

CSE Principles #7: Give us a voice

The act of communicating about their experiences can be therapeutic for young people affected by child sexual exploitation (CSE). However, their experience of services often involves being or feeling silenced, and lacking the opportunity or support to speak. Where these opportunities have existed – either through talking or writing or drawing – young people can identify instances where this led to action being taken on their behalf, or simply feeling listened to. Young people have also highlighted the importance of opportunities to ‘speak out’ to help others – they believe in the power of ‘voice’ to create change.

“Like the photography project - that helped me because when it comes to captions – I like writing and I... I didn't really speak about [sexual exploitation]. I didn't really do that. I just bottled it up and I needed to get it out in another way and I think if I hadn't have done it I think I would have just been bubbling it up.”
(Young person, ‘Helping me find my own way’)

“My social worker, yeah, when I had sommat to tell her, she wouldn't listen. She'd just keep going on and on about what she thought... Sometimes you're in that situation when they think it's all about what they're saying, like you don't get a word in edgeways. They've gotta think about how you actually feel telling someone about sommat serious an that”
(Young person, ‘It's wrong...but you get used to it’)