



Barnardo's children in trouble campaign aims to give people a better understanding of youngsters who are unruly. Society is becoming increasingly short-tempered and often unfairly demonises them. We want people to think again and keep believing that with the right help our badly behaved youth can change their lives around.

A survey conducted amongst Barnardo's young people – just over half of whom have been in trouble – found that most of them thought that young people get into trouble because of boredom and peer pressure.

Of the 393 youngsters, aged between 10 and 23, 44 per cent said bad behaviour is encouraged when the media portrays their peers as misbehaving.

A 16-year-old from Northumberland Housing Project said:

Acceptance is a sensitive issue in teens as they are all individuals and are desperate to feel they have a place so they will do desperate things to get and stay in a group of peers.

More than two thirds believe the answer is to have more adults around to help them, including more police and youth workers. This is despite 31 per cent of them saying they never get on with police or community wardens. Police and wardens are often seen as judgemental and intimidating, shouting at young people and not listening.

Paradoxically, although they admit to needing more help from adults, these youngsters are most likely to turn to their friends first.

A 17-year-old, from The Hub, in London, said:

“Don't give up on those who seem to not care much for themselves and others.”

88 per cent of children said more affordability would stop them getting into trouble.

A 17-year-old, from Bays Project, in Wales, said:

“Everything you want to do costs too much money. The bus costs too much to get places, it's cheaper to buy cider with my mates than it is to go swimming.”

Introduction

A questionnaire was sent to all Barnardo's services that work with children and young people aged 10 and older.

393 completed questionnaires were returned from urban, inner city and rural areas across the UK.

Respondents' ages

Age	Number	Percentage
10	4	1.0%
11	5	1.3%
12	24	6.1%
13	37	9.4%
14	51	13.0%
15	59	15.1%
16	75	19.1%
17 to 23	132	33.5%
Age unknown	6	1.5%
Total	393	100%

Characteristics

178 (53%) of the respondents had either been in trouble with the police or made subject to an ASBO prior to their contact with Barnardo's.

166 (50%) had been excluded from school at some stage.

Of these respondents, 113 had been in trouble with the police and excluded from school. 15 had been in trouble with the police, been subject to an ASBO and excluded from school.

Survey findings

Why do you think young people get into trouble?

NB the respondents could tick more than one box hence the percentages

- 84% boredom
- 75% peer pressure
- 74% family problems
- 69% scared/unhappy/bullied
- 28% loss or bereavement
- 15% alcohol or drugs
- 11% status, to 'look hard' or 'for kicks'

'They are trying to hide their problems or trying to hide their feelings' 14 year old, Newry Adolescent Project, Northern Ireland

'They're looking for something, they need purpose – lack hope so the cost of getting in trouble is low' 18 year old, CANA, Yorkshire

'They have nothing to do and sometimes have nobody to look up to and follow' 17 year old, Signpost, Yorkshire

'They may be getting bullied and forced to do something' 13 year old, Action for Young Carers, North West

'Anger, boredom and lack of genuine support' 21 year old, Regional Children's Rights Service, LEaSE

'They want respect but get it in the wrong way. If they start something they have to finish it. Need to keep up their reputation' 17 year old, The Base, North East

'Because sometimes when kids get into trouble they get more attention at home – even if it's for something bad' 14 year old, Missing Service, Yorkshire

What do you think might stop young people getting into trouble?

- 88% more things to do and places to go
- 88% better affordability
- 68% more adults around would help, including police and youth workers
- 66% more interventions with younger children to keep them away from troublesome behaviour
- 30% more places like Barnardo's projects
- 25% a mentor
- 20% better training and employment opportunities

'More places to go that are affordable' 18 year old, Signpost, Yorkshire

'People closer to their age who have been through the same as them to talk to' 16 year old, Crashpad, Yorkshire

'People giving them a chance instead of just thinking he's young, he's a thug' 17 year old, Lincs Training, Yorkshire

'Places open on a night time after school and open to anyone, any age' 14 year old, Safe Choices, Yorkshire

'Give young people something to do and don't give up on those who seem to not care much for themselves and others' 17 year old, The Hub, LEaSE

'More youth centres – they're closing them all down gradually' 17 year old, The Base, North East

'More opportunities – courses and training places like the Base' 18 year old, The Base, North East

'If they were shown things at a younger age, so to interest them into good things rather than criminal' 17 year old, The Base, North East

'Detached youth workers – my pals were drinking on the corner. A youth worker came and asked if they wanted to go paintballing. They did, they got involved with loads of things – kept them off the streets' 20 year old, The Base, North East

Do you think the media shows young people as:

Mostly bad	174	44.3%
Mostly good	80	20.4%
Equally good and bad	139	35.3%
Total	393	100%

When the media shows young people as bad would it:

Make them behave more badly	171	43.5%
Make no difference to the way they behave	146	37.2%
Encourage them to behave better	26	6.6%
Don't know	50	12.7%
Total	393	100%

'If they see other people being bad they want to show off to the other lads' 17 year old, The Base, North East

'Media should be encouraged to publish good things that teens do – their achievements' 18 year old, Northumberland Housing Project, North East

'The papers give most people a bad name, not just young people. But their main target is youngsters' 18 year old, Out There, Wales

Who would you go to for help if you were in trouble?

Friends	128	32.6%
Parent or carer	123	31.3%
Sister or brother	25	6.3%
Boyfriend/girlfriend	26	6.6%
Specified a Barnardo's worker	22	5.6%
No one	17	4.3%
A teacher ♦	18	4.6%
Youth or Connexions worker	9	2.3%
Social worker	9	2.3%
Another family member	8	2.0%
Someone connected with faith	6	1.5%
Police	1	0.3%
Youth offending worker	1	0.3%
Total	393	100%

♦Those who nominated a teacher all attend Barnardo's residential schools, no one else nominated a teacher

Do you get on with your mum, dad or carer?

Most of the time	186	47.3%
Sometimes	178	45.3%
Never	18	4.6%
Didn't answer	11	2.8%
Total	393	100%

What could improve your relationship with your mum, dad or carer?

189 respondents made suggestions for improving relationships:

- 80 (42.3%) felt that spending more time together or doing more together would help
- 23 (12.2%) felt changes to their own behaviour would help – things like not being moody, arguing less, coming in on time, doing as they were told
- 52 (27.5%) felt that changes to their parents behaviour would help – listening more, not drinking, trusting them more, giving more encouragement, being more honest, being more consistent, not nagging
- 34 (18.0%) felt that external things impacted on their relationships – their family not having enough money, living in poor accommodation, not having enough contact with a separated parent

'Spend more time together, not as much shouting or stress' 14 year old, Missing Service, Yorkshire

'Taking time to listen to what I want and how I feel, not just speak at me' 19 year old, CANA, Yorkshire

Do you get on with your teachers?

Most of the time	153	38.9%
Sometimes	181	46.1%
Never	43	10.9%
Didn't answer	16	4.1%
Total	393	100%

What could improve your relationship with teachers?

104 respondents made suggestions for improving relationships:

- 62 (59.7%) felt that teachers attitudes could be better – they could listen more, treat children with respect, not shout so much, be less bossy, show more understanding of young people.
- 32 (30.7%) felt they could be more lively, make lessons more interesting, give more individual time and more individual help
- 10 (9.6%) felt that their own behaviour could be improved – attend lessons more often, behave, not answer back

'If teachers didn't judge me straight away. I'd be kicked out of one school, then the (new) teachers went on me reputation' 17 year old, The Base, North East

'You need to listen to young people more... and we as young people feel that someone is actually being considerate about our opinions' 17 year old, Willows Young Carers Service, Yorkshire

'If they gave you more time to do the work' 11 year old, Willows Young Carers, Yorkshire

'More relevant subjects and to get tret better, more like an adult' 18 year old, Dr B's, Yorkshire

'If they made more effort to get to know you so they know how you work, etc' 15 year old, Apex Project, LEaSE

Do you get on with the police and/or community wardens?

Most of the time	114	29.0%
Sometimes	132	33.5%
Never	123	31.3%
Didn't answer	24	6.2%
Total	393	100%

What could improve your relationship with the police?

88 respondents made suggestions:

- 35 (39.8%) felt that they were judgemental, not giving young people a chance
- 33 (37.5%) felt that the police were intimidating, shouting at young people and not listening
- 8 (9.1%) felt that the police were racist
- 8 (9.1%) felt the police did not talk to young people enough
- 4 (4.5%) felt that the police picked on children

It is of interest to note that 89 of the respondents said they never saw the police or community wardens in the area they live in.

'If they had less negative and more positive attitudes to young people' 20 year old, The Base, North East

'For them to approach young people with more respect and communicate better' 19 year old, Regional Children's Rights Service, LEaSE

'More local patrols, I see hardly any at all' 17 year old, The Hub, LEaSE

'Police can sometimes lack understanding of young people' 17 year old, Lincolnshire Leaving Care, Midlands

'If they were less suspicious of young people' 16 year old, Children's Advocacy, Yorkshire

'Stop aiming everything that happens at teenagers' 16 year old RU Safe, LEaSE

'If we had any around (it would) be a better community' 17 year old, KKDB, Yorkshire

October 2008