

THE TEN WISHES

What Children and Young People
in Plymouth want from
you and why...



TEN WISHES

What Children and Young People in Plymouth want from you...

We want professionals to be easier to contact.

We want professionals to be on time, as they expect us to be.

We want professionals to be properly trained and for us to be involved in the training.

We want professionals to ask us what we need and not to assume.

We want professionals to do what they say they are going to do, to listen and stand up for us.

We want professionals to use words we understand.

We want professionals to reassure us something is being done and tell us how long it will take.

We want professionals to understand when we need to talk to them one-to-one.

We want professionals to ask us 'do you feel safe?'

We want professionals to respect us and how we feel.

FOREWORD BY THE PLYMOUTH YOUNG SAFEGUARDERS

Consultation with youth participation groups across Plymouth has shown that the Ten Wishes remain as relevant now as they were when they were developed in 2014. Feedback was however that the Ten Wishes didn't seem to be consistently followed across all workers and all agencies.

This booklet has been produced in conjunction with young people accessing a variety of key organisations across the city to explain why these wishes are important to us and offer suggestions as to how you could meet them.

The overwhelming feeling amongst young people is that the Ten Wishes are even more relevant now than before COVID19 became a part of our lives. We want to ensure that the Ten Wishes stay relevant during the 'new normal' and are not increasingly or gradually side lined or even forgotten by their lack of specific reference to COVID19 and how it has effected professional practice. We recognise that there will need to be a change in approach during any restrictions and also during the period of adjustment and 'catch up' once these restrictions end.

Please do not underestimate the impact that 2020/21 has had on our mental health. A greater number of young people are now feeling isolated and a lot more vulnerable. These mental health challenges result in the need for young people to feel valued, listened to and respected by professionals.

There have also been other lockdown related issues such as not having access to technology/resources which has made it more difficult for vulnerable young people to be able to access professional support.

Because young people have been unable to meet face to face and have that human contact there is a fear that relationships between young people and professionals are becoming less personalised and that young people as human beings are being forgotten and replaced by numbers/names on a screen.

Simple things like extra personalisation and warmth within emails/texts like asking if the young people are well and what they've been up to can take into account the positivity shortfall of living in isolation and lockdown.

It can now also be harder to reach out and there is a reliance on professionals answering their messages when we can't just go to their offices. Likewise, we understand that you can't pick up on cues as easily when you are talking to us online so when people have the confidence to speak up, that needs to be picked up on straight away.

We want to thank you for reading this booklet as it shows to us that you are committed to providing the best service as possible for the children and young people of Plymouth.

Plymouth Young Safeguarders
March 2021

WHO ARE THE TEN WISHES FOR?

The Ten Wishes focuses on what children and young people want from 'professionals'. When they were initially created, there was a focus on workers within Children's Social Care. However, they have since been adopted by the Plymouth Safeguarding Children's Partnership and are relevant to anyone working with children and young people.

We know that some of the wishes might be more relevant to your work than others and all we ask is that you do what you can.



We want professionals to be easier to contact

Why this wish is important to young people...

"We don't want to have to go through loads of people and tell them everything over and over, when we could just speak to the person we want directly."

"Young people with anxiety may not want to have to talk to another person when it's taken them a while to gain trust with their worker which may cause them to just not make contact at all, making things worse and letting it build up."

"It's about trust and building that trust quickly."

"Sometimes we need to update people on things missed from appointments or positive or negative experiences between appointments which may influence future sessions."

"A paediatrician I work with uses a secretary to communicate, this is ineffective as it's not as easy to explain stuff."

"Some of us aren't allowed phones because we are too young so it can be hard to let people know when we need to talk."

"It can feel like people are never available when you need them."

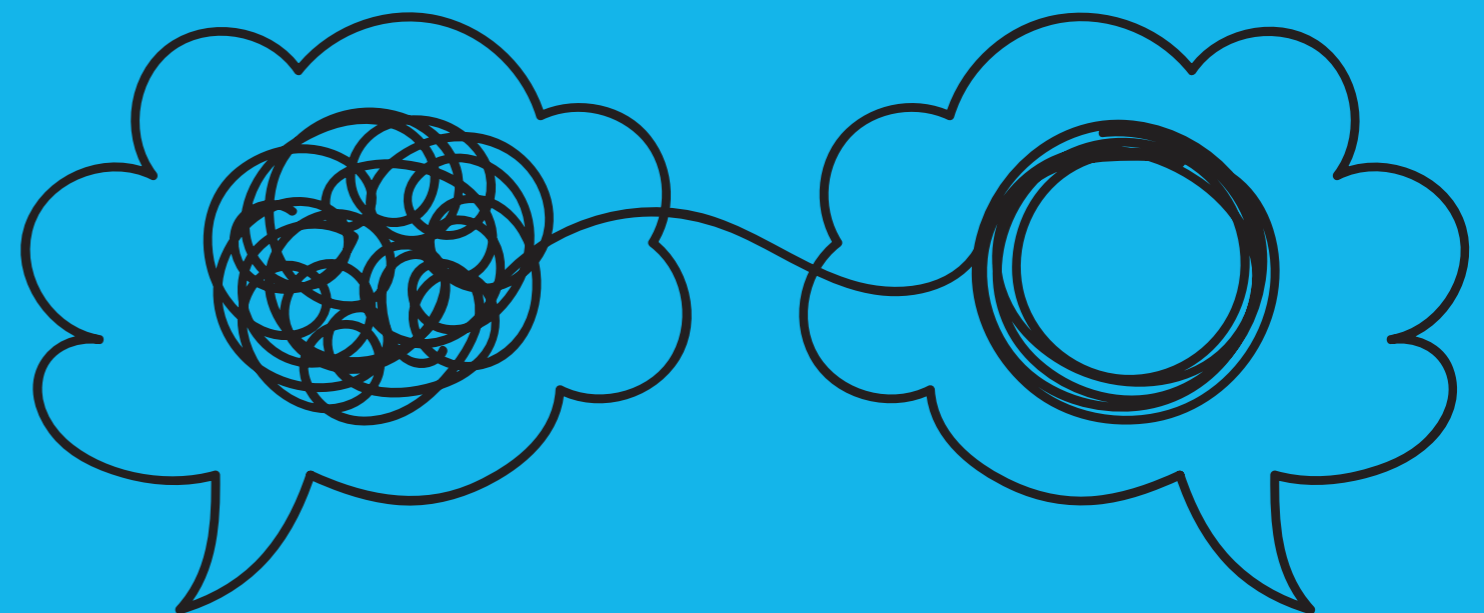
What young people think organisations could do to put this wish into their practice...

It would be helpful to have a website where you can find lots of professionals and their contact details. This could already exist and if it does, help us access it.

Our lives don't fit into 9-5 so maybe there could be a 24hr phoneline for some services.

Having a direct route avoids going through lots of people and having to say the same thing over and over. By making sure that children in care have their social workers phone number or students have the email address of their tutor, we can do things quicker.

You could change it up a bit too by having more routes available to contact workers like email, Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp, text message etc.



We want professionals to be on time, as they expect us to be

Why this wish is important to young people...

"It seems like there is a double standard and that needs to be eradicated."

"It's important because it shows equality and shows that they respect us and it helps make professionals easier to access."

"So everyone feels equally valued and to make sure there is no imbalance or 'us and them' between professionals and those being supported. Equal respect and building trust."

"To make the patient or customer feel happy with the service so they can feel at ease using it again."

"If the professional is on time, the young person doesn't feel rushed, gets more time for talking and gets more valuable output from the session."

"This is super important, it should be common sense as a professional to show up on time but when they don't, it can make young people feel unwanted and like their issues don't matter."

"It is really depressing and demoralising when a vulnerable young person is just sitting there waiting. It makes us feel we're not cared about and that we're a number, and the fact that we don't know when the response is coming means we are in limbo."

What young people think organisations could do to put this wish into their practice...

People are busy, like all the time. Does that mean they have too much to do? Perhaps if there were more people doing the job then the workers could have the time to do things the way we need.

If you can't be there when you say you will and are going to be late, let us know. As long as we know what's going on and aren't just waiting and waiting, we do understand that there will be times you can't be exactly on time.



We want professionals to be properly trained and for us to be involved in the training

Why this wish is important to young people...

"If someone is properly trained, it helps to make the professional more comfortable and confident which then makes young people more comfortable."

"When we are involved in training, professionals get to hear views and real life stories."

"It helps keep professionals aware of recent situations that are happening in schools and other environments."

"There can be a big generational gap sometimes and bringing us together in a learning environment can help break that down."

What young people think organisations could do to put this wish into their practice...

Training is the most important element in regards to enabling young people to get themselves and their views across and for professionals to understand the people they are working with on a human level.

First of all, being properly trained should be a right for all professionals. A lot of teachers will have to teach topics which can be personal such as divorce, abortion and sexual health. "I spoke to the teacher who teaches this and he had no training and didn't feel very comfortable teaching these topics at all!"

Training for all people who work with children and young people on issues like mental health or poverty could help them understand behaviour more and the reasons an individual might behave in a certain way. This is key to Plymouth being a 'Trauma Informed' city.

Secondly, have young people involved in training. We don't have to be there in person (most of the time we can't be anyway because we are in education) but we can create resources or webinars which you can incorporate.

It's not just continuous professional development either; if we had a fuller role at an educational level (university), professionals could have the right people skills from the start.

It's not just training either. We could also be part of interview panels ensuring that candidates don't just perform well in front of adults but also demonstrate that they can connect with children and young people.

We want professionals to ask us what we need and not to assume

Why this wish is important to young people...

"Because I want my voice heard!"

"If people just assume what we need then they aren't properly connecting with us - If you're assuming, you're not listening."

"It's important not to assume what we need because it causes issues and doesn't feel like the professionals understand us properly. This is SO DRAINING for young people."

"If the worker keeps cutting the young person off it can make them feel super inferior and like they aren't truly being listened to."

"I don't want to be generalised. Assuming things about me just puts me in a box and gives me a label that may not be right for me. This could mean that I don't get the right help needed."

"Sometimes people making assumptions makes it seem like they are rushing to get on with stuff. They can't always get a proper understanding without asking our opinion, especially when it's about us."

"If we are supported to explore our own ideas, we are more likely to follow them and make changes within our lives."

What young people think organisations could do to put this wish into their practice...

Training is key. Even by reading this, you're seeing how we feel and could change your practice if you need to.

Show us that you have listened, talk to us, ask us what we need instead of automatically doing what you think we need.

We want professionals to do what they say they are going to do, to listen and stand up for us

Why this wish is important to young people...

"So we can have the best help we can get."

"It's nice to be listened to instead of being spoken to."

"Well, how can we trust professionals who don't do any of these things? Keeping promises is basic human decency."

"It's super important for professionals to listen because then young people feel understood and comforted."

"It creates better trust and then we can model good values."

"If we can't voice our own opinion, we need someone to voice it for us. If someone says they'll do something, it's expected that they'd do it."

What young people think organisations could do to put this wish into their practice...

Don't make promises! It's hard to trust professionals as it is so when they promise something and don't do it then it's hard. Just be a decent human being by doing what you say you will do as this ensures there is respect and trust between professionals and young people.

Help young people by standing up for them when they can't stand up for themselves.

Don't say something just to keep us happy.



We want professionals to use words we understand.

Why this wish is important to young people...

"So we clearly know what they are going to do."

"This is super important because we can get worried and confused with professional words sometimes."

"Each group of professionals have their own special language; their own set of acronyms or jargon and we don't always get it."

"If we don't understand, you aren't communicating with us properly"

What young people think organisations could do to put this wish into their practice...

Cut out the jargon.

Being aware of how you talk or write to us or about us. Use common words so we understand and explain what certain words mean.

Casual chat is okay and has a big difference to relationship building.

You could have separate reports designed specifically for the individual young person.

You could start off by telling us the easier word then follow it up with the big word by adding 'this is also known as'. This would help us not get worried or stressed if it was explained better.

We want professionals to reassure us something is being done and tell us how long it will take

Why this wish is important to young people...

"Telling us how long it will take it is good so we aren't spending time worrying about stuff and it means we can relax a little."

"It's about trust and making promises, don't make promises you can't keep. Don't promise you're going to do something and then not do it."

"We need to know that we are not being ignored."

"So we can trust what you are doing or saying. By communicating with us and being open and honest, it helps to build a better relationship."

"Reassuring young people its being done is important because we might worry about it and it not happening. This will reduce our stress levels."

What young people think organisations could do to put this wish into their practice...

Simply reassure us that it's being done and say a time when it will be finished or give regular updates by email, phone or text.

Listen to what we are saying and if you say you're going to do something, just do it.

If you feel like you can't achieve it then explain that to us and not expect us to wait.



We want professionals to understand when we need to talk to them one-to-one

Why this wish is important to young people...

"Talking one-to-one can help reduce our stress and anxiety."

"So we can express our feelings to workers when we need to."

"It can help us feel more comfortable as we can often feel embarrassed."

"Confidentiality"

"We don't feel like we can be honest when other people are listening. This can include when we are in a space with thin walls!"

"Don't want to feel like we are being judged."

What young people think organisations could do to put this wish into their practice...

Ask us questions such as 'what do you want your session to look like?'

Having a named person that we know we can speak to if we need.

Have quiet areas where we can talk one-to-one.

We may not feel confident enough to ask in front of others or may not want to say 'yes' if you ask if we want someone to leave the room. Offering us a one-to-one space should be standard practice.

If you're visiting us in our home, don't use our bedroom as the one-to-one space as it is our private space. Take us somewhere else instead such as out for a walk.

We want professionals to ask us 'do you feel safe?'

Why this wish is important to young people...

"So we can have the best life we can!"

"If you don't feel safe it leads to stress and anxiety which is bad for our mental health."

"We may not be able to say how safe we feel without being asked due to anxiety and fear."

What young people think organisations could do to put this wish into their practice...

This wish also interlinks with the need to talk to professionals on a one-to-one basis sometimes.

We may feel safe in one place and not another. For example, home might be absolutely fine but we might be scared about something at school. Sometimes this standard question isn't enough. Try unpicking it a bit with us. It shouldn't just be a tick box question.

Also, think about the actions needed based on the response, and what young people might be thinking those actions are. If we are really scared, we might just say that we do feel safe because we've been threatened with harm for saying something different.

Explain your confidentiality policies to us. They are different depending on your organisation and role. This will help us feel safe about what we are sharing with you.

Training is key to putting this wish into practice, embedding into the practice of all workers. This can be supported through supervision and a variety of resources. Suggestions included code words, special stickers on a prescription and having a regular review of sets of questions.



We want professionals to respect us and how we feel

Why this wish is important to young people...

"It builds trust"

"It's important because if people acknowledge how we are feeling, it can bring comfort"

"This can either make us happy or to make us feel happy"

"No means no. If we don't want something and we tell you, we want you to respect our wishes."

"First impressions count. Having respect is key to building a relationship with us."

"Judging us is not okay."

What young people think organisations could do to put this wish into their practice...

You can show us respect by not being patronising and allowing us some control.

Check in with us and ask us questions using appropriate language.

We feel valued when you are flexible and meet our needs as well as yours. For example, by changing the time we meet so we don't get removed from the same lesson every week, it shows you respect our education.

Listen to what we say. If you ask us the same things over and over we don't feel respected.

We are all individuals with different needs.

Please respect our knowledge and take that into account. We can know our bodies and minds better than you may think.

Treat us how you would like to be treated.



Remember the names of the children and families you are working with

Don't make assumptions based on reports about us

Have an open mind

Be sensitive to our environment and how it may be different to yours

Communicate with other relevant agencies

Be aware of the power of the information that you hold about us

Smile

Be aware that negative things about our family members could be difficult for us to hear

Listen



This booklet was produced by the Plymouth Young Safeguarders in partnership with other youth participation groups across the city, supported by the Plymouth Safeguarding Children Partnership.