

‘There’s something there for everyone’

Learning about the Lighthouse: Young people’s perspectives on
London’s Child House

Helen Beckett and Claire Soares with Camille Warrington

February 2022



“Having it all under one roof just adds to that feeling of being in a safe space.”

Illustration by Julianna Jagielska

Contents

Acknowledgements.....	4
Key messages	5
1. Introduction	8
1.1 About the Lighthouse and this study	8
1.2 Learning about the Lighthouse	8
1.3 The structure of the report	9
2. Methodology.....	11
2.1 Introduction	11
2.2 Our approach	11
2.3 Interviews.....	11
2.4 Sampling and recruitment	12
2.5 Participant overview	14
2.6 Consultation with the YRAP	14
2.7 Analysis and presentation.....	14
2.8 Interpretation notes.....	14
3. General perceptions of the Lighthouse	17
3.1 Introduction	17
3.2 The difference engaging with the Lighthouse made	18
3.3 What made the difference.....	19
3.4 A note on Covid-19	24
3.5 Areas for improvement or development	25
3.6 Concluding thoughts	29
4. Reflections on specific service elements	31
4.1 Introduction	31
4.2 Therapeutic provision	31
4.3 Health professionals	34
4.4 Advocacy	37
4.5 Criminal justice processes.....	39
4.6 Youth forum and participation opportunities.....	42
4.7 Physicality of the building	43
4.8. Concluding thoughts	46
5. Conclusion	48
References	50

Acknowledgements

First and foremost we would like to thank all of the young people who took part in this study. We are incredibly grateful for your generous contributions and insights, without which this report would not be possible. We also want to thank our Young Researchers' Advisory Panel (YRAP) for their invaluable support designing and piloting this study and consulting with us on its findings.

Thanks also to the team at the Lighthouse for their time and support in facilitating young people's involvement in this study, especially given the difficult context of Covid-19. We really appreciate your perseverance and support.

Finally, we are grateful to the Evidence and Insight Team at MOPAC for funding this study, through grant from the DfE Children's Social Care Innovation Programme, as part of their evaluation, and specifically Tim Read and Rachael Parker for their support throughout.

*“[It is] amazing
...Somewhere that
helps young
people become a
better version of
themselves.”*

*“It’s about you, it
revolves around
you, not others.”*

*“They help you
with whatever it is
you need help
with.”*

*“They’re not here
to like fix you and
make you better.
They’re here to
give you like the
resources that you
need to get to your
goal. So to get
through the next
chapter, through
the next door, like
they give you
those keys and
teach them how to
use them”*

Key messages

We interviewed 11 young people, aged 15-18 years, who had experience of engaging with the Lighthouse, to ask them what they thought about the service. Their overall reflections were overwhelmingly positive, with all clearly appreciating their experience of the Lighthouse, and the difference having accessed the service had made to them.

As illustrated below, there were five typifying features of the overall Lighthouse approach that featured strongly across young people’s accounts of what they liked about it.



Four of the features identified – a place of welcome and care, a child/youth centred approach across both building and service design, provision that was flexible and unrestricted, and ways of working that were tailored and holistic – are all recognised in existing literature to be core pillars of effective service delivery to those who have experienced sexual abuse. Young people observed this in their experiences of the Lighthouse; they valued the care and attention given by staff and how they not only helped

them deal with the abuse that they had experienced, but also helped them 'do life' more generally.

One of the unique features of the Lighthouse is the ability to access multiple services, including therapy, healthcare and criminal justice support, all under one roof.

While young people valued all of these different elements of the service individually, it was clear from their accounts that what the Lighthouse offered as a whole – an integrated service where they can access multiple services in one place – was, in many ways, of greater value than the sum of its individual parts.

Young people expressed strong support for this integrated model, noting clear appreciation of the ease of access to services and the sense of safety and 'wrap around support' that this provided. They also noted the benefits of having someone (an advocate) to help them navigate this.

That is not to say that all young people reported 'perfect' experiences of the Lighthouse, which is to be expected in any evaluation of a service, particularly one in the early stages of development. The areas for improvement identified in this study closely align with those identified in other Child House studies. These include clarity around confidentiality and information sharing in an integrated service offer and supporting engagement with an unfamiliar service model.

Whilst these were not seen to undermine the overall positive experience that young people had at the Lighthouse they do offer important insights into areas for improvement and areas for future development. Addressing these – alongside ongoing feedback from children and young people as the service continues to develop – would help the Lighthouse further realise its aim to be a child/youth friendly service that keeps the child at the heart of decisions and provisions.

“They did help in quite a lot of ways and there’s something there for everyone...It’s not just one thing; it’s multiple things in one.”

“It felt like a team...They would work together to find the best ways to do things for you.”

“Having it all under one roof just adds to that feeling of being in a safe space; it’s a nice touch.”

Chapter 1

Introduction

1. Introduction

1.1 About the Lighthouse and this study

The Lighthouse, London's Child House,¹ opened in October 2018. Bringing together a range of organisations under one roof, the Lighthouse's intention is to be a child friendly, multi-disciplinary service for those who have experienced sexual abuse, with the foremost aim to be focused on the child (Conroy et al., 2018). The Child House approach is informed by that of Child Advocacy Centres in the United States and the Barnahus model in Scandinavia. The Lighthouse is a member of the Promise Barnahus Network,² a member-led organisation that works to harmonise and consolidate good Barnahus practice across Europe (Parker et al., forthcoming).

The Evidence and Insight Unit at MOPAC was commissioned to evaluate the Lighthouse. As part of this evaluation, they commissioned staff from the Safer Young Lives Research Centre (SYLRC) at the University of Bedfordshire to elicit the views of a cohort of children and young people who had engaged with the Lighthouse, in a study entitled 'Learning about the Lighthouse'.

Key learning from young people's contributions to 'Learning about the Lighthouse' has been incorporated into MOPAC's overall evaluation report (Parker et al., forthcoming). This report provides an accompaniment to that broader report. In line with the Lighthouse's own aim to be focused on the child, this report provides a distinct space where young people's views are the sole focus and central source of learning. Though scaffolded by researcher narrative, informed by cumulative analysis of all contributions, young people's contributions are shared in individual participants' own words.

1.2 Learning about the Lighthouse

The Learning about the Lighthouse study had three main aims:

- To ascertain the views of a sample of service users as to their experiences of the Lighthouse; including what worked well and what they thought could be improved
- To share the identified benefits of the Lighthouse approach with a separate cohort of young people (with no engagement with the Lighthouse) and ascertain their perspective on what difference such an approach might make to other young people
- To provide an overview of learning from the study to feed into and inform the wider Lighthouse evaluation.

Young people's perspectives were elicited via individual interviews, and 11 young people took part in these. As explored in chapter 2, the numbers were lower than the 20 we had hoped to engage. This was for many reasons, not least of which were the direct and indirect impacts of Covid-19. However, though a small sample, the contributions of the young

¹ We use the term 'Child House', rather than 'Children's House' in this report, in line with the terminology used in England (Home Office, 2021).

² <https://www.barnahus.eu/en/>

people who participated were both in-depth and insightful, and offer unique and important contributions to the wider evaluation and development of the Lighthouse service. They also offer important insights for the wider Promise Network, contributing to an emerging evidence base on children and young people's views on the Child House model.

1.3 The structure of the report

Following a short methodology chapter, the report has two core findings chapters. Chapter 3 begins with an overview of young people's overall reflections on their experiences of the Lighthouse. It explores their views on the difference that engaging with the Lighthouse made to them, the key features of the approach and ethos that they identified as positively impacting upon their experience and potential areas for improvement or development. Chapter 4 explores young people's reflections on five key aspects of the multi-disciplinary service offer spoken about during their interviews: therapeutic provision, health, advocacy, support around criminal justice processes and participation opportunities. It also explores young people's reflections on the physicality of the space; an element that also emerged as significant within their contributions. Chapter 5 concludes with a brief synopsis of the overarching learning points from the study.

Chapter 2

Methodology

2. Methodology

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a brief overview of our study design and the centrality of attending to participant wellbeing within this. It also provides an overview of the sampling and recruitment process, our approach to analysis, the challenges encountered during the study and interpretation notes for the report.

2.2 Our approach

As noted in chapter 1, Learning about the Lighthouse was focused solely on eliciting children and young people's views on the Lighthouse. These were elicited via individual interviews (see 2.3 below). Anonymised collated findings of these interviews were then discussed with a group of young people without experience of the Lighthouse (the SYLRC's Young Researchers' Advisory Panel (YRAP)),³ to elicit their views as to the potential benefits of the Lighthouse approach for other young people. The YRAP also supported the design and piloting of the individual interviews.

Learning about the Lighthouse was designed with participant wellbeing and choice and control as dual priorities, and a detailed ethical and operational protocol was developed for supporting the safe and meaningful engagement of participants. The study received ethical approval from the University of Bedfordshire's Institute of Applied Social Research Ethics Panel and the NSPCC Ethics Committee, and ethics remained a living concern throughout the study.

2.3 Interviews

Interviews were designed with the aim of prioritising participant welfare and maximising participant choice and control. They were solely focused on young people's experiences of the Lighthouse, and not on the harm that had led to their engagement in the service. These parameters were clearly laid out in the participant information materials and reiterated at the start of the interview. That is not to say that young people could not talk about their experiences of harm should they want to (which several did), but that there was no expectation to do so.

All interviews were conducted on an individual basis, although participants were offered the option of having a supporter join them should they desire, which some chose to avail of. Interviews were originally intended to be conducted face to face but, due to Covid-19, were conducted virtually. These took place via Zoom or telephone, dependent on young people's preference. Interviews were also either audio-recorded or recorded via handwritten notes,

³ The YRAP supports the SYLRC by helping to make sure that our research is informed by and undertaken with young people, including those with lived experience of the issues being explored. The YRAP comprises seven young people aged 16 – 25 years and represents diverse perspectives and experiences, united by a commitment to improve responses to child sexual abuse and related forms of harm (<https://www.beds.ac.uk/sylrc/young-researchers-advisory-panel/>)

again dependent on young people's preferences. All young people were sent an interview pack prior to their interview that contained key information materials and visual aids that they could use in the interview if they desired.

Questions were broadly framed, to ensure participants were not asked to comment on any specific aspects of their experience that they might not feel comfortable talking about. Questions were also variably asked and worded, in the flow of conversation, to support rapport building and minimise any sense of feeling 'interrogated'. The type of questions asked included:

- How would you describe the Lighthouse to another young person?
- Based on your experience, would you recommend it to another young person?
- What score would you give it out of 10?
- What would you say has been the most helpful thing about coming to the service?
- What are the things they could do better?
- If you were in charge, what would you change?
- [If they mentioned experiences of other services], what, if anything, was different about the Lighthouse?

Towards the end of some interviews, a slightly more directive approach was adopted where we shared a number of distinctive features of the Lighthouse experience – all under one roof, someone to guide you through and the opportunity to do your 'police interview' at the Lighthouse – and asked young people for their views on these. Decisions about whether to share these, and which aspects to share, were informed by what had already been covered in the interview and the assessment of the researcher as to any likely negative impact of doing so.

Recognising that young people may have contributions they wished to make that our questions had not yet facilitated, all interviews ended with a 'is there anything else you want to tell us?' question to ensure that participants had the chance to share anything outstanding on their minds. Interviews also ended with a checking in with participants if there was anything they had shared that they would rather we did not use (they could also withdraw their contributions within two weeks of their interview), thanks for their contributions and a transitioning conversation out of the interview.

Lighthouse staff committed to be available during the time of the interview in case young people became distressed or wanted their support. They also actively checked in with young people following the interview to see how they were and to remind them they were available in the coming days and weeks should anything arise for them.

2.4 Sampling and recruitment

All participants were identified via Lighthouse staff. Staff were provided with information about the study's inclusion criteria⁴ (purposely kept broad to allow for diversity in sample

⁴ Aged 5-19 years inclusive (or up to 25 if a learning disability); currently or previously worked with the service; able to understand what they are being asked to do and assent/consent to this and, in the risk and needs assessment stage, be assessed as appropriate to approach by both Lighthouse staff and researcher.

and desired numbers) and asked to identify children and young people who could be considered for inclusion in the study.

Lighthouse staff provided the researchers with a list of 28 potential participants, and individual risk and needs assessments were completed on each of these, to determine who could safely be approached to see if they were interested in taking part in an interview. The risk and needs assessments were designed to identify any potential negative impacts of involvement in the study and if, and how, these could be mitigated. They were also designed to identify if any additional consents or supports were required, and to ensure that interviews could be individually tailored to best meet the needs and communication preferences of the young person.

Out of the 28 potential participants identified, 19 were assessed as appropriate to offer the opportunity to participate and 11 progressed to interview. There were a number of different factors that contributed to the small sample size across the stages of initial identification, assessment, approaching potential participants, obtaining consent and arrangements for interviewing. These included:

- A smaller initial pool of potential participants than anticipated
- Issues identified in the risk and needs assessment that meant staff deemed it was not appropriate to offer the opportunity for participation (predominantly related to live criminal investigations)
- A change in young people's circumstances between assessment and interview, usually linked to a deterioration in mental health
- Staff turnover and busyness and the 'ask' on staff to support children and young people's engagement
- The proactive promotion of choice for young people (only engaging those who actively wished to take part)
- The conducting of fieldwork in the context of ongoing Covid-19 restrictions and impacts, which meant virtual interviews and, in the case of most participants, having to engage from their own home.

Young people were initially informed about the potential to participate in an interview via their worker, using a short video created by the researchers and youth-friendly written materials. Staff were briefed as to the importance of emphasising the voluntary nature of the engagement. The researchers offered a call with any young people who were considering taking part, and several availed of this opportunity. This offered them the chance to ask questions directly and to 'check out' the researcher in advance; something their workers fed back was an important aspect for the young people. Formal consent to participate was recorded prior to interviews commencing. The age of the young people who chose to participate meant that parental consent was not required for any of our eventual sample.

2.5 Participant overview

Individual interviews were carried out with 11 young people in total. All identified as female, and were aged 15 - 18 years old. Eight were currently using the Lighthouse, and three had used it in the recent past.

As with the sample size, sample diversity was less than we had hoped and the findings presented in the report should be viewed in light of this. Despite proactive attempts to increase diversity, there was very limited representation of those aged 13 or under, or those identifying as male or non-binary in the initial list of potential participants provided by staff. No young people falling into these groups were represented in our eventual sample as a result of issues identified in the risk and needs assessment or, in the case of one child, the absence of parental consent.

Given the small sample size, and the fact that all participants were identified via their worker, quotes are simply ascribed a participant number, rather than any biographical details, to minimise the potential for identification.

2.6 Consultation with the YRAP

One of the aims of the study was to share the findings of the interviews with a group of young people who did not have experience of engaging with the Lighthouse. This was to elicit their views as to whether the features young people commented on as making a positive difference to them, particularly those connected to the unique approach of the Lighthouse model, would hold transferable benefit to other young people. As noted above, this consultation took place with four members of the SYLRC's YRAP⁵ and their views are included where relevant within the report.

2.7 Analysis and presentation

The researchers made initial fieldwork notes after each interview to capture key areas of learning both about process and findings and this, together with the questions asked, provided a framework for analysis. Interviews were coded and analysed using NVivo 12.

As noted in the introduction, young people's views and reflections take precedence in the presentation of the findings. The researchers' cumulative analysis of all contributions provides the framework for this, considering issues of commonality and difference and providing a sense of proportionality as to the numbers of participants offering comment on any particular issue, but young people's contributions, in their own words, remain at the heart of the report.

2.8 Interpretation notes

As noted above, the report presents the contributions of only 11 young people and, rich and varied as their contributions are, they cannot be taken as representative of all children and young people who use the Lighthouse. They do not reflect the full demographic profile of those who use the service, who may experience it in different ways. It may also be that the

⁵ Plans to engage other groups of young people did not materialise due to the impacts of Covid-19 on the study.

process of staff identification and subsequent participant self-selection has introduced a degree of bias towards those who may more favourably comment on their experiences. That said, those who participated did provide honest and insightful critique alongside their positive reflections on the service.

The approach to interviewing – broad questions designed to allow young people to comment only on what they felt comfortable with or wished to share – means that not all young people spoke about the same things and not all aspects of the service were covered in the interviews. An absence of commentary on any particular aspect of the service should not therefore be assumed to indicate lack of insights or relevance; it is simply not what that young person recalled or chose to talk about during their interview.

Despite these limitations, young people's contributions offer unique and important perspectives that cannot be gleaned from other sources and are a critical part of understanding whether, and how, the Lighthouse meets the needs of those it seeks to support.

Chapter 3

General perceptions of the Lighthouse

3. General perceptions of the Lighthouse

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of young people's reflections on the Lighthouse, identifying key themes across their contributions, as a prelude to chapter 4 which considers their experiences of specific elements of the service in more detail.

Overall, the 11 young people who took part reflected very positively on their experience of engaging with the Lighthouse. All were glad of the opportunity to engage with the service and spoke enthusiastically about both their experience of the Lighthouse and the difference it had made to them. Over half of the young people who took part in an interview had prior experiences of other services and reflected on how their Lighthouse experience compared very positively to these:

I feel like it's one of the top places that helps quite a lot, well for me. I don't feel like the other services should be put out, but I feel like the Lighthouse should be one of the first places that they send people to for help. (Young person 3)

As with any service, there is always room for improvement, and most of the young people were able to identify some aspects of service provision that they would change if they were in charge. That is not to say that the presence of such areas for improvement negated the overall positive nature of their experience, as demonstrated by the fact that all young people asked to rate it out of ten, gave it a score of eight or above, with three scoring it ten out of ten. Asked how they would describe the Lighthouse to another young person, their responses included:

Amazing...Somewhere that helps young people become a better version of themselves. (Young person 1)

A safe place, very nice welcoming place. (Young person 10)

They did help in quite a lot of ways and there's something there for everyone...It's not what you think at first; it's not just one thing. It's multiple things in one. (Young person 6)

Asked if they would recommend the Lighthouse to other young people, all replied in the affirmative, with two sharing that they already had. As one of these young people reflected:

I actually referred quite a few people to them...I first spoke about what the Lighthouse has given me, like how they're helping out...and how they can help them out. (Young person 9)

Some of young people’s reflections about what was good about the Lighthouse, and the areas where they felt improvements could be made, reflected existing learning around what young people want and need from services after sexual abuse, irrespective of the service delivery model. This includes relational, authentic working practices that centre around the needs of the child/young person, create opportunities for choice and control, pay attention to the whole person and communicate with clarity and transparency. Whilst not unique to the Lighthouse model, research shows that features such as these are fundamental pillars of an effective response to those who have experienced sexual abuse, that we know are not consistently experienced (see, for example, Hickie et al., 2017, Lefevre et al., 2017, or Warrington et al., 2017).

Other reflections specifically related to the particular set up of the Lighthouse model, and the ways in which this had enhanced young people’s experiences and the impact of the work. Within this, particular reference was made to the benefits of being able to access multiple services under one roof and feeling held in navigating the different aspects of the post-abuse journey, as explored further below.

3.2 The difference engaging with the Lighthouse made

Looking back, I didn’t realise at the time how easier things were made for me with the Lighthouse being there. (Young person 4)

All of the young people shared reflections about how engaging with the Lighthouse had made a concrete positive difference to them. When asked to expand upon the ways in which it had helped them, phrases such as ‘help you in more than one way’ and ‘in lots of ways’⁶ permeated young people’s responses. Growth and change was a strong theme in young people’s accounts, with two young people choosing images reflective of this to describe their experience of the Lighthouse.⁷



Because for me it represents growth, and for me like through growth in the Lighthouse I grew into a different person, like for example, and my confidence as well. (Young person 3)

You do kind of grow and go on a journey once you’re at the Lighthouse because there’s lots of people helping you. (Young person 6)



It’s made me a better version of my old self [and if you hadn’t been at the Lighthouse?] I’d probably still be at square one, just crying in my bedroom and be in and out of the hospital. (Young person 1)

⁶ Quotes from young people 3 and 10.

⁷ Interview materials sent to young people included a pack of cards, with a range of different images on. These were utilised in a number of the interviews with young people asked to pick cards they felt best represented their experience of the Lighthouse.

Growth and change took many different forms in young people's accounts, including in relation to:

- Understanding what had happened to them and normalising reactions: *Validating my experiences has been really important – it has been the best thing to come out of it – letting you know what you are feeling is completely normal.* (Young person 10)
- Accepting the validity of seeking support: *It's ok to not be what you expected things to be, and it's always ok to ask for help, to seek help.* (Young person 2)
- Seeing that things can change with time and support: *I think understanding yourself and I think knowing that you can be fine....understanding that you're not always going to feel inside the way that [you do now].* (Young person 9)

Young people also spoke a lot about confidence and capacity building for the longer-term, in terms of how their engagement with the Lighthouse focused not only on immediate concerns but also on equipping them to deal with future challenges:

I feel like that's one of their, I guess policies, that kind of shines through, is that they're not here to like fix you and make you better. They're here to give you like the resources that you need to get to your goal. So to get through the next chapter, through the next door, like they give you those keys and teach them how to use them I think. (Young person 5)

Finding coping strategies...being able to actually talk and think of how I could process what was going on in my head...they weren't just short term solutions, they were also long term ways of dealing with stuff. It wasn't just what I did at the Lighthouse would finish when I left, it has stayed with me, I guess ...They were able to give me things that I've been able to still carry on. (Young person 4)

3.3 What made the difference

Although there were many positive reflections shared about specific aspects of the service offer at the Lighthouse (as explored in chapter 4), there were also five typifying features of the overall Lighthouse approach that featured strongly across young people's accounts of what they liked about it. These are illustrated in Figure 3.1 overleaf and explored in further depth below.

Figure 3.1: Key features of the Lighthouse approach that young people valued



3.3.1 All under one roof

One of the unique features of the Child House model is the provision of multiple services under one roof. This emerged as a strong and consistent theme in young people's reflections about what they liked about the Lighthouse. The approach also elicited strong support in the YRAP consultation, with one of the members saying it was more than a Child House; it was *'the dream house!'*

Two key themes emerged within young people's reflections on the benefits of being able to access everything under one roof: (i) the practical ease, and more integrated nature, of service provision, and (ii) the avoidance of a need to 'retell'; both themes identified as important to young people within the existing research evidence base (see, for example, Lester et al., 2020).

That is not to say that these benefits were not without some associated challenges and, as explored in section 3.5, young people identified two such challenges: sensitive management of information sharing and the need for help navigating what could feel a very unfamiliar and potentially confusing set up. However, as with all areas for improvement identified by young people, these were not seen to undermine the benefits they got from the approach, but rather, ways in which those could be enhanced.

Ease of access and integrated provision

All the young people highlighted the practical ease of being able to access multiple services under one roof, noting the benefits of not having to travel to lots of different places and/or navigate lots of different systems and people:

It's very good that they have all of it under one roof...Because you're working with the same service and they link in with each other for example, you won't be pulled in multiple directions. Because a lot of young people have school and other things outside of going to the Lighthouse, so sometimes even the scheduling of meeting people [can be hard but] because everyone's talking to everyone it's quite easy for them to fit around you. (Young person 6)

It was just one place that I had to go, I didn't have to travel and go to loads and loads of different places to get the same help or whatever I needed. It was just in one place and I had to go there and I didn't have to re-explain myself to new people because who I was speaking to, they would all speak to each other as well, I guess, so it felt like a team more than just one person. They would work together to find the best way to do things for you. (Young person 4)

As is the case in the above quotation, several young people made reference to awareness that their positive interface with the service was linked to effective behind the scenes communication between staff, with one young person commenting that the closeness with which staff worked together made it feel like 'a family run business'.⁸

The benefits of an integrated service were however more than practical, with several young people explicitly commenting on how it also contributed to their sense of safety and/or enhanced their ability to engage with the service; something they may have otherwise struggled to do:

Everything being under one roof is very reassuring, which you need when you are anxious. (Young person 8)

Having it all under one roof just adds to that feeling of being in a safe space; it's a nice touch. And not having to travel to different places to see different people. (Young person 10)

Not needing to 'retell'

A particular theme identified by several young people was how the inter-connected nature of service provision, and the sharing of information between Lighthouse staff, meant they didn't have to keep retelling different professionals about traumatic experiences that were difficult to talk about:

Like everything's together, you don't have to explain yourself and stuff like that. So I feel that's very helpful like for someone who doesn't want to kind of go through the trauma again. (Young person 3)

It was just like you don't have to re-explain it to someone new and after a while it gets quite tiring if every time you meet a new counsellor or whoever, you have to start from the beginning and tell them about you and do all of that. Whereas at the Lighthouse it was just, they knew me. (Young person 4)

This was something that the YRAP also identified as significant to young people, commenting on how 'having it all in the same place can save some of the traumatising and frustration of having to repeat yourself.'

⁸ Young person 9

3.3.2 Young people at the centre

As noted in chapter 1, one of the aims of the Lighthouse is to have the child at the centre. All of the young people we spoke to readily described feeling that the Lighthouse was a service designed with children and young people in mind:

It was very friendly and I guess very centred around the young person. The actual building itself is comforting and kind of warming, and it kind of gives you a homely feeling. And everyone around the building when you're moving around will probably say hi to you... Also it's quite family centred, so if you have younger siblings or anything there's always space for them. (Young person 6)

This was felt to be apparent across a range of elements, that young people felt came together to deliver a service where young people and their needs were held at the centre of its ethos and culture. This theme intersected with those of relational, tailored and holistic working, with particular reference made to the:

- Personal characteristics and qualities of staff across the service
- Authentic and caring ways in which staff treated and worked with them
- Commitment of staff to supporting individuals' needs and wellbeing in relation to their experiences of abuse, but also more generally
- Design and décor of the physical space as somewhere they were happy to spend time
- Opportunities for participation and being a part of the service design and delivery through, for example, the youth forum.

3.3.3 A place of welcome and care

Although there were a couple of discrete accounts of not experiencing a sense of welcome and care from individual staff members on particular occasions, a key theme across young people's accounts was the sense that the Lighthouse was a place where they felt welcome and cared for. This related not only to their experience of their therapist or advocate, but to their staff interactions as a whole, from the point of arrival to departure. This was a feature which several contrasted to their experiences in other services and which young people have repeatedly identified as important to them in other research (see, for example, Scott et al., 2019):

I think they just made the experience of having to go there a lot less hard than it had to be. And yeah, I did feel like almost loved there. (Young person 4)

It's a really nice environment. Like the people there, literally everyone there is really nice, like even the receptionists, they're so lovely, like nicer than normal people. (Young person 2)

...I've gone through a few different services...CAMHS, eating disorder therapy, and then anxiety management...they were great and they were doing their job, but you could tell they were just doing their job, if that makes sense, whereas here you feel very cared about....I've had times where it is difficult and it's very comforting in that way to know that the person you're talking to isn't just talking to you because of their

pay cheque at the end of the month, if that makes sense. Like you can tell that, from everyone I've met here, they're doing what they do because they care, and yeah, they get paid and that's a bonus, but you can tell they are genuinely passionate. (Young person 5)

Particular reference was made by several young people about the importance of the attention paid to the practicalities of the set-up, including access to drinks and snacks, and how this all contributed to a sense of welcome and care. As explored in chapter 4, similar reference was made to how the building felt specifically designed for children and young people, paying attention to what would help create a sense of welcome and comfort:

They will let you feel welcome. Like, for example, like I'd walk into the building, they would always offer you like a drink or maybe like some cookies or anything like that. So it's like you're basically going home. (Young person 11)

3.3.4 Holistic and individually tailored approach

Several participants explicitly commented on staff having particular expertise and understanding around sexual abuse, particularly in relation to the health and therapeutic staff, and the positive difference this made to feeling able to reflect on their needs and experiences, and have these heard and held. They also however very much valued the fact that the service offer had a broader focus; helping them to 'do life' (offering a holistic response to the breadth of their needs and experiences, not just those connected to the abuse they had experienced):

They help you with whatever it is you need help with. (Young person 1)

[Through work with the Lighthouse] I found out something personal that I never knew...After like what, like 16 years, I found out what I have like a learning difficulty, so they've actually helped me a lot. (Young person 11)

It's about you, it revolves around you, not others. (Young person 5)

Young people appreciated that their engagement was tailored to their particular circumstances, and that staff would create space to identify, and respond to, what young people themselves felt they needed help around, rather than a pre-determined programme of intervention. As explored in chapter 4 this included issues as varied as exams and schooling, health conditions not related to their experience of abuse, and immigration. Several young people also commented on how the service had supported them with family relationships, both in relation to dealing with the impact of the abuse, but also in terms of building better family relationships more generally.

3.3.5 Flexible and unrestricted

Another prominent theme in young people's accounts was the flexibility of provision at the Lighthouse, and the lack of restrictions they experienced in terms of the service offer; often shared in contrast to experiences of other services:

It's not like a team of people trying to fix you and then move on to the next, like hurry, hurry, like very rushed. They're quite thorough. It's very comforting as a service....Like we're here to work with you, not have you do whatever we say and then kick you out after however many months has passed. (Young person 5)

As explored in chapter 4, young people's reflections on flexibility related to the content and pace of therapy; the ability to schedule appointments around what suited them and the ability to change appointments if they were not feeling up to attending them that day.

Young people also commented on the importance of planned endings, linked to when they were ready to stop rather than the withdrawal of a service offer. As illustrated in the quotes below, a particular point made within this was that the service could continue to work with young people after they turned 18:

Like even quite recently [therapeutic worker] was saying 'we can have a little conversation about how you're feeling about things closing, and how we're going to part ways'. It's like, this is not the exit that I got from CAMHS. They were just like 'right, you're 18, you'll be fine'...It's like I'm going to kick you out of the door to fly, whereas here it's very much like we acknowledge that there can be hard feelings. (Young person 5)

Several young people also commented on the ability to reinitiate contact with the service should they need it again at a subsequent point, and the important sense of a safety net that this provided. A few also reflected on the benefits of continued 'check-ins' from workers even after formal cessation of provision:

They left it for me asking them to leave, because I was kind of like, 'okay I've been with you guys for over a year now, I want to try to do this myself'....Like even after she still calls me just to check if I'm okay and she always lets me know [I can come back]. (Young person 7)

Feeling like if I need help, I know where to come and get it. (Young person 10)

For me, I stopped seeing my psychiatrist or whatever it's called, and I'm still part of the [youth forum] groups, but she said if anything comes up I can still like talk to her and book a meeting to see her. (Young person 3)

3.4 A note on Covid-19

Five young people commented on the impact of Covid-19 on their experience of the Lighthouse. Comments were made in relation to the general sense of uncertainty it created, having to adjust from face to face to virtual engagements (particularly in relation to therapeutic support) and changes to plans and appointment dates. Other reported impacts included: having no access to the service's health provision during periods of lockdown (leaving health needs unattended to); a lack of privacy when attending sessions virtually from home; a lack of staff around the building to help when face to face service resumed, and criminal investigations being subject to further delays:

I think it's harder to get that same feeling doing things remotely, if that makes sense. By not being at the Lighthouse sometimes things like privacy and just having that space, you don't really get that. (Young person 6)

However, while young people commented on the 'strangeness' of virtual provision, they still felt they benefitted from the service and that staff adapted well to the circumstances:

It was kind of like stressful...because in my mind, like therapy appointments were like more like having a one to one, like sitting down and having a face to face conversation, and it was a bit different...but they made it really, it was really comfortable. (Young person 9)

One of the five young people felt that the alternative telephone format of support at the start of her engagement with the service had actually allowed her to open up more easily than she might have done face to face, and that subsequent in-person interactions felt more comfortable having already built up a relationship/trust with the worker virtually:

I prefer it in person now, but that's only because I know her, but yeah, before I preferred it through the phone. So it kind of worked out for me even in the lockdown and now. (Young person 2)

3.5 Areas for improvement or development

Even though they're very good there is still room for improvement. (Young person 6)

Alongside questions about what they liked about the Lighthouse service, young people were asked about what they would change if they were in charge and, in the case of those who scored the service less than ten, what would increase that score? Suggested areas for improvement linked to specific elements of the service are included in the relevant sections in chapter 4, but four overarching themes that emerged in relation to the Lighthouse as a whole are explored here. These relate both to the operation of the Lighthouse (communication and information sharing), and awareness and reach (identified more as areas for development, rather than improvement).

3.5.1 Communication

As explored earlier in the chapter, the provision of multiple services under one roof was one of the key positives of the Lighthouse approach that young people identified, and something they very much welcomed. Several did however also note the potential for this to feel confusing or overwhelming in the early stages of engagement, particularly given the uniqueness of this integrated approach and how it differed from previous service experiences. A few young people also noted how engaging with the service in the aftermath of a traumatic life event made it particularly difficult to understand and process unfamiliar or complex processes or information.



I was coming from a place of shock, anger, pain, fear. I was very much confused and this person here is going to call you, and that person there is going to have a meeting with you on this day, and this other person's going to talk to that person for you, and they're both going to call you...everything's going on at the same time. Like you're going in a direction. You're just not sure which one... I don't think that's particularly anyone's fault. I just think that there was a team of people who all had things to do, and I was going through a very stressful phase of shock, and confused.
(Young person 5)

Several young people felt that they had received insufficient, or in the case of one young person inaccurate, explanations of how the service worked, whilst another noted that they may have been told everything, but because of how they felt upon arrival, they had not been able to take it all in. Whilst not suggesting that efforts were not being made in this regard, these young people felt that increased attention to how communications were experienced by young people would make a concrete and positive difference to those engaging with the service; a theme also identified in other Child House studies (see, for example, Rasmussen, 2011).

Being more clear about how things would be. I had an intro, and thought it would be one way but then it changed...I didn't know, so I just went with it. There's lots of different resources but I wasn't aware of them until recently. (Young person 10)

I feel like having an induction pack like when you come [would improve it]. (Young person 4)

It was quite a lot of people, and they were just all talking at me. (Young person 3)

As explored in chapter 4, insufficient or inaccurate communication was also the theme of the one negative reflection shared about the health service and a negative reflection about therapeutic input. As explored below, it was also an important aspect of young people's reflections on information sharing.

3.5.2 Information sharing

Clarity about information sharing and limits to confidentiality are repeatedly identified as important issues for young people affected by sexual abuse in other research (see, for example, Warrington et al., 2017; AYPH, 2013) and so it is unsurprising that it also appeared in some young people's accounts of their experiences of the Lighthouse. Whilst participants understood the need for certain information to be passed on, two did describe incidents where they felt the conditions for this had not been clearly communicated, or where they felt misled on this, and noted how this held potential to undermine what was otherwise a very positive experience of the service:

I only ever had one bad experience...[where a worker disclosed information some time after knowing it, after a concern was raised by someone else and without informing the young person they were doing this]...I was like how could you do that...It's not like you just found out now and you're like 'no this is wrong'. You knew the whole time...For me, after that I was just like no, I don't want this, because that kind of comfortability and the trust kind of thing for me was just like well, it's gone...No explanation, nothing... [asked what she would have liked to happen, she replied]...To speak to me and see my point of view, because she didn't do that. (Young person 7)

On a more positive note, this young person did take pains to stress that this was one negative experience in an otherwise 'ten out of ten' experience, and shared that 'we did work through it and I started being comfortable and trusting her again'. Similarly, the other young person who reported a negative experience around information sharing commended the Lighthouse on acknowledging and apologising 'if they have made it unclear or made a mistake in what they said.'⁹

In addition to these two discrete incidents around information sharing, there was some degree of concern or discomfort on the part of a couple of other participants, around limits to confidentiality, specifically linked to the integrated nature of the service offer:

I think there is pros and cons to it. A lot of positives is that you don't really have to repeat yourself to numerous people because everyone kind of has that baseline information. But then sometimes the negatives is that things that are sometimes private, like say for example you were to go somewhere private for your healthcare, some parts of that information may get shared and if you don't like that, then it may not be the best...I think if you're very private and don't like things to be shared then you may find that a bit uncomfortable, but when you get over the fact that it's just being shared within the Lighthouse it's mostly ok. (Young person 6)

This is not to say that these are insurmountable concerns, or ones that would prevent young people availing of the other benefits they reported from their engagement in the Lighthouse, but to reiterate the importance of clarity of messaging around information sharing and limits to confidentiality, particularly in the context of an integrated service offer:

[What would improve it?] I think being 100% transparent with who was going to know what kind of information and just making sure the young person is 100% aware...I think the best way would be sitting down with the young person and just explaining clearly before any information is passed between the team. (Young person 6)

In the follow up consultation with YRAP members, they also noted the importance of clarity around information sharing within an integrated service, asking young people's consent for this and how lack of understanding about this could cause anxiety:

Amazing model, but it's important to be clear about information sharing and you being in control... when you go through things it can be difficult to share with people

⁹ Young person 6

and you would worry about who would be told what... Important to ask young people if they consent to their information being shared with others. (YRAP)

3.5.3 Awareness of (the uniqueness of) the Lighthouse

Many young people reported that their experience of the Lighthouse was both different from, and better than, their expectations; that were often linked to experiences or awareness of other services. Reflecting on how positive their experience was compared to their expectations, they suggested the Lighthouse find ways to better communicate the uniqueness of their service offer, noting that if other young people understood this they might be more inclined to avail of the service:

A lot of young people don't know about the service...a lot of people know about CAMHS but everyone I know that's been to CAMHS, it's a bad experience, so when, yeah when they hear Lighthouse, obviously they're thinking well it's just borderline the same service and everyone automatically because of the bad experience with CAMHS, they're like 'mm, nah, I'm ok.' But if then more people get introduced to the Lighthouse before having to go to CAMHS, I feel like that would then put a different mood or a different type of energy on people wanting to go, because it is a really good service. (Young person 7)

Several young people also reflected on lack of knowledge that the Lighthouse even existed prior to engaging with it, and showed strong support for increasing awareness of it amongst young people:

Like the biggest thought around it, being part of it now, is the fact that there was a point in my life when I didn't know it existed, and I find that quite astonishing...Like you hear about CAMHS and you hear about other forms of therapy...but out of the ones I've been to, this has been my best experience and I feel like it should be promoted more if that makes sense...I feel like there's a lot of young people who would do really well knowing that there are services like this that are free for you and there for you, like it's a team of people working to benefit you. (Young person 5)

One young person suggested advertising on social media as a key way in which this could be achieved, simultaneously noting how this could helpfully challenge the stigma and silencing associated with sexual abuse:

The reason I never wanted to tell people 'oh yeah, I went to the Lighthouse' is...a stigma of it's something bad instead of something good, and I feel that's where things go wrong, because then everyone's like, well I'm not normal because I have to use a service to help me get better. Whereas I feel the Lighthouse could change that. (Young person 7)

3.5.4 Reach of service

When asked what they would change if they were in charge, two young people identified increased accessibility and reach of the service. Both reflected on how far they had to travel and/or the complexity of their travel journey to get to the Lighthouse, expressing a desire for more locations that would enhance accessibility:

[What would move it to a 10?] So for me obviously it's kind of the travel, so in the sense of different locations I feel it's very much needed, because it is a very good service compared to the others. (Young person 7)

The location is not very accessible. I had to get a bus and a train, or two trains or two buses...I had to leave school 30 minutes early to get there and missed out on lessons...It would be great if there were more of them...places that are easier to come to with the trains. (Young person 8)

3.6 Concluding thoughts

As illustrated throughout this chapter, young people's reflections on their experiences of the Lighthouse were overwhelmingly positive; a view supported by the YRAP in terms of the potential benefits that having access to such a model could offer other young people. As noted in the introduction, some of what young people identified as positive in their experiences of the Lighthouse related to general principles of good practice in supporting young people after sexual abuse. Others, however, related quite clearly to the specific set up and operating practice of the Lighthouse, which can both facilitate, and enhance, the exercise of holistic child and youth-centred practice.

Nothing that young people identified as areas for improvement or development undermine the potential of this model of service delivery, but they do offer important insights as to areas that, if addressed, could make young people's experiences of the service even better as the service develops in the future. The issues around confidentiality and clarity of communication, in particular, though common themes in wider sexual abuse research, are noted to hold particular pertinence in the context of integrated service provision, where the sharing of information can be both a source of support and relief and a source of anxiety or uncertainty. It is an issue that has been identified in other Child House studies and one that requires particular attention, given the centrality of transparency, communication and understanding to young people's sense of control in the aftermath of sexual abuse (see for example, Beckett and Warrington, 2015).

Chapter 4

Reflections on specific service elements

4. Reflections on specific service elements

4.1 Introduction

This chapter considers the specific aspects of the Lighthouse that young people talked about in their interviews, in more detail. As such, it includes young people's reflections on therapeutic provision, health, advocacy, criminal justice support, participation opportunities and the physicality of the space. Aspects of the service that were not discussed by young people in their interviews – such as the social care or police liaison officers who, by their nature, young people are less likely to have direct involvement with – are not considered here, but are considered in the wider evaluation report.

4.2 Therapeutic provision

All 11 young people spoke very positively about their experiences of therapeutic provision at the Lighthouse (across its various offerings).¹⁰ As explored below, they described experiences of this provision as being characterised by authentic and caring relationships, collaborative and tailored ways of working, planned and well-managed endings and a sense of going the extra mile; all issues identified as important in the existing body of research (see, for example, Hickie et al., 2017, Lefevre et al., 2017, or Warrington et al., 2017).

As explored in chapter 3, young people shared a range of ways in which their experience of the Lighthouse had positively supported their recovery and emotional health and wellbeing, and it was clear from their accounts that therapeutic provision played a significant role in this. Specific benefits cited in their accounts of therapeutic provision included:

- Helping them make sense of their feelings around the abuse
- Help with their general mood and emotional wellbeing
- Help with anxiety
- Help with substance misuse
- Improved confidence
- The development of coping strategies, and
- Supporting them to grow and develop as a person.

While, overall, young people shared positive experiences therapeutic provision, four young people offered suggestions for improvements in this element of the service. These largely related to better communication about the service offer and clarity around information sharing, as already explored in chapter 3. However two of the young people offered suggestions as to other changes that they felt would improve young people's experiences. One related to wanting more frequent access to therapy sessions, while the other was a suggestion that psychologists could have a work phone (noting that some other Lighthouse workers do). This was a change they felt would be easy to make and make a considerable difference to them.

¹⁰ Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, the NSPCC's Letting the Future In and Protect and Respect services.

4.2.1 Authentic and caring relationships

Young people were generally very positive about their relationships with therapeutic practitioners, describing them as being 'like a friend'. Young people reported valued, authentic personal connections with therapeutic practitioners, characterised by care, kindness, reciprocity, respect, safety and thoughtfulness:

[Therapeutic worker] especially has always remembered little things. Like I told her I love the smell of oranges and she sent me a care package for lockdown, it had a bunch of stuff and an orange scented candle. I was close to tears. I was like that's so nice. That's so considerate. (Young person 6)

It feels really like, yeah, personal, and they're really like, you feel comfortable when you get to know them. They don't make you feel like uncomfortable or distant. When you go for therapy, I think some therapists are like so professional that you can't have that bond with them. (Young person 9)

You just feel more relaxed. And that's a big thing. And also safe, they're big things for people who have been through stuff. They really do want to have that element of, you know like, OK, here you're going to be safe and here you can trust us, talk to us and relax. (Young person 4)

While a couple of young people mentioned their therapeutic practitioner having changed over time, those who had experienced consistency reflected on how this supported effective working and relationship building:

I really like that throughout my duration that I stuck with the same therapist, and that has been very beneficial in that you got to actually trust them and create a bond with them instead of changing, if that makes sense. (Young person 6)

4.2.2 Choice, control and tailored ways of working

A key theme in young people's accounts of therapeutic provision at the Lighthouse was the ability to exercise choice and control around their engagement in this. Often contrasting it in relation to their experiences of other services, they commented on the importance of this in terms of both the focus of the work, and when they wanted to start and end, therapeutic engagement:

Firstly, you have more control over your experience. As I have anxiety, being in control makes me relaxed...CAMHS had a very long wait list – I've personally experienced it – and when you finish they give your place to someone else. In the Lighthouse, it's my choice. And they are very respectful of your choices. (Young person 8)

Over the time that I was at the Lighthouse there was a lot of changes going on in my life, and they were very flexible with the work that they were doing, and it wasn't just okay we have these goals we have to stick to this, it was more the young person got to pick what they wanted to do based on what they needed at the time. (Young person 6)

One young person specifically commented on how she valued being treated 'like an adult' rather than a child; again a theme identified as very important to young people in existing literature on adolescents' experiences of service provision (see, for example, Allnock et al., 2021). Reflecting on her experience in another service she shared:

You feel downgraded as a person, the way they're literally looking at you, and speaking to you and telling you. As a 15 year old girl, to colour in and play with the sand, it was just like I'm not retarded. Why are you speaking to me like that? ...I feel [Lighthouse practitioner name] does treat me like an adult and yeah, like she just, more time just listens and she does like, not give her opinion, but like give advice and whatnot. (Young person 2)

Many young people specifically reflected on the initial apprehension they felt when first accessing the Lighthouse, particularly around engaging in therapeutic provision. They highlighted how it takes time to 'open up' to professionals, particularly about experiences of abuse and related issues. They reflected positively on how they were given the time and space to go at their own pace, and didn't feel any pressure to talk about anything they were uncomfortable with:

For me I feel like also the best part as well, kind of like this, is you don't have to say anything if you don't want to say, and you don't have to talk about anything you don't want to talk about. You can go at your own pace and open up as much as you are comfortable to do, until you're ready to fully open up and say what you need to say so you can get more help. (Young person 7)

I think I would say that they're very welcome and that they take time how you want it to be done. So for example, let's say if you take really like a while to open up, they will like actually give you time. (Young person 11)

4.2.3 Extended support and 'going the extra mile'

There was a general feeling amongst participants that therapeutic practitioners at the Lighthouse went 'above and beyond' to support them any way they could, signalling to young people that they were cared for and their wellbeing was the priority:

Like I remember when I literally had no food in the house I was at, at the time, and she would literally call my key worker or like, she'd just sort things out a lot of the time really, and I was like oh my gosh, like wow, I don't even know this woman but like she's actually doing the most. (Young person 2)

Young people reported appreciation of therapeutic practitioners signposting them to other resources and sources of support (both within and outside of the Lighthouse), when issues arose that feel outside of their remit:

But every time I've needed any kind of support from anywhere else, she'll be like, well I know someone who's really, really good, let me send them an email to see. (Young person 5)

She always gave me options of what I can do, and she would always refer me to places, she would always ask my consent, like she made you feel like you could really like, not even just trust her but trust the service. (Young person 2)

The extension of therapeutic support to family members, or linking them into such provision, was also mentioned by a few young people (and very much supported by the YRAP) who noted improved relationships at home as a result:

They put my mum in touch with an adult therapist, for someone for her to go to see, but obviously if she was there with me and she needed someone to talk to, [therapist name] would happily take her aside and speak to her and listen to her, and try and give her the best advice possible. (Young person 7)

4.2.4 Planned endings and an 'open door'

Young people who were further along in their engagement with therapeutic support, or were no longer using the Lighthouse, positively commented on practitioners' planning and management of therapeutic endings, and the sense of an 'open door' should they need support again at a subsequent stage. This, together with the ability to continue with the service beyond the age of 18, were things that young people identified as feeling unique and distinct about their experience at the Lighthouse, compared to other services, and something which they noted made transitioning out of the service easier:

Yeah, because it's [CAMHS] more of a limited time there whereas I think with the Lighthouse, obviously you do get to a certain age where you do have to leave, but you can kind of build up to that I guess. With me when I left the Lighthouse, it wasn't just suddenly, I talked long before I would have left. And they asked me if I wanted to stay and stuff...So, it was quite nice to know that I did have that choice if I did want to stay, or stay in contact and be able to still go there I guess...instead of it being sudden, it was easier to move on, I would say. (Young person 4)

She'd always say to me, if I still needed someone to talk to, I could message her and she'll call me and speak to me on the phone, and she always reminded me that even though I'd chosen to leave the service, if I ever wanted to come back I could. (Young person 7)

4.3 Health professionals

The nine young people who spoke about their experiences with health professionals at the Lighthouse did so in overwhelmingly positive terms. As with other elements of the Lighthouse, reflections around the importance of relational working and the sense of care they experienced permeated young people's accounts. Young people's accounts also highlighted themes of ease of access, flexibility, communication, comprehensiveness and reassurance, as illustrated in one young person's summary of their experience of the health team:

I really like the health team there for a lot of reasons, because one, they're very transparent with you so what needs to be told needs to be told, what doesn't need to

be told they won't tell. They're very friendly, and they all take time to explain everything you need and everything you need to know, if you have any questions. They're very flexible as well, so if I'm already there they're very willing to let me pop in if I have a question or anything...They're very caring and they will ask you is everything okay, how's your day been, and just make sure that everything's okay, as well as ask you about your health. (Young person 6)

4.3.1 Ease of access & flexible working practices

Linked with commentary in chapter 3 as to the benefits of integrated provision model, there was a strong appreciation for being able to access health provision at the Lighthouse, rather than having to travel to different places to see different people and navigate separate health systems themselves:

That was one of the greatest things that was really helpful, for them to have a doctor. I knew that not many places do that, and like that was really good. (Young person 9)

I feel like with having that service within the Lighthouse works, because anything you kind of need from a doctor or a clinic, you could get done there. So to have that appointment slot in whenever you need it, even when you're going to the Lighthouse kind of worked, because then you know anything medical, it can get sorted while you're there instead of having to call your doctor, wait weeks, have to go to clinic. (Young person 7)

As well as the ease of access to health professionals at the Lighthouse, young people appreciated their flexible ways of working; with several doing so in comparison to the difficulty of accessing health services elsewhere:

They are very understanding to the different circumstances, and they're willing to work with you even when it's not the most convenient circumstances, if that makes sense. (Young person 6)

My general practitioner is quite touch and go. The actual doctors are fine but getting a decent appointment at a convenient time is close to impossible ...[Health team worker] is absolutely great...And if I want to reschedule she's always very, very flexible. (Young person 5)

4.3.2 Communication and transparency

The issue of communication and transparency also permeated young people's accounts of their experiences of health provision at the Lighthouse. Whilst one young person reported mixed experiences around this, sharing both a positive and negative experience (the latter linked to having to 'chase' to find out the results of an examination) others' accounts were solely positive, expressing appreciation for health professionals' explanation of processes, their role, and young people's choice and control in their engagement with them:

I do remember sitting and having this conversation, like the initial conversation with [paediatrician name], and she was like, this is what I do, I'm a paediatrician, I'm here to support young people specifically in sexual trauma and such like, and basically if

you've got any questions about absolutely anything to do with your mental and physical health, this is a safe place where you can ask them and I can answer them to the best of my ability. And then we organised for the medical examination to be, I don't know how much later, but it was a separate occasion, and then again when I came in it was more just like sitting down and this is what today's going to look like. This is the bed and at any point if you change your mind, that's fine. There is absolutely nothing that you have to do. Just because you said you want to do it does not mean we're going to make you do it, like you can change your mind. (Young person 5)

4.3.3 Attending to all needs

Several participants made reference to the significance of the health professionals having expertise in sexual health and sexual trauma, and in working with children and young people. They noted how it was *'a lot less awkward to go in and talk about your private parts when it's a bunch of people who do that for living'*,¹¹ contrasting this to their experience of accessing health provision in other settings.

Young people also reflected positively, however, on the breadth of health issues that could be dealt with at the Lighthouse; including those not directly related to the experience of abuse. Young people shared accounts of health professionals helping them with issues as varied as headaches, gynaecological issues, mental health issues and vitamin deficiencies:

She would see me for every problem that I would have medical wise. That was really good – like anything that you had concerns about, I would just talk to her and she would like, if I needed it, maybe prescribe medicine or whatever. (Young person 2)

A few young people explicitly referenced the reassurance that such wrap around health support offered them:

I would go and see her every two or three weeks, just to make sure everything was ok...She would prescribe medicine, check on me, have a body check and stuff like that, just to make sure everything else is OK. And then she would tell me and it was just like a reassurance thing as well I guess...she was able to give me reassurance that things were normal. (Young person 4)

Several young people also shared accounts of how Lighthouse health staff acted as an important conduit for accessing external health provision where required, with one young person reflecting on the important role Lighthouse staff played when she was admitted to hospital due to deteriorating mental health:

She helped me get an appointment for my ovaries, because when I was suffering with them as well...I think with the GP, I don't have a really good bond with them, and GPs take way too long to like help you and investigate, and with the Lighthouse it was like, I think I met her like twice or three times, and then after that she sent me a letter home saying I have an appointment in the hospital. (Young person 11)

¹¹ Young person 5

So they'd deal with anything medical. If I needed medication they can prescribe it and everything. They would just send an email to my doctor if I needed them to....And it was good because during my time at the Lighthouse I ended up in hospital because obviously my mental health had kind of just deteriorated, [therapist name] took me there, and then she stayed with me, she waited till a doctor came to see me, waited for my mum to come. And then obviously the paediatrician came, and then she just made sure that the team at the hospital looked after me, because that's the hospital she works at. I was in the hospital for about two weeks. So they properly cared for me and looked after me, so it was properly nice. (Young person 7)

4.4 Advocacy

The role of advocates at the Lighthouse is to help guide children and young people through their journey at the service and to support their engagement in criminal justice processes where relevant. Six young people reflected on their experiences of having an advocate at the Lighthouse, with a further two reflecting on whether they would have liked to have this kind of support. Those who shared their advocacy experiences did so overwhelmingly positively, as explored below and in section 4.5 in relation to their support with criminal justice processes.

Two main areas for improvement emerged in the accounts of those who reflected on their experiences of having an advocate: one related to changes in personnel (reported by a couple of participants) and the other the difficulty of understanding the role in the early stages of engagement. Potential confusion around the role of an advocate was also demonstrated in a few other young people's responses to the more directive questioning about the role of advocates at the end, with them being unsure if they had an advocate or not, and unclear about whether such an offer was even available to them:

...They're great, but because they're specific to anyone who's like in the middle of an investigation, like it's convenient but only if it applies to you...it's not really for people in my situation, but I think a more blanket kind of role would be beneficial for other people. (Young person 5)

4.4.1 A bridge to other parts of the Lighthouse

Advocates were described as being a helpful bridge to other parts of the service. While positive about the 'all under one roof' service model, a few young people noted how this could feel overwhelming (especially at first). As such, they valued having an advocate for orientating and introducing them to the various Lighthouse teams at the start of their engagement and when a particular support need was identified:

Within the Lighthouse first when I was given an advocate they do explain each of their roles, because I think it can be quite confusing for young people. And there's multiple people that you don't really know and you're just like, 'What's everyone's job?'. They make that very clear. (Young person 6)

While not all young people knew/used the term 'advocate' there was a sense amongst those who had an advocate of them being 'their person', who provided an important sense of reassurance and eased navigation of the multi-faceted nature of the service:

It's great. If you only see a therapist once a week you might not get that much from them. You can get more info, and at any time from the advocate. That extra little support makes you feel very reassured....Very positive. (Young person 8)

And with [advocate name] as well, she would also help me with appointments, so she would help speak to a counsellor for me and arrange an appointment and then let me know or let them get in touch with me...it just took pressure off me and just made things easier for me. (Young person 4)

Young people valued having a single person who they could speak to who was up to date on what was going on with them and who knew what their needs were at any given time. With this, they appreciated advocates for:

- Being able to book appointments with different Lighthouse teams on their behalf
- Attending appointments with them if needed
- Being their sounding board should they have issues or concerns.

Ongoing support from advocates, after formal engagement in other aspects of the service had ended, and the ability to contact them should further support be required were also noted to provide an important sense of reassurance and safety:

I can speak to her about anything. I still can. She is there for as long as I want it. Unless I don't want it, I'll always have that support even after my case ends. (Young person 8)

4.4.2 Support for 'doing life'

Overall, there was a real sense from young people of advocates being someone who generally 'looked out for them'; supporting their wellbeing, being engaged in their lives more broadly and helping them navigate every-day life:

We'd have a hot chocolate or something and just talk about normal things. And then if we wanted to talk about the harder stuff and all of that, but yeah, it's just having that relationship with someone who you can trust and who I guess knows you on a different way is helpful. (Young person 4)

I was at college at the time, so if I had to tell my teacher something [related to experience of abuse], she would help me...and she would send emails out... I was the only girl at my college, so even my teachers were males as well, so for me to go up to my teacher, and just talk to them, was a bit awkward, like I didn't want to do it. (Young person 3)

They are extremely kind. Anything they can do, they are there to help – even the very smallest things – like being stressed about your exams. (Young person 8)

As with therapeutic practitioners, young people also recalled their advocates linking them in to other sources of support outside of the Lighthouse, for needs unrelated to their experiences of abuse:

Like for example I was into knife crime and stuff, and my advocate at the time, she found groups for me that was based on knife crime [outside of LH]. So there's more than one thing that you can do, and they can help you with other things that you might enjoy as well. (Young person 3)

When it comes to anything like family problems regarding the law or, for example as much as they can't directly help with immigration they can help lead you to other people that are more suitable for those kind of things. (Young person 6)

4.4.3 Reflections from those without advocates

Two of the young people, who did not have an advocate offered reflections on whether they thought such a role would be helpful. They expressed mixed views on this, highlighting the importance of choice and individually tailored service offers:

Yes, it would be quite helpful. Would mean I wouldn't just go to [psychologist name] for everything. I go to her about everything and she doesn't always know all the answers. (Young person 10)

I feel like for me that would have been too much, because very much when I'm trying to get help in terms of using a service, when it gets to more than like two people, I feel overcrowded and then that's when I don't want to use it. (Young person 7)

4.5 Criminal justice processes

The challenges victims and witnesses experience engaging in criminal justice processes following sexual abuse are well documented, as is the critical need for support around this (see, for example, Plotnikoff and Woolfson, 2019 or Beckett and Warrington, 2015). The accounts of the seven young people who chose to reflect on their experiences of criminal justice processes demonstrated several key ways in which Lighthouse support helped ease these challenges. For the one young person who chose not to engage in criminal justice processes, support was experienced in the form of respecting her decision and not pressuring her to pursue a case against her wishes; something she noted as critically important for her. For the other six it related to the ways in which their advocate had helped them navigate criminal justice processes and, in the case of one young person, the opportunity to undertake their Achieving Best Evidence (ABE) interview at the Lighthouse.

4.5.1 Support navigating criminal justice processes

Five young people spoke about the positive contribution having an advocate had made in terms of their experience of navigating criminal justice processes. Three key aspects of support were identified within this:

- Acting as a conduit between the young person and police, particularly in relation to obtaining updates about case progression; something that young people reported finding particularly difficult to do themselves:

It is really hard to contact the people working on your case – they are very busy, so it's really hard for me by myself to get updates. I have to send loads of emails, make loads of calls – so that was good...[Advocate name] would let me know every now and then what's going on and if I asked for other information she would get it. (Young person 8)

For a while like everything just went dark from the police end of things...and I didn't know the officers that well to contact them, and I never wanted to pester...So to have someone to do that for me meant that I got where I wanted to get. If I didn't have that I probably would have ended up just like waiting however many months for them to get back to me. It makes it a lot easier when there's someone there to write the insistent emails for you. (Young person 5)

- Helping young people articulate their views and helping them understand what others were saying:

They help kind of make things run a bit smoother so you don't have so many questions. For example, if you had a meeting and you're unsure about certain things your advocate is really good for explaining and helping you get your point across. (Young person 6)

Every time, without fail, [she] just explains everything very thoroughly and 'do you have any questions?' (Young person 5)

- And, in the case of one young person, preparation for, and reassurance around, attending court and preparing them for the various potential outcomes of a trial:

Before the trial started I went to the courthouse and I would see the rooms and stuff and she [advocate name] would come with me, just so it wasn't as scary. Because she'd obviously been to courts before so she knew what to do and what would happen and where I would go and stuff like that. So, it was just nice having someone, I didn't feel like I was in the dark...You don't really know what can happen with the court and stuff, and obviously she knew the most so she would be like, and she'd be realistic and say like, 'The outcomes could be this, the outcomes could be like that', and for me I found that reassuring, knowing the way the outcomes that could happen, but also still being reassured. (Young person 4)

4.5.2 ABE interviews at the Lighthouse

One young person shared her experience of undertaking her ABE interview at the Lighthouse, and reflected extremely positively on the difference this had made, compared to when she had done another ABE (related to another incident) at a police station. Asked would she recommend it to others, she responded 'Yeah, yeah, 100%. It just works.'¹² As

¹² Young person 7

illustrated in extracts from her detailed account below, four key aspects were identified as making a positive difference: (i) being offered choice as to where she would do the interview (the Lighthouse or police station), (ii) the physical space, (iii) the attention paid to practical needs (refreshments etc.) and (iv) the ability for her workers and family to be close by and available should she want support:

So obviously I had to have my police interview and asked for it there, because that was also provided for me as an option, which I thought was very good to know that I don't have to go and sit down the police station. I could just do it there. So they come to you...in plain clothes

I had my mum there. I had [therapist name] there and [paediatrician name] there. Everybody was there...My mum was in the other room next door, so if I wanted it stopped at any point in time it could be. And if I needed to speak to [therapist name] I know I could be, or if anything, and obviously they were just checking on my mum, make sure she was fine, because I was in the interview for about four hours, and if I needed anything to drink, eat anything, if I needed to stop I did, if I just needed a breather; that happened... If you wanted tea, a hot drink, a hot chocolate, whatever, it's there, crisps, fruit, whatever it is you want, they've got it and you can have it while you're there and it feels good

[At a police station] the room is so small, it's got a big camera up there, you're one side, everyone's there, like it's just too, everything's just too compacted together, whereas that room [at the Lighthouse] is just spacious. [You know] the cameras are there but you're not focused, like oh my god there's cameras in here, because the room's so spaced out....It's that comfortability and the scenery of that room that kind of makes you more comfortable, because obviously there's nothing that's going to ever make you 100% comfortable to do a police interview [but] it's just like those little extra things made it as comfortable as it possibly could be. (Young person 7)

Two other young people offered views on whether such an opportunity would be a helpful thing, both reflecting that they felt it could be but adding the caveat that that would be dependent on already being familiar with the setting and/or staff:

Yeah I think it is, because it makes them feel like in a way probably more relaxed than it is going to an actual police station. Yeah, because I'm already used to like the environment there, and there it's just like, you know, you go to a familiar place. (Young person 11)

I don't know. I think I would have still had the same emotions. But I think if I first met [advocate name] and all of them and then went into the interview there, I think that would have been better, but at the start I don't think it would have changed anything. (Young person 9)

There was also clear support for such an opportunity in the YRAP consultation, with one young person concluding that 'more young people would come forward if they knew they could do their interview there – 'I promise you, there'd be a lot more cases.'

4.6 Youth forum and participation opportunities

As noted in the introduction, having the child at the centre is an explicit aim of the Lighthouse. Participation opportunities offer a concrete way in which this aim can be realised. Four young people talked about involvement in the youth forum at the Lighthouse and/or other participation opportunities they had been given, including having been involved in decision-making and design about the décor and physicality of the building:

So there's this group, I don't know how many of us, but we're making a lamp outside the Lighthouse, because where the building is, it's like in a little alleyway, so when it's winter time it gets kind of dark, so we're designing a lamp to put outside. It's in the shape of a house and there's pictures around it. (Young person 3)

4.6.1 Participation benefits

Young people described a range of benefits associated with their involvement in the youth forum or other participatory opportunities at the Lighthouse, including:

- That it made them feel valued and listened to
- That it gave them (paid) work experience
- That their engagement with the service was not just focussed on one thing (i.e. talking to people about their experiences of abuse/associated issues)
- The opportunity for continued involvement in the service following cessation of other services
- That it made them feel part of the service
- The opportunity to feel they were giving something back.

I've been doing the lantern design and...doing that has been really nice. It gives you work experience and you get to have input and I really appreciate that. Also, you get to give something back. And you get money for it – that all made me feel positive...It's a nice little incentive. Paying us shows it is valued. (Young person 10)

I remember I went and they were asking loads of us what we thought of some artwork to put up, and how we felt about that, and they wanted colour and different things and you felt like you had a say as well in it. (Young person 4)

It feels good, because like normally if you go to a different place, when you reach the age of 18 everything just gets shut off...I think that's unique to the Lighthouse...They asked me do I want to carry on and I thought okay, so yeah, that's something I liked about it, and like it was very helpful to me. (Young person 3)

One young person specifically commented on the group work nature of the youth forum and how meeting other people who had had similar experiences had played an important role in helping her realise she was not the only one this had happened to; a theme also identified in relation to other participatory initiatives in the field of sexual abuse (see, for example, Bovarnick and Cody, 2020 and Bovarnick et al., 2018):

And like then when I did that group, it did as well, like make me realise that you're not the only one there that's suffered the same thing, like it happens anywhere, anytime.
(Young person 11)

4.7 Physicality of the building

The importance of the relationship between the design and experience of the physical space and young people's overall sense of comfort, safety and care, is one that emerges strongly in young people's accounts of other Child House services (see, for example, Stefansen, 2017; Rasmusson, 2011) and also in young people's accounts of the Lighthouse. Nine young people commented on physicality of the building, reflecting primarily on the internal aesthetic of the space and how this positively impacted their experience of, and engagement with, the service.

4.7.1 Design of the internal space

Young people were overwhelmingly positive about the set-up of the Lighthouse in terms of its interior design and décor, noting how distinct it was from other services (where they had experience of this). They consistently commented that the overall space felt thoughtful and considered. Young people sensed, and appreciated, that it had been designed with children and young people in mind; feeling that particular consideration had been given to what would bolster feelings of comfort and safety for young people with experiences of sexual abuse and alluding to the relationship between physicality and anxiety:

There's a lot of effort put into making it seem like a comfortable place I think. It doesn't look like a medical centre or anything...it's pretty consistent in what it looks like throughout, like everything's very clean and colourful, and there's a little bit of like childlike fun in each room I think. (Young person 5)

I think an important thing, with going to therapy and going to a place like the Lighthouse, you just feel that you can trust the people there and feel that you can feel safe and just feel relaxed. And I guess the way that they designed the place in terms of decorations, they have books lying around and toys and just loads of different things and it's just that, I don't know, it just makes you feel more comfortable and more at home so that you're able to I guess open up more. (Young person 4)

Several young people also commented on how inclusive the Lighthouse felt; set up for both younger children and older young people. One young person did however, feel that certain areas felt too child-like and could be geared more towards adolescents:

...It just comes through that they put a lot of effort to make it comfortable. And not just for young kids but also for older kids, for me who was like 16, 17. So, yeah, I don't know, they balanced it in a way to feel very inclusive for everyone. (Young person 4)

Young people appreciated the sense of comfort and homeliness that they felt at the Lighthouse, and the ways in which the use of colour, pictures on the wall and interesting furniture helped to create this atmosphere:

It feels like home. It makes you feel at home; it's about comfort really – you wouldn't get that in a hospital or something. (Young person 1)

The bright and colourful décor of the Lighthouse was described by young people as something that helped them to 'open up' and speak freely. Young people were particularly positive about the themed therapy rooms and the stark contrast this posed to other services which felt too 'professional' or 'serious' and not conducive to effective therapy and free-speaking:

I feel like for me, if the room's brighter I feel like I'm more open to talk, because I feel like for me colours affect the way that I feel. Like for example, when I went to CAMHS I always used to see blue and black and it was just like, okay, I'll just sit there, just talk, but I don't really, I will just zone out. But then when I was in the Lighthouse it was like white, pink, yellow, like really bright colours. (Young person 3)

Young people also liked having choice and options as to which room to use, and while they appreciated their preferred room may not always be available, they noted that staff would always try and meet their requests where possible:

For me the best part about the Lighthouse is their rooms. They have like, so each room has a different theme...she showed me that room with this big sofa and then the swinging chair, the bean bag. I was like, yeah 'this is my room'... So she would try and book it, and if it wasn't available we'd go to the one of the others, but she would book it as much as possible. (Young person 7)

There was a strong sense of the building feeling taken care of and young people noted and appreciated the attention to the small, but important, things, such as bathrooms being clean. Reception and kitchen areas were also well received, and young people specifically referenced access to books, games and other interactive elements, as well as snacks and drinks. All of these were seen to contribute to their sense that this was a service that cared about and understood young people, and somewhere they felt happy to return to:

There was a hammock in the reception, and books. It was colourful and relaxing. Like you think 'wow, this place is really nice'. It was very calm. There is a little kitchen with a snack cupboard. And toys for young people, and books, things for people from primary age up to my age. It was warm and welcoming and made you think you'd want to go there again. (Young person 8)

While young people were very positive overall about the physicality of the internal space, they also identified two potential areas for improvement:

- **Injecting more colour into the medical rooms:** One young person suggested that while they expected clinical spaces to feel somewhat different to other areas, more could be done to align them to the wider Lighthouse aesthetic:

Like everything's still very nice and warm looking, like there's less of like the childish touch to it. There should be more of it... They should put colourful pictures on the curtains around the hospital bed things here to make it like

something to distract to you whilst you're lying down with your knees you know, up. (Young person 5)

- More artwork: a few young people also noted that more pictures on the wall would be welcome. Two young specifically commented on having previously had the opportunity to input to some design decisions including helping to select artwork for the walls and there was an appetite for ongoing opportunities of this kind:

I feel mainly the building, to put more pictures inside, because there's some pictures, but it's not a lot. So sometimes it can get a bit plain, so yeah, just more pictures within the building. (Young person 3)

Showed pictures of the Lighthouse, and hearing young people's reflections on the space, the YRAP strongly concurred with the importance of the physical space and its relationship to young people's sense of safety and comfort; a theme also identified by young people in other Child House studies (Olsson and Kläfverud, 2017; Stefansen, 2017; Rasmusson, 2011).

The YRAP also observed how the set-up of the Lighthouse felt designed with both children and young people, and an understanding of trauma, in mind, as the following extracts from their conversation illustrate:

The environment is so important. It looks like a safe space...If you feel safe, you're way more likely to engage with services...It looks really open, with lots of space...the more space you have, the more you open up...I think I could offload there...It's important to have sensory things...It fits your mood, the colours etc., they affect your feelings... It's really important that they get to choose [the room they prefer] and that their choice is validated and respected given what they have been through. (YRAP)

4.7.2 Location and accessibility

While reflections on the internal décor dominated the narrative about the physicality of the Lighthouse, a few young people also commented on its physical location, about which there was some mixed feelings. Those who commented on this aspect appreciated the discretion of the exterior signage, and generally liked that the building was relatively private and tucked away. However, a couple noted that this could also make it feel make it feel inaccessible or unsafe (especially when travelling alone):

I just had no like no idea of where the building was at first, or when I did find it didn't think I was in the right place, because it is very like calm, but like on reflecting I do like that, because it's quite private. (Young person 5)

But obviously like it's like down a back street across from the station, but [therapist name] made sure that the appointment was always round me, what time I wanted it, when it was best for me, so that kind of made it feel better. (Young person 7)

Another two young people commented on issues relating to entering and exiting the building. One young person noted that there can be issues getting out when there is no receptionist on the desk – though noted this had not been an issue pre-Covid – whilst the second wished for more privacy around the 'buzzing in' part of arrival:

It's very weird, but it's more in the COVID situation. If there's no receptionist, you can come out of the first door, but the main door leading to the road someone has to buzz you out, and if there's no receptionist, you will get stuck sometimes. (Young person 6)

When you're going you have to press a bell, and sometimes you don't know what to say...if it's possible to have different buttons for different options...and then you go in and then you tell them you're here to see this person and the time, instead of standing outside and saying it, because like sometimes there's like people in that part and they're just looking at you, so it's a bit weird. (Young person 3)

4.8. Concluding thoughts

As noted throughout this chapter, although identifying some areas for improvement and development, young people valued all of the different individual elements of the Lighthouse service that they reflected upon in their interviews. It was also clear from their accounts, however, that what the Lighthouse offered as a whole – an integrated service where they can access multiple services in one place – was, in many ways, of greater value than the sum of its individual parts. Young people particularly highlighted the importance of being able to access health professionals alongside therapeutic interventions, reflecting on the difficulty of having their healthcare needs met in other settings. Support around criminal justice processes was also noted as an important element of the Lighthouse, for those who availed of this, as was the role advocates played in helping young people navigate the various elements of the integrated service offer.

Resonating with contributions from young people in other Child House studies (see, for example, Rasmusson, 2011), young people reflected a lot on the importance of the physical space; recognising and valuing the attention paid to how the design, set up and maintenance of the space would be experienced by children and young people. Though not all had experience of these, participation opportunities were also very well received by those who had, noting a range of associated benefits that had ensued from their engagement.

Across all elements of the Lighthouse service offer, young people recognised and valued the care and attention given by staff, noting a strong sense of feeling known and held by them; a theme also identified as centrally important to young people in other Child House studies (see, for example, Stefansen, 2017). Young people clearly appreciated that the Lighthouse not only helped them manage the impacts of the abuse they had experienced, but also helped them 'do life' more generally. They valued that the service was responsive to what was important to them at any given time, rather than delivering a set programme of work. Young people also very much valued the efforts made to embed flexibility, choice and control across the various service offers at the Lighthouse. They similarly valued the fact that engagement ended only when they were ready for this. They described experiencing Lighthouse 'endings' as planned and well managed, including an important and appreciated focus on maintaining longer-term emotional wellbeing and mental health. The option to re-engage should this be beneficial was also noted to provide an important safety net, and contribute to young people's ongoing sense of safety, wellbeing and care.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

5. Conclusion

Whilst this was a small-scale study, with less participant numbers and diversity than initially intended, the rich, thoughtful and insightful reflections shared by the 11 young people who took part offer important, and unique, contributions to understanding how the Lighthouse model is experienced by those it is designed to serve. They also offer important insights for the wider Promise Network, contributing to an emerging evidence base on children and young people's views on the Child House model.

As demonstrated throughout this report, the young people we interviewed were overwhelmingly positive about, and supportive of, the Lighthouse as a model of service provision. As shown in Figure 5.1 below, five key themes emerged across their accounts of the Lighthouse that, together, contributed to their positive experience of the service.

Figure 5.1: Key features of the Lighthouse approach that young people valued



Four of the themes identified by young people as contributing to their positive experience of the Lighthouse – a sense of welcome and care; a child/youth centred approach across both building and service design; the flexibility of the service offer and a holistic approach that helped them 'do life' as well as deal with the abuse they had experienced – are not unique to the Lighthouse model of service delivery. These are, however, fundamental pillars of an effective response, that we know make a tangible difference to children and young people, but are not always evident in service responses to sexual abuse (see, for example, Hickie et al., 2017, Lefevre et al., 2017, or Warrington et al., 2017).

The fifth theme – all under one roof – relates specifically to the service design of the Lighthouse, and the broader Child House approach. Whilst young people valued all of the different elements of the Lighthouse service individually, it was clear from their accounts

that what the Lighthouse offered as a whole – an integrated service where they can access multiple services in one place – was, in many ways, of greater value than the sum of its individual parts. Young people expressed clear support for, and appreciation of, the added value, ease, sense of safety and ‘wrap around support’ associated with being able to access multiple services under one roof, and having someone help them navigate this. The consultation with the YRAP also demonstrated strong support for this integrated approach to service provision.

That is not to say that all young people reported ‘perfect’ experiences of the Lighthouse, which is to be expected in any evaluation of a service, particularly one in the early stages of development. Identified areas for development around confidentiality and information sharing, in particular, though common themes in wider sexual abuse research, hold particular pertinence in the context of integrated service provision. As young people’s accounts reveal, the sharing of information in such a setting can be both a source of support and relief and a source of anxiety or uncertainty. Young people’s accounts also demonstrate the importance of supporting understanding of an unfamiliar model of service delivery; recognising that this may be particularly difficult to navigate in the aftermath of abuse. Given the centrality of transparency, communication and understanding to young people’s sense of control in the aftermath of sexual abuse (see for example, Beckett and Warrington, 2015), further attention to these issues offers a clear path to further enhancing children and young people’s experiences of the Lighthouse.

The areas for development raised by young people in this study align closely with those raised in other Child House studies with children and young people (see, for example, Stefansen, 2017 or Rasmusson, 2011). Here, as also in those studies, these were not seen to undermine the overall positive experience that young people had – or could have - at the Lighthouse; as demonstrated by the high scores and positive overall descriptions of the Lighthouse that young people shared. They do, however, offer important insights into areas for improvement and areas for future development that – together with ongoing feedback from young people – would help the Lighthouse further realise its aim to be a child/youth friendly service, that keeps the child at the heart of decisions and provisions.

References

- Allnock, D., Beckett, H., Soares, C., Warrington, C., Hagell, A., and Starbuck, L. (2021) *Learning from the Experts: Young people's views on their mental health and emotional wellbeing needs following sexual abuse in adolescence - Briefing paper*. University of Bedfordshire: Luton
- AYPH (2013) *Be Healthy*. Available [online] at: <http://www.ayph-behealthy.org.uk/> (Accessed: 1 December 2021)
- Beckett, H., and Warrington, C. (2015) *Making Justice Work: Experiences of criminal justice for children and young people affected by sexual exploitation as victims and witnesses*. University of Bedfordshire: Luton
- Bovarnick, S., and Cody, C. (2020) *'They need to see the people they are affecting by their decision-making': Developing participatory advocacy with young people on sexual violence in Albania, Moldova and Serbia*. University of Bedfordshire: Luton
- Bovarnick, S., with Peace, D., Warrington, C., and Pearce, J. (2018) *Being Heard: Promoting children and young people's involvement in participatory research on sexual violence: Findings from an international scoping review*. University of Bedfordshire: Luton
- Conroy, L., Hobson, Z., Parker, R., and Read, T. (2018) *The Lighthouse: London's child house initial evaluation report*. MOPAC: London
- Hickle, K., Lefevre, M., Luckock, B., and Ruch, G. (2017) *Piloting and Evaluating the 'See Me, Hear Me' Framework for Working with Child Sexual Exploitation*. University of Sussex/ Office of Children's Commissioner: Sussex
- Home Office (2021) *Child House Local Partnerships Guidance* Home Office: London
- Lefevre, M., Hickle, K., Luckock, B., and Ruch, G. (2017) Building trust with children and young people at risk of child sexual exploitation: the professional challenge. *British Journal of Social Work*, 47 (8), pp. 2456-2473. ISSN 0045-3102
- Lester, S., Khatwa, M., Sutcliffe, K. (2020) Service needs of young people affected by adverse childhood experiences (ACEs): A systematic review of UK qualitative evidence. *Child and Youth Services Review*, 118. doi: 10.1016/j.childyouth.2020.105429
- Olsson, A.E and Kläfverud, M. (2017) To Be Summoned to Barnahus: Children's Perspectives, *Collaborating Against Child Abuse: Exploring the Nordic Barnahus Model*, p. 57. doi: 10.1007/978-3-319-58388-4_3.
- Parker, R., Read, T., Scragg, A., and Dawson, P. (forthcoming) *The Lighthouse: Final evaluation report*. MOPAC Evidence and Insight: London
- Plotnikoff, J., and Woolfson, R. (2019) *Falling Short? A Snapshot of Young Witness Policy and Practice: A report for the NSPCC, revisiting 'Measuring up? Evaluating implementation of*

Government commitments to young witnesses in criminal proceedings' (2009). NSPCC: London

Rasmusson, B. (2011) Children's Advocacy Centers (Barnahus) in Sweden Experiences of Children and Parents, *Child Indicators Research*, 4(2), pp. 301–321. doi: 10.1007/s12187-010-9094-y.

Scott, S., McNeish, D., Bovarnick, S., and Pearce, J. (2019) *What works in responding to child sexual exploitation*. University of Bedfordshire/Barnardo's: Luton

Stefansen, K. (2017) Staging a Caring Atmosphere: Child-Friendliness in Barnahus as a Multidimensional Phenomenon, *Collaborating Against Child Abuse: Exploring the Nordic Barnahus Model*, p. 35. doi: 10.1007/978-3-319-58388-4_2.

Warrington, C., Beckett, H., Ackerley, E., Walker, M., and Allnock, D. (2017) *Making noise: children's voices for positive change after sexual abuse*. University of Bedfordshire/ Office of Children's Commissioner: Luton



MAYOR OF LONDON

OFFICE FOR POLICING AND CRIME

Safer Young Lives Research Centre

University of Bedfordshire

University Square

Luton, LU1 3JU

United Kingdom

Website: <https://www.beds.ac.uk/sylrc>

Twitter: @uniofbedsSYLRC

ISBN: 978-1-911168-15-7