

*'Safety is the one thing
you will need forever
throughout your life'*



Safety First

A report on Young Amplify's work with
the Children's Commissioner

December 2015

Introduction



Anne Longfield OBE is the Children's Commissioner for England. Anne and her office promote and protect the rights of all children in England in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and make sure that organisations take their interests into account when making decisions that will affect them. Her office exists to make sure all children grow up happy and healthy and have the best chance in life. To do this she needs to understand what life is like through their eyes and how they see and experience the world they are growing up in. This enables her to better understand what matters to children and young people, their day-to-day lived experiences, good things, bad things and what can be done better. It can also help to make sure that children's rights and needs are being met.

Young Amplify is the Children's Commissioner's advisory group of 7-11 year olds. The group was set up in January 2014 because the Commissioner wanted to develop her work to listen and learn from younger children. It is made up of around 80 children and is supported by schools and organisations across the country. Young Amplify builds on the work to date done by Amplify, the Children's Commissioner's advisory group of 11-18 year olds giving younger children an equal say in her work and priorities.

Some of the things Young Amplify do:

- Put their ideas and opinions about what matters to children directly into the Children's Commissioner's work, plans and projects
- Help the Children's Commissioner to interview for jobs
- Tell the Government and other decision makers what children think and experience
- Take part in Children's Commissioner's Takeover Challenge.

The Children's Commissioner's Office has been working with Young Amplify to explore different rights and themes that are important to them and other children their age. This report looks at:

- What Young Amplify told us
- Growing up and being safe
- Safety box
- Young Amplify's recommendations



What Young Amplify told us

Young Amplify's work during 2015 highlights how much 7-11 year-olds see, hear and experience the world in which they are growing up. They told us what matters to them and what we could be doing better. We have included some of their words throughout this report. When asked which rights are important to them and other children their age, they said:

- The right to be heard
- The right to safety
- The right to care and support

When we talked to Young Amplify about why they chose these rights and what really matters to them and other children their age, these were the top eight themes that came out across the group:

1

Children need to understand rights and be given more responsibility

2

Children should have their own space and time as they sometimes need to be on their own

3

Everyone should have someone by their side who supports and listens to them

4

Children should be able to speak to other children about problems and be supported to do so because it is sometimes easier to talk to children than adults

5

Everyone should feel safe, secure, comfortable and able to be themselves

6

Bullying must be stopped. It might be physical hurting, cyber bullying, blackmail, texting and posting embarrassing pictures

7

If children can't have fun and relax it affects their physical and mental health

8

Children should be supported to see family and friends if safe to do so

Young Amplify told us that making sense of the world they are growing up in is really important and children need more help to do this. They told us about different situations children might see, hear or experience. These included violence, bullying, family breakdown, poverty, the differences in being a boy or a girl, and children being forced to do things they don't want to do.

They told us that through TV; internet; mobile phones; other children; school; home; and in the street - children see, hear and experience so much that they need to understand in order to keep themselves safe.

'Having a better understanding of things makes children feel safe and this in turn helps them to be safe'

'The world isn't always bad but bad things do happen. Sometimes we know about things but sometimes people don't tell us everything so we know there is more but don't understand it. People should explain stuff to us because to cope with problems you need to know more about them'



Growing up and being safe

One of the clearest messages from Young Amplify was the importance of safety to them and their lives. We explored this theme further and some of the members of the group told us:



It is clear that Young Amplify members think that safety means many things. However, there was one thing in particular the group told us was most important:

'To be safe is to know who I am and what I believe'

Understanding about yourself, what you think, right and wrong and the world around you is what helps you to grow in confidence and to stay safe.

Safety box

After Young Amplify identified safety as a key concern, they started to develop a box that could be used by children and adults to start a conversation about growing up and being safe.

Young Amplify thought the box should:

- Help you express your feelings so you don't keep secrets
- Help you learn how to cope with stuff
- Tell you who you can talk to
- Tell you about your rights
- Tell you where you can go to have personal space
- Tell you information people think you aren't ready for but you are
- Tell you where you can go to say anything without thinking it embarrassing or silly
- Explain things because to cope with problems you need to know more about them
- Teach you how to calm down
- Give you courage so you don't do things you don't want to.

Safety Box



The group told us how they thought this box could be used by children to start conversations about safety. Children can choose what they want their safety box to look like and design their own. They then write down different things they want to put inside it to help them feel safe.

The box should be designed in a way that gives children a bit more control over their own safety and the space to raise conversations when they are ready to and choose who they want to share these conversations with.

Here is a step-by-step guide to how we thought the box could be used by children and adults:

1. Write or draw things about safety and what being safe means to you and put them in a box. These might be anything from the list on the previous page or other things too.
2. If there is anything you want to share from the box, such as a worry or question, put this in there too.
3. When you are ready show the box to a person you want to talk to, such as a trusted adult, and tell them to look inside the box. Or you could open the box and take out something you want to share with an adult at that time. It doesn't have to be everything.
4. This might help start a conversation about some of the worries or questions you have.

The box helps start a conversation when you are ready and with a person you choose. It also means you don't need to find the words to use to begin the conversation as you have already written these or drawn pictures about safety and put them in the box.

Young Amplify want to share this idea with children and adults across England so everyone can start thinking and talking about feeling safe.

Young Amplify's recommendations

Young Amplify explored a lot of different themes but these are the key things that came out of their discussions that they wanted to share with Government, schools and parents/carers:

Top recommendation to Government

- Primary school children need to be taught more about the world they are growing up in because they see, hear and experience so much that they don't understand. Only when they understand and can make sense of things can they keep themselves safe.

Top two recommendations to schools

- Schools need to develop systems that make it possible and help children to talk to adults and other children in a safe and supportive way
- Primary schools need to develop ways to get children thinking and talking about being safe, using tools such as the safety box. These conversations help children to feel comfortable in the world they are growing up in

Top three recommendations to parents/carers

- Children want their own space and somewhere safe they can spend time
- Don't underestimate the importance of spending time listening to children and asking questions about their lives
- A reminder that children want to take part in new activities. Talk to them and plan things you can do together

With huge thanks to the children and staff from:

- Barton St Peter's Church of England Primary
- Beaconhill Primary
- Beechwood Primary
- Bourne Abbey Academy
- Broadway Junior School
- Caen Primary
- Chaddlewood Primary
- Darlington Methodist Circuit
- Duncombe Primary
- EPIC children's forum, Kensington and Chelsea
- Healthy Minds, Lambeth Peer Mentoring Programme
- Hillside Primary
- Honiton Primary
- Leys Farm Junior School
- Marsh Green Primary
- Netherfield Primary School
- New City Primary
- North Lincolnshire Children's Forum
- Reay Primary
- Ronald Ross Primary
- Southwick Primary
- St Aidan's First School
- St Kielder First School
- Sunnyhill Primary
- Thropton Village First School
- WAM Project, Nottinghamshire NHS Trust
- West Pennard School
- Yealmpstone Farm Primary

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