

# Safe from Harm

Children's views on keeping Children safe

Dr Roger Morgan, *Children's Rights Director for England*

The Office of the Children's Rights Director has asked many children about the risks to children and young people, and how they should be kept safe from harm, illness, abuse and injury.

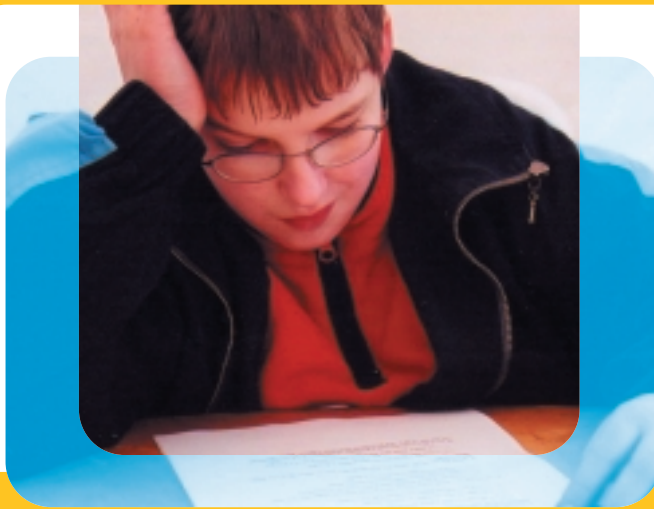
This report gives the top messages from the children's views. These views were gathered during Spring 2004 from 25 groups of children and young people. They included children with experience of fostering and adoption, groups from children's homes and hospices through to children at boarding schools and FE Colleges.



*'listen to us,  
not staff'*



[www.rights4me.org.uk](http://www.rights4me.org.uk)



*'people think that children in care are likely to lie, but adults will always tell the truth'*

## Children were asked what they thought were the biggest risks to young children

### They said:

- ★ Bullying, road accidents, illness and being abducted were felt to be the greatest risks
- ★ Sports can cause accidents.
- ★ Although the big risk is other people there are some risks you can bring on yourself
- ★ There were concerns about fire drills: 'Fire drills teach you going out and coming in while a bell rings – not how to save yourself in a fire'
- ★ Mixing children with traffic or building work is a danger
- ★ They were worried about unhealthy food, but wanted proper solutions 'you need choice, not cucumber'
- ★ You can get bullied just because you are fostered or adopted.
- ★ Staff need to realise that what they say in a jovial way can cause distress. 'Teachers' teasing can be hurtful'
- ★ Abuse doesn't just happen to little girls 'Older young people and older boys worry about abuse too – but its hard for them to say so'
- ★ You don't feel safe when social services 'dump you with strangers'



## Children were asked about what should be done to keep them safe



### They said:

- ★ 'Prosecute abusers hard'
- ★ 'If one child's been abused somewhere – raise the alarm for the other children there'
- ★ 'If you scare children you make them more aware of risks and abuse'
- ★ 'You can't make everything safe – just be aware and take care'

★ Having someone for support is very important 'Be able to choose someone you trust to take a worry to'

★ When children suggest problems, their concerns need to be taken very seriously. 'Listen to us – don't believe children lie and adults tell the truth – and listen to the quiet ones too'

★ We need to deal with the risks of the internet 'Close down chatrooms, but keep e-mails'

★ 'Have first aiders near where the injuries happen'

★ 'Train staff in how to do restraint properly'

★ Children wanted to make sure the authorities learn the lessons from the Soham murders. 'After Soham, make sure you do police checks properly'



**'some things meant to make us safer can bring new risks'**

## Children raised a number of issues on how to make sure measures to keep them safe worked in practice

### They said:

- ★ What is the best way to tackle abusers 'Do dodgy people need shooting or counselling?'
- ★ Is being in a crowd of strangers safer or more dangerous?
- ★ Adults working with young people need to think out the balance between trust and discipline.
- ★ There needs to be a proper balance between the protection of rules and allowing people to take risks. 'Too many rules might lead to breaking them'
- ★ 'It is easier for a young person to talk to a young adult than an older adult'
- ★ 'Staff need to deal with bullying without making it worse'
- ★ 'Please talk over how to deal with bullying with the victim, or you could make it worse'
- ★ Having the right equipment is not enough. 'CCTV cameras need to work properly, or they're useless'
- ★ 'Children's homes need to be inspected more often'
- ★ 'Some things meant to make us safer can bring new risks'

## The Office of the Children's Rights Director

The Children's Rights Director is an independent figure, set up by Parliament, to consult with children living away from home whose services are inspected by the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) in England, or who are being helped by social services. This includes care settings, such as children's homes and foster homes and residential education settings, such as residential special schools and boarding schools.

The Office of the Children's Rights Director is the team which carries out this work with the Children's Rights Director, Roger Morgan. The team is based in the Commission for Social Care Inspection.

## Consultations with children

All our consultations follow two key principles:

1. The groups of children and young people are selected at random for each consultation event.
2. The views of the children are reported directly and as fairly as possible. These reports give the children's views and not anybody else's.



## What we do with the results

The results of each consultation are published for use by inspectorates and other formal bodies, policymakers, social services departments, care and education services and the children themselves.

The findings are also sent to the Minister for Children and the Minister for Community Care.



If you have any comments about this leaflet please send them to:

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We particularly welcome feedback from children and young people.

**Children's Website [www.rights4me.org.uk](http://www.rights4me.org.uk)**

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