

ANGRY ON THE OUTSIDE HURTING ON THE INSIDE

to politicians, police, schools, BUP
and the Child Protection System



C O N T E N T S

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Forandringsfabrikken Kunnskapssenter

Changefactory Knowledge Centre
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T H A N K Y O U

A thousand million thanks to you wise, brave, strong, good and kind children. Thank you for sharing your dear-bought experiences and advice. Norway needs this knowledge.

You have shared important and necessary advice about how politicians, professionals and students can understand why children use violence and what they have to do to provide good help and meet you in a safe way. You have had many reasons not to do it.

You know a lot about how schools, police, the Child Protection System and Children and Adolescents' Psychiatric Outpatient Services (BUP) feel. You also know how it feels to use violence, why it happens and how adults can meet it and stop it in safe and helpful ways.

We hope and believe that your advice will be taken seriously and used to make changes all around Norway, so that more children can be understood and met in safe and helpful ways.

Yours sincerely,
Changefactory Knowledge Centre

THANK YOU FROM OUR HEARTS

Ice around the heart

When our hearts are surrounded with ice we need adults who can melt that ice instead of making it thicker

When we use violence, there's always a reason behind it. It can be words, tone of voice, looks, sounds, smells, all of these things can trigger bad feelings. It could be feeling unsafe with the adult or the situation or that we feel uncertain and afraid. Never forget this as an adult, we think this can help you

When we've used violence, be honest and brave, say what you feel in a warm way because you want us to understand.

Remember to tell us that you understand that we aren't mean, dangerous or bad

Being told off and punished makes the ice around the heart thicker.

Demerits in school, security cells, involuntary searches,

rewards and consequences make what's already bad even worse.

We lose trust.

Stop us safely, when bad situations happen.

When something serious has happened, don't call our parents

before you've talked with us.

You never know the consequences of calling parents.

When the doors at home are closed, it often isn't safe,

scared or angry parents makes the ice around our hearts thicker

Make an agreement with us about what, when, to whom and how

information about us should be shared with other

professionals and parents, the ice can melt and we can tell the most important things,

you need to know this to help us

Big meetings often feel unsafe.

It can feel as if there are meetings where the adults have to give each other information and

decide over our heads. Small meetings, planned together with us can make it safer and then we can talk honestly.

Together we can find helpful solutions

Most importantly, we do the best we can, based on

how we feel inside ALWAYS, and we

need adults to melt the ice around our hearts

About the qualitative survey

The qualitative survey ANGRY ON THE OUTSIDE, HURTING ON THE INSIDE contains knowledge directly from 101 children aged 13-20 years. They are from Oslo, Viken, Trøndelag, Vestland, Rogaland, Agder, Troms and Finnmark, Møre and Romsdal. They are invited through schools, youth outreach services, Child Protection Services, SLT and the police.

Ahead of the survey, we asked for input for the questions from professionals in various services. We received a lot of useful input, which was used in the survey.

All the children decided whether they wanted to participate and whether they wanted to speak in groups or alone. A number of children were given the opportunity in round two to go in-depth on the questions they were asked in round one. The researcher was available to the children after the sessions, to support and answer questions, if necessary.

Experiences and advice from interviews and sessions were documented in transcripts. Factory workers with experience of systematising data summarised the children's experiences and advice. Experiences and advice that were most often repeated by many children in many places in the country became the main answers presented in this report. This is presented in text or bullet points.

How violence is explained:

The children who have participated have used violence such as hitting, kicking, clawing, strangling, fighting, robbing, threatening and using knives. This has been done to both adults and other children. The adults have been public employees, strangers or someone in their family or circle of friends. The focus of the qualitative survey has not been on other crimes, such as the sale of drugs, theft and vandalism.

The questions asked:

Why do children use violence?

How old were you the first time you used violence?

School:

What is/was good and what is/wasn't so good about how you were met at school?

How can the school deal with children who are angry or use violence?

How can the school safely stop children in situations of violence?

Police:

What is/was good and what is/was not so good when meeting the police?

How can the police help children who use violence?

How can the police safely stop children in situations of violence?

The Child Protection System and the youth outreach services:

What is/was good and what is/was not so good about the Child Protection Service?

What is/was good and what is/was not so good about the youth outreach service?

How can the Child Protection System and the youth outreach services help children who use violence?

How can the Child Protection System stop children safely in situations of violence?

Children and Adolescents' Psychiatric Outpatient Services (BUP):

What is/was good and what is/was not so good when meeting with BUP?

Did it help you feel better inside?

How can BUP help children who use violence?

Children's human rights

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) was made Norwegian law in 2003, through the Human Rights Act. Several of the rights in the Convention are also part of the Norwegian Constitution. Only some of the rights are included in the specialised legislation. The general idea is that the Human Rights Act shall be used in combination with the specialised legislation.

The UNCRC gives children a number of procedural rights. These rights describe how children shall be met in all actions and decisions that concern them. The rights include children's right to information, right to express themselves freely and right to respect for their private life. These rights must be secured before one can assess what is in the best interest of the child.

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child prepares general comments on the interpretation of the Convention. The Norwegian Supreme Court stated in HR-2018-2096-A that the general comments must be given considerable weight when interpreting the Convention. This also applies to the situations dealing with children in conflict with the law.

CHILDREN WHO BREAK THE LAW ALSO HAVE PROCEDURAL RIGHTS

Children who break the law ask us to understand that there is always a reason why they do bad things. Getting to the bottom of this reason has to be the main focus to prevent it from happening again. To be able to succeed, the children must be met in a way that feels safe for them.

There is broad overlap between children's procedural rights and what children themselves explain as important to being met in a safe way. These rights make it possible to meet the child in a way that ensures that they can speak freely about bad things that have happened. This way, children's trust in adults can be preserved, children's rights secured and cases resolved in less time.

National authorities and everyone who works with children have a duty to have knowledge about and contribute to ensuring children's procedural rights. Next follows a brief presentation of the procedural rights.

How to assess what is in the best interests of the child

- In accordance with UNCRC art. 3 and The Norwegian Constitution § 104

The UNCRC states that in all actions concerning children, the best interest of the child shall be a primary consideration. This includes, among other things, when the police are suspecting a child of a criminal offence, stop a child in the street, take them in for a concern conversation or questioning.

In order to find out what is in the child's best interests, the adults must ensure that the child has received sufficient and understandable information, that the child is free to express their opinions, and that the child's right to privacy is secured. These are children's procedural rights. The rights must be secured before a decision can be made as to what is in the best interests of the child.

The child's right to information

- In accordance with UNCRC art. 12 - in connection with the child being allowed to express himself freely

The UN Children's Committee states that children have the right to receive the information necessary to be able to express themselves freely. This means that the child as a minimum must receive information about:

- the situation and the matter at hand
- what will happen with the information that the child shares
- which decisions that shall be made and possible alternate solutions

The information must be given in a considerate and understandable manner, it must be repeated when needed, and the child must continuously be given new information in the case. The right to information is a prerequisite for the child to be able to speak freely about the actions and decisions to be taken, and is therefore very important.

The child's right to express themselves freely

- In accordance with UNCRC art. 12 and the Norwegian Constitution § 104

Any child has the right to express their views freely in all matters that affect them. If adults propose other solutions than what the child wants, the child must be allowed to express their opinion on this solution. The child's right to express themselves freely does not depend on the consent of parents or others with parental responsibility. As a general rule, the child's best interest cannot be used as justification for not letting the child express themselves in various processes.

To express their views "freely", means that adults must provide an environment where the child feels respected and safe when they are going to express themselves. To make it safe, the child must be given the opportunity to have a person with them who they have particular confidence in. As far as possible, children must be allowed to talk to an adult they trust. The child must also be able to express themselves in a place that feels safe.

Expressing oneself freely also means that:

- The child must not be subjected to manipulation, undue influence or pressure
- The child shall express their own views, not those of others
- The child receives sufficient and understandable information to be able to speak freely
- The child can speak directly to the decision-maker, if that is what the child wants. Alternatively, it must be ensured that the child's statements reach the decision-maker in full
- The child has the right to think what they want and say what they want, and this must be included in the assessment of what is in the best interests of the child
- The views of the child must be given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child

If it is considered to not give weight to the child's views, the possible consequences of acting contrary to the child's beliefs must be documented and justified. The assessment of whether the action has such a beneficial effect on the child that it clearly outweighs the disadvantages of acting contrary to the child's views, must also be documented and justified.

The child's right to respect for their privacy

- In accordance with UNCRC art. 16, the Norwegian Constitution § 102 and the European Convention on Human Rights art. 8

The UNCRC specifies that no child shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with their privacy. In practice, this means that professionals cannot automatically share information from or about the child within the service, with other services or with parents.

There must be a legal basis that allows such sharing, and the intervention in the child's right to privacy must be necessary. In many cases, information is shared, from or about the child, without the child's right to privacy being a part of the assessment. If information is shared without the child's knowledge, the child may lose trust in the adult who shares. Securing children's right to respect for their privacy is an important prerequisite for children's right to express themselves freely.

The child needs to be informed about what can happen with the information that the child shares, before an adult starts talking to the child. When professionals consider sharing information from or about the child with other professionals, it is an action concerning the child. Adults must therefore inform the child that it is being considered to share information, and let the child express themselves freely about this, before the information is shared. This applies to all children regardless of age. It must also be assessed whether it is in the child's best interests to share the information.

This does not mean that other professionals, services or parents never shall receive information from or about the child. But the procedure for securing the right to information and to express oneself must be followed, and there must be a legal basis for sharing. In addition, adults must consider whether it is necessary to share.

TO NATIONAL AUTHORITIES

Safety-principles

In order for children to be able to tell about difficult or painful things so that adults can understand, make good decisions and provide good help, the child must feel that they can speak freely. In order to make that happen, the child must feel safe enough. Based on the main answers from children, many adults have a lot to learn in order to be able to make it safe for children to speak. Based on the main answers from children who use violence, more adults in various systems for children must know more about this. What competence adults have determines a lot. The main answers from children about what determines safety, are clear:

All adults must be able to

- ♥ Understand and show children that they know children do the best they can
- ♥ Understand that they have the main responsibility for the contact with children
- ♥ Facilitate so that it's safe for children to talk
- ♥ Give children a real opportunity to speak first and alone
- ♥ Ensure that children can have a person they trust with them
- ♥ Meet children with kindness, warmth and feelings
- ♥ Ask concrete in-depth questions
- ♥ Meet violence and anger with safety and understanding
- ♥ Stop children in ways that feel safe for them
- ♥ Agree on what, to whom, when and how something should be shared with others
- ♥ Collaborate on solutions and measures

All adults who work with children must have this competence to be able to give children good help.

View of children

Fundamental change in how to talk about children

Children who use violence are often described as acquaintances of the police, regulars, young criminals, gang members or dangerous perpetrators. Children may be described as those whom no one can help or as a danger to society. National authorities can also do this, maybe without understanding what this does inside children.

Children can feel honour and pride in doing bad things, like being scary or threatening. They can build an identity on this. They may feel judged and lose a lot of respect for adults. It can feel like the adults don't understand anything. They can start believing what the adults say and think very bad things about themselves. Adults in schools and services can say in the media that these children must be stopped and removed from the streets. Then the solutions can often be quick and severe.

From consequences to understanding

It can be difficult to come to terms with the fact that children who use violence very often have experienced very bad things earlier in their lives. So it's understandable that society thinks that when someone has used violence, this must have consequences. Having experienced bad things can't be an excuse.

But do we know that this use of consequences is wise? Do we know that it helps the children? Children may have been punished all their lives. They have been punished at home, at school, in the Child Protection System, by the police and maybe also in the legal system. Repeated answers from children explain that giving them consequences or punishing them can make what's already bad worse.

Public authorities constantly express that we want these children back into society. If the authorities are serious about this, the authorities have to make it clear that they understand it's about something difficult or hurtful inside children when they use violence. The reactions, measures and initiatives decided on must show that the authorities understand this.

Recommendation from children

- ♥ Public authorities must clearly express an understanding that children who use violence are struggling with something. Initiatives and measures must be based on this view of these children.

Politicians' responsibilities

Politicians gain knowledge directly from children

Parts of current legislation and guidelines contribute to making life more unsafe for children who use violence. We know this because the main answers from children point directly to parts of the national framework. Politicians have adopted legislation and guidelines with the best intentions. They've often had little knowledge directly from children to build their decisions on, about how the measures they adopt will be for children. Children ask politicians to take responsibility for requesting and using knowledge directly from children when they adopt initiatives, guidelines, laws and measures that impact children's lives. What's adopted can help or make things worse for them. How professionals feel that the measures are helping, doesn't have to be the same as how children experience it.

Politicians take responsibility for how they talk about children

Some politicians regularly make statements in the media that something must be done to put an end to children using violence. Curfews, more prison places and closed institutions are proposals that can appear. Some politicians want a

"tougher approach" and more consequences for the children. In some places, the police are told to keep a closer eye on things. Politicians talk about zero tolerance. Main answers in this qualitative survey says that when children experience that the police unnecessarily do searches and use force, it can feel as if they're being pushed away from society. This has major consequences for the children. Politicians have a big responsibility for how they talk about children.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child states in general comment no. 10, paragraph 96: "To create a positive environment for a better understanding of the root causes of juvenile delinquency and a rights-based approach to this social problem, the State parties should (...) seek the active and positive involvement of members of parliament, NGOs and the media (...)".

Children ask politicians to take responsibility for speaking highly of children. They must do this both because it is in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and because what the politicians say affects how people view children. At the same time, it affects how the children are met - or pushed away.

Recommendations from children

- ♥ Politicians ensure that they have knowledge directly from children about what's helpful for children who use violence, before they adopt laws or initiatives.
- ♥ Politicians speak more clearly about the rights of children who use violence and the reasons why children use violence. Politicians who speak in the media feel the responsibility to ensure that the initiatives and measures they propose are helpful for children.
- ♥ Politicians take responsibility for speaking with kind words so that society understands more and that children who use violence aren't pushed away.

The police framework

The Attorney General contributes to a safer framework

"There is no fundamental conflict between good crime prevention and human rights".

This is stated on the Attorney General's website. It's fantastic, because it can give the police the opportunity to get some different guidance for their work than what they have today. At the same time, the Convention on the Rights of the Child clearly states that the use of force and means of force against children is a last resort, everything else must be tried first. A main answer in the survey is that children experience that the police easily do searches, use handcuffs, shields and such. They rarely experience that the police try something else first. Use of force and means of force feels like part of the police's routine.

Children who use violence have many important rights. These can be broken, for example, when children experience being questioned and interrogated by the patrols outside, without the children understanding whether they are being spoken to as witnesses or suspects and what this entails. Children ask all police officers to take responsibility for and understand the seriousness of the fact that children have strong rights and that these are inalienable. Children should not be questioned either as a witness, offended or suspect in critical situations. For children, it can be difficult to understand the reporting and witness responsibilities in the correct way, or to understand that you, as a suspect, have no duty to explain yourself. The police cannot put children in such difficult situations. It can be dangerous for the legal security of children. The rights and consequences of talking must be explained to children in a calm and safe environment.

Action plan with knowledge from children

The Ministry of Justice will draw up a new and revised action plan against child and youth crime. Many action plans have been made before. The main answers in this survey say that although adults have meant the best, many measures and initiatives have helped little. The content of the new action plan will be important and it will be important that knowledge directly from children is given a fundamental place.

Education and training with knowledge from children

The Police University College's basic education and further education are changed regularly. The police districts have regular training days. There are many opportunities here to include more knowledge directly from children.

Children ask that knowledge directly from children is part of basic and further education, and the training days for professionals around Norway. It must be included in order for the police to be able to meet children more safely, more helpfully and effectively. Parliament politicians, ministries, directorates and the police academies are responsible for ensuring that the knowledge children have about what feels like safe and useful police for children is part of education and training.

Recommendation

The Director of Public Prosecutions makes a circular and a guideline stating that children can't be questioned on the spot and that children must be questioned safely and in a way that safeguards their rights

- ♥ The Ministry of Justice revises the Criminal Procedure Act so that what the police do, becomes safer for children. Knowledge from children is shown more clearly in the law.
- ♥ The Ministry of Justice and the Attorney General provide clearer guidelines for the use of force and means of force against children.
- ♥ POD (National Police Directorate) creates a training program on children's rights in encounters with the police and on how the police can stop children safely.
- ♥ The action plan of the Ministry of Justice thoroughly incorporates knowledge directly from children.

Framework for school and help systems

New legislation can contribute to a safer framework

The government proposes new laws for the Parliament and politicians. They are responsible for ensuring that the laws contribute to schools and help services that feel safe and useful for children. Children's rights can become more distinct in new legislation. Children's right to get information, to privacy and to express themselves freely, can be given a more important place. The descriptions in the laws of how to assess the child's best interests could be more in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

A new Children's Act can specify children's rights according to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and will and thus provide a safer framework for all children in dealing with all the public systems.

A new Education Act can contribute to safer schools for all children, including the children who are having a hard time or are hurting and show this at school by using violence. Norway can opt out of sections that give the adults in the school the opportunity to use force, with the exception of lawful self-defence or necessity. The paragraphs about giving consequences to children through grades for order and behaviour and through demerits can be replaced with paragraphs more in line with the rights children have, according to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The Child Welfare Act can ensure that the Child Protection System can't introduce measures in the family of a child who uses violence, without the reasons why the child does this being revealed. The law can also ensure that children who use violence are not forcibly moved to residential child care institutions for a year. It can be changed so that children can only be forcibly moved to residential child care institutions for a short period of time, and that the adults during this time have great responsibility for managing to make it safe enough for children, so that the child can get better.

Guidelines, routines and measures with knowledge from children

State guidelines are revised and new ones are made. In municipalities and services, routines are made for how to meet children who use violence. Municipalities have routines that describe what the adults in the school should do if a pupil uses violence. The descriptions can better secure children's rights. Children must be given information and be told if what they say is shared with other adults. The routines must ensure that children can speak safely.

Guidelines for the Child Protection System's responsibility for children who commit offences describe the measures the Child Protection System must use when children use violence or commit other crimes. Here, the measures can be based to a greater extent on main answers from children who use violence.

Schools and support services around Norway can revise their initiatives and measures and ensure that they're based on children's rights and include knowledge directly from children. Measures in schools, the Child Protection System and BUP which aim to treat children for symptoms or which are based on the child's behaviour, must be assessed in light of children's rights and the main answers from children about what measures are useful.

Competence built on what children need

More competence is often the answer when challenges arise. When children show strong expressions of hurting or are perceived as dangerous, children are often referred to professionals with even more expertise. But does Norway have enough knowledge from children themselves about what kind of competence children who use violence are in most need of? Do we know that more expertise in itself will ensure that the systems for children feel safe? Based on knowledge from children, schools, help services and the police must employ enough adults with personal experience from being in these systems to help children who use violence.

Recommendation

- ♥ Children's rights become a clear part of the Children's Act, the Education Act and the Child Welfare Act
- ♥ Guidelines and routines are based on children's rights and on children's main answers about what makes services and measures safe and useful
- ♥ Measures based on symptoms and behaviour, are revised. It's ensured that all measures under the auspices of the public sector are based on the fact that children who use violence do so because something is difficult or hurting in their lives and that violence is what they're able to do, in the situations in which they use violence.
- ♥ Higher education and competence initiatives take seriously the fact that in order to be effective, they must fundamentally build on knowledge from those whom the systems are made for.

Dear everyone

Dear ministers and politicians in the parliament, do you want to make laws that ensure that children's rights according to the Convention on the Rights of the Child become part of the new laws? Do you want to make sure that the initiatives you adopt fundamentally understand that children must get help with what is difficult or hurting and not for the symptoms they show? Do you want to make sure that higher education, competence development and other initiatives that you adopt are based on knowledge directly from children and thus contribute to making the professionals more competent based on what children perceive as competent?

Dear Norwegian Board of Health Supervision and County Governors, do you want to check the services so that more of the human rights children have are investigated? We ask you to check whether children get enough and understandable information, whether children are able to express their opinion safely and without influence, whether children's right to privacy is understood and ensured. We also ask you to check whether these rights are ensured before assessing what's in the best interest of children.

Dear Ministries and Directorates, do you want to create higher education programmes, training and guidelines so that what's important for children gets a much bigger place? Do you want to ensure that children's rights seriously become part of guidelines and training, so that it contributes to safer services for children?

Dear professionals, do many more of you, and within the current framework, want to fight for systems that ensure that children's rights are taken into account much more? And will you contribute to children's rights being given the place they are destined to have, as in all processes and decisions in a child's life?

Dear educational institutions, do you want to thoroughly revise what you teach the students - both in terms of theory, methods and skills - and find out if this matches up with advice from children and the rights children have according to the Convention on the Rights of the Child?

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WHY
VIOLENCE
HAPPENS

Important numbers

101 children have participated in the qualitative survey
The average age for first use of violence was 10 years.

The Child protection system:

90 of the 101 have been in contact with the Child Protection System
Few said that contact with the Child Protection System had made the situation better

BUP:

55 of the 101 have gone to BUP (not all of the participants answered this question)
Few said that going to BUP had helped them

Police:

96 out of 101 have met police officers who have done something good for them
98 out of 101 have had mostly unsafe encounters with the police
80 out of 101 have problems calling the police when they need help

Skolen:

83 out of 101 have experienced adults at school making them feel rejected
A small number of the children have had school social workers who have helped them
4 out of 5 children in the survey have experienced that adults in school have rejected them and met them in ways that felt unsafe

All of the children in the qualitative survey:

4 out of 5 children in the survey have experienced hurtful things growing up.

They have seen others use violence, experienced violence, experienced parents abusing drugs or committing crimes, experienced sexual abuse or experienced neglect when growing up.

45 out of 101 have experienced violence in their families

Almost none of the children in the survey have told anyone in public systems about the bad things they've experienced. Of the few who have told someone, they've experienced having their trust being broken by adults doing things without collaborating with them.

Hurt while growing up

Summarised experiences

What types of hurt children could experience while growing up:

- lived in poverty, with drugs, violence or sexual abuse
- seen parents or other family members hitting each other and felt uneasy and afraid
- had to take responsibility for siblings from a far too early age
- felt that they haven't been looked after in ways that felt safe
- parents have told them to stand up for themselves or to hit others

What it could be like for children:

- they haven't had words for these feelings
- they've learned from parents that anger is a way of showing that something hurts
- they've been taught that violence is how it should be and how things should be done
- feelings of uneasiness, fear, sadness, hopelessness and frustration have accumulated

QUOTES

It's about childhood. If it's bad at home, it often turns out that you use violence yourself.

In addition to the bad things from growing up, I learned that violence is the way to solve problems. When you feel small, it somehow becomes safer to use violence.

I was bullied. Dad said I had to show them who was boss and that I should use violence to put them in their place.

I lived at home with my parents, my father was a heroin addict and very violent to my mum. He beat and raped her.

My older brother and I lived on the run from dad for many years. Mom is kind, but couldn't protect us. Then she gave parental rights to the Child Protection System.

It reached a point where no one wanted to help me. The school didn't give a fuck. I did like my dad and defended myself with violence. Couldn't take any more shit.

At home I experienced violence and control. I wanted to get away from my family. Anger built up. First I hit the wall. Then I started to hit others who were rude to me. I had to get it out.

Hurt turns into anger

Summarised experiences

How hurt inside children could turn into anger:

- they've expressed anger or used violence when painful feelings have built up inside
- they've had a strong wish that adults could understand
- they've been funny, rude, or difficult to connect with at first
- they've first tried to speak up by doing drugs, struggling with food or other things about their bodies
- they've been able to get pain they don't want to feel out, violence becomes a kind of self-harm
- they were able to turn off feelings inside by using violence

What it could be like for children:

- they didn't want to be mean, do bad things or hurt anyone's feelings
- when they were hurting inside, the anger could come
- when the anger came, they could feel like adults didn't understand
- when adults didn't understand they were hurting, there could become chaos
- when they got more and more angry, it could hurt more and more

QUOTES

I got more and more angry over the years. People are rude to you and call your mother bad things. That's when it'll snap.

I started getting violent in elementary school. The cup was filled up then in a way. None of the teachers asked me why I was violent. I was tired of struggling with school, and at the same time just getting told off all the time. I don't think any of the teachers liked me.

You get stepped on by everyone, by teachers and other pupils. When it builds up, you become aggressive. The aggression grows, and you get more and more angry.

Experienced a lot, and couldn't do anything about it because we were young. When we got to 8th grade we didn't give a fuck and had to get it out, the police and the Child Protection System and teachers talked to us every week. But we didn't give a fuck. They tried but what they did didn't help.

It feels good to get hit when you're angry. It's almost like a type of self-harm. You're angry and want to get your feelings out, you want to be beaten.

You get your feelings out. The bad feelings. If you fight, you get it out. It's all about feelings. We didn't care about feelings. Couldn't stand emotions.

There's something that bothers us and feels bad inside us. If you haven't figured it out, you haven't done your job. No one's born an asshole. Something's happened. There's something bothering us.

Don't feel liked

Summarised experiences

How children could feel they weren't liked:

- they've experienced what it's like not to be liked by other children
- they've been called bad things that have hurt
- they've had few friends because no one wants to play with them
- they haven't been invited to birthdays and activities
- their family's had less money, been from a different culture, or been in the Child Protection System

What it could be like for children:

- it felt like they weren't good enough for anyone
- they've felt that there's something wrong with them and that they're less worth
- they've turned their feelings off when it felt like something was wrong with them and that they were worth less
- anger became a way to hide their feelings
- they've used violence so that the feeling of being worth less wouldn't take up space inside them
- they've become someone else on the outside when the pain took up a lot of space inside them

QUOTES

School wasn't the place for me. I ran around the halls a lot and caused trouble. I found reading and writing and that stuff difficult.

My football teammates didn't like me and yelled that I was bad. I swore at the coach and left the team. I didn't give a fuck about football for many years.

People told me straight up that I wasn't handsome. Norwegian boys told me I was ugly. When you become violent, it's about many things that have happened before, it builds up inside you. I get pissed off if I see people bullying.

They don't know what we've been through. Norwegian children don't want to hang out with those of us from families where the Child Protection System is involved. In our culture you have to include everyone, but it doesn't work like that where I live.

Mum means everything to me. I'm raised to think that mothers are the dearest thing we have. It hurts my feelings when people mess with her.

We can tell that they think badly of us. The looks they give us are a little scary.

He has the "I know better than you" attitude. We get enough of that at home, no need to go to the youth club to experience it.

Want to belong

Summarised experiences

How children could feel they didn't belong:

- they've felt uneasy or unsafe in their families
- they haven't had friends or a class where they felt they belonged
- they haven't had anyone to talk to about what they were feeling
- they haven't had adults they felt safe with and could tell important things to

What it could be like for children:

- they could feel left out, lonely, of little use, like a bother or a bother to society
- they looked to be in friend groups with others who felt many of the same things
- they've fought, robbed, committed violence or crime to protect each other and themselves
- they've tried hard to continue to belong to the friend group

QUOTES

It's like having an extra family, we see each other as brothers. It's like having two families. The one at home and the gang outside. We've known each other for so long we don't want to leave each other. We fix what's needed.

My friend listens to me because he knows I know what it's about. We always have each other.

Either way, you always have to stand up for yourself and your gang or you'll be seen as weak. You get a reputation for being a clown. You're seen as a sucker for a good while. You have to have your group, if not, you don't have anyone.

They can't trick us. We know everything that's happening. None of us are gonna let them start. It's love. We look after each other.

It's about your friends. If it's normal in the friend group, then violence becomes the way to express yourself and solve things.

2

SCHOOL
experiences and advice

EXPERIENCES

The view of children

Summarised experiences

How children could tell how adults viewed them:

- they quickly noticed how the adults at school looked at them
- they could tell if an adult they didn't know, had gotten information about them
- they noticed it in their eyes, words or body language
- they could tell when they were put in roles they didn't want, by other children or by adults
- it felt like some adults saw them as difficult, from when they were new at school
- they got more sceptical and suspicious words than warm words and hugs
- they were talked down to, criticised or taken out of the classroom
- they knew if adults were afraid of them based on how they looked at and spoke to them
- they felt adults might be afraid of them based on where they were placed in the classroom
- they noticed when an adult understood that they didn't have bad intentions, even if they were hard on the outside

What it could be like for children when they thought adults viewed them in a bad way:

- it could create painful feelings and a lot of insecurity inside them
- they could lose trust in adults and see them as someone who wishes them harm
- they lost the motivation to try
- they gave up on thinking of adults as someone they could trust or collaborate with
- it could feel like it was adults against children

QUOTES

The people at school didn't understand shit about the reasons behind my actions. I was different and was bullied. They didn't know that either.

They think I have ADHD or something. Teachers talk shit about me, and the other pupils talk shit about me and my family.

When teachers at school reported me [to the police], I said to the teacher, listen, I don't care if you report me. They don't like me and then, in a way, it's all over.

The people at this school judge in advance. One time something had happened, some fighting, and they just assumed it was us. It actually hurts a little. And you just get so tired of it.

I said straight out that I was being bullied and that a pupil had hit me. But I was the one who got blamed.

An adult grabbed me, and then I hit.

I went from being quiet to being angry. I became that problem child. You end up in a bubble, where you can't talk to the adults. They don't understand, don't have time and you lock yourself up inside yourself. Then I can't talk about what hurts at home.

I learned from the age of seven or eight that I wasn't worth anything and I wasn't good enough.

It seemed like the school was prepared for me not being clever or something. Because they were on me right from the start.

The adults didn't like me and it turned into a war. We went against each other all the time.

I ended up having the same view of myself as the view adults had of me.

I dropped out of school because I felt like they treated me differently. They treat me differently than others. I'm seen as a difficult boy and problem child. It's hard to not get angry then. I think my teachers saw me as an impossible kid who would never listen.

That was the feeling I had. It was a cry from me, all I really did, was cry for help.

I didn't bother arguing about the accusations, they didn't mean that much. I just said sorry. Just wanted them to stop telling me off. 35

Fitting in

Summarised experiences

How children could feel like they didn't fit in:

- their words and actions made them less liked
- they didn't have money for clothes and activities
- they were from a different culture
- they weren't invited to birthdays, activities or parties
- they experienced bullying from other children
- some adults tried to help them fit in
- some adults asked questions in a way that made children feel they wanted to understand
- few adults were able to help them

What it could be like for children when they didn't fit in:

- the feelings of hurt turned into anger
- they used violence as protection
- it became unsafe to be at school
- they felt lonely, frustrated or sad
- they thought that adults were unsafe or afraid of doing anything
- they didn't feel like adults understood that children don't want to be mean

QUOTES

I was bullied. In chat groups, messenger and msn and places like that. I had dyslexia and there were many spelling mistakes. People teased me. I got frustrated and angry. Then I wrote even more mistakes, got even angrier and wanted to answer them with violence.

Before, we just hung out with each other, we played football and went to the youth club. In secondary school, people around us started calling us poor. There was a big difference between them and us.

I was never invited to birthday parties in primary school. Everyone would get invitations on their shelves, over their hooks in the hallway. I never did.

I had to leave class to get pills. It was uncomfortable, everyone's eating lunch and I have to go out to get pills. What the fuck is wrong.

I was jealous of the ones who had a Playstation, lots of new jackets and things like that. I had nothing. It made me not fit in properly, and that hurt.

It was me and another foreigner in the class. I was often sent out to the hallway. It became easier to learn from the other guy who was rude. Now I know I have to make threats to be heard.

Adults who understand

Summarised experiences

How adults could show that they understood:

- teachers tried to talk to children about what anger is about
- teachers didn't try to resolve conflicts then and there, but talked about why conflict happens
- adults with their own experiences of struggling could understand in a different way
- adults who wanted to talk in order to understand could, at the same time, be strict and set boundaries

What it could be like for children when adults wanted to understand:

- it became easier and safer when the adults who wanted to understand were at school
- they felt like these adults weren't after them
- when several adults with their own experiences of struggling were there it was easier
- adults could become sad and strict if they were honest about why and wanted to understand

QUOTES

At my school they have someone who's been through the same things who understands us. He was like us but has changed. Talking to him really helped.

Some of them have experienced a lot themselves, they can give advice. They talk to us about how it's not good, they regret things. It helps to talk to people who have experienced the same things.

One of the school social workers is super strict. But she isn't scared. She's been through a lot. She shares things about herself and explains why she's strict.

We like the teachers and the classroom here. They have changed everything. We feel like someone cares about us, we become motivated and happy. Life gets better.

Some teachers you just don't forget. I will never forget one of them. She's had all the hell groups. She made those who had low self-esteem have good self-esteem.

You can see the difference between the teachers here and other schools, they're more with us. When I'm sad they talk to me.

Before, I was angry all the time. I thought there's nothing in this life for me. It was gonna be prison, and I had nothing to lose. Then the guy who changed everything came along. He could understand because he didn't judge.

Sharing information with other adults

Summarised experiences

How children could tell that something was shared with other adults:

- they could tell that another adult suddenly knows something they'd only told one adult
- the adults could share small things or more serious things
- adults shared information and discussed concerns about children in groups or teams
- adults shared information without asking about the children's experience or solutions first

How it could feel like for children when something was shared:

- it could feel like someone was talking behind your back without you knowing why
- they could believe the adults wanted to help but didn't understand that it could do great harm
- they could think that adults didn't care enough to think carefully about what they were doing
- they could think that adults wanted to gain control when the children did bad or hurtful things
- they could stop caring, get angry, not give a fuck - and stop trusting adults
- they wondered if adults don't understand how much hurt it can create inside children

QUOTES

I don't believe in confidentiality. I told the teacher something, then she called the Child Protection System without me knowing. She probably has no idea how that specifically ruined everything.

They have to work with their hearts in order to make it work with children. They have to feel in their hearts what they're doing. They wouldn't go behind people's backs then.

After that we didn't trust her anymore. It makes school more difficult.

I was scared that they would create some kind of chaos at home, my mother became so sad.

In primary school they had complete overview of those practical things. If I came without a jacket, they called home. You stop trusting them.

The people at school just kept sharing things and making things so crazy big. I couldn't say a shit to them, they would've taken me away from my mum. But I should've gotten help.

When the school calls home, it doesn't help with anything, it just ruins everything. My parents can know some things, but don't talk behind my back.

Telling-off and consequences

Summarised experiences

Ways children could be told off or get consequences:

- they've experienced being told off a lot, both at school and by parents
- at school, telling-off could happen in situations in the classroom, after recess or after something in their free time that the adults at school hear about
- adults have said stern or sharp words, in a stern voice
- adults have given strict looks or spoken in a stern tone of voice
- adults have met bad feelings by calling home, give demerits, sending children out to the hallway or sending children away from school

How telling-off or consequences could be like for children:

- tellings-off from adults at school could go straight into the heart or get stuck in the body
- it didn't help them behave in a better way
- it's caused uneasiness, feeling unsafe, fear or sadness
- it's made them create protections in front of their hearts, that can become thicker
- it's destroyed their trust in adults and pushed them away from school
- it could give them a worse view of themselves
- it's made children turn off their feelings
- it wasn't accidental which adults they used violence against
- the violence was almost always against an adult they had experienced using power against them in some way, by not speaking nicely to them, being strict in an unsafe way, feeling they were rude, doing things behind their backs, or giving consequences in a frightening or degrading way

QUOTES

The tellings-off didn't get under my skin at first. But then things got worse and I got told off so much. I got angry and it started to hurt.

I was met with telling-off when I did violence. Felt like the teacher saw one side of the story and wasn't able to understand more than that.

The teachers judged me in advance and told me off. At first it hurt that they were so rude. I used to do drugs to avoid feeling what school felt like.

You become completely numb by being told off. I've gotten so used to it that I just disconnected completely. Every now and then I snap, so the hurt probably accumulates somewhere.

One teacher was so angry with me and grabbed my arm very hard. I got bruises. I was being hurt enough at home, so getting new bruises at school was painful.

Either you go crazy or you just give up. That's kind of all you can choose between.

Who invented demerits? It doesn't help. I don't know how many. Over a hundred demerits, I don't care.

I was used to extreme violence, but no one knew. On top of the violence at home, the adults at school tried to raise me.

The teacher said she did it for my own good, but that was bullshit. She did it to get the problem out of the class. That makes you angry. Another teacher understood and took me into their class.

It doesn't help to bring those who have fought in a room together and ask them to say sorry. It's gonna happen again. Sorry is just a word without any meaning.

I got a demerit and suspension. I don't care, it doesn't fucking matter. Suspension really only makes people angrier. Things went much better when they understood that.

The teachers suspended me and tried to do lots of things. But I didn't give a fuck then. They didn't understand anything. Luckily, the school social worker understood and I could finally tell what was happening at home.

During recess, I had to gain respect, sort of make up for what happened in class. People shouldn't get to look down on me, so there were threats and fights. It wouldn't have stopped if one of the teachers hadn't understood that I was a kind boy.

ADVICE FOR SCHOOLS

Violence is always about something

Children want the teachers to talk to them about feelings, about the fact that children can be different and what that means. Children need to talk about different topics like having little money, what children's free time is like, what bullying can be about and about divorce. They need to talk about what anger, joy and sadness does to children. Children need to talk about these things from an early age so that they learn about feelings and that everyone's different early.

To meet children in a way that feels safe and helpful, you have to remember that when children get angry, there's a reason why. You may, without meaning to, have done something that triggered bad feelings. That can make everything in the situation feel very unsafe. It can be a smell or sound that reminds them of something bad that's happened. Children ask that you always understand and remember that it's about something that hurts inside them. Children ask adults to explain when they feel different emotions, so that children can understand. Children know that adults in school are humans as well, and that they can become scared, frustrated and sad. Children can tell, and when adults don't explain, it feels very unsafe.

Get to know each other well, for safety

The adults in school have to facilitate in order to help the children in class to get to know each other. It's smart for children to know what the other children like and dislike, what can make them happy and what can make them sad, what can make them scared and what can make them feel safe, etc. According to children, getting to know each other on a bit of a deeper level is often a useful use of time. The children can understand each other better and feel more safe with each other. It becomes safer to be in class for different children.

After weekends and holidays, it's a good idea to get to know each other a bit again. At the start of the week there can be a tiny get-to-know-each other activity, after holidays they can last a bit longer. This is also important when a pupil is new in class or a pupil has been away for a long time. It's also nice when the teacher gets to know each and every pupil in class. Then adults can better understand why children do what they do. Maybe they come from a struggling family, maybe things aren't that good at home, or maybe they're not really thriving at school. If children are confident that you know them a little, everything becomes more safe and they can tell you things more easily.

Meet with warmth, stop safely

Meet children with humility and warmth. Children often need love from you adults in school to be safe there. Don't meet children coldly or harshly, even when they've done bad things. Remember that it's about something that hurts inside them that they maybe haven't gotten to talk about. They need human warmth just as much as any other child. School has a great opportunity to give children that love.

When children are about to do something hurtful or bad to themselves or others, they need adults to stop them safely. Children understand that adults can become scared when children have such strong expressions, but on the inside they're also scared or sad, and sometimes despairing or desperate. They need adults to tell them that they know children aren't mean but are hurting. Children need adults who tell them they care about them no matter what they do. They need adults who dare to come close and hold them, and tell them that things are going to be okay.

Reach to get to the feelings

When something bad happens and you understand that it's about something that's difficult or hurting inside the child, you have to try to reach in. You can tell the child that you know they don't want to do any harm or to be mean, and that you understand it's about something inside the child.

Questions you could ask can be:

"Can you tell me what's happening now? How does it feel inside? Do you want to tell me why it turns out the way it does? Did I do something that turned out bad for you?" If the child continues to be very angry, you can talk a bit about how you feel inside. If you feel unsure, feel sorry on the child's behalf or if you feel afraid when the child is angry, tell them that too. You can say that you're trying your best, but that you don't quite know how to help. It can help the child if you talk a bit about your feelings as an adult. You can support the child by being honest and showing the child that feelings aren't dangerous.

Assess risks of parental contact

The adults in school always have to remember that they can't know how parents are for children. You can contribute to making it worse for children at home with more violence and control. Before contacting parents, always check with the child what the child thinks. Show that you want to understand whether it's safe for the child if the school contacts their parents. If children either express through body language or say that their parents shouldn't be notified, you as an adult have to dig deeper to find out why. For example, you can say: "I know many children have a hard time at home, and that it can get worse if the school calls home. Could it become bad for you if I call home and talk to them about what happened? Can the two of us call together? I won't share what you answer now with anyone else before we've talked about how. You know your parents best and know best how it will be for you if we call home now. I want to do what's safest for you." If the child says you can't call home now, you need to find out why. Once that's done, you can assess the risk together with the child.

Make an agreement about what to share

The adults always have to collaborate with the children if something is to be shared. This applies both to parents and to other professionals. Agree at the start of a conversation in what way what the child says can be protected. This is absolutely fundamental for children to gain trust in you.

You'll only have the opportunity to help when children trust that they're able to tell you about what hurts. If you think something has to be shared, ask the child what they think about it. If the child doesn't want you to share it, you have to find out why. If the child thinks it's okay for you to share it, find out together with the child what, to whom and when it will be shared.

Understand that punishment makes it worse

When children do bad or mean things, the child usually knows inside why it's happened. Children know what they're feeling and why the bad thing happened. Adults usually don't know this correlation. Children can often think that they haven't done anything wrong. When consequences and punishments come it can quickly contribute to making something worse. It can feel like adults are starting a war and it leads to making children even angrier. They want adults to understand what they feel caused or started what's happened. Punishment also causes children to lose respect and trust in the adult(s) who hand out the punishment. Children need to get to talk about the difficult feelings they have and what they're about to be able to stop doing hurtful things. These possibilities will freeze up when consequences and punishment is used.

Bad and mean actions shouldn't be excused. Still, all adults in school need to know that these actions always have an explanation. Children don't want to be mean and they don't want to do mean things. Children do the best they can based on how they feel inside. Therefore, when children are struggling and hurting, bad actions can happen. It's very important that you as an adult meet the child with openness, understanding and warmth right then. You'll have a bigger chance to understand why the bad thing happened. There will be a much higher chance for the child and adult to work out what could happen next together as well, and the child can be given better help. Openness, understanding and warmth also help to build trust between adults and children. When children gain trust, there's a good chance that children won't want to do harm or get so angry.

3

The Child Protection
System and youth
outreach services
experiences and advice

EXPERIENCES

90 out of 101 children in the qualitative survey have been in contact with the Child Protection System. Many have also been in contact with the youth outreach services. Some have met the Child Protection System a few times, and others have had frequent contact. Some have been moved from home. Some children know that the Child Protection System is in contact with their parents. Some have tried to tell the Child Protection System what's important. Few said that the contact with the Child Protection System had helped them.

Adults in the Child Protection System

Summarised experiences

What could characterise good adults in the Child Protection System:

- tried to understand what the child's life felt like
- didn't decide what they thought before they'd talked with the child
- listened with their hearts and showed that they didn't judge the child
- showed that they understood there are reasons why violence happens
- didn't share anything about the child with others before talking to the child about it
- had personal experience from struggling and from meetings with different systems, and because of those experiences they could understand what the child has experienced and recognise the feelings
- talked with children without trying to be "loyal" to the systems
- viewed children who used violence as someone who's hurting, not as dangerous

QUOTES

One guy in the Child Protection System is absolutely fantastic. He listens to how it is and puts himself in that situation.

The woman I had before, I felt like I could talk about everything. She was very kind and tried hard to understand. She was like a buddy. I think it's because she'd also had pain in her life.

He was great, he was so open and just wanted to understand instead of talking about all the solutions.

I could trust her. I didn't trust her at first. It was the honesty that turned it all around.

When adults feel like experts

Summarised experiences

What could make adults feel like experts:

- adults could initiate measures without children taking part in the decision
- It didn't feel like adults were curious, like they didn't need to understand from the children
- adults talked "straight from the book", it felt like they knew best
- adults could have a stern and sometimes cold body language
- adults wanted to be competent and talked about how things had to be done the right way
- adults spoke harshly and used words that were difficult to understand
- adults didn't have much body language and told very little about themselves
- adults could put labels on them

QUOTES

You quickly notice the difference between someone who comes with paper and asks questions and someone who starts talking about other things. They can't talk so stiffly, then there's no point.

The Child Protection System doesn't listen well. They don't know you, but still they make up a picture of what's best for you. It's just like talking to air.

None of us have ever talked about how things have really been for us. Even though all of us think we really need to. We've helped ourselves and that's sad.

They can't decide about my life if they aren't interested in hearing about my life.

I've been in the system my entire childhood. They've started a lot of measures, but never asked me about things. They didn't understand that I was living with sexual abuse and violence.

What else is bad about the Child Protection System is that they don't believe children. They get to decide whether your arguments are good. Whether it's right or wrong. If they want to be right, they're right.

Information

Summarised experiences

What children could not have gotten information about:

- what the Child Protection System is and specifically what they can help with
- who the Child Protection System talks to
- what the Child Protection System is planning on doing
- why the Child Protection Systems do what they do
- why the Child Protection System thought they had to be moved from home

What children could have been given information about:

- stories from parents about how awful the Child Protection System is
- rumours about the Child Protection System
- some information that helped to understand what the

50 Child Protection System could help with

What it could be like for children:

- they've been afraid of being forced to move if they tell the Child Protection System anything
- they had little trust in the Child Protection System
- they'd been moved without understanding why and felt a lot of anger

QUOTES

I became unsure of what was going to happen. It made me angrier. And scared and sad.

I'd heard a lot of shit through my parents. They take children for no reason. In the middle of the night, but you don't know the story behind.

If I'd heard more about them, I wouldn't have been so negative towards them when they first were there to help.

The Child Protection System came into the classroom and asked for me. I understood that it was about me. I sat there and kept my mouth shut. Can you come out with us, they said. I refused, then the police came into the classroom. They dragged me through the school yard.

I knew that I would have to move if I said how things were, and the thought of that was scary. I knew so little about what could happen.

It was scary how they wrote everything down, because I knew I could get caught for things later. They didn't say anything about why they wrote it down.

Sharing information

Summarised experiences

How adults could share information with others:

- parents were contacted when something bad had happened
- when children tried to tell the adults, even more adults could get to know about it
- the Child Protection System told parents without assessing the risks for the child well enough
- the Child Protection System talked more with, and then knew more from, the parents than the children

What it could be like for children:

- they were scared that if they said something to the Child Protection System, it would be shared with parents, their school, the police, youth outreach services or BUP
- the Child Protection System shared small stuff, and then children couldn't tell them about the serious things
- it felt like the Child Protection System believed the adults more than the children
- they didn't tell the Child Protection System how things were for them at home
- the kind of help the family received was decided before what was difficult had come to light
- measures to fix the child were started even though they didn't know what the problem was for the child
- after the Child Protection System came into the family, there became more violence and use of force

QUOTES

You can't trust the Child Protection System. They share information. The adults talk to each other. You can't tell them anything.

They have to stop just asking and asking and asking. They use what I answer against me. Things just get fucked up if I say anything. They should spend time learning how to gain trust.

I don't understand how the ones who are supposed to help you can just take what you say and do what they and some other adults think is best.

The Child Protection System is worse than the police because they share everything with everyone. Every time I've talked with the Child Protection System, several new adults I have to talk with come along.

They expect us to trust them just because they work in the Child Protection System. But how can any adult believe that? We don't really trust anyone, so why them?

Meetings

Summarised experiences

Why meetings could feel unsafe:

- there were a lot of adults at the meetings
- the children rarely had a say in deciding which adults would be there
- they rarely had a say in deciding what they would talk about
- they rarely got the opportunity to bring an adult they felt safe with
- what was important to them often wasn't the topic in the meetings

What it could be like for children:

- it could feel like the meetings were for the adults' sakes
- the meetings didn't feel safe enough for them to be able to tell important things
- it felt like the outcome and what they were going to discuss had been decided in advance
- it didn't feel like the children had to be there
- the meetings could feel boring, hurtful or scary for the children

QUOTES

Sometimes there are meetings with the police, the Child Protection System and school at the same time. I don't understand the point of me sitting there, because they're just gonna talk about what I've done wrong and what I have to do now. They don't plan on listening, so I don't say anything either.

When I'm in those meetings, I feel like I become small and shrunk.

I turned into a negative person, when everyone just talked negatively about me. If I try to hint that I'm not feeling well, it feels like they don't want to talk about it.

When the police and the Child Protection System are going to be in meetings with the school, they've all talked together first. Why should you say anything? There's no point then.

The youth outreach services

Many of the children have met the youth outreach services.

Summarised experiences

How youth outreach services could feel safe:

- adults have felt safe and like someone they can tell
- adults have talked about themselves and seemed honest
- adults have collaborated with them about who will get to know what and how things should be done when bad situations have happened
- adults have gone with them to meet people in other systems

What it could be like for children:

- it's helped children to not use violence when things hurt, to talk about it instead
- it's helped that youth outreach services is on their "team" to get the other systems to collaborate with the children

How youth outreach services could feel unsafe:

- adults have shared information with others
- adults wrote down where the children were, when they were there and could share the information to others

What it could be like for children:

- they've lost a lot of trust
- it's felt like the adults were "monitoring" and controlling more than helping

QUOTES

The woman in the youth outreach service feels pretty safe. We know them and they know us.

We know who her husband is, and her children. That feels safe.

If they see us, they write it down. They only want to bust us with what they're doing.

The youth outreach services are the only adults who understand us. They set up meetings to try to fix problems. We've done less bad things because of them.

They listen to us, talk to us and give us chances. They ask who I trust the most and if anything serious happens and they have to break confidentiality. Either way, they tell you before they do it. The youth outreach section are the only ones who keep their mouths shut.

ADVICE FOR THE CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEM AND YOUTH OUTREACH SERVICES

Children need to know enough

Give information in schools

The Child Protection System has to tell all children what the Child Protection System is, what they can help with, and what adults aren't allowed to do. They have to say that adults aren't allowed to use violence, say cruel things to children or do hurtful or bad things to children's bodies. They have to use concrete examples when explaining. Children have to be told how to contact the Child Protection System, and what happens if they tell them something. The Child Protection System also has to say that most children receive help at home, but that children also can be moved to a foster home or residential child care institution.

Give information during the investigation

To be sure that children know what the Child Protection System is and can help with, you who work in the Child Protection System have to give each individual child information about this at the beginning of the investigation. This has to happen every time you meet children for the first time. Children need you to be honest about everything, to be able to talk about what's most important and to be sure that you wish them well. Tell children about all the information you have about them. They need to know what you know from parents and others, what you think and believe should be done and about the plan going forwards.

Safety is most important

Talk to the child first and alone

The most fundamental thing for children to feel safe enough to be able to talk to the Child Protection System, feel safe knowing what the Child Protection System will do if they say anything, and knowing that the Child Protection System first and foremost is there for them. Therefore, you always have to start off with meeting children alone, also when they're younger. Children have to be given the opportunity to bring an adult they feel safe with, and be told that they have the right to this in conversations with the Child Protection System. Ask children in a safe way and without other adults present, if they want to talk to you alone and if they want to bring a safe person with them.

Agree on what information to share

It's important that you always tell the children that you won't share anything before you've made an agreement with the child about how it will be done. It's also important that after each conversation with a child you figure out what can be shared, to whom, when it should be shared and how it should be done. If the child says no to you sharing anything, you need to find out why the child is saying no, in order to protect the trust the child has in you.

Believe children

Children need you to believe them. Believing children means that when they tell you something, you believe their experience of the situation. You take it in and ask more questions to understand. There often aren't any facts, but there are different experiences. That's why you always have to take children's experiences seriously and believe them. Children notice that you believe them when you react with emotions, ask questions and don't speak against the child's experience.

Understand that there's a reason behind it

Children understand that you can get scared when they use violence. But they need you to understand that there's a reason why and show them that you understand this. When a child has been involved in a violent incident, it's important that you, in a humble way, are curious about what was behind it. Children don't need you to tell them that it isn't okay or allowed, they often know this. When children have grown up with a lot of bad things, ice builds up around the heart, and reprimanding or lecturing the child only makes that ice thicker. That's why you always have to wonder why things turned out that way and ask the child what the child needs to feel better inside. Don't focus on the action itself, it can take you down the wrong path.

Personal experience creates trust

Almost all the children have said that the Child Protection System should use people with their own experiences a lot more. This can be a separate measure for children - that they're followed up by others who have been in the same situation. The children say they trust adults way more if the adult has been through it themselves, and they feel hopeful when they see that they've managed to move on from it. It's like a "big brother" or a "big sister". Norway should make this a much clearer priority.

Living safely

For the Child Protection System to be able to help, the child first has to live somewhere that feels safe. If it isn't safe where the child lives, it won't feel safe inside the child and it won't be possible to help either. The Child Protection System has to ensure that the child lives somewhere safe. The Child Protection System does this by asking the child in safe ways, and taking what the child says seriously. It doesn't help to force children to live in places where they don't feel safe, they often just go back to the same things as before.

Collaborate with the child

Listen carefully when the child talks

Children can tell by your face and body language whether you're really listening. In all conversations with children, you have to be open to what the children say and want to listen. You can't go into a conversation with all the questions ready, it will feel like you don't really want to talk with the child. When children talk, it's important to show that you're paying attention and care.

Decide in the best interests of the child

Before deciding on solutions, you always have to listen carefully to what the child thinks. If the child hasn't been able to talk to the Child Protection System in a way that feels safe, you can't really decide anything in their lives. What the Child Protection System decides can affect the child's life. What the child says has to be given a lot of weight when something is going to be decided. You have to come up with solutions together with the child and they have to be based on what the child themselves thinks is smart. You have to think it through very carefully if you're going to decide on a solution that's not based on what the child has said.

Assess risks of parental collaboration

Regardless of what the child may have done, you have to show that you want to understand whether it's safe for the child that the Child Protection System to contact their parents. If children express with body language or say that the parents shouldn't be notified, the Child Protection System has to go in depth to find out why. If you've talked with the adults at home first, this often determines what the child tells you. There's a much smaller chance that the child will talk to you about what you need to know. Children notice that you've heard other adults' explanations and that you have that in your head when you talk to the child.

Give guidance to parents in collaboration with the child

In order for parental guidance to be helpful and useful, it's important that the children have a say in deciding what the parents should be given guidance about. The children know their parents and live with them through good and bad times. They know what parents are good at, and what they can get better at. Without the children having a say in deciding the contents of the guidance, the guidance can miss the mark. Tell the child that you have no idea what it's like to live with their parents, and that you need to know in order to give the best possible help.

Collaborate with the child about meetings

For meetings to feel safe and for the child to see the point in taking part in them, the child has to be collaborated with about how meetings should be, in a safe way. Ask the child where and when it's good for them to have the meeting, and who the child wants to bring. If there's someone the child doesn't want in the meeting, ask the child why that is and take it seriously. Figure out with the child in advance what the topic of the meeting should be, ask the child what they want to get out of the meeting, and talk with the child about what is and isn't okay to talk about.

Make an agreement with the child what kind of signs they can give if they become uncomfortable and want you to stop or let the other adults know.

Stop in a safe way

Be honest even when you're scared

Children often understand that child protection workers also can become scared. They also know that many adults hide their fear. Children can often still see the fear in adults, for example if they become strict, quiet or talk with a strange voice. It's important for children that you as a child protection worker are honest about what you feel and talk about insecurity or fear. Saying that you also feel unsafe or afraid can make it easier for children to feel and talk about feelings. Children need adults who are good role models, and it becomes safer for children when adults are honest.

Show warmth and stop in a safe way

When you're calm, speak kindly and are warm, children often calm down. Sometimes children can still be desperate, angry or aggressive. Say that you want to help. No child wants to scare or hurt others. They want to be stopped, but they want you to stop them like a child who's hurting. Never stop to punish, but stop to help. Children have to be stopped in safe ways. It helps if you're honest and show warmth.

If you've tried with honesty and warmth and the child is still feeling a lot of pain, you can try to stop the child safely by holding around them like a hug. Tell them that you don't want the child to hurt themselves or others.

Explain to the child that it's because you care about the child so much and wish them well. Release the child as soon as the danger is over.

4

BU P
experiences and advice

EXPERIENCES

55 said that they've been to Children and Adolescent's Psychiatric Outpatient Services (BUP), but not all of the participants answered this question. Some have barely met BUP, some have been in treatment for a short time and others for a long time. Some of those who have met BUP have talked about the important things, some have barely said anything. Few said that they've received good help there.

Adults in BUP

Summarised experiences

What could characterise adults in BUP:

- therapists have quickly asked questions about very private things
- therapists have told little about themselves
- conversations have often taken place in an office
- it could feel like the therapist thought they knew best
- therapists had to show feelings and reactions for children to be able to tell important things
- therapists knew what children needed, without talking or getting to know each other enough
- BUP could draw conclusions even if children hadn't said much when they were there

What it could be like for children:

- it felt unsafe when the therapist asked private questions right away
- they didn't feel safe enough with their therapist to tell them important things
- BUP first had to create trust for children to be able to talk honestly
- they quit going to BUP if they couldn't talk about what hurt the most

QUOTES

They ask a lot of private questions. That they have no right to know. Like what I do when I'm out, who I'm with, private questions.

I quit, I didn't want to anymore. But they think I might have ADHD. They don't tell me anything about themselves, and they only ask questions one way.

BUP was cold. He just sat and wrote on the piece of paper. He just asks questions. When they don't react normally to things, it doesn't become very safe.

When you go in there and talk to a psychologist, you can feel like you're sick in the head. They don't say anything back. You don't want to open up to someone who doesn't say anything about themselves.

BUP was uncomfortable. It wasn't for me. To sit and talk to a totally random person. I didn't want to go there but I was forced to.

They think 'that's how we're going to do it, and that's how it is'. I don't feel like they know what they're talking about. They aren't experts, at least not in any way that helps me.

They talk like they know more about you than you do. They think they know what I need. But they don't know, they have to start listening to me.

They have an idea beforehand of what will help, but people are so different. One thing won't help the next person.

Sharing information

Summarised experiences

How something could be shared:

- what they'd told BUP, was shared with parents or other professionals
- BUP shared information without telling the children about it
- parents were involved early on or invited into the sessions
- the therapist spoke with the parents alone
- adults talked together about difficult situations, without the children

How it could feel for children:

- it has felt unsafe
- it has made it absolutely impossible to go to BUP
- they went there but weren't able to talk about the most difficult things
- they stopped going to BUP

QUOTES

BUP is just nonsense, it doesn't work. They try digging, but they share things with others and you can't trust them.

BUP is awful. They send us there, but it doesn't work. You don't want to talk with them. Can't trust anyone there.

There was a lot to think about, which is why I had little concentration. If the guy in BUP found out, he would just share it with others.

I couldn't say anything there. My parents were waiting outside. They would be crushed.

What's most important

Summarised experiences

Ways it could feel unsafe to talk about what was most important:

- the questions were too superficial and not about what was most important for the children
- the therapist didn't go into what the children said enough, but moved on to new questions
- the therapist didn't continue on the topic children brought up, but on standard questions
- the help didn't become very helpful

QUOTES

They weren't good at asking about the right things. Like it had nothing to do with what I said, it went a wrong way. They jump from question to question, from one thing to another. In their own world.

Got a question about how things were. Things are normal. And then he started talking with another patient.

When you experience things like that (rape), you become different. I told my psychologist at BUP about the rape, but we didn't talk much about it.

They have to stick to the topic. The important thing is that they're able to talk about something, get into it and find out how they can help me within that topic.

Diagnoses

Summarised experiences

How diagnoses could be decided:

- they were first given a form with a lot of questions
- few of the questions were about something the children thought was important
- BUP made diagnoses and gave help that was about the diagnoses

What it could be like for children:

- it felt like there was no point in speaking honestly, when everything was about diagnoses
- the diagnoses children get when they use violence felt very mean
- the diagnoses feel like descriptions of a mean person
- it felt like they were looking for something wrong with them

QUOTES

They talked a lot about diagnoses. They thought I had attachment issues but didn't do any tests. And I quickly understood that they couldn't help me.

They just look at the things I've done wrong. When you go in to find a diagnosis, you'll find it. They find it, but is it right?

You can't be honest there. They recommend personality disorder. I'm gonna lie, what other choice do you have? Who wants those descriptions?

ADVICE FOR BUP

Safety is most important

Show warmth

Children ask you to be warm and show feelings. Warmth is in the eyes, in body language, in the tone you speak with and the words you use. Children need you to show emotions and react along with them. It's good if you say how it makes you feel to hear what the child is telling you. It's good if you cry a little or get frustrated together with the child.

Understand that there's something hurting

When children use violence, it's an expression of something that's hurting inside the child. If the child is going to gain enough trust in you to be able to receive good help, they need you to understand that the violence is about something that hurts. You can't remove the anger without removing what's hurting. Therefore, don't start talking to the child about how much violence they use, how often, etc. Instead, start by telling the child that you understand there's a reason why, that you understand the child isn't mean and that you want to help.

Don't pressure children to go to BUP

When a child doesn't want to go to BUP, don't try to pressure or persuade the child. Children who've been pressured or persuaded to go to BUP say it makes them lose a lot of trust in adults and they can become even more angry. The children feel that when they're sent to BUP when they don't want to, time in their lives is being wasted. Children can think the adult could have used that time to find out together with them what they want help with and how they can get this help so it becomes useful instead.

Collaboration

Equal collaboration

To collaborate with children in an equal way, you have to understand how much knowledge the child has. You have to remember that you need to collaborate with the child in order to give them good help. You can't know what the child needs without talking to the child first. For children to be able to have a say in what's going to be decided, the child needs to know enough about the situation and the alternatives. Decisions have to be made in collaboration with the child.

Assess risks of parental collaboration

Remember that you can't know how the parents are for the child. Children can be afraid they might worry or disappoint their parents. They may be afraid that parents will use force or violence. BUP always has to assess the risk of sharing things about the child and what the child has said with parents. BUP always has to make an agreement with the child if parents are going to be involved in the treatment. Regardless of what the child may have done, you have to show that you want to understand if it's safe for BUP to contact their parents. If children express with body language or say that their parents shouldn't be contacted, BUP can never do it without first going in depth to find out why.

Give the opportunity to talk safely

For children to be able to talk about what hurts and the reason why they use violence, it has to feel safe first. To be able to talk safely children need to know what happens when they tell. Meet children alone first, or with someone they've chosen themselves and who they feel safe with. Tell the child at the very start of the first conversation that you'll make an agreement with the child before you share anything with someone else. And remember, you always have to keep to the agreement. After each session, find out together with the child whether anything should be shared with someone else. If something is going to be shared, remember to make an agreement about what, to whom, when and how it's going to be shared. This determines whether children can talk safely.

Flexible and outside the box

Children want therapists who are flexible in the way the sessions are set up. Sessions have to be possible to have at different times during the week, they need to last longer than 45 minutes if needed, and you have to be able to meet them outside the office. By 'outside the box', children mean that you give a little extra, by being available over the phone in the evening when needed, that you do fun things with children to build trust, or that you can do other things than talk.

Understanding for those who use violence

Understand that all children have empathy

Therapists can say and think a lot of different things about children who use violence. But you can never think that children ARE violent or dangerous. There's always a reason why children do what they do, and violence is an expression of something that's hurting. Children do the best they can. Sometimes violence can be the only thing a child is able to do. It still doesn't define the child. All children have empathy, but when there's chaos inside children, they can act in ways that may seem unempathetic. Therapists can't think that children lack empathy, are dangerous or violent. Children will notice that, and often shut off their feelings to protect themselves.

As few forms and diagnoses as possible

Forms that map what children do and can do, how dangerous they are and whether they have empathy for others can feel very hurtful. Children's answers to questions and forms like that depend on the adult. Forms can contribute to making children shut down, it feels too painful to be viewed like that. It can also enable children to do even more dangerous things. To help a child who uses violence, you have to stop defining how dangerous they are and instead find out how much they hurt inside. For BUP to be useful for children who use violence, they need a BUP that can help them without giving a diagnosis. Therapists have to systematically work to get to what lies behind the actions and the reason why there's violence.

Understand that children don't choose to use violence

For mental health services to be able to help children who use violence in the best way possible, the clear advice from children is that there has to be a completely new way of thinking. The way of thinking that's been used until now, with giving consequences, punishment and focusing on behaviour, has to be renewed and become wiser. To achieve this, there has to be an understanding that violence isn't something children do because they choose it, but actions that happen because it's what children are able to do, in the situation they live in first. Built on this understanding, there has to be a belief that children who use violence should get help. Many people understand this when it comes to drug addiction. The time has now come for adults who make decisions to also understand this about children who use violence. Children need help with what hurts inside them. Then the violence can stop.

5

POLICE
experiences and advice

EXPERIENCES

96 out of 101 children in the qualitative survey have met police who've done something good for them. At the same time, 98 out of 101 have had mostly unsafe encounters with the police. 80 out of 101 answered that they have problems with calling the police, when they needed help. All the children in the survey have met one or more people in the police who have felt safe or helpful.

Safety and goodness

Summarised experiences

Ways children could tell what view adults in the police have:

- the way they viewed children and the way they walked
- the words they used and the way they spoke
- it could take 10 seconds to tell whether it was a safe or unsafe police person coming

What could characterise safe and good adults in the police:

- the adult was calm, even in critical, difficult situations
- the adult didn't control the situation with a loud voice, authority and force
- the adult managed in chaos, with words and body language, to help children to calm down
- the adult set boundaries and stopped children in a way that felt safe
- the adult didn't focus much on bad or hurtful things children did
- the adult saw what good the child did and the child's capabilities
- the adult asked thoroughly what was behind the actions
- the adult wasn't looking to punish them
- the adult gave honest information or explained why if they couldn't give information
- the adult was calm, respectful, kind, nice, funny
- the adult was relaxed and didn't take themselves in their

role as police so seriously

- the adult seemed sure of themselves, and dared to share some personal things
- the adult showed understanding when life was difficult and genuinely cared
- the adult could send a text in the evening or celebrate when children had achieved something that felt important to them
- the adult could wake children up for school or help with other practical things

What it could be like for children:

- they felt like the adult wanted to help rather than punish and that created more trust
- they tried to be kind to and protect this adult
- they didn't get angry as quickly with or do anything hurtful to this adult
- they found it easier to tell about something important the police needed to know in order to help

QUOTES

I didn't have to wonder what they were going to do. They said it in a calm way, it became totally clear. I calmed down too. When I realised they wanted to help and not get me, I believed in them. They could've taken out the baton, and it would've been chaos - and then there would've been violence against the police.

One policewoman always takes the time to talk to us. She always asks if everything's going well when she stops us. She works in prevention, they're often a little different. She's tough, but damn kind.

One policeman gave me snus and a cig in detention. He seemed nice. I felt that he didn't judge me. He was a relaxed guy who dared to be completely alone with me. He treated me like a normal person, not like a prisoner.

Young policewomen realise that they can't use power. One time I was dragged to the ground by a policeman and he put his knee on me, a policewoman pulled him away. They're more caring, are easier to talk to and more honest than angry policemen.

I felt they solved it all perfectly when I was standing there with the iron pipe. I got to sit down - got a coffee and got to listen to music to calm myself down. No nonsense happened. I don't remember what they said or did, just that they were so calm.

You can see it in their eyes. They don't come with that scary look. They come with a calm face and smile and are pleasant. You can tell by the way they are right away.

That one policeman sits down next to us and talks about his life. He says that we can let him know if there is something, and we can also figure things out together. Everyone has to be like that, then there won't be so much crime.

A policeman made an agreement with me that he would pick me up every day from school. He understood why I was struggling.

One police contact has been genuinely concerned and cared. Like, she doesn't just think 'another number in the pile'. Then she can be strict in other situations, I feel she has respect for me. I've begun to care about her.

One policeman is really nice. He listens to us and shows that he's there to help. We told him about a policeman who'd treated us badly, and he said we should report him.

We met a good policeman who treated us like we're children. He was calmer and he talked to us.

We've started to feel safe with some of the people in the police. They've known us for a while. We know they're good people. But in the last few months, a lot of new police officers have come to our area. They just go straight in. Just because we're foreigners, they question us and bodysearch us.

The police can't be strictly by the book or nazi for law. It can't feel like you're being caught even though you're talking to them. Some come and aren't strict, they're more gentle and careful. They're chummy. We trust them then and I think that helps them too.

She doesn't come acting top-down. She says hi I'm Anna, not hi I'm the police. It's about which end it starts in. Don't start with being an authority.

Collaboration between adults

Summarised experiences

What the police could do to make collaboration unsafe:

- gave information to other adults without telling children first
- called parents without making an agreement with children first
- contacted parents quickly, without first checking whether it was safe for children
- gave information to and collaborated with adults in other systems about children, without their knowledge
- created solutions and measures without children feeling that they were most important in the collaboration
- had meetings where the adults had talked together first, without the child

What it could be like for children:

- felt like the police, as a basis, thought parents are good for their children
- it could feel dangerous when the police collaborated closely with parents
- felt like the police didn't have confidentiality, which created mistrust and uncertainty
- they didn't feel they could be honest with the police
- it felt meaningless when the adults had talked together without the child
- they didn't say that they'd experienced violence or sexual abuse in their family

QUOTES

It becomes scary for us when the police call parents right away. Most often you just get even more told off at home. Now I try to be at home as little as possible.

The police contact the Child Protection System services immediately way too often. It doesn't feel like they care. I don't know why they think everything has to go through the Child Protection System.

The police have only seen the case right then and there, not the whole case. They tell it the way they understand it. But they don't understand everything. Then they share things that are wrong. They tell the wrong things to our parents.

I don't say how things are for me at home. Why should I do that? If I tell the police, they're just going to tell both the parents and the Child Protection System. I don't feel like I can trust anyone.

When I was caught the first time for drugs, I was in the eighth grade. I didn't want them to contact my parents. They seemed kind and said "no, we won't do that". But they did it anyway. After that I just felt that I'm alone and can't trust any adults.

We had a conversation with the police. They said they didn't have to call home, if we just wanted to tell them. But afterwards they called home and said they were worried about us.

It's so unnecessary. Got a message that parents wouldn't be contacted. Just before the meeting they say they have to contact my parents after all.

Prejudice

Summarised experiences

What children could feel the police judged them on:

- where they're from or where they live in the city
- skin colour or style of clothing
- that they'd been in contact with the police previously, even if it was a long time ago

What children could experience the police doing:

- came to them when something bad had happened in the area
- seemed suspicious before talking to the children
- made up their minds before talking to the children
- throwing suspicion on dark-skinned people or someone of other origins

What it could be like for children:

- it severed all trust in the police
- it felt unsafe and useless
- they had problems calling the police if they needed help

QUOTES

I get stopped all the time. They're looking for guys with my looks. I want out of that circle, but now it feels like the police are dragging me in.

They see us as criminals. Then we feel like criminals. Even if you don't want to be, you get dragged into it.

When the police stopped me last time and wanted ID, I knew what was going to happen. And it happened. Five minutes later I was in handcuffs. It's so basic it hurts.

They expect respect but don't give respect. It becomes a war because of things like that. You feel respect when they're open and listen to us properly.

The police shouldn't judge me based on the paperwork. They have to meet me in that exact situation. Before they come, they really shouldn't get to know what I've done in the past.

None of the Norwegians were stopped, but they stopped our gang who were foreigners. They're racist.

When we sit with Norwegians, they're nice more often. They say we fit the descriptions they've got. "Stand there. I'll tell you when to speak!". We feel like dogs.

I was stabbed. But I didn't dare tell the police, I was scared of getting punished myself.

They judge you, decide what you're going to do and how you're going to do it, without understanding that there's more behind it.

Information about others

Summarised experiences

What kind of information the police could ask children for:

- their friends
- incidents the police were curious about

What it could be like for children when they were asked to give information about friends or incidents:

- they could be beaten, tortured and excluded by children or adults in their circle
- it felt like the police used them to get others and they gave up on the police
- it didn't feel like the police wanted to help when they asked children to "snitch"
- they could take punishment for something they hadn't done, to avoid saying anything
- they were scared and didn't dare to be honest

QUOTES

The police have to ask without tattling. They have to ask why things happen and what makes you do them. But they can't ask about what the others are doing.

I was convicted in a robbery I didn't commit because I was present when it happened. I couldn't rat out my friends. Then I had to go along with what the police said.

If I say something about others, I quickly end up in trouble. The police have to understand that they can't use us teens in ways like that.

In a case involving ten people, the police ask what we know about what the others did. They want to know everything, all the time. That's why they stress about us telling them, but I don't want to. If you don't tell, you have to take the consequences, the police say.

He tried to use me to say who else was selling drugs, or to catch people. I stopped talking to the police then. But they don't get that that's how it's connected.

Controls and body searches

Summarised experiences

What it could be like for children when the police checked them:

- it felt like they were being checked because they were "acquaintances of the police", not for an actual reason
- it felt like the police were exaggerating or not being honest
- they didn't know the difference between when the police came to talk or bodysearch them, that made it feel uncertain and unsafe
- they've become scared of being outside
- they kept being checked or body searched, even though they were trying to fix their lives
- they felt like the police were still after them, even though they'd started being able to do good things
- it created anger and shame when they're being stopped and they knew there weren't any reasons
- it felt embarrassing and destructive, when they were stopped and body searched where others saw it
- it felt just as bad every time, even though they'd been stopped many times before

QUOTES

It feels like we can't move without being stopped. We get body searched for no reason. It creates a lot of despair.

The worst is when they stop me in front of my siblings or my mum. Anger grows and it hurts in my heart.

Because the police have found a machete on someone, so much unnecessary stuff happens. When you're with family, or girls or others, it's degrading to be stopped. They check your whole body, you become very small.

When we hang out at the mall, they call the police and we get restraining orders. After only two months, the police have started to body search us. They're not allowed to, but they do it.

I get paranoid and palpitations when I see the police. Think they're gonna stop me. Even though I haven't done anything a lot of the time.

The police can't use our names, then people realise that the police know us. If we're there with girls, what do they think? It's embarrassing and afterwards I get angry and sad.

Some days five cars come and we have nowhere to go. We get handcuffed and body searched. We can't resist, then they'll put us to the ground.

I'm an "acquaintance of the police", the police have too much time on their hands. They come over calmly. Checking me in front of people, everyone sees me.

Even though I try to fight less, the police make it difficult. They know I'm friends with people, and whenever something happens, they bring me in. They keep making me a criminal in a way, even though I want nothing more to do with it.

I haven't done anything for almost 2 years. But some of the police officers are still keeping an eye on me. It becomes impossible to get rid of the stigma. I think "get over it, leave me alone". Fortunately, some of them brag, that helps.

Use of force

Summarised experiences

What kind of force the police could use on children:

- use harsh words and stern voices
- body searches or put them on the ground
- use handcuffs or pepper spray
- put them in a security cell
- use a dog to threaten them
- grab the child's arm quickly or hard to gain control
- use more force than necessary to gain control
- afterwards not apologising or talking properly about the situation

What it could be like for children:

- defences built up inside them
- they felt they had to stand up for themselves and became angry and harsh towards the police
- they reacted on instinct, like a reflex, when met with force
- they felt they were treated unfairly and judged in advance
- they felt they were put back to when they grew up with violence, threats and control
- they had major reactions, could freeze and have flashbacks to previous sexual abuse
- they were injured and got new traumas from encounters with the police
- they lost trust in the police when the police used force against them
- use of force didn't feel useful, and they couldn't understand that the police were trained that way

QUOTES

I don't care. I'm not scared. I got so used to it. I can't feel anything. They've brought shields countless times. I have so many police cases on me, so what do I have to lose?

Eventually, when you're met harshly by adults, you think you can do the same back. You protect yourself.

Before, I could never hurt adults, but after being met so harshly, it just becomes a reflex.

When the police are harsh and authoritarian, it becomes a fight over who's in charge.

If I don't stand up for myself I feel like an insulted idiot.

They have to understand that I'm just a 16-year-old boy. They threaten. Then I get angry, what should I do then? They're so tough.

The police have used a lot of force against me, even though I've walked alone and totally peacefully. Now I've become scared of going out alone.

The police think they're higher up than everyone else. If I'd thrown them to the ground, they would've reported me.

With a police uniform, they can become completely different people. They're not like that with their own children.

They can drive at full speed after me and handcuff me. Once it happened early in the morning and they didn't say sorry.

Violence only makes everything worse. Don't use violence on young people. The more violence we experience, the more we hurt inside. We can become drug addicts because we've experienced so much violence.

The police have given me a lot of anxiety. I feel it in my body, I've gotten traumas. I get images in my head and I struggle with anxiety attacks today.

If they'd wanted to talk to us, we wouldn't have run. After being thrown to the ground so many times, terror spreads through the body when they arrive.

They don't have to come four police officers to meet a 14-year-old. It's better if someone who feels safe holds around him, so he can feel safe.

One time they wanted to search me without reason, but I refused. Then they slammed my head into the hood and handcuffed me.

The police only trust their own. They can report us for nothing, and at the same time they can lie and threaten us. That's why many teens do criminal things. They don't have respect for them.

I think the police can help us, if they get to know us. And talk nicely with us. Most of them start with a rude tone. It seems like they're trying to show who has the power. It only makes us even more angry.

ADVICE FOR POLICE

Safety is most important

Remember, it could have been your child

Children who use violence or commit crimes are still children. Remember that when you meet children out on the street or in difficult situations. It could have been your child. What could be different is that the children you meet may have been through many difficult and painful things. They may have grown up feeling unsafe, with conflicts, neglect or violence. They may carry feelings they don't know what to call or how to talk about. They might not have met any adults who have taught them to talk about feelings, or they've felt safe enough with, to talk about how it feels to be them.

Children ask that you meet all children who have been angry or used violence with openness. They'll tell by the way you look at them, if there's warmth in your eyes, in the way you talk to them and in your body language. They'll notice it in your words, if you meet them with humility and with warmth. That can make it possible for the child to think you wish them well. It can help the child not end up in situations where they use violence and harsh words.

Safety first

As a police officer, you always have to take the main responsibility for how the communication between you and a child will be. Children who do bad and illegal things don't have the same opportunities as you in the police to make it safe between the two of you. You're the adult, and the child is a child. Safety can be created on the street, in a concern conversation, when a child is arrested, or in interrogation.

Good police officers say their name, share a little about themselves, explain well, are patient and show clearly that they want to help. They focus on the child's strengths instead of talking about the bad thing the child just did. That will make it possible to create trust and a space to talk about the painful and hurtful things.

Speak in a kind way

Children ask you as the police to be calm and talk in a kind way, even when you have to set clear boundaries or clearly let them know something. Even when children are harsh and rude, they need you to help melt the layers of ice that have built up in front of their hearts to protect themselves. They ask you to be humble and meet children without prejudice. It's not the same as being naive or gullible. A hug, sharing a little about yourself or showing you trust the child by giving them your mobile number can be important. Children also ask you to use humour in a way that feels safe. Not humour that can feel condescending or scary. Smiles and laughter can break the ice and make it feel safe.

The police can't greet children out loud by using the child's name if you meet outside and the child is with others. It can create the impression that the child is either an acquaintance or a regular of the police or someone who "snitches" to the police. This can put the child in an embarrassing, difficult or dangerous situation. It may be safer for the police to say hello. You have to make an agreement about this with each individual child.

Collaborate with the child

Collaborate directly with the child

If the police want to contact a child, try to contact the child first, not through the parents. If a letter is sent home, parents may become worried, scared or angry. Parents could open letters with "police" on the envelope. Try to contact the child by text, chat, phone, snapchat or instagram - or try to do it wisely through their school. Children need to know that it's possible for them to talk to the police alone, and that what the child says will be received in a safe way. Children need to know that nothing will happen without an agreement being made with the child first.

No one in the police can try to trick a child into telling them about something serious in order to write a report or start a process, without the child agreeing with it. This applies to situations the child has been in themselves, witnessed or knows about through what other children have said. If a child has started telling about neglect, violence or abuse, work hard to keep the child's trust. If trust goes away, the police won't be able to help. For a child to be able to talk honestly, they have to know in advance what you will do if the child tells you anything.

Solutions and measures in the best interests of the child

Children have the right to be given information, to express their opinion in a way that feels safe and to be talked with before something the child has said is shared with others. When looking for good solutions or making decisions, this has to be ensured first.

When arranging meetings with professionals in different systems, children ask that the police plan them together with the child. Of those who will be in the meeting, who does the child feel safe with? Who doesn't the child feel that safe with? How can the meeting be held in the safest possible way for the child? Before anything is decided, the police have to try to make it possible for the child to describe how they experience the situation and what's important to them. When children feel that adults want to know what the child thinks and means first, and that they want to make it possible for the child to talk safely, it becomes easier to talk. This also makes it easier for the police to help the child in a good way.

Assess risks of parental collaboration

The police always have to remember that they can't know how parents are for children. Calling or going to a child's parents at home can lead to more violence and control. Things might get worse for the child at home. Children therefore strongly ask police officers to always assess the risk when contacting parents. If the police and the child agree it's best for the child not to involve the parents, the police have to find safe solutions together with the child. This could be contacting another adult the child feels safe with or talking to the child to assess together whether the Child Protection System should be contacted.

If the police intend to contact parents, they have to, as far as possible, first find out with the child how this can be done. This applies regardless of what the child may have done. If children express with body language or say that parents shouldn't be notified, children ask the police to try to find out why. Say: "I know that many people have a hard time at home, and that I can make it worse for you if I call home. I don't want that, so I need you to explain to me now. Could it get bad for you if your parents find out about this? Or do you think they can help and support you eventually, even if they might be disappointed or a little angry at first? What you answer now, I won't share with anyone else, before we've talked about how. You know your parents best and know best how it will be for you if we call home now. I want to do what's safe for you, and we have to find solutions together."

Collaborate about notifying to the Child Protection System

If you as police think you should involve the Child Protection System, be completely honest and explain your concerns to the child. Tell them about the Child Protection System and what they can help with. If the child gets scared, sad or angry and refuses to contact the Child Protection System, try to understand and ask in order to understand what specifically lies behind the child's feelings. Always remember to think about: "who is it urgent for, you or the child"?

Always try to write the concerns reported to the Child Protection System together with the child. If you think it's necessary to write something the child doesn't agree with, tell the child you can write that the child has a different experience of some of what is written in the report. Writing a concern report behind the child's back can cause the child to lose trust, both in the police and the Child Protection System. When trust is broken, children might stop telling things. If they find that what they say is shared with their parents, it can become very unsafe. They won't be able to tell the police if they've experienced something even more difficult. That takes away the child's opportunity to be protected.

Collaborate about the concern conversation

When a child is going in for a concern conversation, the police can assume the child doesn't trust adults. The aim has to be to make the conversation safe enough for children to talk about what's difficult, so they can get the right help going forward. The conversation has to take place somewhere that feels safe for each individual child. The police station isn't always the answer. It may be better to do an activity or go for a walk and have a chat. Children shouldn't have to involve their parents in the first conversation. The police can't know what it's like at home for children. Children should be given the opportunity to bring a person they feel safe with, who they've chosen, with them.

To be able to talk about topics that are a little difficult, it has to be safe. For it to be safe, you have to get to know each other a little. The police have to dare to share something personal about themselves and show how they are completely ordinary people, with families, friends and interests.

After that, the focus has to be on what's behind, and the reason why the child has done hurtful or illegal things. Focus on what's happened just now has to come later. The child shouldn't feel that they're being accused or that it resembles an interrogation.

The purpose of questions about the child's network has to be finding out who can support the child going forward, not to find out if someone's doing drugs or something else illegal.

The child has to feel that you want to find the child's strengths and that you can work together closely to find helpful solutions. The child has to be able to contact you directly afterwards. They also ask you not to give up, even if things don't go well the first time.

Stop in a safe way

Be honest even when you're scared

Children know that police officers can be scared as well, and that it's natural when there's chaos. Police officers may have learned to hide their fear, just like children have. The fear can then show up as strictness or harshness, just like in children. Children can cover up other emotions with anger, so they don't feel vulnerable, the same way police officers can do. For children, it's important that you, as a police officer, are honest about what you feel and that you show them that you're a completely ordinary person. You won't lose face. The first time a child meets someone in the police who admits to being scared, it's not certain that the child will meet this kindly. Still, it can do important things with children.

If someone from the police talks about feeling unsafe or scared, it can do something good for the child. The child is meeting a police officer who's an ordinary person with ordinary feelings. After a hard situation, where force has been used, the police should explain to the child that they did what they did because they were afraid that they or others would get hurt. Saying you feel unsafe or scared can be the beginning of reaching in to the child and at the same time teaching the child that it's okay to feel and talk about feelings.

Assess the risk of using force

Children ask you not to use force on children. Only in very critical situations such as an act of "necessity" (norwegian penal code section 17) should equipment such as shields, weapons, pepper spray, handcuffs or other use of force be an accepted solution. When the police meet children with loud shouting, use of force and a lot of control measures, children quickly lose trust.

Children ask the police to always remember what you can't know what the child has previously experienced. They may have been in bad situations where the police have used force against parents or siblings. The child may have a fear inside them that the police could also use violence against others. As someone in the police, you have to remember you can never know what a child has experienced of violence or sexual abuse. Therefore, you can never know what kind of trauma you trigger or what new wounds you create inside a child, by holding them or putting them on the ground. You also can't know what will happen when you shout loudly, are strict or have threatening body language. The police has to always assess the risks of using force and means of force up against the after-effects and new traumas it can create in children.

Needs to be able to stop safely

When children are angry, acting out or threatening, children need the police to speak calmly. The police can also share if you feel uneasiness or fear. You can say you know the child has a lot of good inside of them, that the child probably has a reason to be angry or threatening and that you don't want any harm to happen to the child. If that doesn't make the child calmer, you can ask if you can hold around them gently or give them a hug, so the child doesn't hurt themselves or others. Say to the child they don't deserve to hurt like that.

If you've used force, it's good if you say sorry and explain that you meant no harm. If you don't say sorry, children may think that you want to hurt children, and you become one of the many who have done this and the child will protect themselves from you. Say that you used force because you were scared or wanted to protect others. Also explain that you understand that what the police are doing is brutal and harsh. You can humbly ask how you can do this in a better way next time.

As the police, you have to be able to avoid putting children on the ground and using handcuffs. You also need to know how to speak kindly and warmly to children. You have to know that when children meet the police with anger, they're often just scared. Therefore, these children have to be met in the same way as the police would meet a child who looks scared.

By showing and saying you understand that the child is doing the best they can and that you know the child is actually a good person, it becomes possible for the child to see you as an adult who wants to help in a chaotic and difficult situation. A scary situation can be solved in a calm way, without using force or loud voices. This has to be tried first. When the police are on a mission and they know children will be there, using force must be avoided as far as possible.

Body search children in the safest possible way

Think through whether you have to search right now and right where you are, on the pavement, at school or in front of others. Assess whether it's worth risking the child feeling violated. If it's urgent - be as calm as you can, and say in a respectful way that you need to talk a little with the child alone. Tell them that unfortunately you now have to body search the child. Try to collaborate with the child to find a way that feels as little violating as possible. You can suggest that you go around a corner or somewhere no one else will see.

Afterwards, ask the child if they want you to come back to the gang/family/school and say something about what happened, or if the child wants you to tell the others that it was good that the child went and talked with you, and say it wasn't anything serious etc.

Always remember to find out with the child what can be shared. Others may think the child "snitches"/talks about others, so find out thoroughly with the child how rumours like that can be prevented. The police always have to explain as honestly as possible why they want to body search a child. Withholding information so children don't understand the reason can create feelings that hurt a lot. If the police absolutely have to keep something secret, thoroughly explain why. If the search hasn't led to anything, and perhaps it's eventually revealed that this particular child wasn't the one the police were looking for, explain this and apologise to the child as soon as possible. If you get the child's phone number during the body search, you can call quickly afterwards and explain the misunderstanding or mistake.

CHANGEFACTORY

KNOWLEDGE CENTRE

Why knowledge directly from children?

Children and young people have to feel that the school, kindergarten, support services, police and legal system are safe and useful for them. Children and young people all over Norway have experiences from meeting these systems and advice on how they can be the best possible. Authorities, professionals and students often lack this knowledge from children and young people, when frameworks and what constitutes good practice are to be determined, nationally and locally. Therefore, it must be brought in to a much greater extent and, together with other knowledge, be part of the knowledge base, in order to develop and ensure the quality of good systems for children and young people.

More than 10 years of collecting knowledge

For more than 10 years, Changefactory (CF) has systematically collected experiences and advice from children and young people about how they experience school, kindergarten, support services, the police and the legal system. In 2017, the Prime Minister opened Changefactory Knowledge Centre, to collect knowledge from children and young people about the public systems. As far as we know, there are few knowledge centres in Europe whose main purpose is to gather and disseminate knowledge directly from children and young people about the systems they are in. CF seeks collaboration with similar organisations.

Participatory and practice-oriented method

In order to collect, systematise and disseminate summarised experiences and advice from children and young people, a participatory and practice-oriented method is used. CF has called it the Changemethod. The Changemethod has been developed in close collaboration with children and young people. It greatly considers that children have the right to express their opinion, in ways that feel safe for them. The method consists of process descriptions and tools that help many diverse children and young people to participate. It's based closely on a participatory method used in action research, called Participatory Learning and Action (PLA).

Safety is most important

The experiences and advice are collected directly from children and young people in sessions or interviews. The sessions are organised with an emphasis on ensuring that they are experienced as safely as possible for the children and young people who participate. The adults who facilitate are, among other things, trained by children to meet children and young people with openness and human warmth. This is based on the main findings from children about what adults have to be like, in order for children to be able to tell honestly.

Experiences and advice are summarised

Experiences and advice from the sessions are documented in transcripts and other written and visual documentation. The data is summarised and systematised. No links are made to theory. Experiences and advice that are repeated by many children and young people in many places in the country, become the main answers. We call this knowledge directly from children.

Children and young people present

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

Selected publications



Not mean

Advice from 103 children on how concern conversations, interrogations and punishment can feel safe and helpful



They think they know best

Advice from 152 children on how residential childcare institutions have to be for it to feel safe living there



Wisdom about drug abuse

Advice from 58 young people on how adults have to meet drug abuse wisely



If I was your child

Advice from 55 children and young people on coercion in the Child Protection System

