

Report 6

The views and experience of young people and parents

Home Compulsory Supervision Orders -
effectiveness of decision making and outcomes



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Contents

	Page
Acknowledgements	2
Summary	3
Introduction	4
Methods	4
Interviews with young people and parents	4
Ethics and recruitment of participants	5
Limitations of this research	6
Findings	6
Understanding of home CSOs	6
Role of home CSOs	7
Involvement in decision making	9
Service provision	10
Effectiveness of home CSOs	11
Discussion	15
Do home CSOs make a difference?	15
When do home CSOs not work?	16
Understanding and involvement in decision making	16
Conclusions	16
List of reports in this series	18

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And to the young people and parents who so graciously welcomed us into their homes to be interviewed.

Summary

This is one of a series of research reports on the effectiveness of Compulsory Supervision Orders where the child lives at home with their parents (home CSOs). This report looks at this from the perspectives of those directly affected – through interviews with eight young people and 10 parents who all had (or had a child with) a home CSO.

Do home CSOs work?

Yes, they can. Young people and parents were mostly positive about the supports they got as a result of the home CSO: *“it’s not as bad as everyone thinks, like it’s that people are always looking over you, ...you get more help”* (young person). Parents understood that they and their child had responsibility to work with the supports provided: *“at the end of the day it’s down to us to make it happen, you know”* (parent). Timing was also critical to success, parents told us that the home CSO had to come at the right time for the child.

Parents felt that it being a legal order helped keep their child safe and gave them a ‘back up’ when they needed extra support. They also realised that it meant they got help for themselves: *“I never really had anybody till they came home [on a CSO], and then we all got the support...there was a lot, oh aye, I got a lot. I got it to help me keep my children at home, and that’s what I did”* (parent).

When do home CSOs not work?

Some parents said that the home CSO came too late to help their child - mainly where there was a history of offending or not going to school: *“the person with the compulsory supervision order should be brought in as quickly as possible, from a young age...rather than let it go for any length of time”* (parent)

Others were disappointed with the level of support they received: *“See, this myth that she is meant to come out and see me a couple of times a month...I’ve never seen her so I don’t know what she is meant to be doing”* (young person).

Conclusions

What parents and young people told us makes a home CSO work were similar to those of practitioners¹ – that it does secure services but that its success is influenced by the willingness of families to accept support. Timing of the home CSO is also critical, and for some young people it comes too late to make a difference.

¹ Report 3. Care planning and interventions [link]

Introduction

This is the sixth in a series of reports on research on the effectiveness of Compulsory Supervision Orders (CSOs) where the child remains at home with their parents (home CSOs). This part of the research looks at this from the perspectives of those directly affected – young people and parents.

There have been few studies on home CSOs despite this being the most common type of CSO made by Children’s Hearings², and even fewer that have sought the views of young people and parents^{3,4}. In this part of the research we aimed to fill this gap through interviews with young people who have home CSOs and parents of children with home CSOs.

Methods

Interviews with young people and parents

Semi-structured interviews were carried out with young people aged between 12 and 17 years with current CSOs⁵ and parents who currently had a child(ren) (of any age) on a home CSO⁶. Eight young people (five male and three female) and 10 parents (nine mothers and one father)⁷, from three local authority areas, took part. Interviews were carried out between October 2017 and July 2018.

Interviews with young people and parents explored:

- Their understanding of the home CSO and why it was made.
- If they felt that the home CSO came at right time for them or their child.
- If their views taken into account in decisions to make or continue the CSO.

² Scottish Children’s Reporter Administration (2018). Statistical Analysis 2017/18. Available from: <https://www.scra.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Full-Statistical-Analysis-2017-18.pdf>

³ Lerpiniere, J., Welch, V., Young, E., Sadler, S. and Fitzpatrick, J.P. (2015). Overseen but often overlooked: Children and Young People ‘Looked After at Home’ in Scotland. Report 2: Identifying needs and outcomes. CELCIS, University of Strathclyde. Available from: https://www.celcis.org/files/3114/4585/8335/Overseen_but_often_overlooked-Report-2-needs_outcomes.pdf

⁴ Welsh, V., Lerpiniere, J., Sadler, S. and Young, E. (2014). Overseen but often overlooked: Children and young people ‘looked after at home’ in Scotland. Report 1. Reviewing the literature. CELCIS, University of Strathclyde. Available from: https://www.celcis.org/files/3214/4585/8334/Overseen_but_often_overlooked-Report-1-literature-web.pdf

⁵ Two young people were accommodated at time of interview but had recently had home CSOs.

⁶ Current = at time of interview

⁷ Parents and young people were not always related to each other

- If they received the supports they expected.
- If the supports were delivered.
- What they thought about the quality of the supports they received.
- If there were supports they expected to get but didn't.
- If the home CSO made a difference to them or their child.

At the request of participants, all interviews were carried out in their own homes. All but one of the interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. The one that was not was at the request of the interviewee, and instead notes were taken by the researcher. Interview transcripts were analysed thematically.

Ethics and recruitment of participants

Potential interviewees were identified by services working with them – these were young people and parents who the workers, from their knowledge of them and their circumstances, thought it would be appropriate to approach about the research. Their worker provided them with information about the research and, if they expressed an interest in taking part, obtained their permission for their contact details to be passed to the researcher. Young people and parents were then contacted by the researcher who explained more about the research and what it would involve. For those still interested, arrangements were made for the researcher to visit them at a place and time of their choosing. All interviewees gave their informed consent prior to being interviewed. For young people, both themselves and their parents had to consent to them taking part in an interview. Young people and parents were each given a £20 gift voucher to thank them for taking part.

No identifying information was recorded about interviewees, without their consent. Transcripts were held in secure systems to which only the researchers had access. Transcripts and consent forms were destroyed on completion of the research.

The researchers are all PVG Scheme members in respect of regulated work with children⁸, and have all been trained on data protection law.

Ethical approval for the study was granted by Scottish Children's Reporter Administration's Research Ethics Committee on 19th July 2017.

⁸ Section 52 of the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007

Limitations of this research

It proved to be very difficult to recruit young people and parents to be interviewed. Our original aim was to interview 25 young people and 25 parents, however, this was not possible despite a great deal of help from Includem, Barnardo's Scotland and several Social Work Departments. This was largely because it was inappropriate to even approach many young people and parents about the research because of their vulnerabilities and/or difficulties in their lives. This highlights the balance that needs to be met between obtaining the views of children, young people and their parents to inform policy and practice and the need to avoid, possibly harmful, intrusion into their lives. This is not an easy balance to achieve and needs to be given a great deal of consideration in any activities to consult with families involved in the child protection system.

The young people and parents who did consent to be interviewed were those who had a trusted relationship with their worker. They were therefore likely to have relatively positive experiences of service support, which may not be representative of others involved in the Hearings System. This should be borne in mind in interpreting the research findings.

Findings

Understanding of home CSOs

Few interviewees could articulate what being on a home CSO meant, beyond having the support of a social worker – who often had been involved with the family before the CSO was made.

"I don't actually know what it's meant to be, if that makes sense? You get told compulsory supervision order, but you don't get told the in's and out's and what it actually is for and what it's meant to be for, you know?...I've had snips, wee bits of this and wee bits of that. I know the social worker is meant to, kinda, up their game with them, and like...more contact with them" (mother)

"...I didn't even know why they [social work] were actually coming or what they were doing...other than just to stand there and try and get us back into school. I don't know what else they would do" (young person, male)

"...my outlook on supervision is, I will have somebody there as my back-up, know what I mean? Like, if I need them, if I give somebody a phone for help, if she is going

right off the rails, then there will be somebody on call and I don't need to wait till the police charge her, know what I mean?" (mother)

"...to be honest with you, I don't even know what it means...I think they just told me that I would get a visit from social work every week or something like that...I don't even know what it means, it's just a word to me...It doesn't mean anything to me, I don't know what it's meant to do" (young person, male)

"Don't even know [what home CSO is for]. I've had it for a while...it's pure daft having it, it doesn't even do anything for you...I don't even know what it is. I just know that I have got it" (young person, female)

Parents explained that children do not necessarily know why they have a home CSO or what it means:

"I think he knows a bit, not a lot about it...when asked on them Have Your Say forms 'do you know why you are on an order' and he is like 'eh, no'. He doesn't know, and I say, 'we are on an order to make sure I can do a mum's job, to make sure I keep you safe and all that. That's what the order is about'. And he was like 'oh, alright, okay then, but you do do your mummy job'...see 'cause he was too young" (mother)

Role of home CSO

Whilst not fully aware of what a home CSO means, most parents and young people were able to explain what its role was in their lives:

"...it's not as bad as everyone thinks, like it's that people are always looking over you...they don't pure get on your back and tell you you have done wrong and make you feel shit about it. They just, they'll just speak to you about it...you get more help" (young person, male)

"...I don't think you can get [named service] and that if you are not [on home CSO]...but another thing, a good thing is, like, if she goes missing of a night then 'cause she is on a supervision order the police will deal with it quicker and start looking for her. Whereas, they would wait...missing person...they could wait till the next day before they deal with it. But because she is on the thingmy – the vulnerable young person's list because she is on the supervision order – then they will go and look for her..." (mother)

“...I need to use things like ‘I will phone the social worker and I’ll get you accommodated if this happens’. Drinking and things like that, I’ve got to use wee stupid things to threaten her to keep her in line...it, [home CSO] impacts on our relationship, know what I mean...she thinks she has got off scot free ‘nothing has happened to me’...so she is just carrying on what she already done...what [young person] doesn’t understand is that this supervision order isn’t all about her...This is for me so I know that I have back up there at the end of a phone when I need it...”
(mother)

Parents, in particular, understood that the role of a home CSO is to protect their child(ren) and ensure their safety – both physical and emotional:

“It’s put in place for the benefit for the child, you know, it’s not there for no reason”
(mother)

“...[the social worker] wanted to keep him [child] on it [home CSO] just for safety...”
(mother)

“...they [Panel] need to make sure the safety of these kids” (mother)

Parents said that their experiences of home CSOs were positive insofar as they resulted in additional supports and ‘back up’:

“...things didn’t change, you know, for a long long time, even after social work intervention they still weren’t going to school, so that’s when we started going to the Panel...because legally I wasn’t fulfilling my role as a mother, you know...so that’s why it became compulsory, as well, you know, I suppose to cover all bases, you know? Social work had the kind of power, if you like, to take the kids into foster care should that have been required, you know...” (mother)

“For them [Panel] to give me the home based supervision order they knew I was ready to try with the support, you know...they are still staying at home they are still on the order...till I got myself sorted, basically. ‘Cause I had an emotional...my emotions and all that to deal with, so that’s why the home based order was put in...put in place. So now I’ve got myself...well, almost one hundred per cent sorted, so that’s why it got discharged. So I can manage a lot better myself now”
(mother)

“I think it’s good to know that it’s [home CSO] there...because, the situations that are going on and that...I don’t want to say it’s handy, but I feel there is back up there for us. If we need it. It’s there” (mother)

Parents were reflective and acknowledged that they themselves could be the reason for the home CSO, whether this be problematic behaviour, addictions, mental ill-health or their parenting ability. For example, one mother said that when things were going well and she was not drinking her child’s home CSO was terminated but following a relapse another home CSO was made. Another recounted how she struggled to set boundaries for her child so his behaviour worsened and this was partly why he required a home CSO. Regardless of why their child(ren) had a home CSO, parents did recognise that additional supports were put in place because of it.

Involvement in decision making

Most interviewees felt that they had been consulted during the decision making process. But they also felt compelled to ‘go with’ what was being recommended and, regardless of their views, decisions would be made whether they agreed with them or not:

“...whatever is for the best I will go with, you know. Because, they must know what’s for the best, and I will comply with anything they put in place...not that I haven’t put in my opinion, I have done, but I have always kind of gave it ‘right, well, I will stick with what they are recommending’, you know?” (mother)

“...obviously I know they [Panel] need to do it, but, like, if [brother] – [brother] doesn’t always talk a lot in the Panels – and if he said his opinion then sometimes they would, like, argue back at him...I think they, like, listened, but in the end it was like, no matter what you say, they were deciding...even if you were to put your views across, like, no matter what, it was their choice and not yours” (young person, female)

“...the social workers are, like, if they recommend that [young person] is taken into care then that is what would probably happen. So my opinion doesn’t really come into it at all I think...they listen to everybody at the table’s views, but then, as I said, at the end of it...they agree with the social workers...most of the time” (mother)

“...the Panel Members are dead nice. They were, they were very...they listened to you. You know, they let me have my say...they did take my points of view into consideration. I mean, there was nothing changed, but I felt that...well, I was listened to” (mother)

Young people had mixed views on whether they had been listened to and involved in decision making:

"...didn't really get the chance to speak. Just sat there...Well, they did ask me about the tag, and I said aye that I think it would help me, but that was it" (young person, male)

"...I stopped giving them my views because I felt as if they just didn't listen to me. 'Cause you would sit at a meeting and then they would be like 'you can speak now' and I'd be like 'there is no point in speaking 'cause you never ever listen'" (young person, female)

"...they always ask me if I still want to be on the supervision order and that, like, they don't just tell me, then they ask if I want to know anything about it. They don't just tell me what I'm doing" (young person, male)

Service provision

The majority of interviewees believed that social work involvement is a benefit of a home CSO. But some were disappointed with the level of contact they had with their allocated social worker – they did not see them as regularly and timeously as they expected:

"...since [young person] got taken off his restriction of liberty order...he's never seen his social worker once, you know? And that's him on a compulsory supervision order still. And he has never seen her...there are some things that you would like to speak to the actual social worker about...but you don't get that, you don't get that support" (mother)

"Like, they say that social work are meant to come out and see me every week or something like that, but I've no seen her in about three months...She doesn't give me any [support]...See, this myth that she is meant to come out and see me a couple of times a month...I've never seen her so I don't know what she is meant to be doing" (young person, male)

"The social worker, it's pathetic. No seen her since the Panel I had to call myself. Do you know what I mean? And then the one [social worker] before that, she was away and nobody took on the casework, that's the reason I had to call a Panel, because we hadn't seen her at all, know what I mean?" (mother)

“Social work phones...no offence, no disrespect to social work but they [another service] are quicker than what social work is. ‘Cause obviously they [social work] are busy with other families and stuff...” (mother)

Others related more positive experiences of social work support:

“...if we needed [social worker]...if I need them, aye, I could just phone them and they would come out or whatever, they would be there” (mother)

“Social Workers have got this label they’re bad people and you don’t want social workers in your life but at the end of the day they are there to help, they are there to do their job...I am happy with social work in my life but I know they are needed at the moment” (mother)

Prior to home CSOs being made, many parents said the only contact they had with services was social work and this had often been sporadic. Regardless of individual issues with social workers, the consensus of parents was that more support was available to them after the home CSO was made, both for themselves and their child(ren):

“...that’s when they started putting [named service] into place, do I did have that more support...it was after [the home CSO] was made that they [named service] got more involved” (mother)

“...it [services] was more geared towards the kids in the first instance...as time kind of went on I was referred to a parenting group, and a self-esteem group as well, and I know there are other things out there I can access if I need to. But, for the first six months of the supervision order was just all ‘how can we move on with the kids’, which was fine by me, so that was okay. I wasn’t looking for anything else at that point” (mother)

“...it’s not cause of the social work I’ve got [named service]. I said to the Panel that I wanted it, and that’s when...and then she [worker] came out” (young person, female)

“...I never really had anybody [for support] till they came home [on a CSO], and then we all got the support...there was a lot [of supports], oh aye, I got a lot. I got it to help me keep my children at home, and that’s what I did. I was at a parenting class...the Incredible Years I did, so, you know what I mean, I have had quite a lot of support...” (mother)

From the interviews, it would seem that the supports and services put in place for children with home CSOs were significant, however, they could also be time consuming and intense:

“...there were just so many people that were just, like, come to the door unannounced and just, like...I don’t know, just too many people at the time...You are kind of almost expected to be in!” (young person, female)

“...I do think we got to the point where there just seemed to be millions of people, either calling or coming in, or making plans. And it all got a bit overwhelming at times...because it was all getting a bit too much” (mother)

Whilst they appreciated the supports in place as a result of the home CSO, some were concerned that these would stop when it was terminated:

“I am scared that if that structure is taken away from them it’s easy for them to fall back into old routines. I am hoping that’s not going to happen, you know...just need to wait and see how it goes, you know...” (mother)

“I am personally quite glad that it’s [home CSO] still...it’s still compulsory, ‘cause I feel I need to kinda wean myself off [it], you know, ‘cause it’s been my main support...We are still, you know, I have no doubt there will be wee kinda glitches of some sort of another in future, you know, that’s just like, but yeah I think I am quite happy that it is still compulsory to be honest, you know. It’s my wee crutch” (mother)

This was reiterated by another mother who said that she felt the home CSO “ended really fast” and unexpectedly. It had been terminated because her son said he would not engage with services, and the Hearing decided that it would be more appropriate for him to have support on a voluntary basis. This resulted in visits from the social worker to her son being reduced from weekly to once or twice a month. She felt that both she and her son would have benefited from the home CSO being continued to ensure on-going and more regular social work support.

Effectiveness of home CSOs

Engagement of child and parents

There was general acceptance that the effectiveness of a home CSO depends on the responses of child(ren) and/or parents to it.

One mother compared her younger son with her older son who did not engage with his home CSO and associated supports:

“...since he has been on the compulsory supervision order he’s been fantastic. It’s brilliant...I think for [younger son] it has worked, because he got a bit of a fright” (mother)

Another mother described how her children responded differently to support at school:

“...[my eldest] didn’t cope well in mainstream school...he’s not got the mentality...he just can’t sit in that school setting, he finds it very difficult...[younger son] can do it, he’s very very intelligent, he just can’t be bothered” (mother)

The effectiveness of a home CSO was explained to be influenced by the character of the young person and/or their parent(s) and how they engage with supports:

“...she won’t take part in other things...she won’t get involved in anything...she just kept knocking them [services] back...I know that everybody is trying their hardest to support her...I don’t think anything that anybody is doing is going...is going to help...what was offered was good, she just wouldn’t do it...So to be honest, no, I don’t think it [home CSO] is making any difference to [young person] at all, you know, on the supervision order...They do offer a lot of help, so it all depends on what the kids’ like and if they are going to accept the help” (mother)

“...it wasn’t like they were saying ‘oh, we’ll wave this magic wand and this will happen’, it’s obviously...at the end of the day it’s down to us to make it happen, you know. People and the supports are there, and the suggestions are there and it’s down to us to make it go forward, you know? But I think everybody has been, you know, kind of really honest and helpful about it” (mother)

“...it depends on the child really, doesn’t it...who knows, it might do the world of good...give it [home CSO] a try, give it the benefit of the doubt, ‘cause it works for some kids, but doesn’t work for others” (mother)

Timing

Timing was also raised as being important in the effectiveness of a home CSO.

One mother said that she had reached the ‘end of the road’ with her daughter and that the home CSO came just at the right time. Another felt that the home CSO was appropriately made at the time when her child started to get into trouble.

“...with [young person] it [home CSO] nipped it in the bud quite quickly...it was a case of ‘catch him quick’, you know, before he follows suit and goes right down the same line [as his older sibling]...the person with the compulsory supervision order should be brought in as quickly as possible, from a young age...rather than let it go for any length of time” (mother)

“I don’t know what would have happened [if the CSO had not been made] to be honest, ‘cause...you know, it couldn’t...we were talking earlier about it being the right time – it absolutely was...I know at some point someone would have intervened. But how long could it have gone on...I don’t know, I don’t know...” (mother)

Other parents felt that the home CSO and supports came too late to help their child(ren). One mother explained that her eldest child’s home CSO had not worked as well as it did for her two younger children because it had not been in place early enough to change his behaviour.

“I mean, like, at the age of five [he] was lighting fires in his bedroom and everything else...I used to go on the phone, screaming, ‘I need help here, I need help’...will you not listen to me?” (mother)

“After the CSO home schooling was offered, followed by a referral to a special school...it took ages for him to be allocated a place at school and by this point [young person] had completely stopped going...” (mother)

Benefits

Parents acknowledged that the home CSO had helped improve the situation for them and their child(ren) and explained why:

“Got counselling myself...go to my doctor regular, take my medication. Even the Panel noticed a change in me...my social worker noticed a big change in me and put it through to the Panel, she said ‘this lady changed’ and the Panel Members stood up and said ‘you’ve changed, ‘cause from what we read a year ago isn’t you now’. I said ‘I know, I know it’s no’. It [home CSO] has been useful for myself, know what I mean...and the kids and stuff” (mother)

Young people focused more on the conditions specified in their home CSO in how it had made a difference to their lives:

“Well, that tag did [make a difference]. ‘Cause obviously that kept me out of trouble...I didn’t like it at all, but it did help” (young person, male)

"[Home CSO has made a difference] a wee teency teency teency bit... 'cause if we didn't go to a Panel we wouldn't have [named service] and if I didn't have [named service] I wouldn't be going to college..." (young person, female)

Two young people reflected that their home CSOs were beneficial, even though they ended up being looked after away from home. Their CSOs had allowed social work to escalate interventions quickly when situations did not improve, resulting in the young people being placed in safer and more supportive environments:

"...I didn't like it [home CSO], but it was the, you know, the right thing for me ...Working with them [named service] three times a week made a big difference ...Social work has made a big difference 'cause I am no getting as much charges ...like the things they talk about, the things they discuss at the meetings [Hearings] actually happenSo, aye, it's made a big difference ...I think it's made my life a lot better, 'cause if I didn't end up going into the unit I reckon I would either be dead or..." (young person, male)

"...I just felt like, what is the point in this? All it is is them coming in for extra visits, that's all I felt it was...[but] it made a big difference, 'cause I was, like, never going to school, I would just refuse to do stuff, but then I came in here [unit] and started, like ...not kind of forcing me, but pushing me to go to school...I went for one day and I was like 'why did I not come here, I really like it here'..." (young person, female)

Discussion

Do home CSOs make a difference?

Yes, they can. Young people and parents were largely positive about the supports they received as a result of the home CSO. They recognised that they would not have received these services without the CSO. However, parents understood that the effectiveness of the home CSO was also affected by the engagement of their child and themselves with the supports offered. Timing was also critical to success, the home CSO had to come at the right time for their child.

It was not only the involvement of services that made a difference to them, parents described how the statutory intervention in itself helped keep their child safe and also gave them as parents a 'back up' when situations changed and they need extra support. They

also realised that they received supports for themselves that would not have got if their child was in care.

Young people recognised that the home CSO could be used flexibly in having conditions specific to their needs and could be varied to move them away from home if necessary. Conversely, as one young man discussed, the Movement Restriction Condition on his CSO meant he could stay at home and avoid the alternative of secure accommodation.

When do home CSOs not work?

Parents gave examples when the home CSO came too late to be effective for their child. These were mainly in situations where their child had long history of offending or not going to school. They felt that if the home CSO had been made earlier, then it could have made a difference to their child's life. Linked to this, parents acknowledged that a home CSO cannot work if their child refuses to engage with the supports provided, and this is more the case for their older children.

Some parents and young people were disappointed with the level of support they received, especially contact with their social worker. Others were worried about what would happen when the CSO was terminated, in that they would lose the support they felt that they and their child needed.

Understanding and involvement in decision making

Few parents and young people understood what a home CSO is but they did understand why it was made and the impact it has on their lives.

There were mixed views on involvement in Hearings' decision making. Whilst most felt that their views were asked for and they were able to give them, the extent to which they felt they influenced the Hearing's decision was limited.

Conclusions

What parents and young people told us about what makes a home CSO effective reflects the findings from other parts of this research. Practitioners also felt that the success of a home CSO is influenced by the willingness of young people and parents to accept and work with

supports. That a home CSO secures services was clear from what young people, parents and practitioners said and was also evident from the cases analysed^{9,10,11}.

Parents and young people explained how the timing of the home CSO was critical, and for some young people it came too late to make a difference. We also found that age was an important factor in decision making, with interventions tending to be made for young people after an accumulation of concerns, and practitioners acknowledging that there are different thresholds for young children^{8,9,10}.

⁹ Report 2. Wellbeing outcomes for children and young people [link]

¹⁰ Report 3. Care planning and interventions [link]

¹¹ Report 5. Decision making in Children's Hearings [link]

Home Compulsory Supervision Orders - effectiveness of decision making and outcomes

List of reports in this series:

- Report 1. Residence and contact conditions
- Report 2. Wellbeing outcomes for children and young people
- Report 3. Care planning and interventions
- Report 4. Professional trust and relationships in Children's Hearings
- Report 5. Decision making in Children's Hearings
- Report 6. The views and experiences of young people and parents



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