

Call for Written Evidence: Civil Society Alternative Report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child 2022

Safeguarding children including violence against children

AYPH have prepared this evidence with the youth advisers on our We're All Right project, which seeks to demonstrate the importance of knowing your rights and when they are being violated specifically for survivors of sexual violence. We have already written about [the state of young people's rights and how they could be improved](#).

The Youth Advisers highlighted several problems with how the right to protection against violence is used in ways that can be detrimental to young people. The way safeguarding procedures are applied often result in young people:

- Having choice and control taken away because of the assumption that adults know what's best for young people
- Having information (often intimate details) shared without their consent or knowledge
- Being given no choice in which services they contact i.e. forced to go to police or social services
- Being given no choice of treatments or support including: long waiting lists for support and talking therapy being the only support option with no access to art, drama or other types of therapy.

The Youth Advisers felt that safeguarding procedures could be misused by professionals to protect themselves and their organisations/institutions from legal challenges or reputational damage. They also felt that the right to protection from violence was used by well meaning adults in a way that effectively cancelled out their other rights such as:

- Article 12 (respect for views of the child) – young people's views are rarely considered or listened to once safeguarding procedures are triggered
- Article 15 (right to assembly) – young people are prevented from working with their peers in groups because adults see them as a risk to each other. Young people have told us that working with peers who have had similar experiences is therapeutic and key to their recovery
- Article 16 (right to privacy) – personal information shared widely and with people who don't necessarily need to know
- Article 31 (play, leisure and culture) – the right to have fun and live a 'normal' life were taken away from them when safeguarding procedures were used
- Article 39 (recovery and reintegration) – cumulatively this restricts young people's ability to regain their social life, dignity and self-respect after experiences of sexual violence
- Article 42 (knowledge of rights) – the young people we worked with on the project were almost entirely unaware they had any rights!

Article 39 is key to supporting young people's recovery from the impact of the pandemic, which needs to be understood and applied more broadly to recognise how traumatic the experience was for many young people. The effects of being separated from peers, not having access to education or support services as well as losing loved ones and living in constant fear should not be

underestimated. Young people have been expected to return to school or college and do extra catch up work, despite being given little to no support to aid their recovery and reintegration.

About AYPH

The Association for Young People's Health works to understand and meet the particular health and wellbeing needs of 10-25 year olds.

We want all young people to have the best possible health and equal access to high quality youth friendly services.

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