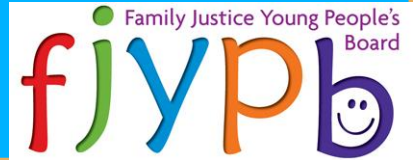


# VOICE OF THE CHILD

2023 Live Webinar: Summary



This year, the Family Justice Young People's Board (FJYPB) held their annual Voice Of The Child virtual conference on the 27 July 2023.

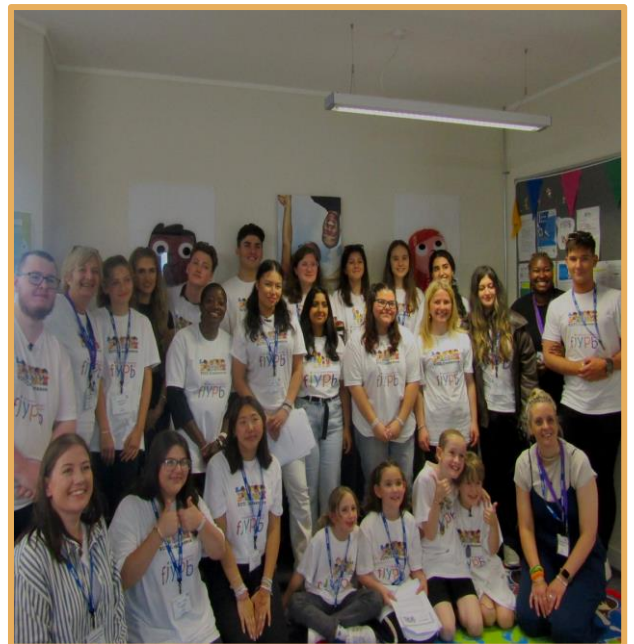
This year's theme for the conference was **BUILDING TRUST - to enable children and young people to participate in their family court proceedings in the context of delay.**

Over 400 delegates attended the webinars, with representatives from across the family justice sector. Our goal was to bring together key professionals to Listen, Reflect, and Take Action.

The webinars, lead by the FJYPB members, focused on:

- Building trust STARTS, STAYS, and ENDS with the child.
- Deprivation of liberty.
- Focus needs to remain on reducing delay.
- Leaving care: Relationships and Transition

This summary includes the key messages from the FJYPB for professionals to take away, and highlights from our exciting agenda.



## WHAT IS TRUST?

Trust: A firm belief in the reliability, truth, ability or strength of someone.

"Trust to me means healthy communication and respect."

"Once you have trust, you have freedom."

"Trust means that I can rely on them and be able to tell them personal things that I cant talk other people"



*"Trust is the glue of life. It's the most essential ingredient in effective communication. It's the foundational principle that holds all relationships."*

- Stephen Covey

## WHY DOES TRUST MATTER?

- Decisions that are made by you have a life changing impact on children.
- This effort to make connections with us means so much at a vulnerability time our lives.
- Trust is the reason why we are willing to share our thoughts and experiences, seeking support when we need to.
- Children and young people need to experience that you have listened, valued their opinions and supported them by representing their voices and experience



## STAYS

- **“Show interest in me** as a whole person, not just my situation.” You can do this by “not ignoring the simple things”.
- It is important that children and young people are **kept updated** throughout their proceedings.
- **Trust needs to be maintained.**
- **“Communicate clearly** with me and **be honest** about what you can and can’t do, to avoid giving false hope.”
- **“Hear not just listen** - Mirror back what I have said to let me know that you have understood.”
- **“Do not stand on eggshells around me.** It is more harming to me if you leave out information rather than giving me the full picture.”

## WHAT DOES TRUST LOOK LIKE?

Building trust **STARTS, STAYS,** and **ENDS** with the child.

## STARTS

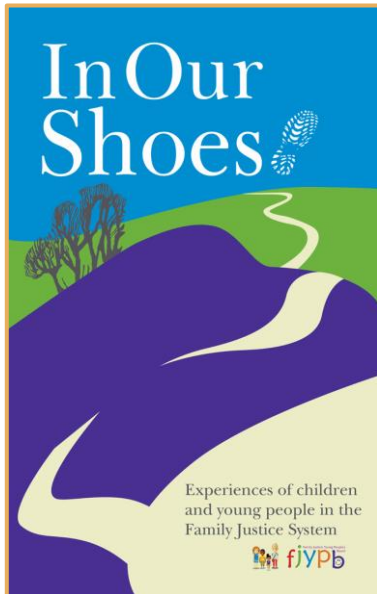
- Trust **starts even before you meet with the child.** Think about what information you will need to share with a child before you meet with them and on your first meeting.
- **Building trust takes time.** It often needs for the same interactions, communications and connections to be repeated so we can start to build up familiarity and to develop that trust.
- **“Explain to me how you are going to help** so I can trust you to share my experiences.”
- **“Body language is important** - Present yourself as being open and approachable.”

## ENDS

- **Trust needs to be secured.**
- Make sure you are able to **end your support properly** with each child by answering their questions and reassure them of any worries they might have.



## OTHER CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS



FJYPB members Lisa, Aiden and Milo shared their personal experiences of the family justice system with us. These were both impactful and thought provoking. Here are the key takeaways:

- Trust is everything.
- For me to trust you, you have to trust me.
- Everybody's story is unique.
- Always put the child first.
- Listen to us! Don't ignore us! Let us have a voice.

"Milo and Aidan's presentation will stay with me and remind me to ensure my practice is not what they experienced. So powerful. Trust is so important." - Cafcass

"Thank you all so much for telling your experiences, they were so insightful and articulately spoken." - Ministry of Justice

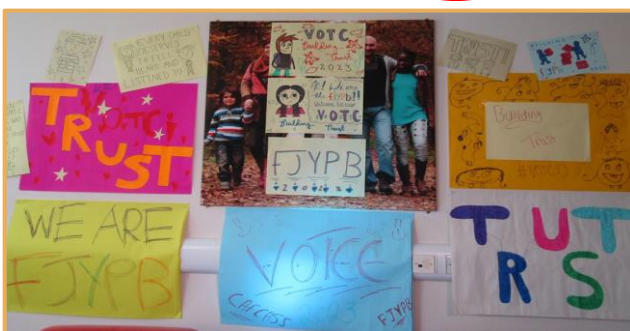
"I enjoyed getting to present our In our shoes and hearing the panel say that they wanted things to change because of what we said." - Aiden

FJYPB member Andrew chaired our panel session where they had a discussion surrounding the theme of Trust, which was followed by a Q&A.

Far too many people are leaving care at the age of 18 without anyone important to them in their lives. What are you going to do to improve this?

What actions can you take forward to improve the experience for children and young people, who are deprived of their liberty whilst also supporting the positive relationships in their lives?

In the context of delay, how do you support children and young people to develop confidence and trust in your service?



FJYPB members highlighted the statistics and impacts around deprivation of liberty and leaving care. Members also emphasised the importance of reducing delay.



## FJYPB CHALLENGE 2023

1	How will you tell children and young people about the information you have shared about them with others?
2	How will you keep children and young people updated and informed, especially around delay?
3	What will you do to promote and encourage children and young people to stay in contact with the people that matter to them?
4	Make sure that all children and young people you work with know their rights.
5	How will you show children and young people that TRUST started with them, stayed with them, and ended with them?
6	What will you do differently in your practice now that you have heard our messages?

## FEEDBACK FROM MEMBERS AND ATTENDEES

"Hearing the young people's voices was really powerful!"

"Attendance ought to be mandatory at the FJYPB conferences! Keep up the good work, you were all brilliant. Huge thank you!"

"Another fantastic and thought-provoking FJYPB conference."

"Thank you to all the FJYPB members for helping us to keep focused on what this feels like for children and young people, and challenging us to be exceptional in our work."  
- Cafcass

"All the young people speaking today did an amazing job!"

"It was a real privilege to watch us all as a family promote the voice of the child!" - Member

"Thank you to the young people who hosted and shared their stories, their lived experiences, without them, we would struggle to make the improvements that we need to..."  
- Cafcass Cymru

"Our experiences are diverse, but our goal is the same: to be heard." - FJYPB Member

"I am going to work hard and try to improve on myself while working with young people to ensure that I am able to advocate for them."  
- Surrey CC

"I am going to work harder to create Family Justice systems that enable Cafcass to work with the child in a way that is bespoke to them." Ministry of Justice

"I will certainly embed the importance of this message into training I deliver to practitioners." - Metropolitan Police

"My favourite part was seeing all the members and being able to catch up." - Member

"It has been reaffirmed how important the child's voice is during proceedings."  
- East Riding of Yorkshire Council

"I will encourage family justice colleagues to take on board what's been said today and use some of the ideas in promoting children's rights"  
- Department for Education

## MANY THANKS

### OUR PANELISTS:

- Sir Andrew McFarlane, President of the Family Division
- Jacky Tiotto, CEO Cafcass
- Lauren Kocan, Head of Children's Rights and Family Justice, Department of Education
- Debbie Jones, Interim Corporate Director, ADCS
- Kate Thomas, Head of Operations for South-West Wales, Cafcass Cymru

### VIDEO MESSAGES FROM:

- Lord Bellamy KC, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Ministry of Justice
- Claire Coutinho, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State Minister for Children, Families and Wellbeing
- Sally Cheshire CBE, Chair of Cafcass
- Alice Roe, Researcher at the Nuffield Family Justice Observatory

AND ALL MEMBERS OF THE FJYPB!!!



## NEXT STEPS

- Review the webinars with FJYPB members to celebrate our achievements and reflect on learning and feedback
- Follow up with attendees in 3-6 months to see how they have implemented the take-aways from VOTC 2023
- Begin planning for VOTC 2024

