

### What other factors can affect the way young people use services?

- **Age** - sometimes services set age limits and other times young people don't go to a service because they don't see it as 'right for their age group.
- **Boy or girl?** - whether you are a boy or a girl can sometimes affect what activities are available for you.
- **Lack of services on offer** - this applies to leisure facilities, especially outdoor play areas in poorer parts of towns and cities.
- **Location** - some services are unreachable because of poor public transport or young people being unable to get a lift there by car.
- **Service environment and design** - what the facility looks like and how it's been designed are important influences.
- **Staff attitudes** - how young people feel they are treated by staff makes a big difference.
- **Quality and availability of information** - often seen as targeted at parents rather than young people.
- **Time of day and year** - this particularly impacts on outdoor services.
- **Ability to travel** - this affects use of local services and those located further away.
- **Worries about safety** - a major influence, especially for young people in poorer city neighbourhoods. Worries can be about getting safely to and from services as well as being safe when you are using the service.

*"It would be easier for [children] if there weren't a lot of bad people going about, because sometimes you can't go out."*

### Does a young person's neighbourhood make a difference?

Those living in poorer areas criticised their local services more - including shops and leisure facilities. They were also more worried about street gangs and other threatening groups.

Health services, however, were thought of in the same way across all our study areas.

Those from richer neighbourhoods on the other hand had more good things to say about local services.

Young people in remote towns and countryside areas reported that they had less choice - especially in healthcare - and needed to travel more to reach them. They also said that the shops offered little choice and were more expensive than in the towns and cities.

The biggest problems occur when young people are affected by many of these issues at the same time (for example, they can't afford the transport or the cost of getting in somewhere). This happens most often for young people who live in less well-off homes and it can stop them from using services.

### What do the people who provide the services think?

Many agreed with the young people we interviewed in several key areas:

- **Young people need services from staff they can trust** - who treat them with respect and keep things confidential.
- **Informal spaces** - such as parks and play areas - are important. Flexible opening times are too.
- **Cost, getting parents to agree, the threatening attitude of some young people and poor transport** (especially in the countryside) were seen as possible problems.

Service providers were also concerned about **young people's lack of confidence** - young people from less well-off homes can miss out as they find it hard to find out about and use services on their own.

*"I used to go with my big cousins, but then they have got different age groups and they went to the big group and I was too young, so I just didn't go myself. I don't like going by myself."*

We're now making the following suggestions to councils and other organisations so that more young people can benefit from more services - especially those from less well-off homes and poorer areas.

## 4. SUGGESTIONS FOR CHANGE

- **Build** more 'informal' spaces such as parks and casual meeting places
- **Provide** more free transport and improve public transport
- **Develop** ways of improving neighbourhood safety and security
- **Help** build self confidence in young people - especially those from poorer homes
- **Encourage** friends and family to increase practical and financial help to young people who need it most
- **Remind** schools and other agencies of the vital importance of their role
- **Design and deliver** service information with young people in mind
- **Create** more neighbourhood facilities suitable for young people of different ages
- **Improve** local areas by tackling litter, graffiti and other problems
- **Provide** more help with the hidden costs of using a service - like bus or train fares or help with equipment or clothing
- **Encourage** service providers to understand the long term negative effects of young people being unable to access services
- **Talk** to young people about how to boost the level of services provided in poorer areas

## 5. WHY WE SHOULD LISTEN MORE TO YOUNG PEOPLE

It's clearly been very useful to involve young people in helping us to design and carry out our study. For many it was their first experience of being 'listened to' in this way.

We hope that listening to young people is an idea that can be further taken up by all those involved in planning for young people's services - in local councils and elsewhere.

In particular, when it comes to creating more 'informal' or casual meeting places for young people, we believe that they should be fully involved in the process from the beginning.

More young people from less well off homes need to be listened to so that they are more likely to benefit from the services they need and deserve.

Glasgow Centre for the Child and Society, (Universities of Glasgow and Strathclyde), Save the Children (Scotland) and Scottish Centre for Research on Social Justice (University of Glasgow) 2007

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To find out more about how poverty affects young people in the UK visit [www.savethechildren.org.uk/endchildpoverty](http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/endchildpoverty)

## A young people's version of the Serving Children? Report

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UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW



Save the Children

# ACCESS ALL AREAS?

How poverty affects young people's experiences of services

# WHAT'S THE REPORT ABOUT AND WHY DID WE PRODUCE IT?

**Access All Areas?** is a young people's edition of the *Serving Children?* report – a large project that explores how young people see and use 'services' in their lives.

'Services' in this case includes things such as healthcare, leisure facilities (parks and play areas - for example) and shops.

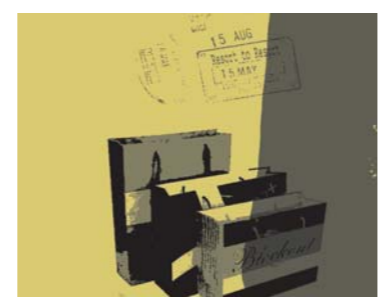
The study was designed to explore whether young people who are less well off lose out by not being able to take advantage of services as much as those from better off backgrounds.

It's not, of course, the first time that anyone has studied how poverty affects young people.

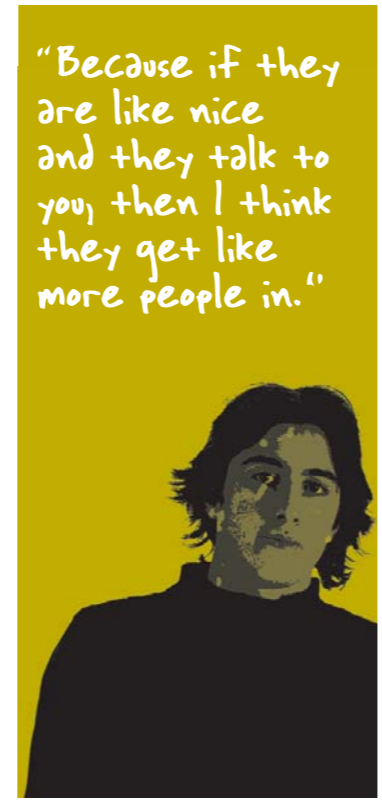
Previous work, though, has measured the actual **number** affected or listened to what adults think.

This study is important because it focuses on gathering **young people's opinions** on the range of services they use – what helps them and what difficulties they face.

We hope that our report will help councils and other organisations plan better services that more young people can benefit from – especially those from less well off homes.



*"We play there, we play outside, we play round the back, we play round at the shop, play up at [a friend's] street, play down at the shopping centre, play at the park, just play everywhere."*



*"Because if they are like nice and they talk to you, then I think they get like more people in."*

## 3. WHAT WE FOUND OUT

This section shows what we found out when we asked young people the following questions:

- What do 'services' mean to young people?
- What makes a service 'good quality'?
- What possible improvements are considered most important?
- How do adults, friends and other organisations help young people use services?
- Does being richer or poorer make a difference?
- What other factors can affect the way young people use services?
- Does a young person's neighbourhood make a difference?

We also asked the people who provide the services what they think.

### What do 'services' mean to young people?

Most young people we talked to understand services as 'a place to go' to meet old and new friends.

They also told us that services provided opportunities to take part in activities and to go to new places.

Others mention that some services offered 'help and support'. A small number thought a service was a chance to 'learn a skill'.

Services were not the only places where young people spend their time. Children told us that they use parks and other public spaces for playing and meeting friends. This was particularly important for children from less well-off homes.

### What makes a service 'good quality'?

- Convenient opening hours and location
- Affordable prices
- Child-friendly staff that can be trusted and don't judge people
- A welcoming and safe environment
- 'Continuity' – in other words the chance to see the same person each visit (especially important for services such as healthcare)

### What possible improvements are considered most important?

- Access to cheaper services (particularly leisure-related)
- Services within walking distance
- More youth facilities including 'informal spaces' such as casual meeting places (particularly important for those from less well-off homes)
- Better local parks with good facilities
- More 'child-friendly' health services - for example young people's waiting areas and school nurses
- More respectful shop staff
- Less vandalism and litter in and around where services are delivered
- Better information about services designed and made available for young people as well as their parents

*"A lot of things, people need an adult with them to go and that is not really much help, because I can't go with an adult. I don't have an adult to go with me"*



*"If I needed health services I would just tell my Mum and she would find out for me."*

*"Not many children are going swimming because their mum's can't afford to give them £1 every time - and just give them money to get something to eat"*

*"...well my Mum doesn't even... she can't really afford that much, that is why we don't go to the pictures a lot"*

### How do adults, friends and other organisations help young people use services?

Parents have a big impact helping young people of all ages. However, it does depend on the particular service. When it comes to health services, parents (especially mothers) generally help young people to use them - whatever the age group.

Looking at leisure and retail services, children from less well-off homes are more likely to use them without their parents. As they get older, young people are more likely to go to places with their friends rather than their parents.

In particular, young people told us how important their parents are in giving them information about what services are available and how to go about attending them.

**Friends** play an important role for those who receive less support from parents or other adults. It's good to have someone to go with and to join in with new activities that friends already do. This applies especially to young people from less-well off homes who get support from their friends to help with information, transport and costs.

**Other influences** on whether young people use services – also particularly important for those from less well-off homes - include:

- **Schools** – can provide information about what is going on in the local area and refer people to special projects
- **Youth clubs and other agencies** and professionals who work with young people – can help put young people in contact with services they might not otherwise have known about

### Does being richer or poorer make a difference?

**Whether or not a service is affordable** is one of the most important factors – especially for young people from less well-off homes. This mainly applies to leisure services, rather than to health services that are generally free.

Young people from less well-off homes have less opportunities to take part in organised activities because of the costs involved. Some young people only use services when they are free.

Young people from less well-off homes appear to know more what services cost compared to those from better-off backgrounds.

**Public transport costs** affect more young people from less well-off homes - particularly when costs for 'getting in' somewhere are included.

**Young people's homes** also have their part to play in deciding how much they need a service and use it.

The practical and financial support offered by family members and friends is also important, especially for young people from less well-off homes.

INTRODUCING THE AUTHORS AND HOW OUR REPORT WAS ORGANISED

*Serving Children?* was organised and written by staff from the Universities of Glasgow and Strathclyde working with the charity Save the Children. Our work took two years and was paid for by the BIG Lottery.

We talked to 56 young people in Scotland aged between 10 and 14. To get a fair picture, we chose them from lower-income and higher-income homes in cities and towns, as well as in remote and countryside locations.

We started by talking to groups of young people and asking them their views. We also asked for suggestions as to how we could best carry out our study.

Our 'focus groups' decided that three services – health, leisure and retail – were the most important areas to find out more about.

We then gave out disposable cameras so that the young people involved could take pictures of the services they'd used over one week. These were really useful when participants came back to talk to us about their experiences individually.

We also talked to some of the organisations and businesses that provide services in our study areas – and asked them their opinions.

