Office of the Domestic Abuse Commissioner for England and Wales

Tell Nicole Our Feelings Matter: Research findings



Webinar R1

Tuesday 20th May

Agenda

Introduction & background

Tell Nicole
Methodology
Looking at the data
Key themes
Recommendations

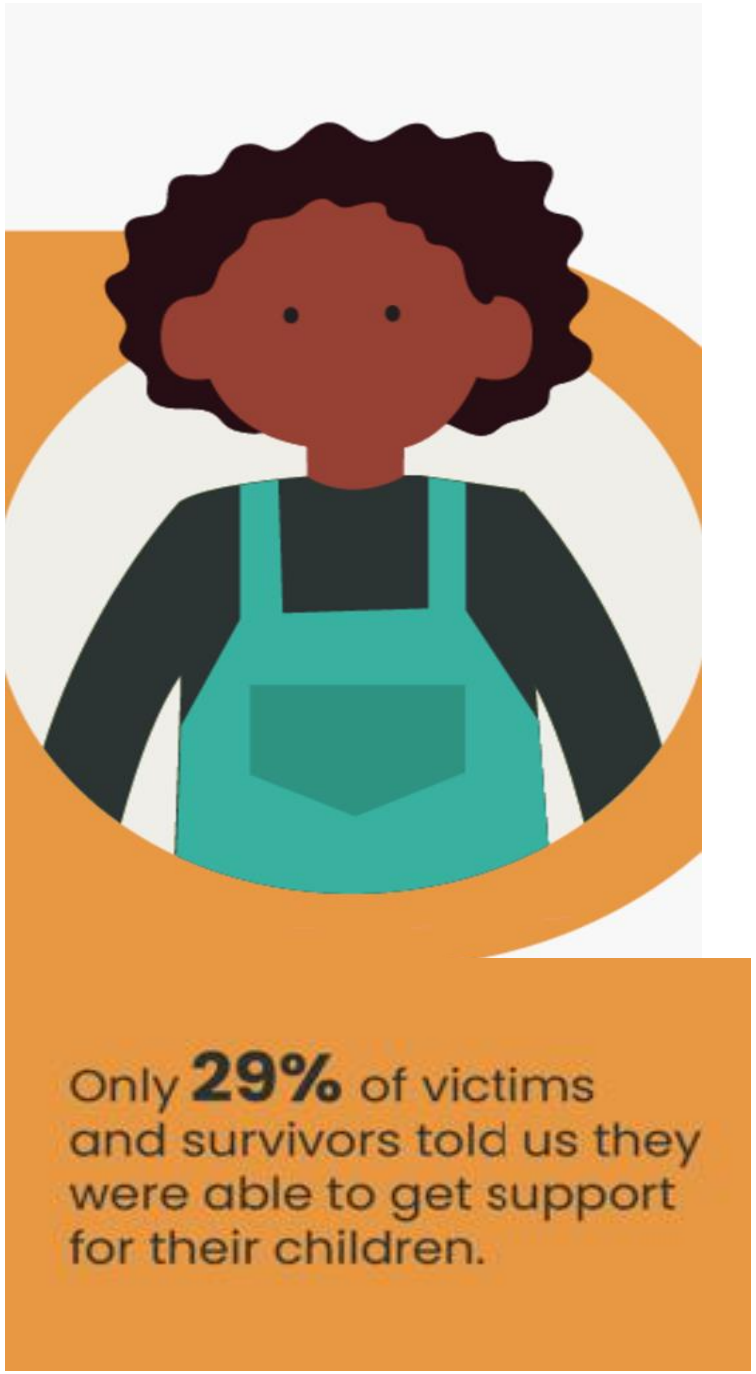
Commissioner@domesticabusecommissioner.independent.gov.uk

Content warning: The presentation does not include any direct descriptions of domestic abuse. There are words and pictures that children have written and made, which describe their feelings about the help they did or did not receive. They also describe what they wish would change. Some people may find the children's words upsetting. Please take a break away from the presentation if you need to.






A Patchwork of Provision
How to meet the needs of victims and survivors across England and Wales
SUMMARY REPORT


Only 29% of victims and survivors told us they were able to get support for their children.



Published: 29th April 2025

Government required to respond within 56 days

Policy recommendations

Practice recommendations






tell
nicole



VOICES

the domestic abuse commissioner 's survivor platform

Tell Nicole enables children and young people to have the opportunity to ‘tell’ the Commissioner what they think about domestic abuse issues in a way that is meaningful to them.

The key to this framework is to collaborate with professional who are already involved in children’s lives through voice, participation and engagement work. Materials and guidance documents were shared by the DAC team to enable engagement.

The guidance is flexible and encouraged workers to tailor sessions according to age, needs, and interests of young people



Legal context

Article 12 within the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child

states that every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously.

Domestic Abuse Act 2021

Section 3 defines a child victim as any child who “sees or hears, or experiences the effects of, the abuse.”

Section 7 states that the Commissioner should encourage good practice in ‘the identification of children affected by domestic abuse’ and ‘the provision of protection and support to people affected by domestic abuse’

tell nicole

Tell Nicole: SAAFERR Framework

Safety

Accessibility

Analytical

Flexibility

Engage

Relevance

Reach



Lundy's Model of Participation



Image: Department of Children and Youth Affairs (2015) National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making 2015-2020 Dublin: Government Publications.

Houghton's Model

Participatory Ethics model: Three Cs, Ds and Es for the participation of young survivors



- Participatory Ethics Model: Three Cs, Ds and Es
- Participation Framework: Space, Voice, Action, Power
- Participation Conditions: Support, Safety and Impact

Consent and information	• Young person is the central participant in the process and key decision-maker.
Confidentiality	• Young person has control and choice over information sharing. Risks to anonymity require involvement of non-abusing parent.
Child [and adult] protection	• Young person is respected as an individual survivor, their own experiences and agency in their family's protection validated.
Danger	• Young person's perceptions of risk are vital to assessment and safety planning, alongside others affected.
Distress	• Young people are capable of managing and minimising (inevitable) distress.
Disclosure	• Participation is an act of disclosure for young survivors, thereafter control/choice over personal stories needs maintained.
Enjoyment	• Fun while building trust is an essential component of participation and key to feeling able to speak out.
Empowerment	• An individual, equal voice (to each other and adults) and recognised status as experts and key decision-makers is crucial.
Emancipation	• Real power within the political system that results in an impact on abused children's lives is a condition of involvement.

Houghton (2015). Adapting Mullender et al.'s 2002 three Cs and three Ds to focus on children's agency; adding three Es to reflect children's power and impact.
Co-developed with Voice Against Violence who produced their own participation standards.

https://cafada.stir.ac.uk/ethics-3/

Guide for session facilitators

TELL NICOLE

A guide for CYP participation facilitators

The first priority of Nicole Jacobs, the Domestic Abuse Commissioner (DAC) for England and Wales, is to stand with victims and survivors of domestic abuse. Following the introduction of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, children were legally recognised as victims of domestic abuse in their own right. The DAC wants to ensure that the government understands the impact of domestic abuse on babies, children and young people and commits to ambitious work to support them and improve how services respond to them.

An important part of the work conducted by the DAC Office will be hearing from children and young people themselves. Our 'Tell Nicole' framework is part of our ongoing work to ensure that we capture the voices of children and young people to inform our strategy in relation to babies, children and young people. The framework enables children and young people to have the opportunity to 'tell Nicole' what they think about domestic abuse issues in a way that is meaningful to them.

The 'Tell Nicole' Framework

While the DAC hears from hundreds of adult victims and survivors who raise concerns about their children's needs, we recognise that the voices of children affected by domestic abuse have been historically and systematically marginalised. So, we wanted to create opportunities for more children and young people to become involved in our work. Key to our approach is working alongside professionals already involved in children and young people's voice, participation and engagement work who can share children's feedback with the DAC Office. We believe that this approach has the following strengths that are set out in Table 1.

Table 1: Strengths of the 'Tell Nicole' Framework (SAaFERr)

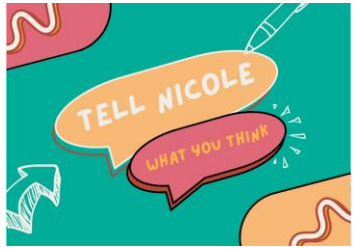
Safety	Engagement activities will be facilitated by practitioners who already have an ongoing working relationship with the children and young people and can continue to support them and make appropriate referrals where necessary.
Accessible	Practitioners/facilitators can use the 'Tell Nicole' framework to contribute to DAC policy making and strategy but tailor the activities to suit the age, development stage, communication needs, disabilities location and interests of young people that they work with.
Analytical	The DAC Office will carry out thematic analysis of all the feedback using a framework approach within Nvivo, software used for qualitative data analysis. This will allow us to identify themes both within and across the data that can all be treated equally, whatever the format.
Flexibility	Feedback can be sent to the DAC Office in any format that can be emailed to our office. For example, the practitioners / facilitators can send anonymised pictures, photographs, short videos, audio recordings or written feedback to: voices@domesticabusecommissioner.independent.gov.uk
Engage	Each year the DAC Office will provide a theme for 'Tell Nicole' that will help us to include children and young people's voices within our current work. We will also include a question that enables children to tell us about something we may not have considered.
Relevance	Children, young people and their participation facilitators might want to use the framework to address a specific topic or a local issue but also share their information with the DAC Office to have a national impact too. We will acknowledge every group who contributes to our work.
Reach	While adult survivors can engage with a range of opportunities via the VOICES at the DAC platform, we need different approaches for engaging children and young people. The 'Tell Nicole' framework will enable us to work with a wide range of organisations who support children affected by domestic abuse across England and Wales.

Session plan for young people attending primary school

Session objective	Material required	Suggested timings	Questions to cover (prompt / examples in yellow)	Actions and outcomes
Session introduction	None required unless group has particular needs or activities.	10 mins	Start with your normal check in or process for starting the group and explaining the purpose of the session. Refer to the session objectives and looking after ourselves	Children and young people are welcomed to the session in a way that is familiar to them.
Optional How to tell Nicole	None required unless group has particular needs.	Optional 5 mins	Optional: if you haven't done so already, you might want to **discuss and agree the methods** you will use to "tell Nicole' and how that will be sent to her, e.g. photographs, written information, recordings etc.	Methods to be used for 'tell Nicole' are agreed.



Circles of support





Session objectives

To help children and young people understand how the Domestic Abuse Commissioner tries to help victims of domestic abuse.

To discuss the Tell Nicole theme for 2024 (children and young people's access to domestic abuse support services) or another related topic of their choice.

To answer the question, "If you could ask the Domestic Abuse Commissioner to tell the government something about children and young people's experiences of domestic abuse, what would you want to tell them?"

tell nicole

Who took part?

Workers from 8 organisations ran 21 sessions involving 105 children and young people during Spring 2024.

Organisations based in North-East, North-West, South-East, Yorkshire and the Humber and London regions, plus one national group who meet online.

Ages ranged between 4 years and 24 years.

Groups submitted photographs, surveys, posters, flipcharts, artwork, postcards and written documents.



- Schools should go more into detail about what is happen abusive relacionships.

- There is still kind of a saying around ' children should be seen and not heard' - This shouldn't be a thing.

domestic abuse and don't speak to people or hear about the help or if they can't see the wrong in it they could become the abuser.

always have to tell the ins and outs of the situation.

- Children can overthink if parents lie to them.

- Children can react angrily and lose respect for the people lying to them if they find out later the truth.

SEE rejection AS A redirection

I AM GRATEFUL FOR TODAY

- They will listen to their parents as they will trust them. Feel safe around them.
- Trust their bestfriends and tell them how they feel to get it off of their chest.
- They might trust their siblings as they could be going through what you

WHAT MIGHT STOP SUPPORT

* Not knowing what support is out there?
* Scared and embrassed
* Not being aloud to seek help

* People finding out Scared being in a group.
* Transport nor being able to get there.
* Can be overwhelming
* Not ready for support.

What Type of Support Do Children Need?

-> Need someone to speak to
-> Support helping them to get through the tough times going on.
-> Support can even being someone listening
-> Feeling understood, wanted to be heard is good support.
-> Supporting them just being there for them.

More education around abuse in Schools to allow understanding and to stop future abuse(s)

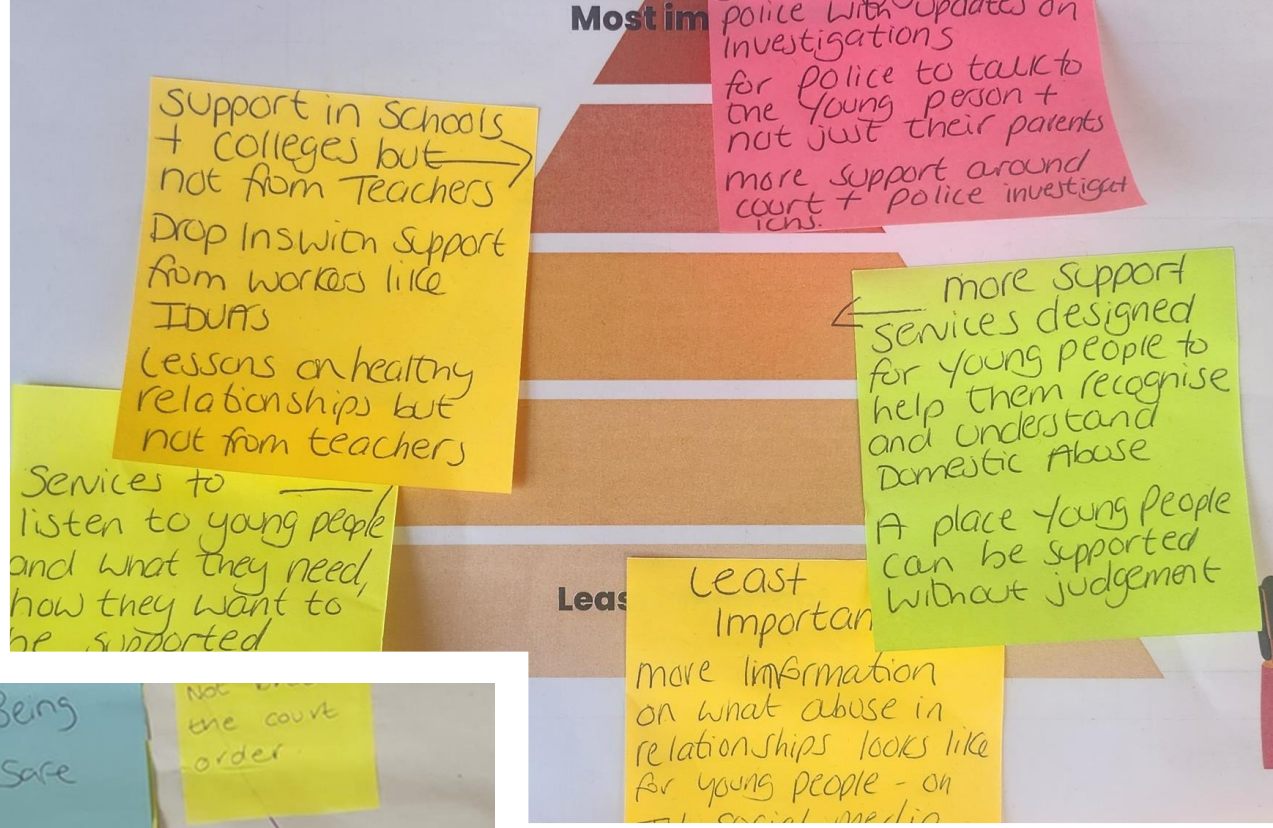
Tell Nicole

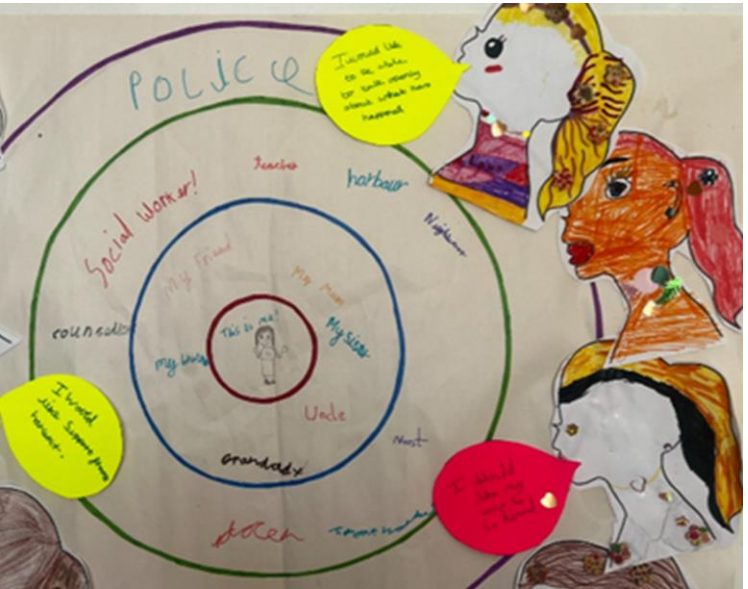
Stop saying Children Should be Seen not heard!

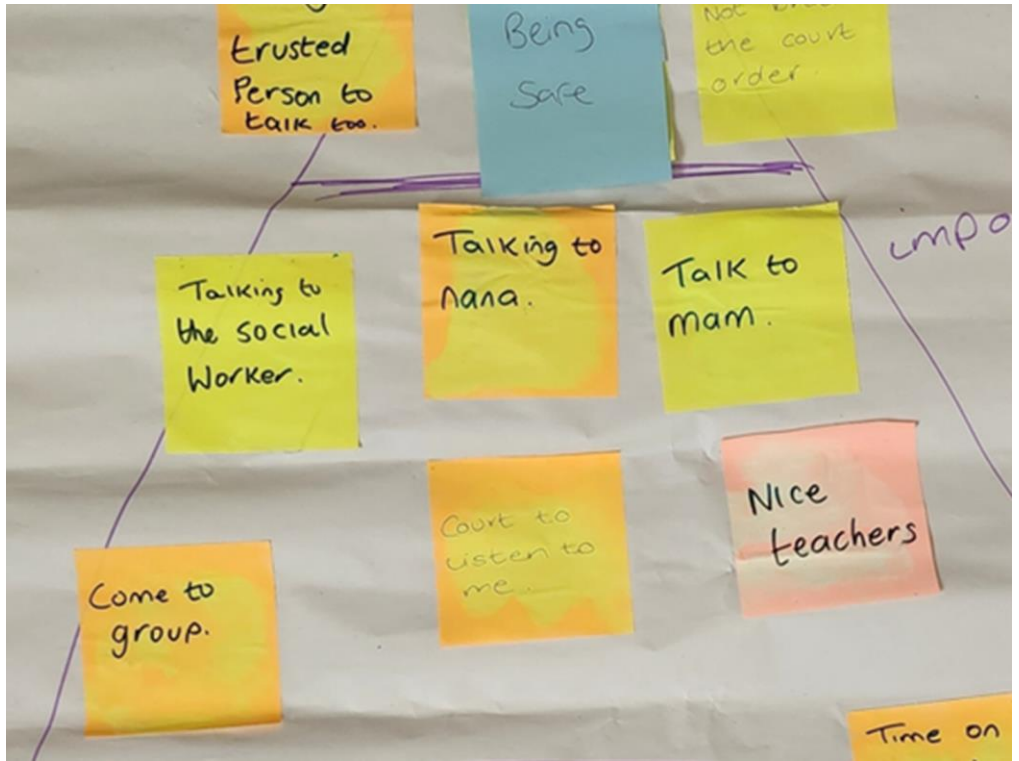
When Incidents happen after police/ Social care involvement For someone to then check in with the yp their thoughts + feelings

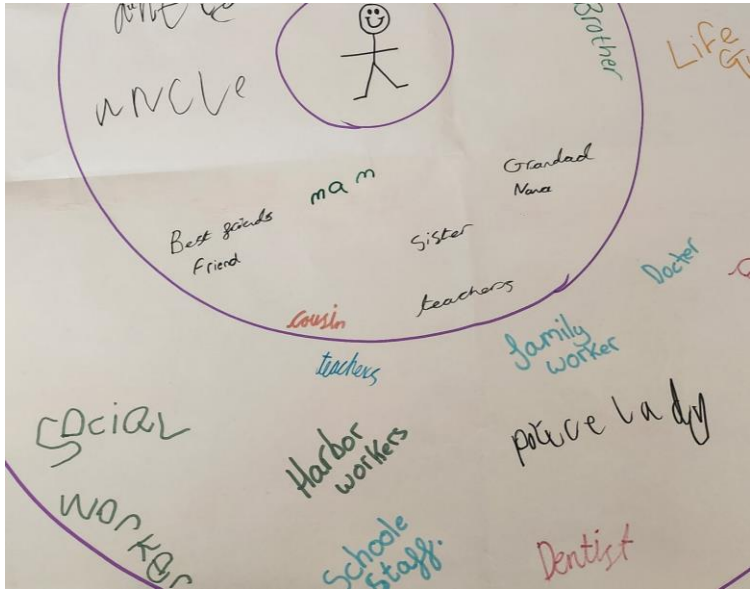
For Schools to incoporate domestic abuse in assemblys and share agencies with them what will help Support


more sessions in mental health x childrens
more time in group
Support in homes
Groups in School
more help
to meet workers in school before group
D.A Sessions in School
make school food
Least import


Most im
police with updates on investigations
for police to talk to the young person + not just their parents
more support around court + police investigat ions.
Support in Schools + colleges but not from Teachers
Drop Ins with support from workers like IDVAS
Lessons on healthy relationships but not from teachers
Services to listen to young people and what they need, how they want to
more support services designed for young people to help them recognise and understand Domestic Abuse
A place young People can be supported without judgement
Leas
Least Importan
more information on what abuse in relationships looks like for young people - on


POLICE
Social Worker
harbour
My Friend
My Mum
My Sister
Uncle
Nan
Granddad
teacher
doctor

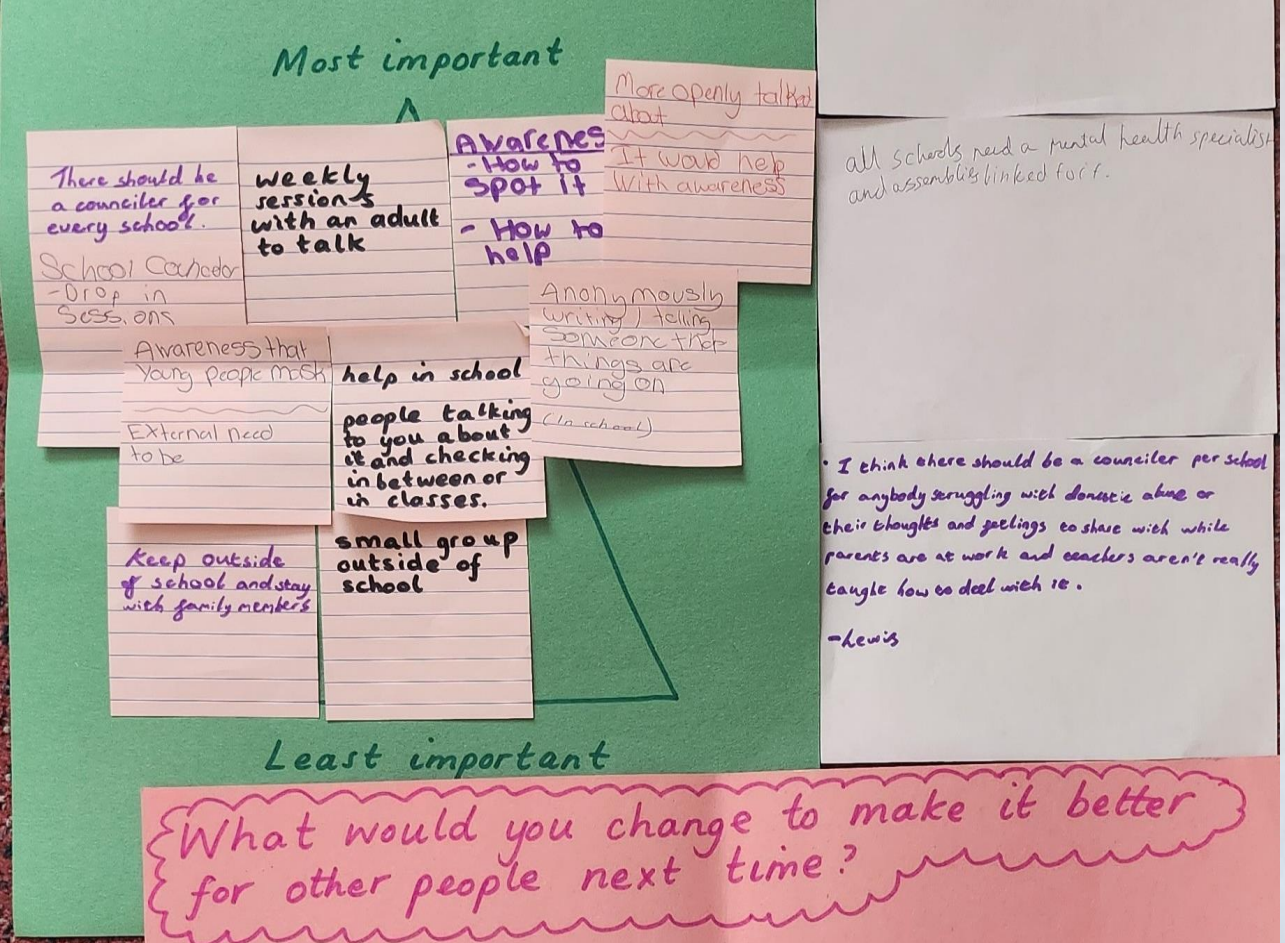

Trusted Person to talk too.
Being Safe
Talking to the Social Worker.
Talking to nana.
Talk to mam.
Court to listen to me.
Nice teachers
Come to group.
Time on


UNCLE
Brother
Life
mam
Granddad
Nana
Best friends Friend
Sister
teachers
Doctor
cousin
teachers
family worker
Social
Harbor workers
police lady
Dentist


being
You listen to us!
We might have things to share in private!
Emotions
SAFE HANDS
TRUSTED Adult
Seperate from School!
TELL NICOLE
THE DEN!
Mental Heath
My worker Respects me. My worker is experienced.
more time!
Respect us!
Meet other people!
more resources
We can speak up!
1:1 Support time!
FUN!
Friendships.
ALL CHILDREN SHOULD FEEL SAFE!


Be Kind
age 8
Be Nice
age 8
Be Happy
age 8
Talk to children


Talking to my mum
WHAT CAN HELP
Nice teachers
Squishy
Alone time
Police
Fight
Rubix Ball
Who can Help
Talking to my teachers
ihpad
I had a sotawork
Came in a Sagsup train



all schools need a mental health specialist and assemblies linked to it.

- I think there should be a counciler per school for anybody struggling with domestic abuse or their thoughts and feelings to share with while parents are at work and teachers aren't really taught how to deal with it.

-lewis

What would you change to make it better for other people next time?

Keep the same

Nicole,

Tell the government —

* We need people like my IDVA worker in schools
* Services to listen to young people about their relationships
* Support for victims going to court
* Changes in the law to support young victims of Domestic Abuse

Tell the police —

* Better support when going through a police investigation
  - regular contact
  - speak to us not just our parents
* Young peoples experiences of Domestic Abuse is just as scary as adults!

HAVING SOMEONE ELSE THERE TO SUPPORT ME ... LIKE A FRIEND.

on our level

Ask us what we want to happen...

Let us decide who we share our story to.

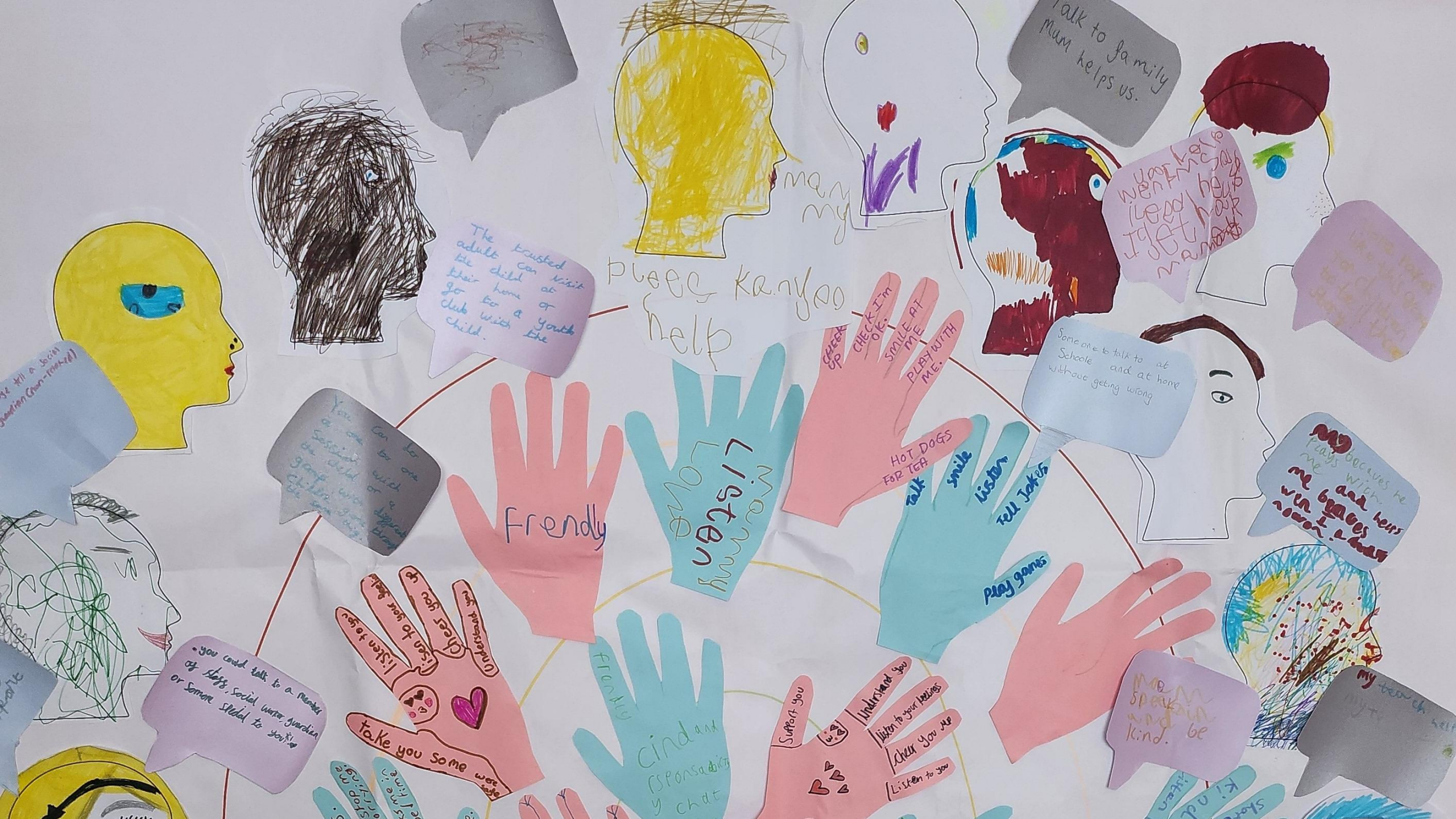


quicker support and warning signs noticed by schools

more support from school about safe relationships

For the police to ask us our version of events

listen to both sides equally and not be more likely to believe adults over children


Talk to family Mum helps us.
The trusted adult can visit the child at their home or go to a youth club with the child.
Please kanyoo help
Frendly
Listen
Love
Kindness
CHEER UP
CHECK I'm OK.
SMILE AT ME
PLAY WITH ME.
HOT DOGS FOR TEA
talk
smile
listen
tell Jokes
play games
Someone to talk to at Schoole and at home without getting wrong
Listen to you
Cheer you up
Understand you
take you some where
Support you
Understand you
Listen to your feelings
Cheer you up
Listen to you
frendly
kind
Be kind.

Support you

Understand you

Listen to your feelings

Cheer you up


I would like to be heard
I like grow better than my own
I would like my voice to be heard
I would want to share my own
bingo
Fun
groups is more fun
I would change learning in groups
I think I would like
Share my own story
Be creative
Bring some toys that
Make us do Harder Jobs

Our thanks to the following organisations:

Acorns, Tender, The Den, The Dash Charity, Limes College, Hounslow Social Services, My Harbour, West Yorkshire Youth Commission

Key themes: “Our feelings matter”

The importance of listening to children: the consequences of failing to listen, advice to professionals.

“We need to be listened to and taken seriously and be believed - especially around contact arrangements.”

(Postcard completed by a child aged between 7 to 19 years)



Key themes: Tell the Government

Better **understanding** of children's experience of domestic abuse.

The **legal system** supports children affected by abuse.

Greater awareness of what **support** is helpful.

Improve the **availability of services**.

"Even though children are now classified as victims, their voices still feel hidden."

(Comment from online group meeting)



Key themes: What children need to recover

Safety and space where they can talk to someone who listens.

"To be able to play, relax and talk to adults. To have a place away from the hurting and fighting."

(Children aged 6 to 9 years)

"Young people need someone they can relate to and talk to when they need it."

(Postcard, secondary school-aged child)

"The people fighting to stop and say sorry."

(Children aged 8 to 10 years)

Greater choice over length, location and type of support

Groups versus One to One?

"Talk to adults and not children because they will tell others about what is happening at home."

(Child aged six to nine years)

"I wouldn't want to talk about it in a group with other children as they might not believe you."

(Postcard, child aged 10 years)

"I like group better than on my own."
"Groups are more fun."
"Talking to other children is better"
"Don't feel on your own."
"Make new friends."

(Children aged 4 to 11 years)





Check in with the young person

Professionals to recognise that **children's accounts may differ** from those of their parents and carers.

"I would like to be able to talk openly about what has happened."
(Child aged 4 to 11 years)

"Police should be more attentive to young people when there is an incident and seek their views – ask them what happened."
(Children aged 11 to 16 years)

Barriers to getting support

Lack of awareness.

Readiness to talk.

Previous negative experiences.

Influence of family members.

Concerns about the police.

Gender and intersectional factors.

tell nicole

"Made homeless sitting in policeman's car, he said 'Can you stay at your friends because I need to go soon'."

(Young person attending a domestic abuse service)

Key themes: Schools

Teachers being able to **identify signs** of domestic abuse.

"Schools need to look out for the signs. If someone is acting up, instead of being hard on them, pay attention, find out why, give them a safe space."

(Postcard, young person aged 7 to 19 years)

Helping children to recognise what is an abusive relationship.

Providing support to children experiencing abuse.

Better **understanding of trauma**.



Qualities that children valued in professionals

Experienced and have a good understanding of domestic abuse.

Able to relate, having been through things themselves.

Kind and respectful to children.

Good listeners and able to keep calm and positive.

Patient and non-judgemental.

Children want professionals to:
Take more time to listen to them and work at their pace.

Recognise that adults have more power, which can be unfair for children, e.g. confidentiality.



Next steps

Seven key themes

Centring children's voices.

Stronger cross-departmental working and strategic leadership.

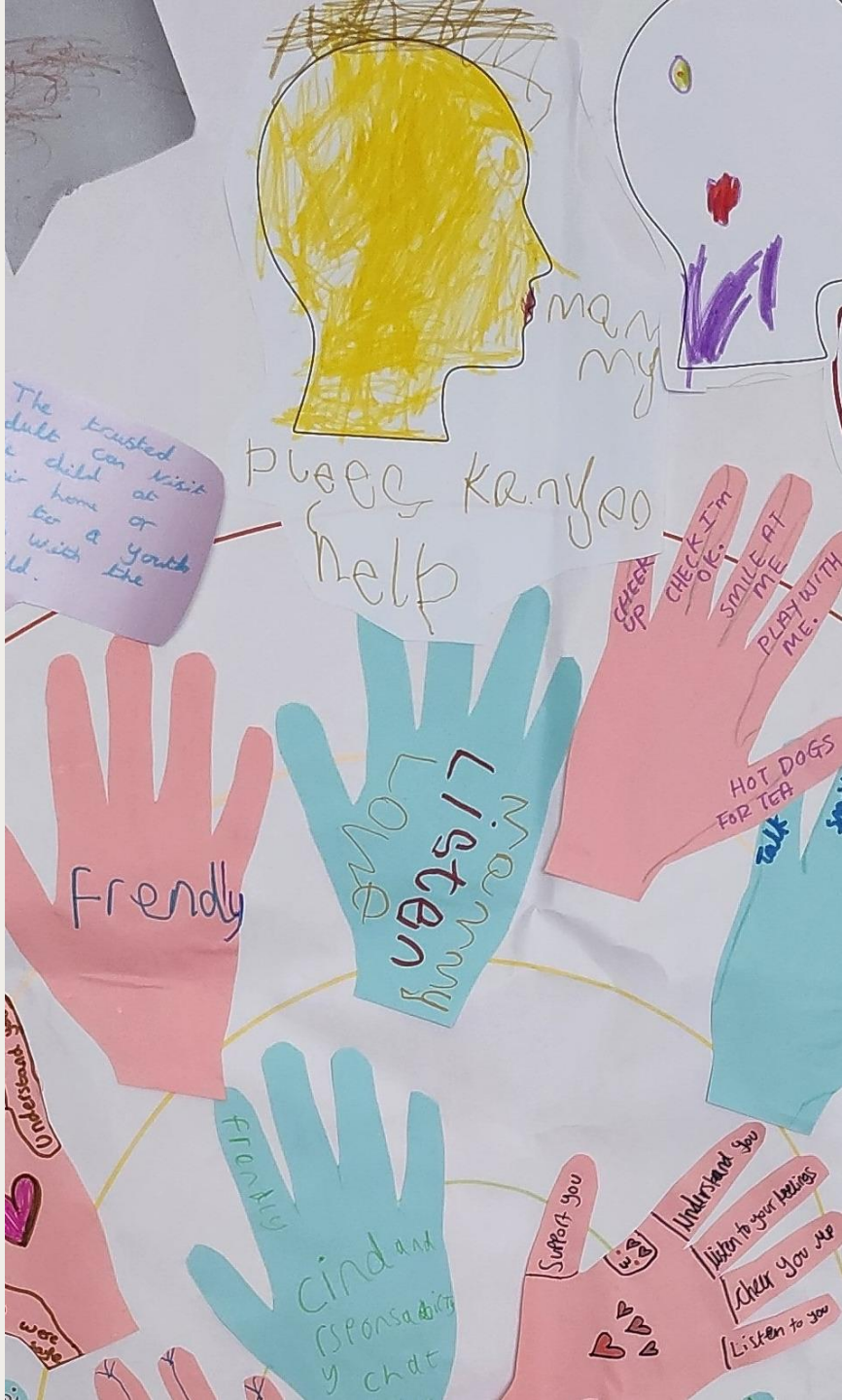
Holistic funding.

Data and evidence.

Specialist training for every frontline professional who may work with babies, children or young people.

Safeguarding.

Ensuring practice is informed by specialists



Further engagement

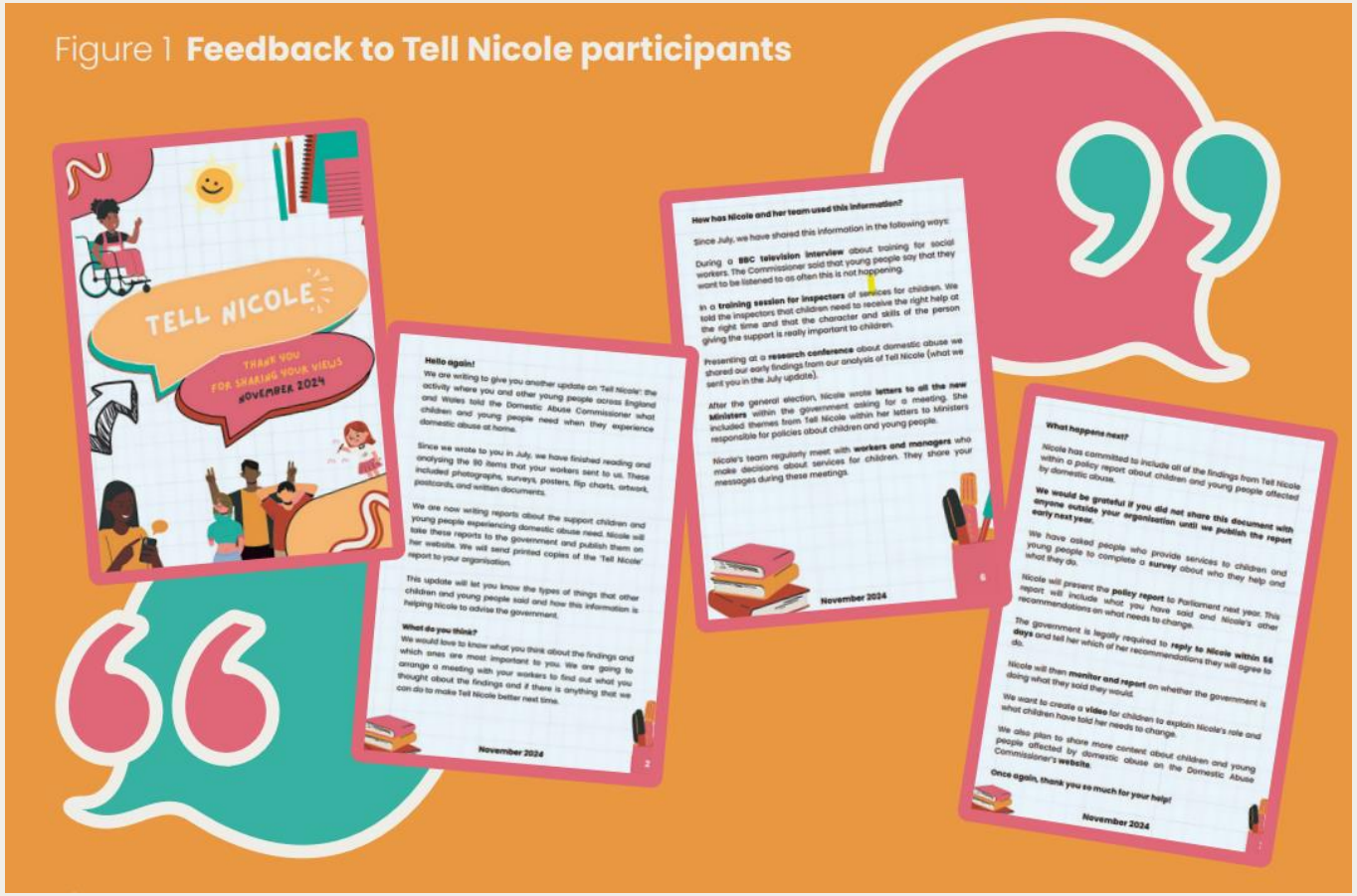
Newsletter updates

Tell Nicole log

Young people's presentation at the Parliamentary launch

Commissioner visits

Feedback sessions from practitioners and young people.



Questions


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Find our reports and briefings on the Domestic Abuse Commissioner website:
www.domesticabusecommissioner.uk

