

YOUTH VOICES about Youth Justice:

Themes from what young
people told us



**Listening to young people's experiences
of communication within the justice
sector in New Zealand**



www.talkingtroublenz.org

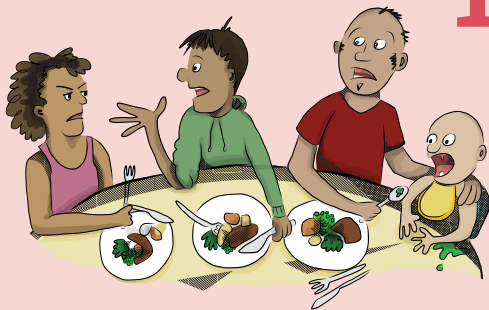
What would young people say about your communication?

- These Youth Voices cards were inspired by young people's feedback.
- Use them to reflect on your work and your organisation. Celebrate the things you are doing well.
- Focus on the things that you need to change.

Let young people help you to build good communication practice.

Read the full Youth Voices report and explore resources and training options at www.talkingtroublenz.org

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Family/whānau matters most

Family/whānau is the most important thing for us but family members are not always the easiest people to talk to.

Reflection; things to think about

How do you and your organisation actively support children and young people to stay connected with their family/whānau?



Communication is often a negative experience

We have often experienced negative consequences in talking situations. We don't believe our talking makes a difference. Sometimes when we talk we just make things worse.

Reflection; things to think about

How do you support children and young people to:

- get their own views across clearly
- see other people's point of view
- disagree with someone in a positive way



Rapport and trust are essential

We need, and respond to, people who take the time to get to know us. We are more likely to trust, and listen to, adults who are calm, loyal, and genuinely care about us. We want professionals to be 'straight up'.

Reflection; things to think about

What sets the pace for your relationship-building with the children and young people you support

- the jobs that need to be done?
- the deadlines that need to be met?
- your knowledge of their life experience?
- their (and your!) social and language skills?

Communication is a transaction

We won't talk to you if we don't see the point of the conversation; there has to be a purpose, and something in it for us. If we do talk to you about something and you don't do anything about it we might not give you a second chance.



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Reflection; things to think about

When you talk to children and young people, how do you make sure that your conversations are interesting to them?

How do you make sure that what they say impacts on decisions in a genuine way?

Will the child, or young person's day, week, or life really improve if they take part in your conversation?



Feeling safe is important to good communication

We need to feel both physically and emotionally safe to open up and communicate.

Reflection; things to think about

What's your organisation's environment like...

- Is it easy to find spaces where children and young people are likely to feel safe?
- Do children and young people know what is going to happen if they reveal their worries, ideas, or thoughts to you?



Listening is key to good communication

We want to be listened to. We want people to try to understand our point of view, and our worldview. We are tired of being judged. We want to feel that adults genuinely care about our wellbeing.

Reflection; things to think about

How do you hear what children and young people have to say if it's difficult for them to put their thoughts into words?

What creative ways can you use to ensure they have a voice?

How do you:

- help them to tell their story?
- make it easier for them to organise their ideas?
- help them to find the words they need to express their views?
- enable them to see their story from someone else's point of view?



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Institutional language is a barrier to communication

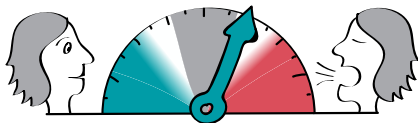
Youth justice situations involve a lot of jargon, and assumed knowledge as well as complex words and concepts. These all create barriers between us (and our whānau) and the people trying to communicate with us.

Reflection; things to think about

Blah, blah, blah!

Listen to your colleagues. How much jargon do they use every day?

Listen to yourself. How much jargon do you use everyday?



BLAHOMETER

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Reflection; things to think about

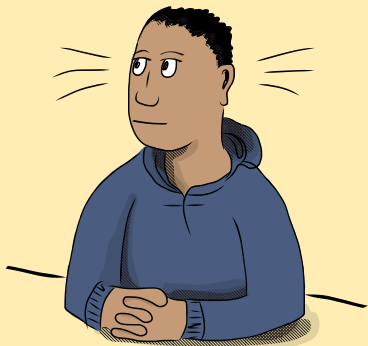


Communication can be a trigger

Communication can sometimes make us angry and can result in behaviours that get us into trouble.

Does the way I talk calm things down or make things worse?

How do I equip children and young people with the communication skills to manage difficult feelings and solve problems?



Speech, language and communication needs are not always obvious, even to the young people themselves

Reflection; things to think about

Do you know how to:

- break information down?
- explain the big words?
- check understanding effectively?

