

Children's Rights Alliance
for England

“We are all equal and that's the truth!”

**Children and young people talk about
age discrimination and equality**

September 2007

Carla Garnelas

The Children's Rights Alliance for England (CRAE) was commissioned by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) to run a discussion day for children and young people in August 2007. The purpose of the event was to bring together children and young people from England, Scotland and Wales to discuss the Government's proposals to extend protection from discrimination and to extend the duty on public authorities to promote equality as they impact on under 18s. Parallel meetings took place between the DCLG and other groups experiencing discrimination, each attracting about 20 participants.

CRAE is a coalition of 380+ voluntary and statutory organisations committed to the full implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). CRAE monitors Government action on the CRC and is the coordinating body for the NGO England report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. We also make submissions to other international and national human rights monitoring bodies. CRAE undertakes public policy advocacy on the themes of 'respect' and 'justice' for children. We disseminate information on children's rights developments, and educate the public and professionals about children's human rights. We have produced dedicated materials for children and young people on the CRC.

CRAE wants all children to be respected as individuals and to be treated as full and equal members of society.

'If the Prime Minister lived my life for a week, he would find that he is constantly victimized just for being a young person. He would find that instead of walking in to a shopping centre, proud to be a world leader, he would instead be frowned upon by the world as a trouble maker and potential shop lifter. He would find that instead of being able to go where he wants, when he wants, that he is restricted by signs saying "no more than one child at any time". At this point he'd think to himself, if that sign said "no more than one gay at any time" or "no more than one old person at any time", that it would be against the law.' (Male, 17, Lincolnshire)

Format of this report

The views and experiences of the young people have been grouped under the following themes for the purpose of this report:

Summary	Page 4
Section 1: Equal but different	Page 8
Section 2: Discrimination in transport, shops and leisure facilities	Page 13
Section 3: Single public sector duty	Page 19
Section 4: Monitoring and enforcement	Page 21
Section 5: Pregnancy and maternity	Page 23
Section 6: Attitudes of adults and feelings of young people	Page 26
Section 7: Written testimonies of children and young people	Page 30
Annex A Discussion day practicalities	Page 35
Annex B Monitoring information	Page 36
Annex C Discussion questions for focus groups	Page 38
Annex D Timetable of day	Page 39
Annex E Evidence brought on the day by participants	Page 40
Annex F Feedback from group discussion	Page 48

“I think that at the moment the country’s stuck where half the country is following the more old school route of children should be seen and not heard, and the other half believe that children are the future and we’re never going to get anywhere if we keep it like this. I think now is the time for us to decide what way we’re going to go.”
(Male, 16, Aberdeen, Scotland)

Summary

Twenty-three children and young people from across England, Scotland and Wales were brought together in August 2007 to discuss Government proposals for new laws on equality and anti-discrimination. See Annex A for a description of the day.

We found that children and young people feel passionately and deeply about equality. They experience age discrimination on a regular basis, including when trying to access emergency and support services, or using buses and shops. The participants in this event were keen to stress their determination to achieve equal rights for children and young people. This was set within a wider commitment to equality: they did not ask for or expect any special favours for under 18 year-olds. They believe that everyone has the right to be treated respectfully and fairly:

“I think everyone should be treated in a respectful and tolerant manner and they shouldn’t be treated any different because of their age. Everyone needs to be treated equally.” (Male, 13, London)

Children and young people that took part felt the best way to challenge unfair treatment and change attitudes is to introduce equal legal protection from age discrimination:

“I genuinely believe that the only way in which we can collectively, as a society, try to rule out ageism – not only towards the younger generation – is to make it an official part of UK law. Everyone has the right to be treated as equals, as well as individuals. Young people’s assets and achievements need to be recognised over their supposed ‘flaws’.” (Female, 17, Hertfordshire)

All of the children and young people had examples where they have been personally discriminated against because of their age, including:

- Calling an ambulance and being refused help because they were under 18
- Being discharged from children’s health services but not eligible for adult services
- Being treated differently by the police – accused of making trouble, being “cheeky”, assumed that you are going to cause vandalism or be dangerous

- Teenagers not getting as much help at school for bullying as younger children

"Me and my friend were walking home at 12am and were stopped by the police because they thought we were going to cause trouble." (Female, 17, Hertfordshire)

- Not being allowed to open a bank account for EMA [educational maintenance allowance] money because under 16 (despite having all required identity documents)
- Having coat sleeves checked by staff/security guards on the way out of shops
- Being served after adults even if in the shop queue first
- Banned from supermarkets whilst wearing school uniform
- Having to leave bags outside shops and in cinema lobbies in case they steal sweets
- School children not allowed to sit down in a supermarket café to eat breakfast – have to buy food and eat it outside
- Being banned from shops but dogs allowed to go in
- Restrictions on the numbers of children allowed into shops at any one time – staff monitoring how many children can go into a shop
- Sign on shop saying 'no children allowed' but this is the only shop on the housing estate

"I remember hating the fact that they wouldn't let people under 16 in the shop because they thought that made me a thief. Can you imagine the fuss that would be kicked up if the sign said "only one black person in at a time" instead of one person under 16?" (Female, 17, Hartlepool)

- Being followed around an electrical store whilst shopping for a camera and treated suspiciously by staff
- Being told to get off buses or being driven past
- Being told that they must stand on buses because they haven't paid an adult fare
- Not being believed when asking for a child's fare

"I was on the train going to Birmingham with my mates, I got a ticket like normal but when the conductor checked it he said that I had to pay full adult price or get off at the next stop. I tried to explain I am only 13 but he wouldn't listen so I had no choice but to pay the full adult price!" (Female, 13, Birmingham)

- Inconsistency in what is a 'child' and what is an 'adult' (especially on buses and at the cinema) but also in terms of taxes, joining the army and voting age
- Not being trusted to pay for a meal in a restaurant.

"We went out for a Chinese meal, there was about 12 of us, having a quiet adult like meal but the staff refused to serve us as they didn't

know if they could trust under 18s to pay after the meal.” (Group of 16 year-olds, West Midlands)

Discriminatory treatment elicited a range of powerful feelings among young people:

- Angry
- Can't be trusted
- Creepy, its like being watched
- Discriminated against
- Disrespected
- Fed-up
- Frustrated
- Inferior.
- Like we aren't being taken seriously
- Not listened to
- Paranoid
- Patronised
- This is really unfair
- Upset.

“So we go in a shop, we have security guards following us everywhere, you feel basically adults can do what they want, they can go anywhere without feeling discriminated against, like you're not patronised but we can't go anywhere, buses, without an adult looking down their noses at you, like giving you attitude when you have done absolutely nothing wrong to them.” (Female, 14, Manchester)

Key points

Discrimination in goods, facilities and services

Shops, restaurants, cinemas, buses and health and social care services were all highlighted as places where children and young people experience high levels of discrimination because of their age.

“I feel that especially if you go to shops and shopkeepers are watching your every move. They think you're going to steal from him. If you go on a bus it's like they have absolutely no time for you and they just really don't want to hear from you and an adult is treated much better.” (Male, 15, Borders, Scotland)

Participants challenged the Government's proposal that children and young people under 18 be excluded from protection from negative discrimination in the provision of goods, facilities and services.

Discrimination in relation to pregnancy and maternity

The participants felt strongly about the exclusion of schools from rules about negative discrimination relating to pregnancy and maternity. Lots of examples were given that showed that the treatment of pregnant girls varies hugely across Britain. The majority of the participants did not agree that other legislation already protects girls who are pregnant or who have just had a baby.

“How can you say that just because there is other legislation in place you don’t need this protection? It’s like saying a disabled boy would only get protection from unfair treatment on the grounds of gender, not because he has experienced bad treatment because of his disability.” (Male 16, North Wales)

Monitoring and enforcement

The participants were very clear that any anti-discrimination laws must be rigorously enforced and monitored. There must be clear guidelines to help people implement the new laws. There were concerns that, unless everyone knows about and understands the law, discrimination will continue. Participants also wanted a clear and easy to follow complaints system to follow if someone had broken the law.

“I think that if people break the law in the way that they treat people, there has got to be punishments for organisations. The Government has got to say that there are consequences if you break it. People have got to be aware that there’s got to be some sort of punishment available. Laws are made to be followed, not to be broken. So there has to be something there to scare organisations and companies into treating people properly.” (Female, 17, Northeast England)

Section 1: Equal but different¹

Key points:

- It is fine to have services for particular age groups but there must be equal opportunities for everyone
- It is very important that children and teenagers get equal access to services. Teenagers often feel that they are not listened to as much as younger children – particularly in cases of bullying at school or if there are problems at home
- Teenagers often fall through the gaps in services – especially in terms of healthcare and social services. Laws that promote equality and equal opportunities would help stop this from happening
- There must be flexibility within the legislation: 12 and 16 year olds need different things
- There is inconsistency in what is an ‘adult’ – this makes it really confusing, particularly for teenagers. They often get charged adult prices on buses and in cinemas, they can pay taxes but can’t vote and often can’t access children’s services
- Children and young people’s services must be widely advertised to all children and young people.

Not being taken seriously

Many of the young people described not being able to access services because of their age. We heard examples about children and young people being denied children’s health and social care services. One young woman described a particularly disturbing example of being denied access to ambulance services. A friend of hers had collapsed, so on the advice of the doctor she called an ambulance. The operator asked how old the person was who collapsed and said that because it was a young person, an adult had to call the ambulance service:

“... it was just because they thought we were lying because we weren’t at an address, and it’s because she was a child. Where as I’ve seen it when adults have collapsed, they come straight away.”
(Female, 12, Berkshire)

She went on to explain that the operator said that the ambulance wasn’t going to come and that they should put the girl in a taxi and get a parent or adult to come along.

Separate services, equal treatment

All of the groups agreed that children and young people need equal treatment and opportunities but they also need services and treatment appropriate to their age. Participants felt that it was fine to say that certain services should be age specific, however this should not contradict the idea of equality.

¹ Section 1 focuses on children’s and young people’s experiences of less favourable different treatment in the public sector, including education, health and social care services. Children’s and young people’s experiences of age discrimination in transport services, shops and leisure facilities are dealt with in Section 2.

“I think there’s certainly an area where you have to break it down where a young person’s needs, for example, maybe a child under the age of 12, is different from those of a teenager. For example, within the health service, my needs would be different from those of a five-year-old and that is why I want everybody to be equal. But there are certain things that change as you develop as a person and education as well. Your secondary education is going to be different from when you were at primary school so, when it comes to the development and what you know and what you understand and what you need as an individual and a human being, it’s different from being equal and receiving the same quality of service. But there would have to be a differentiation of what it is you receive because of your age as a person.” (Female, 15, East Ayrshire, Scotland)

The kinds of services proposed by young people as being important for different age groups included mother and toddler groups, age specific health services, childcare for under fives and separate swimming times in leisure centres for older people.

“I don’t know, a mums and toddlers’ group, you know, someone can’t come along and say, oh, “I want to bring my son along, yeah, he’s 23”. Because it’s for mums and toddlers, two or three year olds, and that’s specific to them and that’s fine.” (Male, 16, Aberdeen, Scotland)

However there has to be rules that ensure people are not being denied access to services unfairly. Young people acknowledged that it is not always possible or appropriate to treat everyone in exactly the same way:

“Because we’re meant to be equal and together but then in some places you need to be separate, that’s like the pregnancy thing in schools. There does need to be something to say that they can have time off where other people can’t, and that’s to help them through it if they want to still stay at school because there needs to be an exception there. It’s like positive discrimination.” (Female, 16, Southampton)

Many of the participants were keen to stress that even if services are treating people differently, everyone should still have equal opportunities:

“There should be the opportunities there equally but the opportunities have to be different, because people are different.” (Female, 17, Sutherland, Scotland)

Two of the key areas where it was seen as absolutely crucial to have age-specific services were in the justice system and in the health service (particularly in relation to sexual health). One young woman explained that without age specific sexual health services young people might be intimidated and not get help and advice when they really need it

“A service that is fair that’s age specific... It’s for contraceptive advice and it’s for people aged 18 and under. I think that that’s definitely good that it is for young people because if it was mixed in with older people I don’t think people would go. So, it’s fair to treat the young people... It’s intimidating being mixed with older people. I wouldn’t go if there were adults going to be there as well. It’s specifically catered for young people so they have people trained up to speak to young people to talk about sexual issues.” (Female, 16, Southampton)

Several participants said it is very important to make sure that children receive different treatment to adults in the prison system:

“... they shouldn’t have to deal with [adult prison] at the age of 15 and ages like that.” (Male, 15, Essex)

“Things like having separate prison facilities for different age groups, I do think is important, because then you’re thinking children’s rights and how best to protect the child. Let’s face it, an adult prison is no place for a child to be.” (Female, 17, Hertfordshire)

One group discussed how rules could be introduced to ensure that people are treated equally, even if they are entitled to use different services (see section below on public sector duty). Participants suggested training for staff on how to talk to children and young people and guidance for organisations:

“So what you’re talking about is people should learn to treat people equally even if it’s in different services. Maybe things like training would have to be taken onboard for these services like social services or people working in receptions and things like that because obviously you have to be trained how to deal with young people and how to treat them just as equally as you would an adult. And if they get aggravated with everyone, how to calm people down and just general social skills.” (Female, 15, East Ayrshire, Scotland)

Equality for teenagers too!

A major issue that came up in all of the focus groups was the fact that teenagers often fall between children and adults' services. Participants said that younger children seem to get lots of support and help, but once they get a bit older and become teenagers this reduces or stops.

One young woman described how a friend of hers who had attempted suicide was released from the children’s care services in Rotherham once she had turned 17 but she was told that she couldn’t use the adult services. She talked about how she found herself in the same situation following a bout of mumps:

“...I’ve had similar experiences because I had mumps in 2005 and then afterwards I suffered from post-viral depression. I’m 17 now and I’m not getting any help for that at all. I get refused by Child Services and Adult Services because I’m 17...I’m not 18 so I don’t qualify for the services that they provide...They’ve terminated any contact I’ve had with them. They’ve just released me from their care, so I’ve got to wait until I’m 18 to get proper services” (Female, 17, Yorkshire)

There was concern that teenagers are often perceived as not needing as much support as younger children. This means that they don’t always get the support that they need:

“That’s why I think some people are harming themselves and then no one’s helping them. That’s why so many young people get killed or they kill themselves because not enough services are being there for them.” (Male, 14, Essex)

“My mum is a professional who works with young care leavers and the social services, generally speaking, only intervene in violent situations where it’s a young child, whereas if it’s a teenager they’re not so bothered about getting the teenager out of that situation even though it’s probably equally as harmful, if not more because they will remember that for the rest of their lives.” (Female, 17, Yorkshire)

One young woman said that teenagers who are living in violent situations are often not given enough help and support, and contrasted this with services to help adults who are experiencing domestic violence.

Several young people raised the issue of equal treatment in school. Participants accepted children being separated according to age in schools but pointed to other differential treatment that is not justified. One young male described a situation where he had complained about being bullied but felt that he wasn’t listened to because of his age:

“I don’t know because if there’s a year seven that’s being bullied, I think because they’re new they get more attention out of it but because I was year eight or year nine, one of the two, I was feeling left out because I’m older and I’ve been at that school longer, they were pushing me out of it.” (Male, 15, Essex)

Another young person said that in her school the year sevens were taken more seriously than older pupils in the school councils:

“In our school, I don’t know if it’s actually a policy which has come out but in our school council, if you’re a year seven, then all the teachers will listen to your ideas. As you get up towards year 11, nobody cares about you being in school council by year 11. It’s like, “oh, yeah, you’re a GCSE year, what are you going to do?” Last

year we had a problem with the stores and science block so as year 11s we made it happen and we got new stores and everyone was like, "oh, you're a year 11, you shouldn't be doing interesting stuff like this." (Female, 16, Staffordshire)

Inconsistency in how services define 'child' and 'young person'

One of the major issues that came up in all of the discussion groups was that there is no clear cut definition of when children and young people can access specific services or qualify for concessions. Inconsistency was starkest in cinemas and on public transport:

"Recently, I went to my local cinema, with some friends to see a 15 rated film. However, because I look slightly younger than I am, I wasn't allowed to buy a ticket. I then tried to buy a ticket for a 12A film, and they charged me full adult price [applicable to over 15s]. I did try and point out that if they didn't believe I was old enough to go into a 15 film, they shouldn't be charging me full adult price, but I was told to contact their helpline if I wished to complain." (Female, London)

"They're really exploiting people because at 15 you pay child but then above that... Legally, you're not an adult until you're 18 but they're willing to take your money off you." (Female, 16, Southampton)

"I've only got certain pay rights because I'm 16 and yet I have to pay more for my bus travel. It's £14 a week for me which is a lot of money because I'm paying adult prices where I'm on child wages." (Male, 16, North Wales)

"I think it's really unfair when you turn 16 you have to pay adult prices but you get 21-year-old students who pay less... When you're 16 you're more likely still be at school, getting money off your parents, and that's really unfair." (Male, 15, Borders, Scotland)

These comments led to lively discussions about the fact that young people can join the army and pay taxes at 16 but they are not allowed to vote. Several young people suggested that the experiences of young people being discriminated against were not taken seriously because they do not have the right to vote.

Section 2: Discrimination in transport, shops and leisure facilities

Key points:

- Children and young people must be protected from unfair treatment in goods, facilities and services
- Young people are treated much worse than adults on buses
- Young people are often followed around shops by security guards
- Discrimination in goods, facilities and services would not be acceptable for any other group – so why is it OK to discriminate against young people?
- Young people can understand why some adults have certain attitudes and perceptions but they should not stereotype all young people and assume that they are going to steal or cause trouble
- When young people phone the police they are not taken seriously
- ID cards (that are voluntary) could help to prevent age discrimination, or help children get access to services.

All of the participants had several examples of where they have been discriminated against because of their age in relation to transport, shops and leisure facilities.

Transport

A major area where children and young people experience age discrimination is on public transport – particularly on buses. Many of the young people described times they had been told to get off the bus, driven past by a driver of an empty bus or made to pay full adult fares.

“I was on the train going to Birmingham with my mates, I got a ticket like normal but when the conductor checked it he said that I had to pay full adult price or get off at the next stop, I tried to explain I am only 13 but he wouldn't listen so I had no choice but to pay the full adult price!” (Female, 13, Birmingham)

“We were waiting for the bus to come after we had been ice skating, the bus drove straight past us and it was empty!” (Group of 12-13 year olds, Telford)

One young man said he feels that adults receive better treatment on public transport and more respect than children and young people:

“If you go on a bus it's like they have absolutely no time for you and they just really don't want to hear from you, and an adult is treated much better...especially old age pensioners all seem to get a lot of respect from bus drivers, but young people don't. They have no time for them.” (Male, 15, Borders, Scotland)

This experience was echoed across the discussion groups. One young woman described her experiences of her local bus service:

“Some adults assume they have precedence over children on the bus and some bus drivers avoid picking up children and teenagers. I think children are treated unfairly on the bus. Before, a group of old women tried to stop me getting on the bus, which was very full. They said I was being bad mannered by getting on before them, even though I had been there first... There's also a particular bus driver who drives straight past bus stops if there are kids there. He drives straight past the college stop every time he's on that route.”
(Female, 17, Hartlepool)

A young man from Wales said that on a large bus company in North Wales there are signs on the buses saying that children who don't pay the full adult fare must not use a seat if there are any adults standing. He described a time where he was on the bus on his way home from hospital and was forced to stand up for an adult, even though he was in a lot of pain.

No entry to children

Many of the young people said it is common for shops to have signs restricting entry on the grounds of age – for example, 'no children allowed', 'children must be accompanied by adults' or 'only two school children at any one time'.

“I remember hating the fact that they wouldn't let people under 16 in the shop because they thought that made me a thief. Can you imagine the fuss that would be kicked up if the sign said "only one black person in at a time" instead of one person under 16?”
(Female, Hartlepool)

One young woman said that the only shop on her estate has a sign preventing children entering unless they are with an adult. She was unable to buy cookery ingredients for school.

“And I must admit the other day I was walking past this shop and I saw a sign that said, I was like kind of going in, and it said no child is allowed in here without an adult. I was like, “my gosh. I can't get what I want”.” (Female, 14, Manchester)

It is not just corner shops and newsagents that restrict entry to children – larger stores and supermarkets do this too. One young person said that young people are banned from going into the section where newspapers and magazines are sold. Another young person described how a local branch of a major supermarket has banned school children from sitting in the supermarket café:

“...they're actually really good with the young people there... But there's one thing, they've got a café there and if you're wearing a school uniform you're not allowed to sit in. You've got to take away whatever you're eating, which is a bit unfair because me and my friend were going on a school trip and we got in... about half past

seven because this trip was at eight o'clock. And we went to go and sit in for breakfast and they said you're not allowed. And it was a bit unfair because we couldn't have breakfast then." (Male 14, South Wales)

A young male from Essex described how he challenged the attitude of a local branch of another major supermarket and persuaded the management to agree that pupils from his school could go in. The supermarket had banned all of the pupils from his school from going inside because a small number of pupils had caused trouble in the shop. He felt that this was unfair treatment and managed to meet with the managers of the store. Eventually the decision was overturned.

One young person described how the shop near her school only lets in two school children at a time, but allows in adults with dogs:

"...it's like, right, so they can take their pets in but we can't go in more than two..." (Female, 16, Southampton)

There was overwhelming consensus in all of the discussion groups that shops should not be able to ban children from going in without an adult. One young woman explained that she used to have to travel for an hour and a half and take three buses to get to school. This made it impossible to get something from the shops, as she would have had to go home, get her mum and come back again!

Being followed

The experience of being followed around shops and treated with suspicion was common to all of the participants. The young people described instances of being trailed by department store security guards and being quizzed about why they were in the shop and what they were planning to buy. A participant from Scotland described how she had gone to a local branch of a major electrical store to buy a camera with money she had received for doing well in her exams. Although her parents were in the shop, she was looking at cameras on her own:

"I was just looking and taking notes, comparing prices. And then one of the employees came over and said, "excuse me, madam, did you enter the shop by yourself". And I thought, well I'm going to question this, so I said, "is there a problem". And he said, "no, it's just because we were just wondering what it was you were doing". And I was, "well, I'm looking at your cameras". And he said, "this is suspicious behaviour"... (Female, 15, East Ayrshire, Scotland)

She explained that once her father came over the sales assistant's attitude changed completely and he apologised to her parents.

The experience of being followed was highlighted in all of the discussion groups. Two young people described being followed around branches of a pharmaceutical chain store by security guards

“...you’ll be walking in an aisle and you know what it’s like, a few metres back a security guard is following you and it’s like you just start to feel like, oh, my gosh... He’s watching three girls get some stuff instead of watching the rest of the store...” (Female, 14, Manchester)

“I did work experience there...but from doing work experience I could see that if a young person enters a store or if they’re with a group, they’ll soon be people walking round the aisles in different orders and that they’ve all got mapped out in the offices upstairs if they see people in aisles then they walk round these other aisles so they can watch you all the time, and they focus the CCTV straight on the young people...” (Female, 16, Staffordshire)

One young woman described how being followed made her feel:

“It’s really quite threatening when you can’t move around freely just because you’re a young person.” (Female, 16, Southampton)

Another participant told the group how the security guards used to check the coat sleeves of young people leaving the shop in order to make sure they had not stolen anything:

“Lots of my friends have similar stories to that basically where people follow you around the shop and they think you’re stealing. When I was a bit younger you had to show them down your sleeves... they check down your sleeves, like every time you come out of the shop in case you’re stealing something.” (Female, 17, Hartlepool)

Another young person said that she felt that she was being judged by the staff – just because she was a young person.

“You don’t feel very good. You just feel like I haven’t done anything wrong, this man doesn’t even know me and he’s judging me from other people when I am my own person and, you know, you can’t judge me from what someone else has done.” (Female, 14, Manchester)

Being treated differently to adults

The treatment of children and young people in shops by staff and security was often compared to adults. One young male said that children and adults have a different status in society and are treated differently because of this. He said that despite children being younger and needing to go to school they still have valid views and opinions and deserve equality:

“I think children are definitely treated differently compared to adults but that’s because children, we’re still growing up. But we still have our views, we’re still in touch to do what we want to do but the same

goes for adults but just because they've gone through education, they're like high in the rankings and they have a job, they're quite independent but because children, we're still going to school, we still need to learn some things but some things we already know so I don't think we should be treated differently just because of that..."
(Male, 13, London)

Several young people commented that adults would never be followed around shops in the same way that young people are. One participant said that people are always commenting on groups of young people but they would never make a fuss about older people:

"My friend... we went on a politics trip to London, and afterwards we were able to go around London ourselves and get back to the coach by five, and he went to the...shop [major electronics shop] in London and because he's a young person, the security guards there immediately swarmed around him, whereas adults who were doing the same as he was, because he was going to buy something there, they treated him completely different to adults so in the end he didn't buy anything, so it was their loss in the end." (Male, 16, South Wales)

A number of young people also described situations where the attitude of shop staff changed depending on whether they were speaking to children or adults:

"Because if an adult walked in looking at the sweet section, a shopkeeper would never go up to the adult and say what are you doing because they're older than us and they feel like they have to treat them differently." (Male, 13, London)

Participants described being left standing in queues longer than adults, even if they were there first. They also said that shop staff were often less helpful to young people than adults:

"...in a shop that a friend and I were in. And we were looking at their clothes lines, whatever, and you ask a question, "do you have this in our size" [and the sales assistant says] "I'll just check a minute". But there was a woman standing next to us [and the sales assistant said] "I'll phone another branch for you, the one in this street down there, they might have it" ..." (Female, 15, East Ayrshire, Scotland)

"We were in town trying on some prom dresses and taking pictures of each other... and the shop staff allowed the brides to do it but they warned us if they saw us doing it again then we would be banned..." (Female, 16, Staffordshire)

"I had some trainers for a present but they didn't fit, so I took them back to the shop with the receipt and the staff member said that I

couldn't exchange them because I was under 18 – why?” (Male, 15, Wolverhampton)

“I wanted to complain about the lack of manners the sales staff had towards young people in the cinemas but instead all I got was more anti young people comments and got told if I didn't like it I could get out.” (Female, 16, Walsall)

Section 3: Single public sector duty

Key points:

- There must be a duty on public authorities to respect everyone irrespective of age
- Any new anti- discrimination legislation must encourage and promote equality between all people
- At the moment young people are not protected at all from unfair age discrimination beyond the workplace
- By introducing legislation to promote equality between people of all ages the Government is setting an example and saying how it expects everyone to be treated.

There was a strong feeling that public authorities should be promoting equality between all people regardless of who they are, what they look like or their status in society.

“I don’t think at the moment there is any sense of equality” (Female, 12, Berkshire)

“I don’t even think it’s related to age. It’s anybody’s place in society to treat people with equality and fairness depending on race, religion, gender, all of that. I think that people are under obligation to be fair and equal and if they aren’t they should be reprimanded and something should happen to them. I think there should be that warning there to individuals or companies that, if they do treat people unfairly, that some type of action will be taken towards them. So I think in that way it can ensure their treatment to young people who should be treated fairly in society.” (Male, 14, South Wales)

“I think all young people should have their say and all adults should have their say and then bring that together so everyone gets their opinion and take that into consideration so the Government can take an adult’s point of view and a children’s point of view and bang it into one and see what side’s what and what other side’s what and then see what can be done to help both sides of humanity.” (Male, 15, Essex)

Age was considered just as important as gender, race, sexual orientation, religion/belief and disability:

“Because everyone goes through being a child, just like everyone is either a man or a woman, everyone has got a skin colour.” (Female, 16, Somerset)

One young man from Wales said it is hugely important that the Government makes sure public services are promoting equality between people of different ages and

ensures that people have equal opportunities to access services. He said that by including age in the public sector duty the Government would be setting a positive example and showing how other services must treat children and young people. He also said that the Government had made a commitment to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and introducing anti-discrimination laws that protect children and young people would be a way of fulfilling this commitment.

Another participant said that society had changed and that years ago it would have been acceptable to pay men and women differently but most people think that you can't do that now. He thought that legislation had helped to change attitudes, and said it is time to take the step to give children and young people equal status in society:

"They've taken 50 years where you never think about men or women getting equal pay, so why not take it one step further and get children on equal balance in society?" (Male, 15, Borders, Scotland)

One group talked about how it was really important that the law promotes equality in terms of age. One idea that the group came up with for ensuring that children and young people are treated fairly and with respect was to have a youth forum in every local area. At the moment these youth forums are not always listened to, but if the local authority had a duty to promote equality they might have more of a say.

"Yes, if you've got a youth council or youth forum in your area, and they're not making much progress because adults are not taking them seriously, if you've got the weight of having anti discriminatory law that includes age then you've got that to back them up so there's more weight. Does that make sense? If you had that legislation behind you then you'd be able to push things forward." (Female, 17, Hertfordshire)

The group also said that if there is going to be a public sector duty that includes age then everyone should know about it. There needs to be lots of information, awareness raising and good training for staff.

Section 4: Monitoring and enforcement

Key points:

- Organisations and businesses need to know about any new legislation. It must be properly enforced and there must be sanctions if it is broken
- Inspect and monitor services to ensure that they are following the law and make organisations accountable
- Monitor the impact of legislation: what happens once it comes into force. How does it change anything?
- There should be a clear complaints procedure to follow if a person feel someone has broken the law
- Complaints should be published so everyone can see how many complaints a service has had and what has been done about it
- Young people need more information and awareness about the law
- There should be undercover investigations to make sure people are following all the rules
- Carry out questionnaires to see who is using services, what they think of them and to see how well they are promoting equality.

After inviting them to think about the single public sector duty, and the kinds of services this duty would cover, young people were asked how they would measure how well public bodies follow the duty to promote equality. This question elicited strong feelings about the importance of monitoring, enforcement and sanctions.

One group suggested that public bodies should have a standard or goal to show that they are fulfilling the public sector duty:

“Maybe there should be a standard or some sort of goal, some sort of manifesto that they should have to complete so many points or maybe they’ve got to show evidence of something. Or maybe there are checks to show that they have actually done what they say they’re going to do. You can’t say you are going to do something and not: that’s not accountability for what they do.” (Female, 15, East Ayrshire, Scotland)

“Maybe equal opportunity standards... so maybe we could do something like that.” (Male, 14, South Wales)

The idea that there had to be consequences for breaking the law was raised in all of the discussion groups:

“I think that if people break the law in the way that they treat people, there has got to be punishments for organisations. The Government has got to show that there is consequences if you break it. People have got to be aware that there’s got to be some sort of punishment available. Laws are made to be followed, not to be broken. So there has to be something there to scare organisations and companies into treating people properly.” (Male, 14, South Wales)

“I think a statutory code of conduct or a code of good practice would be good with that sort of thing, playing to the public sector...with sanctions...” (Male, 16, South Wales)

One group talked about the difficulties in monitoring how well a public body is fulfilling a particular duty. They raised the example of a community centre that is supposed to be multi-racial but is only being used by one ethnic group in the area. To young people it seems that none of the council officers are trying to enforce the rules. The group discussed how the centre could become truly multi-racial: they felt the solution was to inspect the service closely and monitor its activities through questionnaires for example.

In two of the groups the young people suggested using some kind of ‘mystery shopper’ system where people could use services and then report back. This was seen as a good way to check how public bodies are doing at fulfilling their requirements to promote equality:

“I think something like mystery shopping, again. If we did one now completely before anything about it, and then again in six months after [the new law] goes through, and then just compare. Then you can tell them. They don’t have to know anything about it which is the best thing because you can say, “look what we’ve done”.”
(Female, 16, Somerset)

Other suggestions for monitoring public authorities included questionnaires and some kind of incentive scheme that public bodies could sign up to in order to show that they are positive about young people

One of the most frequent comments from the groups was that there needs to be a really clear complaints procedure if a person feels that a public body is not carrying out its duties properly. One young person suggested that if a public body receives complaints it would be good to publish information about these so everyone could see what the organization is doing to make sure people are being treated equally:

“If they get any complaints they would have to show those and say to the young person about age discrimination, they would have to show how many people were – just checks and standards that have to be reached. There has to be guidelines to guide these people – to tell them what’s right and what’s wrong.” (Female, 15, East Ayrshire, Scotland)

Section 5: Pregnancy and maternity

Note: the comments in this chapter were written down by staff facilitating the day, not recorded and transcribed.

Key points:

- Pregnant girls get variable treatment at school. Some schools are very supportive and others are not
- The law must cover schools because other legislation isn't properly protecting pregnant girls
- New laws would help pregnant girls be treated just as well as other girls at school, even if they need to learn in a different way, or need time off from studying
- Anti-discrimination laws are important as the weight of a law; the threat of being taken to court can encourage people to change their behaviour and attitudes
- Schools in England must have complaints procedures for pupils.

During the first part of the day, there was a group exercise about current anti-discrimination law. The aim of this activity was for young people to understand the current law in relation to under 18 year-olds and to see what changes might occur if the Government's proposals become law.

The young people were asked the following question:

“You are a young pregnant woman. Does anti-discrimination law protect you from being treated as well as other pupils in your school because you are pregnant?”

The group had to decide whether they would be protected or not protected under current anti-discrimination law (answer: not protected). The group was then asked what would happen if the Government proposals become law (answer: schools would be excluded from providing protection from less favourable treatment).

This question sparked an interesting group discussion about the treatment of pregnant girls at school. One female said that a friend of hers was due to have a baby during her GCSEs. She told the school that she was pregnant and then felt that the school treated her badly:

“She then got limited tuition and was told that she should do fewer GCSEs. She felt that she was being bullied out of school, teachers trying to push her out. But she wanted to stay on as she felt that this would be the best start for her and her baby.” (Female, 17, Hartlepool)

Two other girls said that their schools were very supportive and were excellent at letting the girl carry on her studies, complete her exams and come back to school once the baby was born.

A young man from Wales said that his school seems to 'give up' on pregnant girls because pregnancy makes the school look bad.

There was overwhelming consensus from the group that it is important to make sure that anti-discrimination laws that protect women from less favourable treatment on the grounds of pregnancy and maternity should cover schools as well. Many of the participants disagreed with the argument that there are other laws in place (including the gender equality duty) designed to protect pregnant girls and make sure they get appropriate support and education.

One young woman from Wales asked:

“If this law excludes pregnant girls at school or is not implemented how can complaints bodies do anything about the treatment? They might be encouraged to treat girls in this way too.” (Female, 15, North Wales)

Another young person from Wales added:

“How can you say that just because there is other legislation in place you don't need this protection? Its like saying a disabled boy would get protection on the ground of gender, not because he has experienced bad treatment because of his disability.” (Male, 16, North Wales)

Section 6: Adult attitudes and young people's feelings

Key points:

- Age discrimination makes young people feel really horrible, frustrated and disrespected
- Some adults do care and some don't. Young people want to change adults' perceptions about children's rights and they want adults to be more positive about young people
- Young people understand that some adults might have a good reason for not wanting some children in their shops but they should not judge all young people on the actions of a few
- There should be more consultation with young people
- There must be more communication between young people and decision makers
- Young people should be much more involved in decision-making.

Perceptions and stereotypes

One of the major issues raised during the day were the attitudes of adults towards young people. All of the participants felt that negative images of young people and assumptions about their behaviour lie behind unfair treatment.

One young man commented that he found it incredible that adults could have such negative stereotypes about children. He said that he could see why a person might have a negative stereotype of a group of people who you don't know much about, but it seems strange to treat children so badly – because everyone has experienced being one!

"I think it's incredible that people treat children or young people this [negative] way because it's one of those things, this is, in a way, far more extreme than racism or whatever because you can say, "oh, I don't like the Welsh, I don't like Buddhists", whatever. You've maybe never met one, you've maybe never had to speak to one and you've maybe got your own stereotype in your head. But everyone's been a young person and it's incredible that they feel this way and also it shapes our society." (Male, 15, Essex)

The media was identified as being extremely powerful in perpetuating and reinforcing negative stereotypes of children and young people.

"...But the media is the worst culprit. While making our film we found out that only negative press sells. The papers don't print stories that celebrate positive things about young people and this just adds to the stereotyping attitudes. We would like to come to this event to try and tackle this. Maybe we could make sure the government does something to really highlight positive contributions of young people" (Group of young people, East Renfrewshire, Scotland)

"I think we need to get help in the media. We need to cut out all this rubbish about so-and-so job did this, we need a positive image and we need to portray that because young people, we do have a

positive image to put across, we just need to get it noticed.”
(Female, 15, North Wales)

It was thought that negative images of young people in the media have a huge impact on the way that adults interact with children and young people.

“But if you’re a law abiding person then they have no right to suddenly assume, “oh, she is a young person, so therefore she’s going to steal”.” (Female, 17, Sutherland, Scotland)

“And they always have that sort of attitude about when you go to buy something in a shop, they never think that you actually have the money for it, whereas if an adult...” (Male, 16, South Wales)

“I don’t think that shops should be actually allowed to say not more than one child allowed or no children allowed, or stuff like that, because it’s basically basing everything around the fact that one child has stolen a chocolate bar but you can’t discriminate against every child who comes into that shop because one child stole something.” (Female, 14, Manchester)

“I have not lived here long but every time I go out with friends people make comments that we are “the youth are out to cause trouble again” and we have never done anything wrong.”
(Male, 12, Aston)

“They never give you the chance to go in and say, “well, I’m not going to smash anything”. They just automatically say, “well, they smashed something so you’re going to”.” (Male, 14, South Wales)

“Or you get the blame for saying someone else has done it. And they see it on CCTV and they think that. One of my friends got stopped in the street for no reason because they thought they stole something from a shop. But the thing with that is they’re judging them when they have just walked out of the shop.” (Male, 15, Essex)

All of the participants felt very strongly that it is unfair to treat a whole section of society in a certain way because of the actions of a few. Several young people said that this treatment would be unacceptable if applied to, for example, people from one religion, or all people from a certain ethnic group. Indeed, it would be against the law to discriminate against others in this way:

“I mean they can’t say that about any other group, you know, so why should they be able to say that about young people?” (Male, 16, Aberdeen, Scotland)

Young people felt that sales assistants and shopkeepers often have little time for children, even if they are paying the same price for things as adults.

“I think it’s the general attitude towards young people is quite short and they don’t really have a lot of time for you because obviously I’m not saying that all children are perfect...Because I’m going in to purchase whatever, but you get this attitude problem, this behavioural kind of shortness, and you can be standing there but they’ll turn round to be nicey, nicey to an adult next to you.”
(Female, 15, East Ayrshire, Scotland)

Understanding how adults feel

Many young people said they appreciate that a few young people do cause trouble or steal from shops and they can see why shopkeepers might want to put up a sign saying ‘no children allowed’.

“I completely understand that sometimes in particular places they might get hassled and we need to think about that as well. I can completely understand that. But individuals like myself do not go out to cause trouble and that’s the clear definition that sometimes shop assistants and people like that kind of brand us all with the one brush.” (Female, 15, East Ayrshire, Scotland)

“...but if you look at it from a shopkeeper’s point of view, they would feel kind of, they would want to know what people are doing in their shops but I think they’re just blowing [it] out of proportion by saying only two children. I think instead of just putting up a sign they should let people in but just don’t let them feel patronised but don’t let too many people in, but I don’t know how they can do that.”
(Male, 13, London)

Another member of this group agreed that some shopkeepers might be justified in limiting the number of customers, but said that this should apply to everyone, not just children and young people. One of the participants said that this would never happen because shop staff are not as bothered about adult behaviour.

Media images of anti-social behaviour and ‘violent youth’ were seen to be very powerful and young people could see why teenagers are often treated with suspicion:

“I can see where adults are coming from, they are prejudiced against young people. Maybe there is some young people that have had problems and they’re killing people, I’ve heard in the news, like people are joining or mixing with the wrong people and there’s gangs and people are being stereotyped...” (Male 15, Essex)

"...I can understand it because people do steal from the shop and they have to make money and I know it's age discrimination, but..."
(Female, 16, Southampton)

How unequal treatment makes children and young people feel

"I feel patronised quite often." (Male, 16, North Wales)

The participants talked powerfully about how age discrimination makes them feel: angry, frustrated, powerless, patronised and disrespected were common descriptions.

"I agree... about how you feel quite patronised when you see only two children allowed..." (Male, 13, London)

"It's going to make people more likely to steal from them, I reckon. If I saw a sign up, not that I am a shoplifter or what not myself, but I'd be angry. I've seen signs like that and I've thought, what, what's that? It doesn't make you want to respect the owners of the shop; it doesn't make you want to abide by their rules at all." (Female, 15, North Wales)

"My neighbours look down at me because I'm young. They talk about me when they don't think I'm listening." (Female, 17, Hertfordshire)

"I don't feel that I'm worth as much with a doctor. I don't feel respected." (Male, 16, South Wales)

Another young person said that she felt that she was being judged by the staff – just because she was a young person. This made her feel miserable.

"You don't feel very good. You just feel like I haven't done anything wrong, this man doesn't even know me and he's judging me from other people when I am my own person and, you know, you can't judge me from what someone else has done." (Female, 14, Manchester)

One young person said that she was fed-up of people making assumptions about her and her friends:

"The fact that I am a young girl who looks older than I am and I "hang around" with a group of young males seems to get me into even more trouble than normal. I think that just because young people like to "chill out" in streets, and may be playing music on their phones, it does not give older generations the right to look down their noses at us. My friends and I are fed up and I want to be able to change the way things are." (Female, 12, Berkshire)

Another young man said that the daily experience of age discrimination makes young people feel like second-class citizens:

“I have walked passed so many shops but unable to go in because I am with friends and only a certain amount of people are allowed in at a time. This frustrates me because I am a mature young person who isn't out to cause trouble and so many other young people are in the same situation. Also young people are looked down in public places and on public transport. This is very unfair because many times people have told me they feel they are treated like 2nd class citizens.” (Male, 15, Borders, Scotland)

Section 7: Written testimonies of children and young people

I have often been treated unfairly due to my age, shops tend to follow young kids about merely to make sure we have not stolen anything, and on more than one occasion I have been stopped so they can check my bag when I had done nothing wrong. Also, often in restaurants because we are in school uniform or look young we are asked to pay before we can eat. I have never been involved in an act where hospitals or police ignore or discount the words from a young person but have heard several times where this has been the case. I have often wished to join an organisation to help or join projects but none have ever been offered to me and often I am busy with school work as I have just finished my GCSE's, but I have always been outraged on discrimination in this country and it makes me wonder and sick to think of other less developed countries where injustice may be and is most probable to be worse. I wish to help in every way that I can and stop injustice from happening nationwide to the youth of today. **Female 16 Kent**

As a young person myself I have experienced age discrimination in many forms...the obvious being glared at when you enter a shop with a group of your peers – the others slightly less obvious – like not getting positive media attention that other groups in my local area receive. As a Youth Councillor, for two years, I have worked towards “Promoting Positive Images” of young people, which has become our slogan, and was the starting point for our first youth conference, in which we discussed why young people are discriminated against, and how this could be prevented, or stopped all together. I genuinely believe that the only way in which we can collectively, as a society, try to rule out ageism- not only towards the younger generation- is to make it an official part of UK law. Everyone has the right to be treated as equals, as well as individuals. Young people’s assets and achievements need to be recognised over their supposed “flaws.” **Female 17 Herts**

I would like to take part in this organized day because it would be a great chance and successful opportunity for me to express my views and opinions on the types of discrimination and automatic stereotypical attitudes which happen every day. Because I am a very opinionated and strong-minded person I enjoy debating and getting my views across and heard, as well as also being open minded to other peoples ideas and views. The neighbourhood which I have grown up in is continuously being looked down on so I would like to be accepted and given this chance to be apart of this day to do some research and ask other peoples views and opinions on the subject. It would also be a good experience to be given an opportunity to learn about the new laws on children discrimination, also the very big issue of equality, which stands to be a big issue within young children and growing up. **Female 15 London**

I believe strongly that all young people should be treated equally and never discriminated and that they should always have a say. I work as a Connexions young peoples involvement co-ordinator for Kirklees and in this position I always try as hard as I can to make sure all young people participate in things and are treated equally (no matter the age). I therefore have loads of opportunities to ask young people about real-life examples where they have been treated unfairly and I hope to make a

difference if they do feel like they have. Going to London and discussing government plans, I feel would do this. It sounds like a really fun opportunity as well as being a serious one and I think I can empathise with the subject because I am a young person who also sometimes feels like adults do not take me and my peers seriously and to go to London and discuss this topic would be something I would love to do. **Female 15 Yorks**

I feel very strongly about young people's rights. I feel that young people are people, just like anyone else and should be treated in the same way. I am a member of the Youth Action Committee in Aberdeen which listens to young people and then raises issues with larger organisations. I have been involved in organising various events to promote all kinds of equality, one of the largest being when I sat on the steering group for a national conference called "In Ma Heid", aiming to tackle stigma about mental health among young people. Above all else, I feel that young people's rights are a very important issue which is not given enough attention; on various occasions I have even headed small scale campaigns against local groups/services that appear to have a young person prejudice. **Male 16 Aberdeen**

I am passionate about getting equal rights for all young people living in the UK. I have walked passed so many shops but unable to go in because I am with friends and only a certain amount of people are allowed in at a time. This frustrates me because I am a mature young person who isn't out to cause trouble and so many other young people are in the same situation. Also young people are looked down in public places and on public transport. This is very unfair because many times people have told me they feel they are treated like 2nd class citizens. We need to make society not look down on young people but treat them with the respect we deserve. We also need to make sure all young in the UK have equal rights to those older than us to make society a much fairer place! **Male 15 Borders, Scotland**

I want to be able to talk about age discrimination from a disability point of view as one of my brothers has autism and the other one speech delay I think that the way people look at them especially the elderly it's as if they've never seen somebody disabled before! My friends I think would also be very keen to contribute to these points and another one is about the age of which people should be aloud to vote for government I'm not saying as young as me but a bit lower so that I don't have that much longer to wait! I also think that teenagers should be able to make bigger decisions and be able to change things. Because as people say we are the people of the future but very few of them remember when they say we're to young and irresponsible how do they know when they haven't even given us a chance???

Female 12 London (could not attend the event)

I would like to do this because I want to get children's views out, it will be a great experience for me to do this for people. I know I can do this because I am a very confident person and am good at talking to people. Also I would like to get my views out to the Government about this subject. **Female 15 London**

Some children in my area where I live are ethnic origins and they get discriminated for their color and that they are different to us because there a different colour to other people they think there not equal to other people and that's wrong and I think

that it should be changed and the ages that even I get discriminated for my age on a bus and I would like to help that in my area and its unfair that this is happening because we are all equal and that's the truth. **Male 15 Essex**

I feel the issues of age discrimination and equality are germane to the current generation of young people. I think topics such as equality and age discrimination are highly pertinent and affect my everyday life. Young people are the future of this country, and as such should feel valued and I hope the contribution of this legislation will ensure a true and honest input, and that our voices are heard. I feel passionately about these current concerns because I have experience of a direct link between age and lack of services, which prevent young people from fulfilling their potential. I would like the opportunity to share experiences and ideas with my peer group and influence government policy. **Female 17 Yorks**

As young people we often feel stereotyped. It's not just adults who do it but other young people. We are always given a label like Goth, skater, NED, Emo and people think certain things about us because of this label. Adults stereotype us too – we often get asked to move on if we are out on the street with friends and some people seem to be scared of us even if we have done nothing wrong. But the Media is the worst culprit. While making our film we found out that only negative press sells. The papers don't print stories that celebrate positive things about young people and this just adds to the stereotyping attitudes. We would like to come to this event to try and tackle this. Maybe we could make sure the government does something to really highlight positive contributions of young people. **Group of young people, East Renfrewshire, Scotland (could not attend the event)**

To explain why, I would like to simply quote part of my PM Swap posted on the Get ready for Geneva website: 'If the Prime Minister lived my life for a week, he would find that he is constantly victimised just for being a Young Person. He would find that instead of walking in to a shopping centre, proud to be a world leader, he would instead be frowned upon by the world as a trouble maker and potential shop lifter. He would find that instead of being able to go where he wants, when he wants, that he is restricted by signs saying "no more than one child at any time". At this point he'd think to himself, if that sign said "no more than one gay at any time" or "no more than one old person at any time", that it would be against the law.' This is a small part of why I feel strongly about age discrimination, especially towards young people. **Male 17 N E Lincs (could not attend the event)**

I would like to be part of the consultation because I am appalled by the casual age discrimination I see in every day life. I could list numerous examples. One instance would be a few weeks ago on the bus when an old woman literally bullied a girl of 7-8 out of her seat, or when a major supermarket refuses to allow groups of children to go near the magazines. Around two years ago my town (Hartlepool) introduced a curfew in one area for anyone under 16. I thought this was shocking and a total abuse of people's rights. For older children, a big issue is the separate minimum wage, which means 16/17 year olds are given unfair wages. Age discrimination seems to be accepted in people's individual attitudes and also, more worryingly, in the law. I think it needs to stop. **Female 17 Lancashire**

I believe that equality is vital. Not only do I believe in actively promoting equality I believe in practically showing it too. I have had many experiences where I have been discriminated against just because of my age. I have written countless articles to my local newspaper highlighting this huge problem. I was recently given a sum of money from the government to make a documentary highlighting the main problems with public transport in my area. One of the main problems is age discrimination. I have a passion for equality and cannot help myself talking about it in every situation possible. I believe by talking to adults and putting our opinions across then maybe change can happen and young people gain their rights that they so truly deserve.

Female 16 Somerset

I would like to attend the Equality training day because it would increase my knowledge and understanding of the government's new laws on equality and how other young people are affected by age discrimination (and other forms of discrimination) from across the country. In my local area there is a lot of age discrimination particularly to High School students (11-18 year olds) which the local youth forum are working on as we feel it is unfair on all people but especially the young people as it is 'us' who suffer it the most. If I was given the chance to come it would enable me to find out what can be done and how government plans to take action on this unfair discrimination. **Female 16 Staffordshire**

I would want to talk about age discrimination because I feel as people that are from an ethnic minority background are being pushed out by other people from other backgrounds. And I feel strongly about people being treated badly by others. I think people should be treated the same and feel more secure in other places. Equality is important for people to feel safe. And I feel strongly about racism because I have friends from an ethnic minority and I don't like to see others suffer. **Male 16 Essex**

I would like to be part of the age discrimination event for various reasons. As being a child myself I realise the pains and angst young people have to put up with just because they have been branded as "immature". I know myself that not all young people are silly or do bad things. I think it would be a positive event where lots of young people can get together and discuss, argue, debate, talk and think about age discrimination. I would really like to be involved in something with such a positive outlook involved. If I attended I would be able to tell my constituents more about the single equality act and help them to understand as young people what it's all about. I would love to be involved with promoting equality. I have always had a strong belief in equal rights, and justice and this event sounds like something I would very much enjoy. It would also give me an opportunity to travel and visit somewhere new, and meet lots of other young people. **Female 15 East Ayrshire, Scotland**

I want to talk about age discrimination because I feel that in Bracknell, especially, it is a problem between the youth of the town and the adults. I find that when with a group of friends, however harmless our intentions or actions, we are followed round shops and car parks just for being young people and wearing hoodies. The fact that I am a young girl who looks older than I am and I "hang around" with a group of young males seems to get me into even more trouble than normal. I think that just because young people like to "chill out" in streets, and may be playing music on their phones, it does not give older generations the right to look down their noses at us. My friends

and I are fed up and I want to be able to change the way things are. **Female 12 Berkshire**

I would like to talk about age discrimination and equality because it is a very big and important topic in my life. This is because everyday I come across age discrimination and I feel I should get the opportunity to discuss and change the activities which I and many other children experience. I am also a very good listener and I am able to share and refer my ideas to people. I am also confident which means I am not afraid to ask certain questions about topics that bother or anger me, and if I want to change something which needs to be changed I will try my best to do so. Lastly, the main reason why I would like to be a part of this is because I think everyone should be treated in a respectful and tolerant manner and they shouldn't be treated any different because of their age. Everyone needs to be treated equally. **Male 13 London**

I would love the opportunity to talk about age discrimination, as it really is an issue that greatly affects us young people. At a UKYP workshop two years ago I was told by Harriet Harman that the best way to get your voice heard was to vote, yet to a group of under 18's this advice was somewhat worthless. It infuriated me to see that even leading ministers were conveying signs of age discrimination. Age discrimination is a major issue in the workplace also as I have friends who are working for £3.30 an hour even though they are doing exactly the same work as older employers who get much more. With the Single Equality Act coming into place, I would really love to discuss with other young people to hear their past experiences on age discrimination as I could pass on this information to my local forum and Funky Dragon **Female 15 North Wales**

I would like to attend this event because age discrimination is a major issue for me, an issue that is leading to electoral apathy amongst 18-21 year olds and an incredible sense of resentment that is felt by young people of all ages. As a person who has represented young people since I was 12 years old, I have a lot of experience of listening about and seeing first hand the discrimination that young people feel when they meet up to just have some harmless fun and when they try to challenge decision makers on issues that affect them. Discrimination is a widespread problem in the UK, ranging from shop signs saying only two children may enter at a time, because some people believe that young people are more likely to steal, to being stereotyped as hoodie wearing vandals. That is why I am so passionate about attending this event. **Male 16 North Wales**

Annex A: Discussion day practicalities

The event was held at CRAE's office in London and the day was facilitated by CRAE staff and young volunteers, with support from staff from the British Youth Council and the Law Centres Federation.

Young people from across England, Scotland and Wales were sent information about the event. All interested young people were asked to write and submit 100-150 words explaining why they wanted to attend (see Annex A). We stressed that this information could be provided on audiotape or by telephone, and did not have to be in written form.

Twenty-three young people attended the event, four from Wales, four from Scotland and 15 from England. The youngest person present was 12, and the oldest 17 (see Annex B for information about participants in terms of age, region, gender, ethnicity and disability).

CRAE staff produced a background briefing paper that included several questions based on the Government's proposals (see Annex C for a full list of the questions). The paper was approved by officials and then sent to all participants in advance of the event and formed the basis for the discussion groups on the day. Participants were asked to think about the questions in advance. They were asked to consult with their peers and to bring along 'evidence' on the day. This evidence is quoted throughout the report.

The timetable of the day was put together by CRAE staff and two young volunteers (see Annex D for the timetable of the day). The first part of the day included introductory activities and an overview of the Government's proposals, presented by a DCLG official. Notes were taken during this part of the day, and some of the comments appear in this report.

During the lunch break children and young people had the chance to write up other examples of age discrimination that they had gathered. Annex E contains the evidence that young people brought with them on the day describing where they believe they have been treated unfairly because of their age. Young people also listed the goods, facilities and services that they believe have discriminated unfairly against them on the grounds of age (see Annex F for alphabetical list of services).

After the lunch break the participants divided up into four small discussion groups. The groups were mixed according to age, gender, ethnicity and region. The discussions were recorded and transcribed. Full transcripts are available. At the end of the taped discussions, each group was asked to feedback up to five key points (see Annex G).

Three Government officials were present in the afternoon and sat in on the discussion groups.

Annex B: Monitoring information

All participants were asked to complete a monitoring form at the start of the day

Gender

Gender	Number	Percentage
Male	9	39
Female	14	61
Total	23	100%

Age

Age	Number	Percentage
12	1	4.3
13	1	4.3
14	3	13.1
15	5	21.7
16	4	17.4
17	9	39
Total	23	100%

What is your ethnic origin?

Ethnicity	Number	Percentage
White British	17	73.9
Mixed	2	8.7
Asian	1	4.3
Black	1	4.3
Other	2	8.7
Total	23	100%

Where are you from?

Country	Number	Percentage
England	15	65.2
North West	1	
North East	1	
Yorks and Humber	1	
East Midlands	-	
West Midlands	1	
East England	3	
South East	4	
South West	1	
London	3	
Scotland	4	17.4
Borders	1	
East Ayrshire	1	
Sutherland	1	
Aberdeen	1	

Wales	4	17.4
North Wales	2	
South Wales	2	
Total	23	100%

Do you consider yourself to be disabled?

	Number	Percentage
Yes	-	-
No	23	100
Total	23	100%

Annex C: Discussion questions for focus groups

These questions were approved by an official from the team, and sent out to all participants in advance of the event.

1. *Think about the different times you or your friends or brothers and sisters have tried to enter a shop or another place to buy something, use a service (such as a swimming pool or a bus), get help (from a doctor, the police or a social worker for example) or for some other reason ... Was the treatment you received better, worse or about the same as what an adult would get?*
2. *What rules should be used to decide whether a service should be allowed to treat people differently?*
3. *Can you think of any services where it would be fair to treat people differently because of their age?*
4. *If it is OK to treat people differently because of their age when they need particular services or help, how can we make sure people within age groups get fair treatment? For example, we would all probably agree that children and young people need help to stay safe at home. But should social services be expected to give similar treatment to younger children and older teenagers?*
5. *What decides a child or young person's chances in life in Britain today?*
6. *Do children and young people feel they have equal worth to adults?*
7. *Do you agree that public authorities should be under a legal duty to help make Britain a fairer and more equal place?*
8. *What public authorities most affect the lives of children and young people?*
9. *What **other** kinds of things could public authorities that most affect children and young people do to help promote equality?*
10. *How would you measure what public authorities do and achieve?*
11. *Do you think organisations like Ofsted should have to follow this duty? Should they check how well the duty is being followed by others?*

Annex D: Timetable

Aims of the day:

- To bring together children from England, Scotland and Wales to discuss the Government's plans for a new law about equality
- To discuss how the Government's plans might impact on under 18s
- To collect evidence of perceived unfair discrimination based on age

Time	Activity
11.00 – 11.30	Arrival, sign in, drinks and snacks
11.30 – 1.00	Introduction session. This will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hello from CRAE• Hello from Government officials• Ice breakers/games• Looking at the key issues in a bit more detail• Question and answer session
1.00 – 1.45	Lunch
2.00 – 3.00	Small discussion groups. To include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sharing examples/evidence• How the plans will impact on us?• Responding to the Government's questions
3.00 – 3.30	Group feedback
3.30 – 3.45	Thank you and next steps

Annex E: Evidence brought on the day by participants

Female, 17, Hertfordshire - examples of young people being treated unfairly

1. " My neighbours look down at me because I'm young. They talk about me when they don't think I'm listening."
2. " I've been stared at in a shop because they think I'm thieving."
3. "When I was using the bus for the first time on my own the Bus Driver was really rude to me."
4. " Young people in my area weren't invited to a local consultation about a community leisure site, despite their youth club being situated there. When they went there of their own accord they were not allowed to speak on the issue."
5. "There has been a major change in the structure of the youth service in my local area... and despite this resulting in our local youth clubs being closed down and losing our youth worker, young people weren't consulted on the issue at all."
6. " Me and my friend were walking home at 12am and were stopped by the police because they thought we were going to cause trouble."

Female, 15, East Ayrshire Scotland – examples of age discrimination

Entered store and browsed rails of clothes, was continuously watched by staff. Needed assistance which was given cheekily however, older women also in store was treated with respect.

Asked police about facilities etc when group of friends were asked to move on. Got questioned on being cheeky.

In shop, purchased juice. Queue quite long. Sales assistant persistently ignored him and asked adults to till.

Restaurant – asked for some juice, did not arrive. Called again later when order didn't arrive. Got told they didn't ask. Questioned the service and asked again.

Female, 17, Hartlepool - age discrimination evidence

GENERAL ATTITUDE OF ADULTS

Two young females felt they were not taken seriously when they tried to complain about their schools at various levels.

When I went to my MP to complain about my school's refusal to discuss problems I was not taken seriously. The MP kept on saying how I was very brave and clever to come to see him rather than dealing with the problem.

- Female, Hartlepool

To cut a long story short I wasn't given my entitlement by my school or local authority. It took 12 months for them to take me seriously in which this time I had written to Tony Blair, Lord Adonis, my MP and they were all on my side saying I was right...Where the age discrimination fits in I would say is with my teacher and Lancashire County Council thinking I would give up and not backing that a 15 year old could take it that far.

- Female, Lancashire

Recently, I went to my local cinema, with some friends to see a 15 rated film. However, because I look slightly younger than I am, I wasn't allowed to buy a ticket. I then tried to buy a ticket for a 12A film, and they charged me full adult price (for children aged over 15). I did try and point out that if they didn't believe I was old enough to go into a 15 film, they shouldn't be charging me full adult price, but I was told to contact their helpline if I wished to complain.

- Female, London

Meh. Yeah, I get treated inferior because I'm not an adult - my views often aren't given the same amount of respect, and it sucks.

Female, South East

PROBLEMS USING PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Many bus services are still unavailable to pushchairs.

The [major bus company] buses in my area are terrible. They all have steps at the front and if you have a buggy or if you're disabled or whatever you can't get on them.

- **Female, Stockton**

Some adults assume they have precedence over children on the bus and some bus drivers avoid picking up children and teenagers. I think children are treated unfairly on the bus. Before, a group of old women tried to stop me getting on the bus, which was very full. They said I was being bad mannered by getting on before them, even though I had been there first. They could get lots of other buses and I could only get this one to where I lived. They told the driver to "tell me" but he just ignored them, thankfully. Another time an old lady told this little girl "get up, I'm sitting there" and then took her seat. She wouldn't do that to an adult. There's also a particular bus driver who drives straight past bus stops if there are kids there, he drives straight past the college stop every time he's on that route.

- **Female, Hartlepool**

CURFEWS AND DISPERSAL ORDERS

Police in Burnley have/had the power to break up any groups of under 17s at any time of day.

When I was about 16 we had a policeman visit our school during assembly. We were told about a new law in our area (covering most of the outskirts of our town) which meant that more than two children weren't allowed to be seen together outside of school at any hours. If they were seen out on the streets together, the police could break them up or send them home. It didn't matter who the children were or what they were doing - you just weren't allowed to be seen together outside. The implication was that any group of under-17s would cause vandalism or be dangerous to the real people (the adults, that is).

- **Male, Burnley**

In Hartlepool there was a curfew for all children in one area of the town.

A few years ago there was a curfew on one estate in my town. Everyone there under 16 had to be in before 9 or they could get sent home. I thought it was pure shocking.

- **Female, Hartlepool**

PROBLEMS USING SHOPS

A lot of shops refuse to let groups of children in at a time, and many children and teenagers are suspected of being thieves.

Well my village shop only lets 2 children in at a time, if they go to my local school, and they stand at the doors monitoring us.

- Female, Sedgefield

Once I tried to go into a shop and they said there was already a group of kids in there so they wouldn't let me in until they left.

- Female, Nottingham

I remember hating the fact that they wouldn't let people under 16 in the shop because they thought that made me a thief. Can you imagine the fuss that would be kicked up if the sign said "only one black person in at a time" instead of one person under 16?

- Female, Hartlepool

The cashier at Thorntons stood right behind me the whole time to check if I was stealing...

- Female, Northampton

I am only 14 and so when I walked into an alcohol shop with my 21 year old friend who was buying the alcohol for her mum and dad I got sent out.

- Female, South West

Well i woz in a shop [local branch of chain of newsagents] wid me m8 and dey followed us coz we wer teens. dey wuldnt let us look at stuff dey kept doin it 4 us.

- Female, Stockton

Photographic evidence of age discrimination: Male, 13, London



Corner shop West London



Newsagent West London

Equality... or is it Age Discrimination? Female, 16, Staffordshire

Examples	Age, Gender, Location
I wanted to complain about the lack of manners the sales staff had towards young people in the cinemas but instead all I got was more anti young people comments and got told if I didn't like it I could get out.	16 F Walsall
I wanted to go to the sweet shop with my mates but the assistant stopped us and said that only 1 young person at a time, so we waited outside the shop, only to then be told but another adult to move away as we were "cluttering the path ways"	15 M Chase Water STAFFS
I wanted to train to play football with my friends in the under 16 club but I was told I couldn't as I was too young yet I am too old to play for the under 13's!!	14 Cannock STAFFS
I had some trainers for a present but they didn't fit, so I took them back to the shop with the receipt and the staff member said that I couldn't exchange them because I was under 18 - why???	15 M Wolverhampton

I was on the train going to Birmingham with my mates, I got a ticket like normal but when the conductor checked it he said that I had to pay full adult price or get off at the next stop, I tried to explain I am only 13 but he wouldn't listen so I had no choice but a the full adult price!	13 F Birmingham
I was on my way to football training and wanted to get a drink but I wasn't allowed into the shop because I had football boots on yet there was an adult in there who also had football boots on, so I questioned this and the woman said if I had a problem "then tell somebody who cares!"	15, M Newcastle
I am a Young mother, I was doing some clothes shopping in town with my pushchair and I wasn't able to get into one of the most popular shops in town, as the doors were too small.	19 F BloxMch
I am a wheelchair user and in town I cannot go into several shops, as they are up stairs, but when I'm with my friends then they help me but in several shops I get told that they can't allow wheelchairs in.	18 M Rugeley
I finished School in middle of June after my last exam, everywhere I went adults were questioning why I wasn't in School, and being sarcastic	17 F Cannock STAFFS
I live with foster parents, and one day I passed out at School but they refused to send me home or call a doctor/nurse to see to me as I'm "a foster kid!"	12 F Heath Hayes STAFFS
I'm looking for a Saturday job but nobody will offer them as I am under 18 yet I know loads of 14 - 16 years olds with jobs!	17 M Hednesford STAFFS
I was planning a residential for a group of young people with little help from a youth worker because all along he said "everything a young person organises always goes wrong!" and 2 weeks before we were due to leave he cancelled the trip.	16 F Rawnsley STAFFS

I look older than I am so I have had to get used to people asking me my age, but many use my age against me like on the buses all under 16 have a travel discount but I "look to old" or "probably lies about his age".	14 M Boston
I wanted to buy some alcohol and got asked for some id, I do look older than I am, so when I showed my drivers license they assumed it was fake and barred me from the shop!!	24 M Warwick
We were waiting for the bus to come after we had been ice-skating, the bus drove straight pasted us and it was empty!	12J13J1b F/M Telford
We were in town trying on some prom dresses and taking pictures of each other doing so and the shop staff allowed the brides to do it but they warned us if they saw us doing it again then we would be banned.	16 F (group) Stafford STAFFS
We went out for a Chinese meal, there was about 12 of us, having a quiet adult like meal but the staff refused to serve us as they didn't know if they could trust under18's to pay after the meal.	16 F (group) Great Wyrley
I wanted to open a bank account ready for my ema money but the bank refused to let me do it as I was under 16, yet I had all my id with me and proof to show them.	15 F Perton
I have not lived here long but every time I go out with friends people make comments that we are "the youth are out to cause trouble again" and we have never done anything wrong.	12 M Aston
I have to pay for most stuff like adults, yet when it comes to bars& clubs I get treated like a stupid School kid.	20 M Burntwood

Notes from the graffiti wall

- I think... everyone should be treated equally
- Being treated unfairly due to age
- Bus/travel passes should last all year and not expire in August for students
- There should be more services for 17 year-olds (health services, social services etc)
- Equality!
- Bus drivers treat you differently due to your age
- Feel patronised by other adults in public places
- I am here to say about people that are different but are treated badly, so we should treat everyone equal
- I'm here to share my views and opinions
- I'm here because I think highly upon age discrimination!
- Children and young people shouldn't be patronised (in shops, schools)
- I came today to discuss age discrimination with others to get it resolved... to become a more important issue
- I was stopped from going in a shop because they said no children allowed in without an adult and not more than 1 child allowed at a time
- Adults are not more important than children
- Where are the young children
- I want something done. I'm here to say my view!

Annex F: Feedback from discussion groups

At the end of each discussion the groups were asked to come up with five key points that they wanted to feedback to the rest of the participants and the officials.

Group one

- Organisations and businesses need to know about any new legislation. It must be properly enforced and there must be sanctions if broken
- There should be ID cards (that are voluntary) to prevent age discrimination, or help children get access to services
- Inspect and monitor services to ensure that they are following the law and make organisations accountable
- Make sure that services are clearly signposted to say who they are/aren't for.

Group two

- Young people are treated worse than adults on buses; they are also followed around shops. When young people phone the police they aren't taken seriously
- Teenagers are not taken seriously as younger children if they complain about bullying
- Young people should be more involved in decision making. We are young people, how can adults make decisions about us on our behalf?
- We don't feel well respected by older people. We get frustrated because of their negative attitude
- What happens once legislation has been implemented – how does it change anything?
- Some adults do care and some don't, we need to change adults' perceptions about children's rights.

Group three

- There must be more communication between young people and decision makers
- If there is age discrimination, you must make it very clear how to make a complaint
- Need more information and awareness about the law
- There should be more consultation with young people
- There should be undercover investigations to make sure people are following the rules
- Be more positive about young people.

Group four

- There needs to be a voice for young people in all local areas, there must be a duty to respect age, legislation must encourage and promote equality
- There needs to be more dedicated workers for young people
- Children and young people's services must be widely advertised to all children and young people
- Close the gap between discrepancy in services for 16-18 year olds, they are falling through gaps in services
- There must be flexibility within the legislation – 12 and 16 year olds need different things. There must be equal opportunities but recognition that children and young people have different needs.