

Bright Spots programme

By Coram Voice, a registered charity



Founded 50 years ago as The Voice for the Child in Care, Coram Voice is itself the story of innovation and impact from the establishment of the first advocacy service in 1975 and creation of visiting advocacy and independent visitors services to the delivery of the national children in care council, A National Voice making change happen for children and young people in and leaving care.

The Bright Spots Programme was developed by Coram Voice in partnership with Professor Julie Selwyn at the Rees Centre, University of Oxford, with funding from the Hadley Trust. Over the last 10 years its tailored surveys have created an important national data set on subjective wellbeing of children in care and care leavers whilst the local surveys have supported innovation and improvement in local areas.

Back in 2013, the Programme asked a seemingly straightforward research question: 'which local authorities provided a good care journey for their children in care?' and the question could not be answered from the available data. Whilst there were objective measures, none of these focused on what children themselves feel about their lives (subjective well-being).

To fill this gap, four online surveys were developed to capture the views of children in care (*Your Life, Your Care* survey for each of the age groups 4 to 7 year, 8 to 10 years and 11 to 17 years) from 2013, and *Your Life Beyond Care* survey for care leavers since 2017. The surveys ask children and young people about their 'subjective well-being': how they feel about their lives at both the individual and interpersonal level.

The questions are based on the Bright Spots Well-Being Indicators, a set of measures co-produced with children in care

and care leavers about what makes their lives good. To date 80 local authorities across the UK have taken part and we have had nearly 30,000 responses from children.

The Programme helps local authorities to improve children and young people's experience by focusing change where children say it is needed. Findings are used to influence practice, service development and strategic thinking. The Bright Spots practice bank is available to inform and inspire change and the sharing of experience and [can be found here](#)

Here we share some of the work that one local authority has done in response to their Bright Spots findings. Following Hull's Bright Spots survey, where they heard from nearly 400 children in care and care leavers, the local authority and children in care, picked five areas to focus on (challenging stigma; change of social worker; bullying; family time and friendships).

It gives you that evidence base on how children feel, which is the true measure on how you're doing as a local authority isn't it?

Development Officer

Hull's Bright Spots journey

Hull's Bright Spots survey results highlighted the impact on children of changes in social worker. Children wrote about how it made them feel when the change was not managed well. Hull has worked alongside their children in care council to develop a powerful podcast of views and experiences to share how it can feel when you have a change of worker and you don't know that this is happening and the podcast is now part of every new social workers' induction.

The new practice standards in Hull (linked to the Bright Spots wellbeing domains) are clear about the expectations of what should happen when there is a change of social worker and change of worker has been incorporated into their monthly audit processes to check whether practice is changing and improving in this area.

Creative response

Posters have been created to focus on 'you said' and 'we will do' to make sure children are always told the reason for a change of worker and reassured that this change is never their fault. Other imaginative projects include an award-winning film called Dream on based on the themes from their Bright Spots findings, 'Hopes and Fears' screen prints, a card game training resource for workers called 'The cards you're dealt', writing lyrics and composing a song (Shine Bright) which has been chosen as the 'song for the city 2025'.

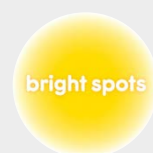
A sculpture based on 'what makes life good' was unveiled by the Hull Chief Executive and is placed in the entrance of the main council building as a reminder of children's voice and Hull have committed considerable time to disseminate the Bright Spots findings across all departments of children's social care – from student social workers right up to the Director of Children's Services and elected council members.

Sessions have been held to give staff time to reflect on the findings and what it means for them in their role – those attending were asked to make 'pledges' about what they personally could do in response to what children have said – this has resulted in individual and team commitments to 'do' and 'think' differently. Hull's new corporate parenting strategy has been structured using the Bright Spots well-being domains.

Strategic commitment

Throughout all the work a central part has been keeping children updated on what is happening and letting them know their voice has made a difference. The Director of Children's Services wrote a thank you letter to all children in care to tell them about the findings and commitments to action, it was accompanied by a 'words and pictures' story and film.

Following Hull's Bright Spots survey, where they heard from nearly 400 children in care and care leavers, the local authority and children in care, picked five areas to focus on (challenging stigma; change of social worker; bullying; family time and friendships). The use of the survey ensures the journey continues.



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getting young voices heard