

1. What did children and young people say?

During the CFJ guidelines drafting process, professor Ursula Kilkelly did some research with children and young people to hear about what they thought of justice proceedings. Some 4000 children filled out a questionnaire and these are some summarised results as they were brought back to them:

“We asked you about your experiences in the justice system, when these decisions were being taken. Most of you said that you were there when the decision was made. You thought that it was explained to you beforehand what would happen and one third of you said you had been asked for your views. Some of you thought that these views had been taken seriously but many of you did not know for sure. Many of you (a third) felt they you not been treated fairly overall.

Lots of you said they you had been supported by having someone there with you, and about half of you said that the decision had been made in a setting that was safe and comfortable. When we asked you what would have made you feel better, most of you said that you should have someone that you trust with you.

Most of you said that you understood the decision made about you and felt that it had been explained to you. You said that you would like your parents or a family member to explain the decision to you. You did not want to have this explained to you indirectly, such as by a letter. Instead, many of you told us that you wanted to talk directly to the person (like a judge) making the decision. You all think it is very important that your voice is heard.

We asked you to tell us whether you thought certain things were important, very important or not important. The ones that most of you thought were either important or very important were:

To be treated with respect;

To be listened to;

To be provided with explanations in language that you understand and

To receive information about your rights.”