

Young Inspectors REPORT 2018

Young Inspectors report on support services for vulnerable adolescents

THIS REPORT IS A SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS BY THE YOUNG INSPECTORS TEAM

1. Who are the Young Inspectors?

Every year, a team of Young Inspectors undertake research into the views of other service users and professionals about the services provided by partner agencies responsible for safeguarding children.

The Young Inspectors are young people aged 16-21. They are selected through an interview process and are involved in designing and conducting each inspection. The strength of the Young Inspectors is that they can apply their own experiences and knowledge of the service to the inspection.

2. What is the aim of the inspection by Young Inspectors?

The main focus of the Young Inspectors project 2018 is to ensure that service users and professionals are involved in the development of a specialist adolescent-centred approach to supporting vulnerable young people, aged 14-18, who experience multiple risks and exploitation.

The proposal supports the DfE Partners in Practice project that seeks to improve the service to adolescents facing complex risks.

3. Why is the Young Inspection focusing on support for vulnerable adolescents?

Knife crime, gangs, youth violence and sexual and criminal exploitation are major concerns held by Camden young people and their families. Data held by safeguarding services supports these concerns and shows that the numbers of at risk adolescents is increasing. These risks, together with the pressures of being an adolescent, means that young people are experiencing poor mental health and low self-esteem, often leading to substance misuse, poor school attendance and in some cases, self-harm and suicide.

Research confirms that adolescent development and changes taking place in the brain impact on emotions, social interactions and relationships and adolescents are more susceptible to risk-taking behaviour.

Researchers suggest that services should adopt a 'distinctive adolescent-centred approach' to working with young people and that, "parents and parenting remains of critical importance to children's wellbeing and resilience during adolescence."

4. How did the Young Inspectors carry out their research?

The Young Inspectors team gathered information through: **Obtaining feedback** from teenagers, parents, carers and staff about their experience of services for adolescents, using questionnaires and focus groups.

Interviewing officers from the looked after children service, youth offending service, early help teams, fostering service, independent reviewing officers for child protection and looked after children and police officers.

• Desktop research covering material by:

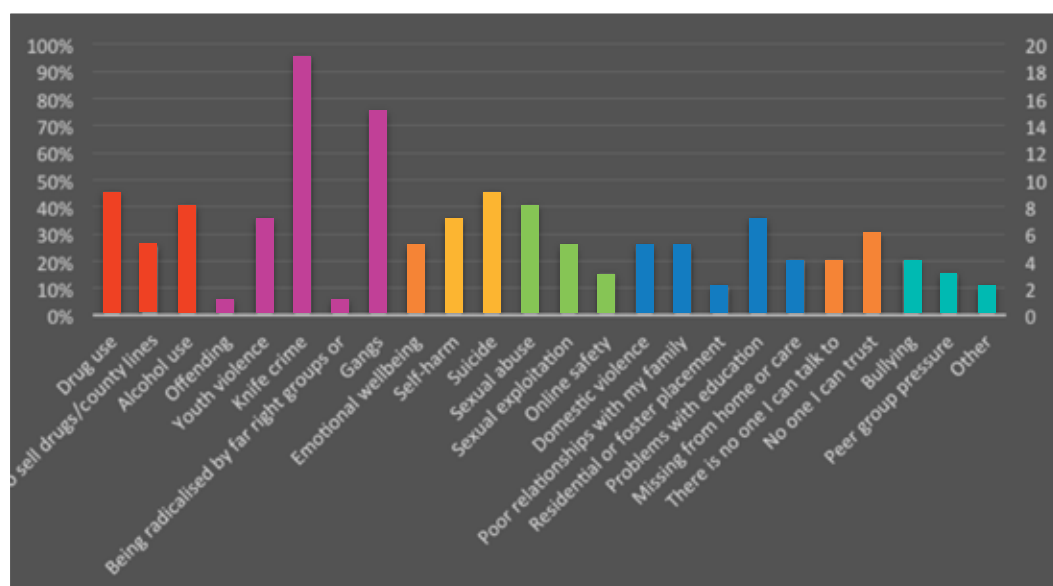
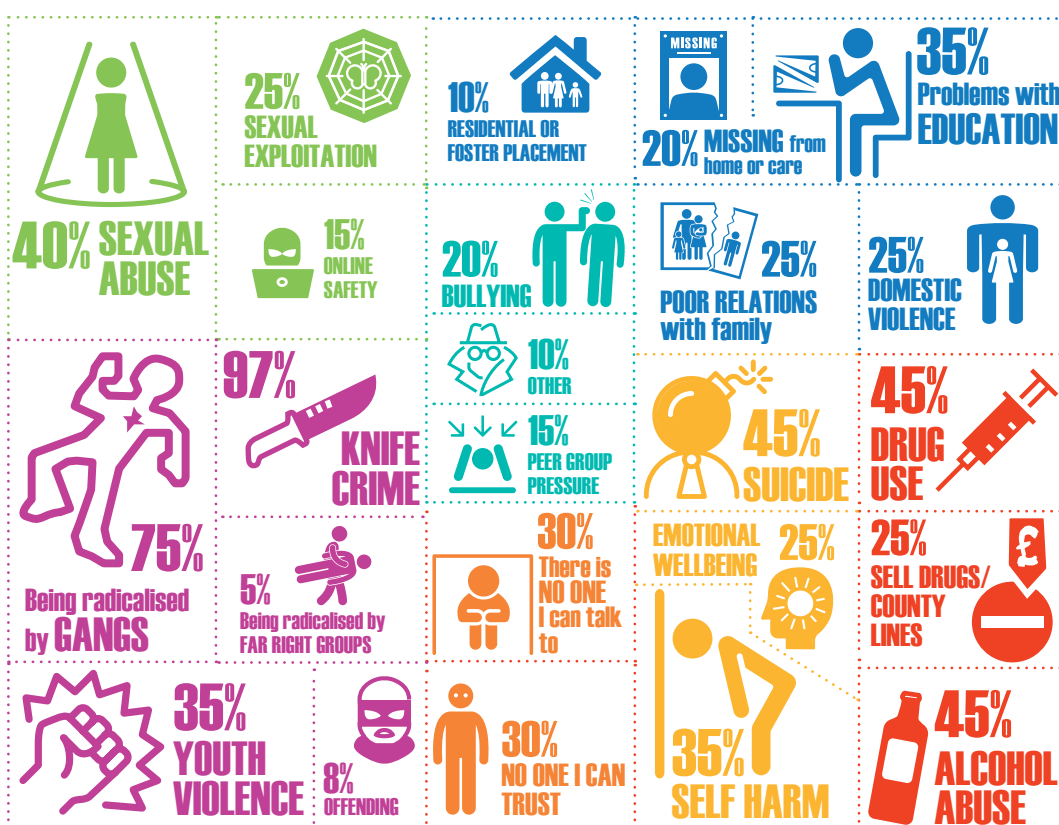
- **Research in Practice** - That Difficult Age: Developing a more effective response to risks in adolescence.
- **The Guardian** - How Scotland reduced knife deaths among young people.
- **London Assembly, 2016** - Serious Youth Violence.
- **The Scottish Violence Reduction Unit.**
- A range of **videos** about child sexual exploitation, domestic violence, radicalisation and mental health.



KEY FINDINGS

We received the following feedback from **young people** who took part in the focus group discussions and questionnaires:

What risks are you most worried about?



Who would you ask for help...

if you were worried about your safety and wellbeing?
(This could be services or community groups)

- My mum
- parents
- youth worker
- social worker
- carer
- someone I can trust
- someone that has been in my life
- teachers
- welfare officer
- friends
- police
- people in senior management roles
- I would go where I felt safe.

HELP

What has changed for you since you had help from services?

for example

- I became **more active**
- It helped me to **speak to someone** at school
- I use to be bullied and now it has **changed**
- Having **someone to talk to** when I need help
- It made me more **confident**
- It gave me **options** to think about and what to do
- I felt **reassured** about the issue
- It helped me to understand the situation I was in and how to **deal** with it
- I felt **supported**, listened to and able to reflect on my actions
- I feel I am **not alone** now
- I feel much **safer**
- It helped me to **understand** what happened to me and my family in the past
- I have a better **understanding** through workshops provided about knife crime and sexual health topics
- I can **speak** when I am ready. People understand my disability
- I learnt how to **cope** with my depression
- I was referred to the FWD team to help with alcohol misuse
- I am more aware of what to do in certain situations.



What could have been done differently...

to make sure the help you received was better?

- To provide information and advice on how to deal with things before the situation arises
- It is good as it is
- To talk **only** about issues I feel comfortable with
- To have easy access to information with **quick answers**
- Make sure of **continued support**. The help I was given was very supportive
- Fewer staff asking me questions and having to tell them what happened to me.



What helps you to keep in touch with workers who support you...

youth worker, key worker or social worker?

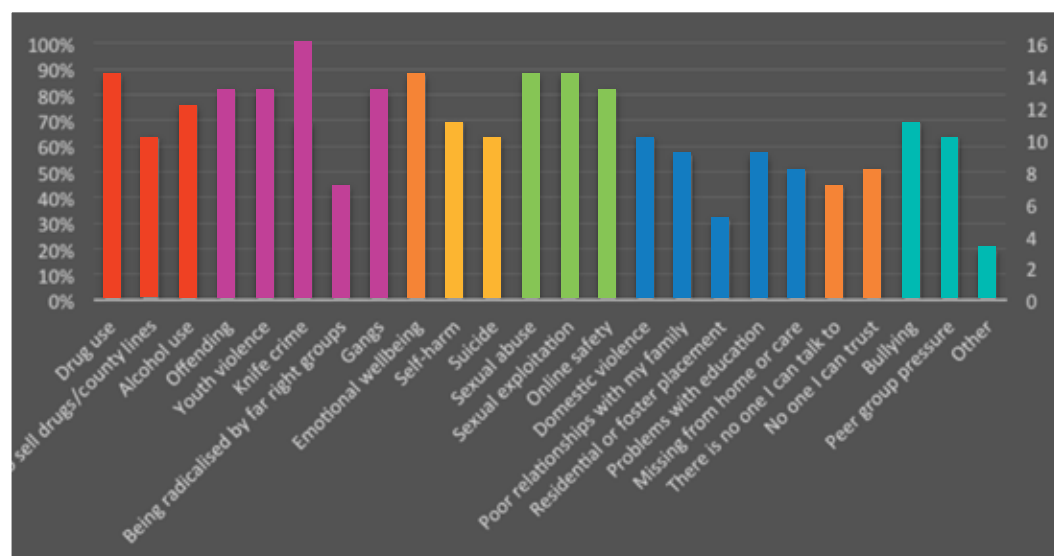
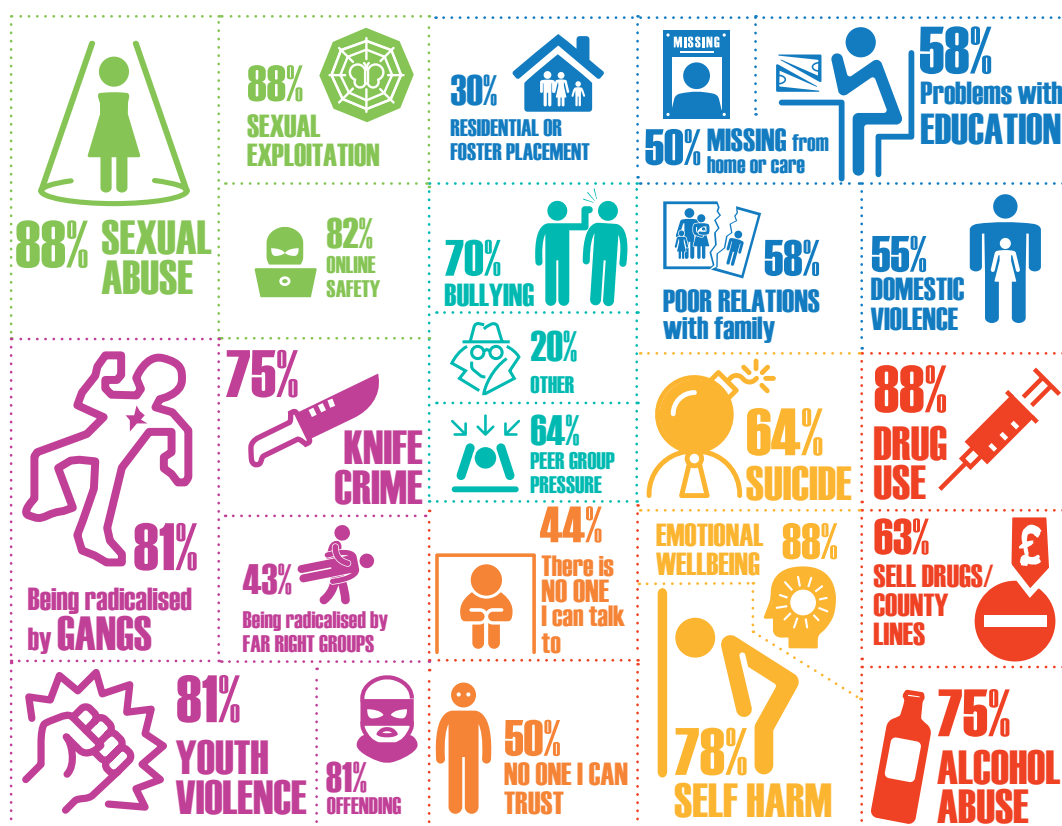
- Going to a **youth club**
- Having a youth worker
- **Keeping in touch** through text messages, emails or phone calls
- Taking part in **focussed drop-in** sessions
- Knowing I **have someone** to turn to
- Having PSHE lessons at school to discuss drugs, alcohol and mental health issues
- Having a good relationship with a key worker from FWD (substance misuse service).

FOCUS
DROP-IN
SESSIONS

KEY FINDINGS

We received the following feedback from **parents and carers** who took part in focus group discussions and from their responses to questionnaires:

What risks are you most worried about for your child?



Who would you ask for help...

if you were worried about your safety and wellbeing?

(This could be services or community groups)

- Social work
- Youth offending
- Youth service
- Family support
- Family therapy
- Family mediation
- Family group conference
- Youth mentor
- Adolescent mental health
- FWD drug service
- GP
- School
- Police missing person unit
- Friends and other parents
- Parent support group.



What has changed for you since you had help from services?

for example

- I felt relieved that my teenager **started to talk** to someone
- It has been an **eye-opener** for my other children
- My **relationship** with my child has **improved**
- I attended **NVR training for parents** (non-violent resistance) and it gave me **confidence** and **tools to improve** the relationship with my child
- The children now **go to school every day** and other issues they had problems with are getting better.



What could have been done differently...

to make sure the help you received was better?

- To change **police approach** to teenagers;
it could have been **more friendly**
- To have more **help** from school
- To have the offer of **one-to-one mentoring** for foster carers in addition to the support group
- To offer help to families **early**.

**TEENAGER-
FRIENDLY POLICE**

**SOMEONE
I RESPECT**



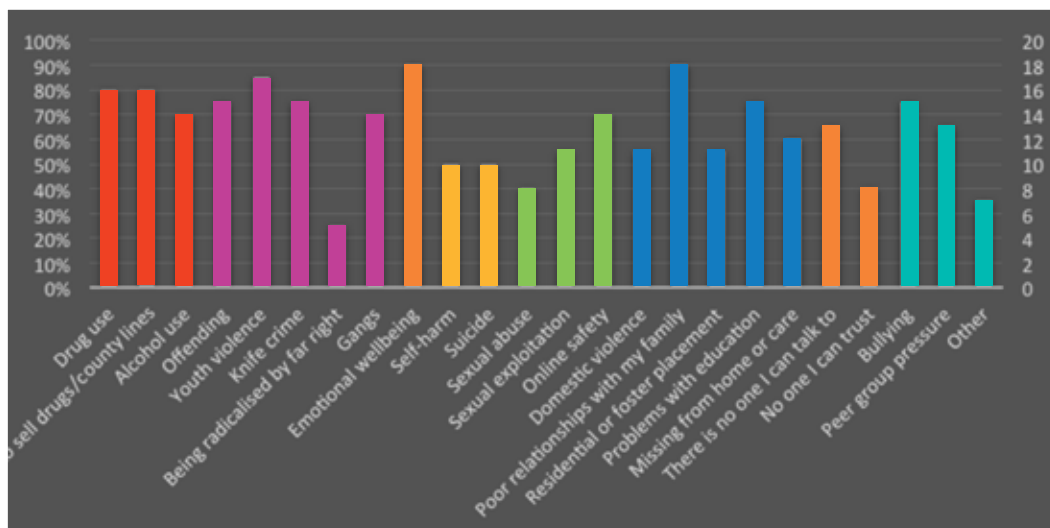
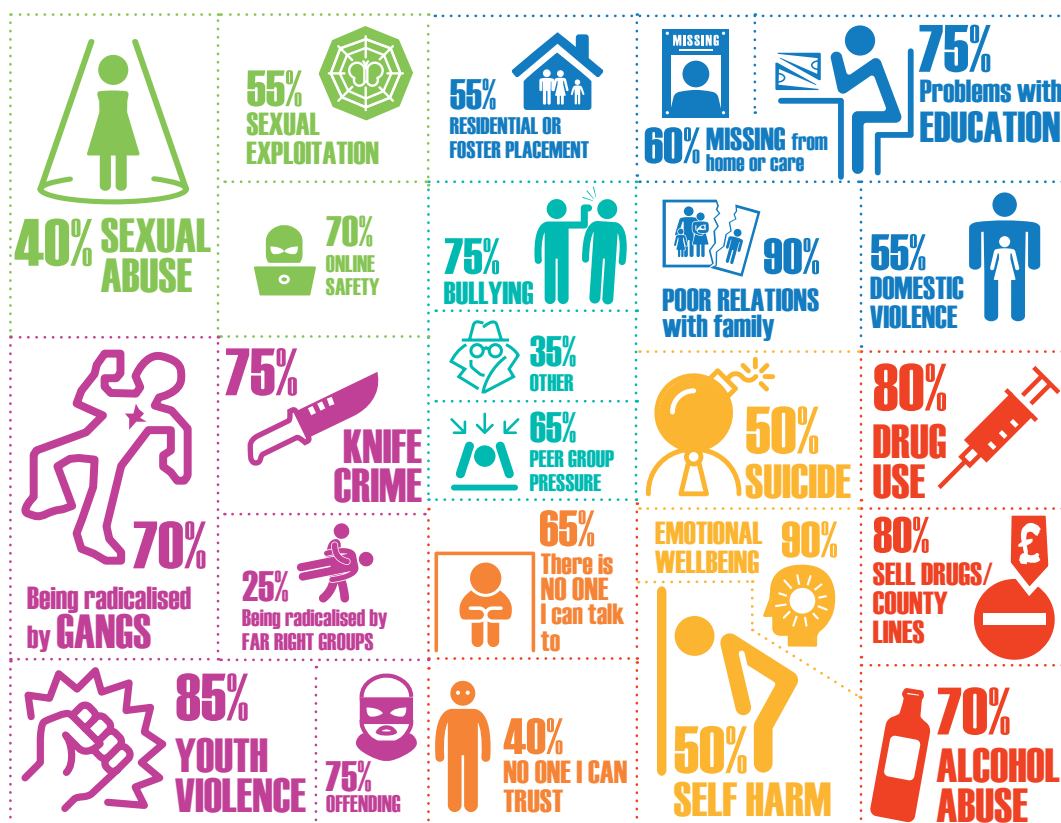
**MEET MY
MENTOR**



KEY FINDINGS

We received following feedback from **staff** who were interviewed by the team and from their responses to the questionnaire:

What risks are you most worried about for adolescents in Camden?



Additional risks identified by staff in the category of “other”:

- Financial **stability** of the family, sense of **belonging**, feeling **protected** and social isolation.

What do we do well in our work with adolescents?

- Developing **good relationships** with young people and making sure their **voice** is heard
- Developing trust
- Preventative work
- Supporting families to make **positive changes** themselves and to have good relationships with their teenagers
- Providing a **safe space** and a “listening ear”
- The needs are **identified early** and support shaped around the **young person’s needs**
- Engaging in **positive** activities
- Empowering teenagers.



What could we do differently?

- Focus more on what **teenagers** would find helpful
- **Appreciate** their level of autonomy
- **Listen** to social workers more
- Be **more creative** in how we do things
- **More training** to teenagers on substance misuse
- Empower families by giving them **education** and information.

TRAINING

Camden is planning to create a specialist approach to providing services to troubled adolescent and their families.

How could we address the need to **Prevent, Identify, Support or Disrupt** the risks and exploitation faced by vulnerable adolescents?

- **Analyse** why the current approach does not work
- Focus on **community-based interventions** and long term support in universal community settings
- More focus on providing **training** for parents/carers and introducing approaches such as STEP UP and NVR (non-violent resistance)
- Work with schools, academies and colleges
- **Continue to invest** in services for young people
- Educating families on **mental health** and what support is available
- Work closely with **CSE and missing person’s police** to disrupt abusers
- Police youth engagement team and staff from the council’s youth offending team to have **greater links** to carry out interventions and diversions.





PRIORITISE GOOD RELATIONSHIPS
BETWEEN ADOLESCENTS AND SOCIAL
WORKERS OR KEY WORKERS.





**SUPPORT ADOLESCENTS
TO DEVELOP POSITIVE
AND LASTING BONDS
IN THE COMMUNITY**



KYLE

Kyle – Young Inspectors team leader

The thing I found most enjoyable about the project was being able to work with such a **strong yet easy-going team**, where we did the work on time but also made sure to have plenty of fun. The team asked me to teach them some hieroglyphs!

I also enjoyed having the **opportunity to speak** to many key members of staff and gain a **greater understanding** of how the service works, since I find social services to be such an interesting area of work that does not always get the credit it deserves.

The most challenging thing about the project was being able to cover all the bases of the project's focus. Children are exposed to a lot of potential risks and it's hard to consider all of them at once, so we had to prioritise those which we had the most evidence for. At the same time, we wanted to make sure our recommendations were universal and helped address all the issues, not just some. I feel like we have achieved this.

GJESICA

Gjesica – Young Inspector

I really enjoyed working in a team because we were all **supportive of each other** in sharing ideas and **understanding each other's point of view**. Working in this team was great because everyone has different information about different topics and we were able to work fast and collect good information for the report.

This project helped me to learn **how much work** Camden does for young people.

Interviewing professionals from police, social work and youth work made me realise how many people actually **care** about teenagers. I got **opportunities** to get training on how to run a focus group or how to use Excel to capture responses from the questionnaires.

I **gained confidence** in working with other people, saying what I think and not being afraid of what other people think.

This project changed the way I think about **police officers**. I realised that they **care** about **our safety** and they try to prevent bad things happening. It also made me think about young people, how I can influence others in the future to do **good things** and to **prevent bad things** happening to them.



HANIFA

Hanifa – Young Inspector

I overthink a lot and this process has taught me to appreciate the fact that things are often as **simple** as they seem. Once I allowed myself to **slow down**, the project became **easier** to manage and significantly easier to complete. **Excel training** refreshed my mind on a useful skill that I had lost touch with and forgotten, which will **transfer well** onto many if not most of my potential future career/job roles. I have learnt how to hold a **successful focus group**, how to conduct **in-depth research** and **collate information** for a report.

This project taught me to **value myself** as a person, **my voice** in terms of what affects my life and that of my peers. It also showed me how many people are **willing to listen** to what I have to say and **value my opinion**, and that of other young people, enough to place us on a panel such as this.

ROSIE

SAFE

Rosie – Young Inspector

The most enjoyable part of the project was meeting all the other young inspectors, as well as getting the chance to **interview** different professionals, including four police officers. It was important to understand how each professional has a **different role** to keep young people out of trouble and safe. This was the highlight of the project because this was such a great opportunity to have and I would never have got to do anywhere else. Initially, I found it **challenging** to understand so many aspects of risk and evaluating the research to identify the most important aspects for the report. I needed help to understand different terminology and different terms used around this subject. I have gained skills and confidence to research information. Sometimes, it was hard to understand and sometimes it touched on personal issues of young people in the team.

I hope the young inspectors' participation in the project and the report will give the professionals more information on what needs to be **focused** on and to make sure adolescents get the **attention** and **help** they need. One important message is to realise that talking to another young person and **support from peers** can help to prevent them taking risks or committing crime. It is important to **change** young people's perception of the police.

Key themes and RECOMMENDATIONS

Key themes identified from the consultation responses and from the research are:

- Focus on taking the wider community into consideration
- Building relationships with young people based on positive experiences and achievements
- Working with the impact of trauma experienced by adolescents aged 14-18
- Giving careful consideration to supporting parents and carers to enable them to maintain a good relationship with their children.

Key recommendations for the development of a specialist adolescent-centred approach arising from this inspection, include the following:

- 1 Promote supportive relationships between adolescents, their peers and families
- 2 Support adolescents to develop positive and lasting bonds in the community
- 3 Prioritise good relationships between adolescents and social workers or key workers
- 4 Ensure easy and immediate access to professionals. Make services visible
- 5 Develop a wide range of community-based interventions with families
- 6 Provide training for parents to help them maintain positive relationships with adolescents and to develop techniques to deal with challenging behaviours. NVR (non-violent resistance) received high praise by parents and carers who have benefited from the training
- 7 Provide training for social workers and key workers to recognise the signs of trauma experienced by adolescents and to provide trauma-informed approaches
- 8 Develop strengths-based approaches by professionals
- 9 Ensure good interagency communication and close links with professionals involved in the service
- 10 Strengthen partnerships with young people, families and the community to develop peer mentoring, peer support and co-production of the adolescent-centred approach.



If you would like to be a **Young Inspector** or would like to know more about the project, please email elzbieta.chandrasena@camden.gov.uk or contact us via www.backchatonline.org.uk