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# Be Heard Young People's Panel

## Views about social work practices

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9 October 2013

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## Introduction

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The Be Heard Young People's Panel was established in 2005 by the Office of the Children's Rights Director for England as a way of empowering young people to have a say about things that matter to them by using modern methods and technology that they are comfortable with to engage them in the consultation process.

Membership of the Panel is voluntary and open to any young person who is within the remit of the Children's Rights Director ie those who live away from home in children's homes, foster homes, boarding schools, residential special schools, further education colleges, residential family centres and those who are receiving social care support either at home or as independent care leavers.

As a virtual panel, members receive a weekly question either by mobile phone text or email and feed in their views via cyberspace. Responses are quick, straight to the point, honest and insightful.

The Be Heard Panel has been utilised by many and continues to shape the future for children cared for away from home. I sincerely hope that you find the views expressed in this report illuminating and helpful to your work.

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## BeHeard Panel Responses

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### *Question*

***What would be the GOOD things and BAD things about a council asking a separate company to provide social workers to work with children?***

*Date Asked: 04/10/2013*

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### *Responses – 27 received*

#### ***Young Person aged 16, Boarding School***

They wouldn't have the ridiculous luxuries that council workers get so would do the job properly

#### ***Young Person aged 19, Children's home***

It could be cheaper if companies tendered for contracts I suppose. But it could perhaps lead to even more pass the parcel with children in care than there already is if contracts kept on going through the tendering process again and again. The most important thing for children in care is consistency and that seems to be what

#### ***Young Person aged 17, Children's home***

Good more social workers. Bad harder to keep an eye on!

#### ***Young Person aged 17, Children's home***

The good points would be that the don't know how that system works so you could run rings around them and the bad points is they will find everything out about you and if you get close and attached to them and when they finished it will be hard to say bye and let go.

#### ***Young Person aged 15, Foster Carers***

I dunno, I guess it's cause there being lazy is a bad thing but a good thing is that they might find a good social worker

#### ***Young Person aged 13, Foster Carers***

Good things about it would be that the council could have the people they employ to be social workers could do other jobs. Bad things about are that they may not be fully qualified.

***Young Person aged 15, Foster Carers***

The good things is they might be good with children, another good thing is that you receive more social worker that can help children and will visit the children more often. The bad things are that they training a lot of training.

***Young Person aged 18, Foster Carers***

The good thing would be less pressure on the council to provide the best service possible but the bad thing would be the lack of support the young people

***Young Person aged 12, Foster Carers***

The good things are: a council won't let things slip and will keep going until the jobs are actually done. The bad things are: the jobs don't get done properly.

***Young Person aged 17, Foster Carers***

I don't know. Every different social worker has different things that are good and bad about them.

***Young Person aged 11, Foster Carers***

To be honest I can't think of anything good, it is all baddddd.

***Young Person aged 19, Foster Carers***

I think good thing is that they are from different service bad. Thing is that we may get new ones every month

***Young Person aged 16, Adoptive Parents***

The good things about a separate social work company is that the young person may feel that they are independent to them, and they are going to be more focussed on them, rather than 20 other young people. The bad thing is that they may not know as much about social work as people who are social workers for the council, which will put separate social workers at a disadvantage

***Young Person aged 10, Adoptive Parents***

The good thing is that there would be extra people to help and the bad thing is in case they no to helping and the council is then left without social worker expertise.

***Young Person aged 12, Adoptive Parents***

I think the good thing would be that perhaps then having a separate company would mean that the company might specialise in social workers and they would be good at their job. Because it's a private company they might also get paid better which might encourage them to do a better job. They may also have less stress as they might have less workload. The bad thing is that if private company wads to take over the work, they may not be given all the necessary, important information.

***Young Person aged 11, Adoptive Parents***

The good thing it is cheaper, and the bad thing is they might not do well by looking after the children

***Young Person aged 18, Further Education College***

Got someone else to talk to, bad because they may not trust them

***Young Person aged 17, At Home with Help from SSD***

It would be independent but may lead to communication difficulties

***Young Person aged 13, At Home with Help from SSD***

They would be independent and not try to do stuff to save money bad thing may cost more for the service

***Young Person aged 17, At Home with Help from SSD***

I don't know!

***Young Person aged 16, At Home with Help from SSD***

Good things would probably be that since social workers are from a separate company they could be a change and different from the usual council social workers. They could have different experience. Bad things could be that those social workers don't know how things are in the council and might change things up which could confuse people.

***Young Person aged 23, Care Leaver***

Protecting vulnerable children should not be profitable. End of story.

***Young Person aged 21, Care Leaver***

The good thing is some kids get on with people they don't know and the bad thing is that sometimes it's best if they know the person.

***Young Person aged 18, Care Leaver***

There are good and bad things about council asking separate company to provide SW. They might be productive and efficient but might put profit before people and if the council can't do the job of looking after children who can do it better. It's a hard and difficult decision and on both side there is cost and benefits. But I think the system needs to improve rather than making it privatised.

***Young Person aged 22, Care Leaver***

Bad:

- They may be seen as second rate if the young people are aware that they're hired outsiders.
- Inconsistent if the Council workers are used to working one way and the hired workers another way.
- Could disrupt the social worker teams if they're having to show the ropes to hired out social workers, that disrupts flow.
- Hiring social workers could lead to a lot of staff changes and high turnover if constantly leaving rather than being tied to a contract.
- More paperwork for HR.

Good:

- Take the weight off social workers if there is a flux in young people needing support.
- A lot more can be done, they could bring the extra help when needed without them being tied to long term contracts.
- Would benefit those who perhaps are looking to become social workers, could open doors for them, less cost than hiring a social worker out right for the Council.
- Not having to pay out pensions.
- Fresh ideas brought to the team and fresh faces for the young people, even if only temporary.

***Young Person aged 18, Care Leaver***

Well I wouldn't know about this as I don't know the link between the council and social workers so this question I don't particularly know the answers

***Young Person aged 22, Care Leaver***

I don't think there is any good things and the bad things are the children won't be settled with the social workers coz they will keep swapping workers



## BeHeard Panel Responses

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### *Question*

***If a company wants to provide social workers for children, exactly what checks should be done before it is allowed to do that?***

*Date Asked: 05/10/2013*

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### *Responses – 19 received*

#### ***Young Person aged 19, Children's home***

The company's employment procedures should be looked at to ensure that its employees have been vetted adequately. How long they retain employees on average should be looked at too. The longer the better! If the company is new so you cannot do this, it becomes very important to look at the experience of the person/people setting it up.

#### ***Young Person aged 17, Children's home***

Make sure the company not just doing it for profit

#### ***Young Person aged 18, Foster Carers***

They should have been crb checked and should provide some background information make sure they are young people friendly.

#### ***Young Person aged 12, Foster Carers***

They should be checked on how well they get on with children because if they don't get on with the children then they might not be able to help those that need or want help and those are who will actually tell the social worker what the problem is or whether they need help etc.

#### ***Young Person, Aged 11, Foster carers***

CRB checks are needed, passport identification, birth certificate, past history, past education, jobs in the past which they have done.

#### ***Young Person aged 15, Foster Carers***

What type of social worker the child wants and weather they can get to places easily

#### ***Young Person aged 13, Foster Carers***

CRB checks should be done on all employees, and they must have rigorous background tests to see if they have the right sort of personality to work with

***Young Person aged 15, Foster Carers***

the checks that should be done is that to make sure they have no clean record with no crime records another check is to make sure they have had a secure child hood and not an upsetting childhood because they could take it out on the children. Another check that should be done is to make sure they are good with children

***Young Person aged 12, Foster Carers***

Make sure that all involved are suitable and capable and all back ground checks are carried out

***Young Person aged 20, Foster Carers***

They should check if they can work with children and adults. Experience with working in social work service.

***Young Person aged 19, Foster Carers***

Attitude checks behaviour safety

***Young Person, Foster carers***

They should do check on the family's as well as the social worker themselves then they should test to see if the social worker is correct for the child

***Young Person aged 16, Adoptive Parents***

I believe that before a company can provide social workers, they need to be checked with regards to their company track record, and an Enhanced DBS check should be carried out, to make sure the social workers are safe to work with children. There should also be a matching process to ensure each child gets a social worker that they feel they can trust, rely on and get on with.

***Young Person aged 12, Adoptive Parents***

I think it would be important to check whether the person has ever served a prison sentence and what for. Also if you have ever been arrested by the police and what for. Where they have experience of working with children and if so what?

***Young Person aged 10, Adoptive Parents***

Just in case they don't do their job right, they should be checked for their expertise, both qualifications and hands-on experience of working with children. They should also check that they have never been horrible to children. You could ask the children if they have always been kind to them.

***Young Person aged 13, At Home with Help from SSD***

check no convictions and that they like working children and listen to us

***Young Person, Aged 16, at Home with Help from SSD***

That the social workers are qualified for working with children. After this, they should be interviewed or checked that they're nice people and have good intentions to work well. They should be checked for criminal records to make sure they're definitely not dodgy. Maybe also check their family relations are well and references from other people to make sure they are happy so they can make children happy too.

***Young Person aged 22, Care Leaver***

CRB check; relevant qualifications; appropriate experience (unless it's work experience or shadowing then requirement levels will be different). Perhaps worth first seeing how they interact with young children before letting them go solo.

***Young Person, Aged 18, Care leaver***

I think that the checks that should be done are: Having the company workers checked on their records and seeing whether they have a police record and having the people who want to be social



## BeHeard Panel Responses

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### *Question*

***Companies can provide social workers for children. Is it enough to check they are OK before they start doing that or should they be inspected afterwards too? Why do you think that?***

*Date Asked: 05/10/2013*

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### *Responses – 19 received*

#### ***Young Person aged 19, Children's home***

Of course it is not enough to check they are ok. A company may seem adequate and be contracted but they may actually be terrible. An example would be [charity organisation] taking over [another charity organisation's] contract with [LA] Council. By all accounts [charity organisation] completely useless. The most important thing has to be the children, the people who actually use the service. As soon as the company has provided its service for a while, the council has to find out the views of the children on this service and if it is not good enough or does not reach a minimum standard then something should be done. It is hugely important this happens. This is the best thing about hiring private or independent contractors because if it is the council providing a terrible service generally nothing will be done because of the protectionism involved. An example of this would be when I wanted to make a complaint about a social worker I had a few years ago. My personal adviser would not help me because the links were too strong between the two organisations, [LA] Children's Service and [LA] Independent Living Service despite WILS ostensibly being part of [ORGANISATION], a registered charity.

#### ***Young Person aged 17, Children's home***

Inspected afterwards by like ofsted

#### ***Young Person aged 18, Foster Carers***

They should be inspected afterwards too as things could crop up that people were unaware of before it's better to be safe and keep children safe rather than to be sorry later.

#### ***Young Person aged 12, Foster Carers***

I feel that they need to have an inspection after they have been checked they should be inspected just to make sure they keep the high quality standard otherwise things could go badly wrong and if that happened nobody could give evidence why

#### ***Young Person aged 15, Foster Carers***

Yes they should be inspected so they know who they are working with and all that admin stuff.

***Young Person aged 13, Foster Carers***

It is not OK to check them just before they start, they must be checked regularly, say every 3 months to see how they are doing and whether they have changed at all.

***Young Person aged 15, Foster Carers***

they should be inspected afterwards because when doing the job might make them distressed and change their attitude so they should be checked to make sure they are secure and good at the job because if they are weak it is not fair on the children due to the children are weak and need someone to support them

***Young Person aged 12, Foster Carers***

I think that the companies should be inspected twice yearly to make sure that they are complying to all legislation

***Young Person aged 19, Foster Carers***

I think they should be inspected during and after

***Young Person, Foster carers***

In my opinion, all social worker checks need to be done throughout the process to make sure that both the child and the social worker are safe, secure and happy. Social workers need to be fit for the job description and need to be assessed at all times.

***Young Person, Foster carers***

They should be regularly checked and tested to see if the child and the family and the social worker is happy with the situation if this does not happen there may be conflict between one and another then the social worker wouldn't be doing he/she's job right

***Young Person aged 16, Adoptive Parents***

I also believe that checks on welfare etc. should be carried out before an independent social worker starts working with a child, during their regularly time working with the child and after they have finished working with the child on an "exit interview" sort of basis. This will ensure that the social worker has done their job to the best of their ability at all points during their time working with the child and will also give them an opportunity to raise any positive aspects and causes for concern about the job. It will also be a chance for their manager to check and maintain the suitability of the worker for the child in question.

***Young Person aged 12, Adoptive Parents***

I think they should continue to be checked on even when they start taking care of children. They need to ensure they are checked properly before they are allowed to work with children and continue to be checked and asked for feedback to their company about what they find at their visits of each family and child and if they have any concerns. This would help stop children being neglected and harmed when in care or even if they have problems with their parents that cause concern enough to get a social worker involved in their issues.

***Young Person aged 10, Adoptive Parents***

they should be checked before they work with children and a routine questionnaire should go to children after that have dealt with to check that there have not been any problems.

***Young Person aged 13, At Home with Help from SSD***

always check as well as evaluate after as they may begin to not like their job etc

***Young Person, Aged 16, at Home with Help from SSD***

The social workers should be inspected before and afterwards working to check they are ok. This is important because perhaps a particular experience in work makes them angry or forget/change the rules or the way they should be working.

***Young Person aged 22, Care Leaver***

The most important checks for hired social workers should be done before working and during (continuous monitoring, the usual guidelines to follow, complaint procedures, etc.) work. If they are hired again in future then the checks (before and during) should be followed. Afterwards it shouldn't matter if they've done the work required at the standard/quality expected, unless there is reason to think otherwise. A check afterwards of their work could be beneficial to monitor standards but then it could also be a waste of resources, the quality of work should be checked during, like any other work place, not after once it's too late!

***Young Person, Aged 18, Care leaver***

I think it is not enough to just check whether they OK I think you should get inspected afterwards to see whether they are suitable enough to be doing that job or not.

***Young Person aged 20, Care Leaver***

They should get inspected afterward again. Because they not do the job they was going to do.