everything the right way'. (Political Conflict: UK)

The mutual reciprocity of having a conversation was emphasised by a group of LGBTQ children from Germany who included the phrases "two way street – on both sides" and "use matching responses; reaction" in their written descriptions of respect.

'If I'm respecting him too. Mutually'. (M/12-15, Children Receiving Social Services: Romania)

The group of migrant children from Belgium also stressed that is not always easy to express your opinion, for the person himself or because it's not accepted by the audience

'Because it doesn't fit with their opinion'. (Child migrant: Belgium)



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Another group from Belgium spoke of the harsh criticism and disrespect they sometimes received from adults about their personal appearance such as what clothes they were wearing.

'Mr. X is really hard, that's really not normal. If you were wearing something that didn't look like it, he said, "You don't look like it. Where are you going, to a whorehouse?" Yes, but he had that really fiercely! And when you said something to him, he would look at you like "Yes, why do you care?" (F/16, Children in Care: Belgium)

The children constantly reiterated the underlying principle of respect, which was about treating others with kindness, and said that this was explicitly expressed through how adults communicate with them. When discussing what respect means and how it can be shown, approximately half of children referred to things such as adults' tone of voice, choice of words, politeness, and not interrupting when they are speaking or answering questions. A significant number across groups also associated expressing respect through empathy and the provision of appropriate help and care.

'Respect is provided with beautiful words, with help, much understanding'. (F/14-16, Children in Care: Romania)

- **Taking action**

The importance of involving children, listening, understanding, empathising and respecting their views was crucial to inform the actions adults would take to support and protect them.

'We said a lot of things, but nothing changed'. (M/13-17, Migrant & Refugee Group: Austria)

'I have experienced that myself, I have also remained stuck in the drugs and alcohol and so on to forget my pain. Now I have come back to my thoughts I know that is not ok'. (Residential care; Belgium)

The children's views on their rights to protection and support for victims of harm varied significantly. While their predominant understandings of violence related to physical manifestations, there understandings of protection and support were discussed in relation to emotional and mental wellbeing, caring and providing much needed resources. Several of the children across groups in different countries related both protection and support to moving to a new environment. However, after experiences of physical violence the children from Romania focused more on the importance of emotional support than material resources.



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What is more, the children understood their right to protection from harm as something they had to seek out for themselves, whether the risk of harm was from other children or adults.

'you have to ask the care giver for that (M/13-17, Migrant & Refugee Group: Austria)

'Go and look for protection. Yes, go to your neighbours, for example. Or go to your family. Or friends'. (F/13, Children in Detention: Belgium)

However, most of the children were able to identify several limitations of their experience of protection from harm. In the discussion about rights, the children from Austria spoke of perpetration of violence by their peers. They felt their caregivers were afraid of getting involved in altercations, so did not take action to stop or prevent this behaviour. The participants suggested that in this way, they were not protecting them from harm but were more focused on protecting themselves.

'She should separate two young adults who start fighting, they are not doing that...but then they get hit themselves'. (M/13-17, Migrant & Refugee Group: Austria)

'Professionals should do what they promise'. (Children in detention; Belgium)

The children from UK with experience of political conflict expressed a particular risk of harm at the hand of paramilitaries, and were concerned at the police forces inability to protect them.

'Police are the ones that give you the warning.... If the cops could do something about it, they wouldn't give you the warning. They would sort it out...They don't protect you. No'. (M/14-15, Political Conflict: UK)

The vast majority of the children stressed how the important it is for adults to keep their promises and urged them to keep on searching until a workable solution for their problem was found. Equally important was that adults should feedback to the child on what they were doing with their reports etc., and keep them informed of decisions that were being made and the reasons why other decisions could not be put in place. This, the children said, would help them understand their situation better, make them feel valued and respected in the process and might make them seek help more and develop better relationships with adults in other areas of their lives.

'if they promise something, that they really do, that they don't change all the time. If they promise and then don't do it, then...'



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'The, they are not doing well. Yes. For example, if they say they're going to do that within a month, they'll have to do it. And if you can't return home, either they say we're going away for the weekend or they look for a home for you. That they keep their promise. I think they should discuss that and if they have a solution, they have to go for it'. (Children in detention: Belgium)