Speak Up!
Children’s Rights Alliance for England (CRAE)
‘Vulnerable’ group report

1. Background information/Introduction
The focus group interviews took place in January 2012 in two secure children's homes. Children living in these secure units are there because of contact with the juvenile justice system (either through sentencing or on remand) or on welfare grounds because they are a danger to themselves or others. Both units are situated on the outskirts of cities in the south-west of England. One unit accommodates 24 children and the other accommodates 10 children. Both units accommodate children of both genders aged 10-17.

In total, eleven children aged 13-15 participated in the focus group interviews, including seven boys and four girls. The ethnicity breakdown of the children was four White British, one White Irish, one Irish Traveller, one White/Black Caribbean, one White/Black African, one Black British and two Black Other. The majority of the children were originally from cities.

We were originally due to interview three additional children. However, one had left the secure unit the day before to return home, one decided he did not want to take part, and one had a scheduled meeting with her social worker.

Preparation of the children
All the children received an information sheet beforehand, summarising the Speak Up! project, the purpose of the focus group interviews, and a draft outline of the day. The information sheet also explained that we would like to take photos and use quotations from the children and that we would need their consent in order to do so. Each child was given a consent form for them and the unit staff to complete.

The children at each unit knew each other. The children had not previously met the facilitators from CRAE.

Five of the children knew about human rights, although it was not clear whether they had been taught this at school. None of the children knew about the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

Programme/Methodology
The programme for the focus group meetings covered:

- Introduction to CRAE and the Speak Up! project
- Introductory session on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Choosing the four rights that are most important to you
- Discussions on each of these four rights
- Next steps for the project

- Secure children’s home A
The meeting was facilitated by two members of CRAE staff. The meeting took place in one of the recreation rooms – a big space with natural lighting. The pool table was
still set up but did not distract the children. There were sofas and a number of comfy chairs. The room was overseen by a glassed-in office where one or two members of staff were working.

In addition, there were two members of staff from the secure unit in the room at all times. They supported a couple of the shyer children, but generally did not take part. They did remove two, and then three, of the children during the afternoon session as a fight had broken out just after lunch. Two of those children returned after a few minutes’ time out.

Eight children divided into three groups to look at the children’s rights cards and pick out their four top rights. The groups made different choices, so a ‘hands up’ vote was conducted to choose four rights for the group. For the detailed discussions, the children were divided into two focus groups – one of four, the other of three (one boy had been taken back to his room).

The children made notes on flipchart paper about their own ideas for what rights children need. The focus group discussions were recorded and the facilitators also took handwritten notes. These recordings were then transcribed.

- **Secure children’s home B**
The interviews were conducted by a member of CRAE staff. It was not possible to interview the children as a group, so individual interviews took place. The children were brought in from their normal classes and accompanied by a member of staff who (with the exception of one interview) remained there throughout, but did not take part. The children seemed reassured by having adults who they knew there with them.

Two of the interviews took place in an interview room with natural lighting that had a television (locked up and off), a sofa, three comfy chairs, and a side table. The third interview took place in a very small space that was solely furnished with cube chairs and had no natural lighting. This appeared to be a chill-out room that was used to calm children down.

The discussions with two of the three children were recorded and the facilitator also took handwritten notes. These recordings were then transcribed. One child objected to the discussion being recorded, so handwritten notes were taken by the facilitator.

2. **Key findings**
Some of the children had prior knowledge of human rights, although the source of this information was unclear. None of the children knew about the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). When asked to identify what rights they thought children should have, however, the children chose many rights that were reflected in CRC. Some of the other suggestions for rights reflected the children’s experiences with the juvenile justice system.

Overall, the following four rights were identified as the most important:

- All children are equal (article 2)
- All children have the right to health care (article 24)
- Children have to be protected from torture and deprivation of liberty (article 37)
- No child shall be abused (articles 19, 34)
The children spoke strongly about the need to access their rights and the difficulties they had experienced in doing so due to being in custody and their contact with the juvenile justice system.

The children provided a number of proposals at a local and governmental level to ensure better protection of children’s rights.

3. Children’s awareness of children’s rights

Five of the children knew about human rights, although only one child said they had been to classes in human rights. The children had no prior knowledge of the CRC. However, in the activity where the children were asked to choose what rights they thought children should have, many rights identified were common with the CRC. These rights included education, health care, freedom, respect, opinions, travel, freedom of speech, freedom to live and protection from being a victim. The children also chose many other rights that are not explicitly covered in the CRC, including clothes, love, independence, work opportunities and child support. Other chosen rights reflected children’s experiences with the juvenile justice system, including legal advice, legal representation, and protection from police harassment.

In secure children’s home A, after the rights of the CRC were explained, the children were divided into three groups to discuss the children’s rights game and to choose which four rights were most important to them. Each group shortlisted four rights and then the whole group voted for the top four from the shortlist. The results of the vote are below in descending order of popularity:

- All children are equal (article 2)
- All children have the right to health care (article 24)
- Children have to be protected from torture and deprivation of liberty (article 37)
- No child shall be abused (articles 19, 34)

In secure children’s home B, the three children each made individual choices about which four rights were most important to them. The results of their choices are below in descending order of popularity:

- All children are equal (article 2) 3
- All children have the right to education (articles 28, 29) 2
- Children have the right to express their opinion (article 12) 2
- Children have to be protected from torture and deprivation of liberty (article 37) 1
- Children without a family have the right to special protection (article 20) 1
- Children have the right to an identity (article 8) 1
- Disabled children have the right to special care (article 23) 1
- Minority children have the right to enjoy their own culture (article 30) 1

Information on the combined choices from both secure children’s homes is provided below. Each right is presented in order of overall popularity.

- **All children are equal (article 2)**
  This right was placed in the top four by the most children. The children knew they had a right to be treated equally and to not be discriminated against. They discussed different reasons why a person might be discriminated against. They mentioned background, age, race, religion, disability, height, looks, style, and economic inequality. One boy spoke about slave ownership and segregation in a historical context. The children spoke about the importance of equality:
‘People being treated equally I think is fair because … I don’t like hypocrisy and I think I should be treated the same as … everybody in here should be treated.’ (boy, aged 15)

One child emphasised people’s shared characteristics rather than their differences:

What’s the difference between all of us sitting in this group? Are there differences between us?

‘No, we’re all humans.’ (girl, aged 15)

The children also recognised that children should be treated equally even though they may ‘different’:

‘I think all children should be treated the same, but maybe it might look in different ways because they’ve got different abilities or some people are different to other people, but I think they should also be treated equally on other things.’ (girl, aged 14)

Examples of ‘difference’ in this context were described as the way someone acts, their age, their background, their language and the way they learn.

- **All children have the right to health care (article 24)**
  This was chosen as one of the four most important rights by the children in secure children’s home A. When asked about the right to health, one girl identified that health care in England is free, whereas in countries such as the USA you have to pay for it.

- **Children have to be protected from torture and deprivation of liberty (article 37)**
  This was chosen as one of the four most important rights by the children in secure children’s home A and by one child in secure children’s home B. When asked what torture might refer to, the children mentioned violence, rape and unwanted touching. The children knew that even if they break the law, they have a right to be treated in a human way.

- **No child shall be abused (articles 19, 34)**
  This was chosen as one of the four most important rights by the children in secure children’s home A. The children identified different types of abuse including, physical, sexual and emotional, and knew that none of this was allowed. Bullying was also identified as a form of abuse:

  Do you think bullying is a form of abuse?

  ‘Yes because you’re making the other people feel that they’re worth nothing and that can make their self esteem low and they might commit suicide.’ (boy, aged 14)

- **All children have the right to education (articles 28, 29)**
  Two children chose this as one of their top rights. One girl (aged 14) knew that children have the right to learn and mentioned subjects such as maths, English and science.

- **Children have the right to express their opinion (article 12)**
Two children chose this as one of the most important rights. One girl (aged 14) already knew that children have a right to express their opinion. Another girl (aged 13) also knew that children should be able to express their opinion.

- **Children without a family have the right to special protection (article 20)**
  One boy (aged 13) chose this as one of his top four rights but gave no specific reasons.

- **Children have the right to an identity (article 8)**
  One girl (aged 13) chose this one as an important right for people that have no country to belong to, especially Travellers.

- **Disabled children have the right to special care (article 23)**
  One girl (aged 13) chose this as one of the most important rights and identified that disabled children are entitled to care from the State. She mentioned different types of disability, including Down's syndrome and learning disabilities, as well as children that need to use wheelchairs.

- **Minority children have the right to enjoy their own culture (article 30)**
  One boy (aged 13) was clear that he has a right to enjoy the Traveller culture. This right was particularly important to him as he felt that being in the secure unit prevented him from having access to this right.

4. Children's needs in relation to the four selected rights.

- **All children are equal (article 2)**
  One child explained how she would feel if she was treated differently from other people her own age:

  'I wouldn't feel very happy. I’d feel isolated, hurt. I’d feel like I’m different. Frustrated.' (girl, aged 13)

  Another girl (aged 13) spoke about how, at home, her brothers and sisters were treated differently from her and given more things.

  Two of the children mentioned the unfairness of being given a worse punishment than their peers for similar behaviour:

  'Sometimes when like incidents happen you feel like one person’s worse than the other and you get a little more punishment than someone else. That I don’t think is fair sometimes.' (girl, aged 14)

  Some of the children spoke about being treated differently because of their age:

  What about children being treated differently because they’re children?

  'I don’t agree with that at all because age is nothing but a number.' (boy, aged 14)

  They highlighted how, because of their age, children’s views are sometimes disregarded:

  '[S]ome adults these days, they don’t listen to what we kids say. Am I right or wrong?' (boy, aged 15)
‘People need to pay more attention to the young people because some people, say you’re young and you try and speak to your mum, they’re like yes, yes, blah, blah, blah, ignoring you. They should think that, maybe you’re saying something important. If you listen to them maybe they’re saying something good.’ (boy, aged 14)

Some of the children thought that age had a big impact on a person’s life because as you get older you are able to do more things, such as get employment. One child said that young people used to be able to work, but now they have less to do and are more likely to get involved in crime.

The children spoke about economic inequalities, lack of equality of opportunity, and the impact this can have on a child’s life.

‘I think some children are treated equally but some are not … I feel that if you are poor and then there’s an upper-class rich person they’re treated a bit differently.’ (boy, aged 14)

‘I think the rich people they go to high school and start getting a better education than lower people who don’t get higher education so then that means that gives them more opportunities for them to get better jobs, better qualifications, better everything. On the other hand the people who are poor, they’re more likely to sell drugs and stuff like that, which the upper-class people are more likely not to do. They’re more likely to run the business through the family or have some sort of a connect to higher jobs compared to the poor.’ (boy, aged 14)

The children spoke about how resentment could exist between children from poorer and wealthier backgrounds and neighbourhoods.

One child spoke powerfully about his experience being treated differently in custody because of committing a crime:

‘They treat you differently because obviously you’ve done something wrong, but we all make mistakes and that so obviously when they hear you’ve done something wrong they feel, okay that’s it, all your opportunities are gone, your freedom has gone, you have basically … I think this way, you have nothing to live for so basically you’re in here...’

That bad? Seriously that bad?

‘Some people do feel like that … some people feel like obviously when you’re in here you’re being treated different, you don’t go out, you don’t get things you want basically or things you might need. I feel that people that have been to prison and have come out have learnt to not go back because it’s not a good place to go to.’ (boy, aged 14)

The children also spoke about discrimination affecting children in care as well as racial discrimination:

‘Oh, it was last week … One of the YPs must have called anotherYP Blackie.’ (girl, aged 15)

- **All children have the right to health care (article 24)**
Although there was first aid and a nurse on site, some of the children commented on the inadequate level of health care at their secure children’s home:

‘I’ve asked so many times to go the doctor because I’m ill but it’s never happened. They’ve said to me they haven’t got a doctor here you’re going to have to wait …’ (boy, aged 14)

The children said that they experienced stress, which seemed in part to be caused by the behaviour of staff:

‘… people in here, staff, do get you stressed and I saw that, since I’ve been here I’ve been getting more stressed …’ (boy 1, aged 14)

‘You’re meant to be punished for your crime and not stressed.’ (boy 2, aged 14)

‘Because this is a secure unit, not a prison. You shouldn’t be feeling the stress like you’re in prison but that’s how some people feel in here.’ (boy 1, aged 14)

One child mentioned a particular member of staff who docked points from children for minor behaviour (such as farting) and the emotional impact this can have:

‘There’s one person … who likes taking people’s points before they hit a good thing so that does make them go upset and maybe get depressed. So it does, after a while when that has happened a lot of times to you, you can I think probably get, not a headache but your head keeps thinking a lot about the points and it gets a bit stressful after a while. When you’re stressed you can’t concentrate and you can’t focus on stuff.’ (boy, aged 14)

One boy said that the medical staff listened to what he had to say. Another child said that the staff explained medical problems in a way that she could understand:

‘I think they just explain everything bit by bit, how you’ve got it, what’s wrong and how they’re going to treat it …’ (girl, aged 15)

- **Children have to be protected from torture and deprivation of liberty (article 37)**

One child thought that it was important that children in custody are not placed with adults:

‘They should not be put with adults, because children and adults have got different rights … They see stuff differently, they act different.’ (girl, aged 15)

One girl highlighted the importance of phone calls and visits for keeping in contact with family whilst in detention.

Another child spoke about his experience being in a secure children’s home as opposed to another form of custody

‘… this place … they claim for it to be more lenient than prison, but it feels like prison, because we don’t do a lot of things and the staff treat us like shit, yes? And, there’s certain people who work here, who … don’t care about us … but they just work here for the sake of the money and working.’ (boy, aged 15)
One child recognised that children who are detained in secure units for welfare reasons (rather than through the juvenile justice system) might be there for their own safety. This child thought that such welfare cases should be treated differently to the children who are detained through sentencing:

‘I think kids who are on welfare are different, have to be treated differently in a way because they haven’t done nothing wrong as such, and people who are criminal, I think they should serve their sentence.’ (girl, aged 14)

- **No child shall be abused (articles 19, 34)**
In the discussions, one child highlighted that some people use violence without provocation:

‘… what I’m saying is that there doesn’t always have to be a reason why you would have a fight. Some men just hit their partners and some women also …’ (girl, aged 13)

One girl explained that children may have been threatened by their abusers and may seek help in indirect ways:

‘They might not know, like, let’s say they've been threatened, if they tell anyone, then they will die, so they keep it in, because they don’t want to die, and like, so they don’t know what to do with that, so then they’re like, they’re just scared, so they act in a way, so that people must be suspicious, and that’s their cry for help. They didn’t want to actually say anything, but they will do stuff in order to say that they need help.

…

‘They might not know who to go to … They’ll just keep it inside.’ (girl, aged 13)

- **All children have the right to education (articles 28, 29)**
One girl felt that her right to education was being fulfilled in the secure unit. She did, however, mention the limitations of the education provided:

‘… we just do basic like maths, English, science. I think we do media at the moment.

…

We try to do PE which obviously is quite restricted, but we do try. That’s about it. It’s hard in a secure because you can’t do as much as you can do at normal schools, but they do do quite a bit here …’ (girl, aged 14)

One boy felt that his right to education was not being fulfilled in the secure unit. He was frustrated by the fact that he was unable to do ‘proper science’ with exciting experiments and also wanted to do more art. He spoke about his experience of not having been to school before:

‘I do some work but it’s like a kid that has never been to school in their life and then they come in here and straight to school without knowing anything at all, just like that. Because I don’t really know that much and I’ve come in here and they’ve put me straight in school and I didn’t really know nothing about school.’ (boy, aged 13)

One child felt that she was respected and supported by the education staff:
‘Well, if you want any more reading books or if you’re struggling with work, they try and get easier work for you. You know, they do try their hardest for a small school.’ (girl, aged 14)

She also mentioned that staff at the unit assist the children in arranging plans for their education when they leave.

One boy (aged 13) said that he had not been asked his views on what was being taught. He said that teachers sometimes listen to him, but that ultimately he still has to do what they ask. If he does not comply, there are sanctions such as turning the power off in his room. He thought he should have the right not to take part in education:

‘Travellers are not meant to do education. Because we’re Travellers, we’re meant to teach our own ways.’ (boy, aged 13)

He also mentioned that he was Catholic and that he was not allowed to wear rosary beads.

- **Children have the right to express their opinion (article 12)**
  One girl felt that her rights in this area were being respected in the secure unit. In particular, she mentioned that an independent advocate visits every week to speak with and listen to the children. When she spoke about her experience of education in the secure unit, however, it seemed that she was not able to have much control over her educational choices:

  ‘In school [here] … sometimes you get annoyed with them because they can’t do certain things or sometimes things take time, though you’ve kind of got a path.’ (girl, aged 14)

This girl described how some schools can label children with ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) without listening to the child or examining the issues more deeply:

  ‘…I just don’t think it’s very appropriate to just label someone just because they’re hyperactive … That’s why I think they should listen …’ (girl, aged 14)

It seemed as though this particular issue had affected her, and she said that in her case she did not have the opportunity to challenge this labelling and she was excluded from the school.

One girl (aged 13) mentioned the importance of this right for disabled children.

- **Children without a family have the right to special protection (article 20)**
  One boy (aged 13) mentioned that several members of his family had been in care. His view was that being taken into care meant being taken away from your family and that going into care made things worse.

- **Children have the right to an identity (article 8)**
  One girl (aged 13) thought that this right was particularly important for Gypsy and Traveller communities. She thought that these communities are judged unfairly and that people are ignorant of their culture. She thought that Gypsy and Traveller people should be able to follow their own culture and their own beliefs.
• Disabled children have the right to special care (article 23)
One girl (aged 13) pointed out that disabled children might experience bullying on a daily basis. However, she felt that disabled children are able to take a full part in society.

• Minority children have the right to enjoy their own culture (article 30)
One boy was angry that his right to enjoy the Traveller culture was not being respected in the secure unit. He felt that being away from his community cut him off from this right.

‘...I’m not in my culture am I? I’m a Traveller. I’m meant to be in my culture’
(boy, aged 13)

He felt that the only thing he could do in the secure unit relevant to his culture was speak to his family. He wanted to go home and live with his family, or be in a home with other Traveller people.

He explained that even when living in the community he is not allowed to speak his own language.

5. Proposals for policies or actions for children’s rights

• All children are equal (article 2)
The children suggested a number of proposals for improving children’s equality. They felt that adults should give children an opportunity to speak, and suggested that children should be able to vote. One child emphasised the long-term benefits of listening to children:

‘... I’m just saying if you pay more attention to people our age you’re more likely to have a better future. If you’re not paying attention to something, let’s say you’re baking a cake, you don’t read the recipe properly or you try and make your own recipe and it doesn’t come out as you want it, you’re going to feel like you done a mistake.’ (boy, aged 14)

In order to address economic inequality, the children suggested grants for parents to help pay for basic things such as food and clothes in the first years of their children’s lives. They also suggested grants should be available to the young people who need them most (such as those who cannot afford to pay university fees) to improve their access to life opportunities:

‘I think the grant should be given to you when you most need it, so I think when you’re just about to apply for university you have to pay university fees ... so that means that grant can pay most of it and that it could help you forward because then if you go to university you’re more likely to get a better job ... more opportunities are being given to you. The more opportunities, more chances you have of having a better life, successful, and passing it to your family and on and on and on and on, better world.’ (boy, aged 14)

In relation to the juvenile justice system, some of the children spoke about the need to ensure that children are not treated the same as adults:

‘I think when you’re under 18, you don’t know as much ... you can’t sentence an adult the same as a child, but you’ve also got to be quite fair in a way.’
(girl, aged 14)
Some of the children said that the authorities should stop putting young people into custody unnecessarily and mentioned the substantial impact going into custody has on their lives:

‘I think they should stop putting children in prison for dumb reasons.’ (girl, aged 15)

‘[I]f you think about it, everyone is allowed to make mistakes, aren’t they? Am I right or wrong? That’s how we learn from it and obviously, I reckon, by putting children like us, 13, 14, 15-year-olds into jail and shit, that’s not really going to help.

‘… young people in jail will be missing out on so much shit. It depends on where they go. We could be missing out on our GCSEs and qualifications and shit. Some GCSEs we can’t get in jail so, yes, we’re missing out on them, especially if you get sentenced for three years and you’re 15 or something. That’s you missing out on young manhood. That’s stressful.’ (boy, aged 15)

The children also spoke about the need to listen to what young people suspected of committing a crime have to say, and not just focus on what the witnesses have to say.

In order to address inequalities for children in care, one boy suggested a grant for foster carers to help with costs.

- **All children have the right to health care (article 24)**

Some of the children had general recommendations for improving children’s access to health care. One girl suggested cleaning the hospitals more and improving the food provided. Another girl said that health care professionals should check whether people are allergic to a medicine before they give it to someone.

Other children had specific recommendations about how their access to the right to health could be improved in their secure children’s home. One child thought that there should be more opportunities to improve their overall health:

‘I do see the GP but I feel that people in prison should have more opportunities because obviously they’re not doing what they should be like they’re not exercising or they should be motivated more.’

Tell me more, more opportunities to do what; to see health people?

‘To see health people, to keep fit, … some people maybe are big and they want to lose weight, to get support with that to, anything to just keep healthy and keep on track. I feel that we don’t get that around here.’ (boy, aged 14)

The children also wanted improved access to sexual health advice and information:

‘… people should be given more opportunities to learn about sex, to learn about condoms, where they could get it from, what does it do.’ (boy, aged 14)

This child also mentioned about the need to be informed about different types of medication.
• **Children have to be protected from torture and deprivation of liberty (article 37)**

One child thought that both parents and the Government have a role to play in protecting children from torture:

>'As a child you always think that you’re going to be protected and that you’ve got adults around you who are going to protect you, but it’s not always like that. And there’s been quite a lot of people who have been tortured, there’s been quite a lot of kidnaps, and Government should maybe be more aware of it because it’s Government’s problem. It’s not ... we can’t do a lot. It’s Government’s decision. It’s not ours.

...’I think parents should try and protect the child and I think Government should do something about that.’ (girl, aged 14)

The child suggested that the police should monitor previous offenders to help prevent children being tortured.

In relation to deprivation of liberty, one boy said that parents should be there with the child throughout the criminal justice process to help protect their rights. Another boy suggested that another adult could be there to fulfil that role and represent the child.

One child thought that there should be fewer children in custody and stressed the impact being in custody can have on children’s life chances:

>'I think the Government should [have] less young people in jail like us ... basically, you miss all that time when you could be doing something good with your life, and then, when you come out, you might not even then have anything, and then you will probably end up back inside, and then that just keeps going, and keeps going and keeps going, like that, and at the end of it, your life is not very successful, because you were in here all the time.’ (boy, aged 15)

One child highlighted the importance of having staff in custodial settings who genuinely want to work with children:

>'I think ...the people who work here should basically have some sort of calling to work with people who are here ... give your time to the lads and stuff like that …’ (boy, aged 15)

One girl (aged 14) thought that prison is primarily there to punish people. The children identified that there were alternatives to custody. These included making reparations to the victim, electronic tags, indoor curfews and work with the youth offending team.

One child spoke about the circumstances of children deprived of their liberty for welfare reasons (i.e. for their own safety or the safety of others). She thought that children should not be detained for too long and that there should be more opportunities to go out:

>'I don’t think kids as such should be locked up. I think being in secure is good, but I also think like sometimes I don’t think long periods are good. I think long periods but not too long periods, because sometimes it can feel like a punishment more than a good thing for you and I think more like people going out like on mobility and going out more often would be better.’
How long is long, do you think?

‘Like a year.’ (girl, aged 14)

She also thought that there should be more funding for staff and suggested other improvements:

‘... maybe like more family and stuff, and maybe more outings like group outings, if like it’s on a risk assessment, obviously a risk assessment basis.’ (girl, aged 14)

- **No child shall be abused (articles 19, 34)**

  The children thought that the Government needed to step in and identify intentional and unintentional maltreatment and prevent it from happening.

  One boy suggested providing support to parents in order to prevent them maltreating their children. Another girl highlighted the importance of listening to victims of abuse.

  One child suggested that schools should investigate if a child shows up injured, but acknowledged that there might be difficulties:

  ‘In schools, so if you get a bruise or something, they could ask them how they got it, because you obviously must have got a bruise from somewhere.

  But then again, or you can say, I was playing, so you’ve got no actual evidence, so there is that, but if … it’s complicated.’ (girl, aged 13)

  One child mentioned the uncertainty and fears related to reporting abuse that children might have. She highlighted the need for reassurance and information, which could be in the form of a leaflet:

  ‘I think the majority here is that they’re scared of what they might do, so like, kids are pretty scared of what they’re going to do if they find out, so they need some reassurance from the Government … That’s what the Government can do.

  Not knowing what’s going to happen … That’s what they’re scared of.’ (girl, aged 13)

- **All children have the right to education (articles 28, 29)**

  One boy (aged 13) thought there should be better recognition of children’s achievement in education classes, such as rewards.

  One child thought that education should prepare you for later in life (such as money management) and should help you find employment. She thought that Government should provide more resources for education:

  ‘A bit more resources maybe, a bit more money. It’s always money. It’s always the problem.’ (girl, aged 14)

  She also wanted more teachers of a higher standard, and more one to one time for children who are upset or annoyed.

- **Children have the right to express their opinion (article 12)**
One girl (aged 14) said that the Government does not listen to children’s views. She highlighted the particular problem of schools mistakenly labelling children as having ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) and suggested that there should be better teachers who are more understanding. She said that children should be listened to by relevant adults including health professionals, teachers and Government. She also suggested that the Government should be able to close down bad schools.

Another girl (aged 13) agreed that the Government should listen more to children but did not have any specific suggestions on what could be done.

- **Children without a family have the right to special protection (article 20)**
  The boy who chose this as an important right did not have any specific suggestions for how governments can better protect this right for children.

- **Children have the right to an identity (article 8)**
  The girl who chose this as an important right did not have any specific suggestions for how governments can better protect this right for children.

- **Disabled children have the right to special care (article 23)**
  One girl (aged 13) suggested that teachers should take things step by step when working with disabled children.

- **Minority children have the right to enjoy their own culture (article 30)**
  One boy (aged 13) wanted to enjoy his Traveller culture in the secure unit and suggested activities such as ‘proper boxing’ and horse keeping. When asked about what the Government should do to better protect his rights, he just looked up at the ceiling and snorted.

6. **Evaluation of the focus group meeting(s)**
   In secure children’s home A, the children gave feedback through a ‘hands up’ vote. The feedback was very positive and accompanied by applause.

   In secure children's home B, one child gave positive verbal feedback, one child shrugged their shoulders and another young person left before providing feedback.

7. **National Research**
   Please refer to information sent previously.