



Commissioners who is non-verbal, enabling him to fully participate and share his views in the session.

Care Inspectorate Wales asked the Young Commissioners to think about the below areas:

- What makes a house feel like home.
- What is the right size of a good home is and how many children who should live together.
- What the inside of a good home should look like, including their thoughts on the individual rooms and shared spaces.
- What the exterior of a good home should look like, including the gardens and outside space.
- Where a good home should be located and what should be in the surrounding community.

Set out in this report are the views and recommendations of our Young Commissioners.

Young Commissioners views on what makes a house feel like a home.



This word map reflects the key words and phrases that emerged when our Young Commissioners were talking about what they think makes a house feel like a home.

When asked about what makes a house a home, the Young Commissioners told us a

variety of things can make children and young people feel at home.

Good **food** is very important to them, they talked about having 'plenty of food and a choice of what to eat'. When sharing their previous experiences, they talked about arriving at a new home and being welcomed with their favourite meal, this helped them to feel at home and they thought that it was nice that the carers had

found out what they like to eat to make them feel important and welcome. They also talked about how food made them feel comforted, happy and safe.

Our Young Commissioners told us that '**people** that make a home'. The people who care for them are key to making children and young people happy in their home. Forming positive relationships with carers is critical.

"Understanding people, who will listen to our story"
"Nice people make it good"
"I don't want to live with people who shout or I will shout back"
"I run away cos I don't like the staff"

They say they need to be treated kindly, fairly and be listened to.

When talking about **pets** and the home, the majority of our Young Commissioners of all ages love animals and think that it is important that a good home includes a pet of some sort, particularly dogs or cats. One Young Commissioner did not want a pet as they were concerned about cleanliness, but thought that a parrot or a lizard would be ok in the home. Looking after the pet, including play, keeping the animal healthy, fed, clean and loved were important.

"Pets are important"
"I don't want pets, but, maybe we could have a parrot or a lizard, something that is quite clean"
"The house must be clean"

The Young Commissioners are clear a good home should be **clean, warm** and **cosy**.

Young Commissioners views on the right size for a good home and who should live there.

All of our Young Commissioners say that they think that a children's home should reflect a '**normal**' **family home**. They strongly believe that smaller homes are best for children and young people, they are more homely and normal. There was a strong focus on wanting homes that did not stand out as childrens homes, which may have an association with a stigma of being looked after.

They think larger homes can be too noisy, busy and could make some children feel anxious and unhappy. They told us that smaller homes enable those living there to have better relationships with each other and that there is less likelihood that they would feel 'left out'.

"A nice normal size house, 4 people is plenty"

They also think that children and young people should live with others who are of a similar age and have interests that they can share with each other but did acknowledge that typical families include children of different ages and that can work too. Shared interests and doing activities together emerged as a positive theme.

A few of our Young Commissioners shared their individual experiences of living in a **solo** home where they were the only young person living there along with their carers. They told us that this wasn't the best type of home for a young person to live in. They talked about feeling lonely, not being able to build positive lasting relationships and not being able to learn to respect and share their space and feelings with others.

What the Young Commissioners think a good home should look like inside, including rooms and shared spaces.

When sharing their views on what a good home should be like internally, a key focus of their conversations were staff spaces, particularly formal **office** layouts. They generally feel that large formal offices don't reflect a family home. They talked about how some of them were not allowed to enter these staff spaces in their homes. Our Young Commissioners tell us that carers tend to gather in offices rather than spend time with them in the communal spaces, watching tv, chatting etc.

"Small offices, it should be a cupboard under the stairs, less room to fit people in".

They acknowledge the need to have a space that can keep private and personal information safe but highlight that this information doesn't need to be on paper with effective use of technology and don't feel that, for example, a large office with locked cabinets is necessary. Home working spaces are important but can be communal and more inclusive, fit for a family home environment.

When considering other communal areas, our Young Commissioners feel that these areas should be large enough for everyone living there to gather. When discussing **living rooms**, they say that in addition to the main living area, there should be a smaller comfortable 'snug' 'cwtch' area, where that they could spend time if they become anxious, overwhelmed or just need some time alone. Cosy and warm were key words.

Bathrooms and the need for privacy when using these rooms is important to our Young Commissioners. Keeping shared bathrooms clean and comfortable is important. They talked about some young people who have medical needs needing personal space, and also that some may be embarrassed if they were ill and there is only one bathroom in the home. Our older Young Commissioners felt that an ensuite would be the best option for them but were aware that they would need to keep it clean



themselves 😊. A Young Commissioner shared his experience of living in a smaller terraced house which only had one toilet for all staff and young people living there, this was something that he wouldn't recommend.

When discussing their **bedrooms**, it is clear that their bedrooms are very personal and private spaces. Positively, all of our Young Commissioners had been involved in decorating and furnishing their bedrooms and described them as cosy, snuggly and comfortable. Furnishings should be individual and bedrooms should look and feel individual to the person whose space it is, not standardised so every room looks the same. These spaces are very important to their wellbeing in a home.

Views were varied when discussing a good **kitchen** and **dining area** and our Young Commissioners feel that the design should depend on the size of the house and the children and young people that live there. They recognise a kitchen as a good place to gather together, to help to cook, and that a big table to sit around is important to the family feel. Some of our Young Commissioners prefer a separate dining room as this can be used for other activities around a table, like homework, and playing games.

Young Commissioners views on what the exterior of a good home should look like, including the gardens and outside space.

A good **garden** area is important to our Young Commissioners as many of them like, even prefer, to be outside (when it's not raining!). They talk about a large enough area to play games, or practice sports like football. They also talk about the importance of being able to spend time there when they 'need space', time to think or reflect, and time away from others.

As previously mentioned, our Young Commissioners are very clear that it is of paramount importance they want to live in what looks like a '**normal family home**', and that a childrens home shouldn't look any different to any other child's family home. They talk about how there shouldn't be any signs (corporate signage) that identify their home as a childrens home, they talked about the stigma that can come with this. One young person felt that from the outside, his home looked like a 'block of flats' and that it shouldn't have big railings around it. They feel a house must look like a home if it is going to be a good home, not like an 'office', not with 'blocks', not like a business, it should blend in with other homes in the area. A home should look, feel and be welcoming, warm and well looked after.

Where our Young Commissioners think Childrens Homes should be located.



“Safe places, no Manchester, no Liverpool, avoid big cities, must have low crime rates”

Another important consideration of a good home for our Young Commissioners is where they live and the **people who live around them**.

They want to live around **‘nice, friendly people’** and with **‘no arguing neighbours’**.

Feeling **safe** and away from **crime** was discussed in depth. Some of our Young Commissioners had lived in areas that experienced **drugs, violence and anti-social behaviour** and they wanted to stress in their view that **‘drugs shouldn’t be around children’**.

They feel that there should be balance between cities and rural locations. Those who had lived in large cities were concerned about being safe from crime and criminals. Those who had lived or live in rural areas talked about ‘angry farmers’ and being ‘isolated’. In both cases they talk about ‘noise’ and there is a clear sense they want to live in places where there is an environment that can be quiet and calm to support their wellbeing.

Many of our Young Commissioners talked about wanting to stay close to the area they had lived before becoming looked after. Those that were able to stay close to home, said that it helped them feel ‘safe’ being close to their family, friends, school and in a familiar place. Being far away from their **schools** and having to travel a long time with carers to attend school, is a concern for them, and meant that it was difficult to spend time outside school with their friends or making new friends.

Good transport links that help with their independence and leisure time is a key consideration for our older Young Commissioners, being close to bus and train links that help them to access leisure activities is important. This is something that some of them are unable to do living in their current homes, due to their rural location and poor access to public transport.

Summary of what our Young Commissioners think that a good home should look like:

- All of our Young Commissioners who were living in a children’s home told us that a good home should reflect a **typical family home** and that ideally there should be no more than 2 or 3 children living together. They think that **smaller homes** are best for children and young people and that larger homes could be too noisy, busy and could make some children feel anxious and unhappy.
- Our Young Commissioners, including those who have experience of living in a solo home, thought that children and young people should not live alone with

their carers. They feel that living in a **solo home** can result in children and young people **feeling lonely**, not being able to build relationships and learn to respect and share their space and feelings with others.

- Our Young Commissioners told us that the **carers** who look after them are key to making children and young people happy in their home. They want to build relationships and that they need to be treated kindly, fairly and to be listened to.
- **Food** and cooking is an important element of a good home. Some of our Young Commissioners talked about moving to a new home and receiving a welcome with their favourite meal, this helped them to settle in and it had 'meant a lot' that the carers found out what they liked to eat and cooked it for them.
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- When talking about **pets** in the home, the majority of our Young Commissioners of all ages love animals and think that it is important that a good home includes a pet of some kind.
- When sharing views on what a good home should be like internally, our Young Commissioners tell us that large formal **offices** don't reflect a family home and that they would prefer their carers spend time with them rather than in their office areas. When discussing **living rooms**, they say that in addition to the main area, there should be a smaller comfortable 'snug' area where they can spend time if they become anxious, overwhelmed, or just need some time alone. **Bathrooms** and the need for privacy when using these rooms were important to our Young Commissioners. Our Young Commissioners **bedrooms** are very personal and private spaces, and they describe them as needing to be cosy, snuggly and comfortable. All our Young Commissioners had been involved in decorating and furnishing their bedrooms.
- Views were varied when discussing a good **kitchen** and **dining area** and our Young Commissioners feel that the design would be depend on the size of the house and the children and young people that live there. They recognise a kitchen as a good place to gather, want to help to cook and that a big table to sit around is important.
- When discussing a good **location** of a children's home, feeling **safe** and away from **crime** was a key priority for our Young Commissioners.
- They felt that there should be **balance between cities and rural locations**, those who live in cities were concerned about being safe and those who live in rural areas talk about being isolated. A number had experienced living in different types of locations and balance was clearly the preference, for example in or near a town.
- Being far away from their **schools** and having to travel a long time to attend, is a concern for many of our Young Commissioners, some of whom travel over an hour each way daily.



- **Good transport links**, particularly being close to bus and train links is a key consideration for our older Young Commissioners and is needed to help them to become more independent.

Word for Word

Finally, the written feedback from the sessions captured across the template 'home' worksheets is detailed below,

What we asked our Young Commissioners	What they told us
<p>What makes a house feel like home.</p>	<p><i>"A safe place, a safe location, security cameras"</i> <i>"Good food and fed well".</i> <i>"Nice friendly, sensible staff"</i> <i>"No abusive staff, no naughty corners, no locking people in, they need to see the outside world, fairness, freedom and remember our rights"</i> <i>"Community meetings, ask everyone what they want and activities".</i> <i>"We aren't allowed pets, but pets make a house feel homely"</i> <i>"I don't want to live with people who shout, or I will shout back".</i></p>
<p>What is the right size of a good home and how many children should live together.</p>	<p><i>"Smaller homes teach children to share and respect each other, this doesn't happen when they live alone".</i> <i>"Children who live alone are lonely".</i> <i>"3 young people, anymore and it's too loud"</i> <i>"If there's more than 4 then everyone needs their own bathroom for privacy when they are ill or have a medical need".</i> <i>"3 people in the home".</i> <i>"No more than 2 to 3 young people"</i> <i>"It depends on what you are used to some people have big families".</i> <i>"Should have similar interests and be similar ages".</i> <i>"Normal brothers and sisters aren't the same".</i> <i>"In a big home you always feel left out".</i> <i>"2 to 4 people is good, its like a normal home, can focus on us, more time to spend with each person and less dishes and cleaning"</i> <i>"Less than 4, maybe get on better as fewer people. If there's only 1 then too much attention"</i> <i>"No more than 2 or it gets too much".</i> <i>"Nice normal size house, 4 people is plenty".</i> <i>"Too many people - anxiety"</i></p>
<p>What the inside of a good home should look like, including thoughts on the individual rooms and shared spaces.</p>	<p>Communal areas: <i>"Small offices, should be a cupboard under the stairs, less room to fit people in".</i> <i>"Big offices take up too much room, need an office to keep things private but could have less paper".</i> <i>"We aren't allowed in the office its private".</i> <i>"They (carers) need their space and our space is private".</i> <i>"Staff should go in the living room more, not the office".</i> <i>"Small study or room, so we don't get overwhelmed".</i> <i>"Smaller quiet room"</i></p> <p>Bathrooms:</p>

	<p><i>"Prefer ensuite bathroom, but should be at least 2 bathrooms, depending on the size".</i></p> <p><i>"Toilets are important, we need more than 1".</i></p> <p>Bedrooms:</p> <p><i>"Bedroom is most important because it is more cosy".</i></p> <p><i>"Bedrooms are private, do not disturb".</i></p> <p><i>"Bedrooms for privacy"</i></p> <p><i>"My space"</i></p> <p><i>"I chose a bus bed so I could drive to London".</i></p> <p>Kitchen/dining:</p> <p><i>"Big table so we can all chat and cook".</i></p> <p><i>"As long as the right stuff is there and its all easy to find".</i></p> <p><i>"Enough space for everyone that lives there and room to cook".</i></p> <p><i>"A table to sit and eat around, can be dining room".</i></p> <p><i>"Kitchen doesn't need to be too big, dining rooms are nice".</i></p> <p><i>"Choosing what's in the house is important getting involved, helping with the painting, choosing pictures and posters"</i></p>
<p>What the outside of a good home should look like, including the gardens and outside space.</p>	<p><i>"Like a castle 😊, no, it should look like a normal house and not like a block of flats".</i></p> <p><i>"No signs saying "CARE HOME" or railings around it"</i></p> <p><i>"Tidy, nice grass, place to play"</i></p> <p><i>"Fairy lights"</i></p> <p><i>"When I need space, I prefer to go outside into the garden".</i></p> <p><i>"Big outside, important, I like being outside"</i></p>
<p>Where a good home should be located and what should be in the surrounding community.</p>	<p><i>"Safe places, no Manchester, no Liverpool, avoid big cities, must have low crime rates".</i></p> <p><i>"No chavs, no violence, no stabbing, no arson"</i></p> <p><i>"Around nice people"</i></p> <p><i>"Nice people, have to be friendly".</i></p> <p><i>"No angry farmers, living next to a farm is noisy".</i></p> <p><i>"Good buses and trains to help independence."</i></p> <p><i>"Local food outlets and entertainment but not McDonalds, bad for healthy living."</i></p> <p><i>"In a nice quiet road in walking distance to things"</i></p> <p><i>"Cities are too much"</i></p> <p><i>"Being close to your school, family and friends makes you feel safe".</i></p> <p><i>"Drugs and seeing doing drugs is unsafe, no drugs around children".</i></p> <p><i>"(Not) too many people, violent neighbours arguing and anti-social behaviour".</i></p> <p><i>"We all live about an hour away from our school, being closer would be nicer".</i></p> <p><i>"Close to school is very important".</i></p> <p><i>"Good to have a train station within reasonable distance".</i></p> <p><i>"Train/bus links are important for independence especially going to college".</i></p> <p><i>"Not near a motorway or a rural place"</i></p>



The Young Commissioners want to thank Care Inspectorate Wales for asking them to help to write the new guidance and they have asked that they are given feedback on how their views will be incorporated into the final document.

