OXFORDSHIRE VIRTUAL SCHOOL
Looking After Learning

YOUTH VOICES OXFORDSHIRE
CARE FOR THE FUTURE

Oxfordshire Virtual School presents:

2026 Annual Conference

Education as The Anchor: Building Stability and Futures for Every Child



allado
THERAPY EDUCATION TRAINING

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Ofsted
raising standards
improving lives

Together, we explored…

- Relationships, trauma and belonging through Louise Bombèr's *Come Find Me* keynote and Q&A
- Reflection and translating learning into practice, individually and with colleagues
- The changing role of the Virtual School, including new statutory duties, our local context and priorities
- Inclusion through an Ofsted lens, including what inspectors look for in the experiences of vulnerable learners
- Education as an anchor in practice, hearing from schools about what is working, the challenges and where they are heading next
- Lived experience and children's voice, reflecting on when education provides stability, connection and opportunity, and when it does not


Louise Bombèr
Come Find Me
ncertainty


Louise Bombèr
Q&A with Dr
Hester Riviere
11:05-11:45
OXFORDSHIRE
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Be aware
BGN

Clare Pike
The Role of the Virtual School




Linda
Culling
Ofsted and
Inclusion
OXFORDSHIRE
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COUNTY COUNCIL
REMOVING
BARRIERS

When Education Anchors and When It Does Not…









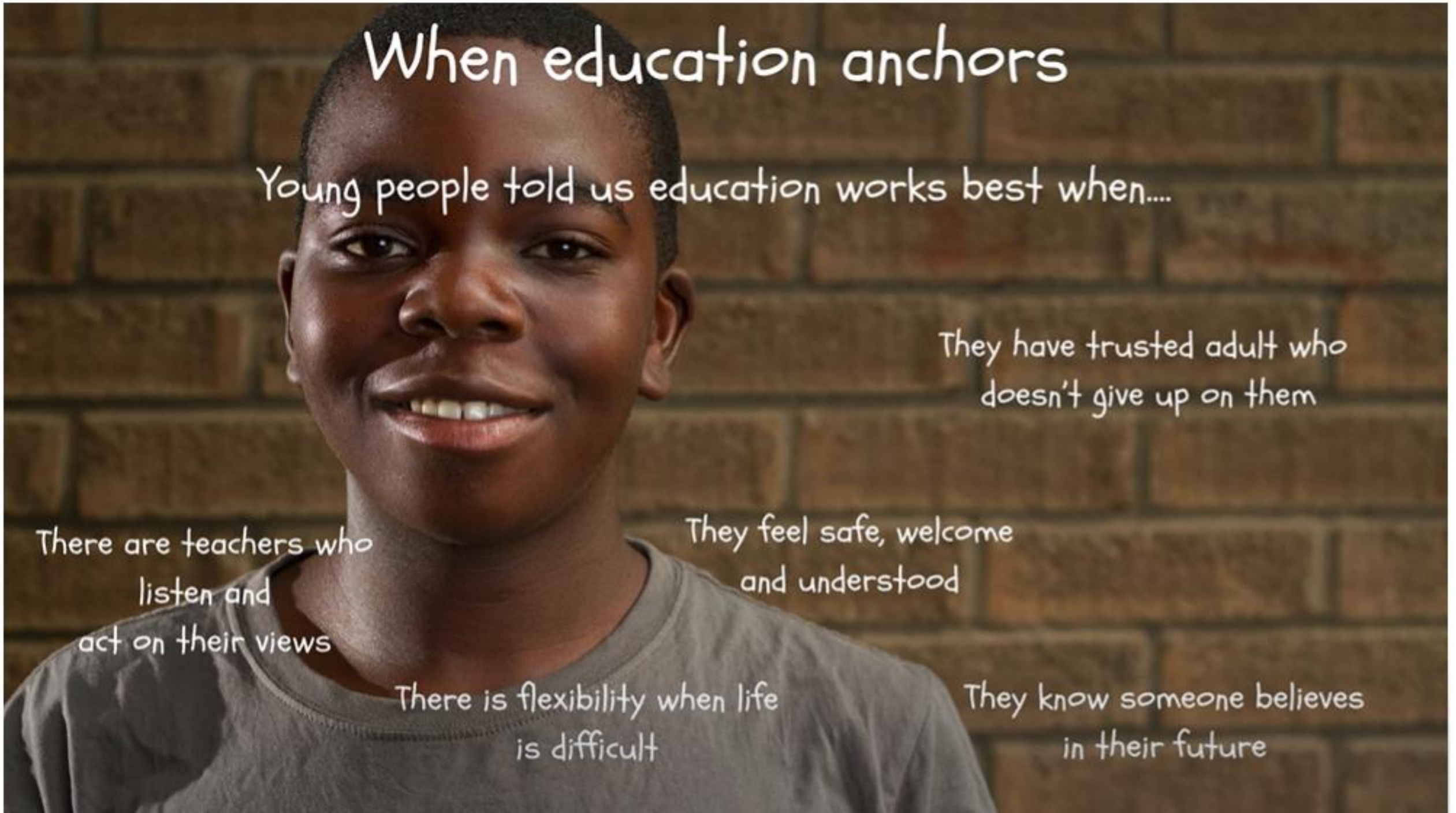

Education as an anchor.....
What care-experienced young people want us to know

Education can be much more than lessons, exams and qualifications

For many care-experienced children and young people, education can be an anchor.

A source of stability, belonging and hope during times of uncertainty.

We asked young people what helps them stay connected to education and what can make it harder....


When education anchors
Young people told us education works best when....
They have trusted adult who doesn't give up on them
There are teachers who listen and act on their views
They feel safe, welcome and understood
There is flexibility when life is difficult
They know someone believes in their future

They told us that.....

Consistent relationships matter more than interventions

Being included in decisions about their education makes a difference

Opportunities to succeed and build confidence

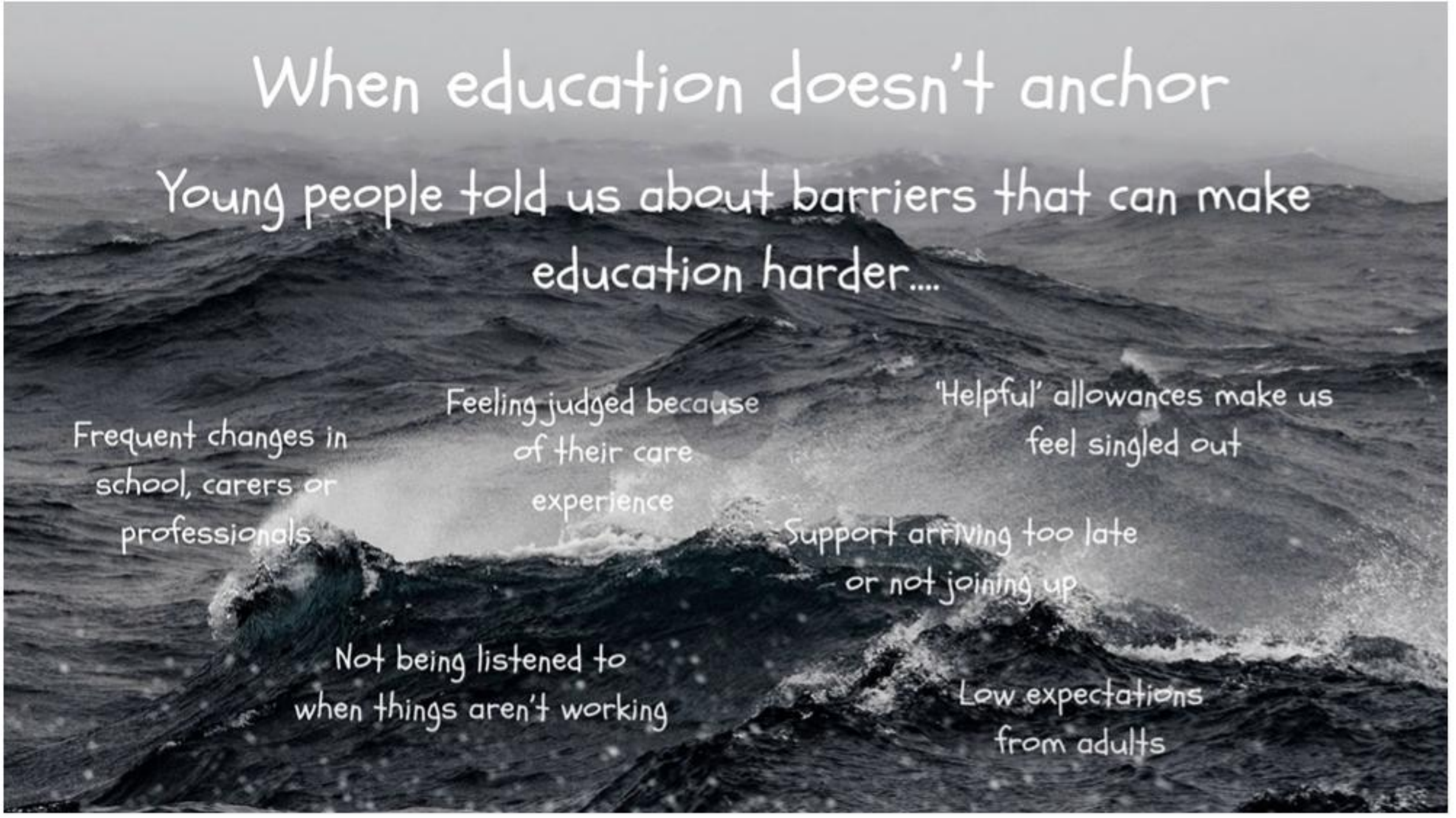
Support needs to continue through periods of change and transition



And most importantly.....

They want education to connect to their hopes, ambitions and future goals


What makes the difference?
Relationships
Belonging
Stability


When education doesn't anchor
Young people told us about barriers that can make education harder....
Frequent changes in school, carers or professionals
Feeling judged because of their care experience
'Helpful' allowances make us feel singled out
Support arriving too late or not joining up
Not being listened to when things aren't working
Low expectations from adults


A lack of choice and control can reduce motivation
Young people can feel invisible within systems
Missed learning and exclusions can have long term impacts
Repeated disruption can make it difficult to engage
Trust takes time to build, but it can be lost quickly


What gets in the way?
Instability
Disconnection
Low expectations

Young people told us eduction anchors when....

People stay alongside me during meetings

I can see a future worth working towards

My strengths matter as much as my challenges

Adults work together around me

Someone notices when I am struggling

I have a say in decisions


These aren't complicated solutions
They're about relationships.
Listening
Consistency
Trust
And believing in young people's potential.

Everyone can be an anchor.

Care-experienced young people tell us that feeling heard, valued and believed in, helps them stay connected and achieve their potential.

By listening to them and acting on what they tell us, we can create environments where every young person feels they belong, can thrive, and can look to the future with confidence.





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160 delegates

A word or sentence to capture your experience of the day...

Eye opening.

Welcoming space to reflect and consider all of our children, the orchids and the dandelions.

Very thought provoking…

Open and engaging.

Inspired.

Reassuring.

Re-ignited my passion to keep working at positive relationships with all of our children.



What is the most important insight or "light bulb moment" you are taking away from today?

Slowing it down will get me there quicker.

Surprise young people positively.

Chase the why, don't make assumptions.

Defensiveness is met with defensiveness.

Every interaction is an intervention.

Real relationships take time.

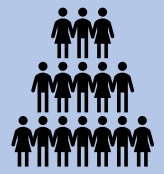
The staff team IS the intervention.

"We will get through this together…"

Very useful to have Virtual School data alongside the theory.

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100% of delegates felt the content aligned strongly with encouraging reflection on how education can help build and sustain stability for care-experienced and CSC-experienced children and young people.



Of the practice shared, what are you most motivated to implement within your setting?

Teams of adults around children who need it – adults who know the child really well. Termly (or more regular) check-ins of Team Around Child.

Embedding relational approaches – more training for staff.

Explore OPAL.

Further working on creating a truly relational culture.

Encourage team in school to stick with the practices we have in school and believe in them. Nurture the team and their ability to self regulate and remain PACEful.

So many!! Model using regulation strategies and sensory tools.

Exploring ways to change our behaviour policy to a relationships policy.

Trauma informed practice and sharing PACEful approach.

Meaningful repair and some of the whole school practices highlighted by Bishop Loveday Primary School.

Thinking about stress-regulators in offices for our year leaders

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Is there anything you would like to learn about or hear about at future conferences? If so, tell us more...

Could we have similar updates for Heads and Chairs please.

It would be good to hear from Become, Kinship and learn more about VR headsets.

Children and young people speaking about their experiences.

Practical inclusion strategies for secondary schools.

Continue doing what you do, thank you!

It was really excellent. Thank you so much Virtual School for the effort and info!

What out of area children in care can access.

More of the same!

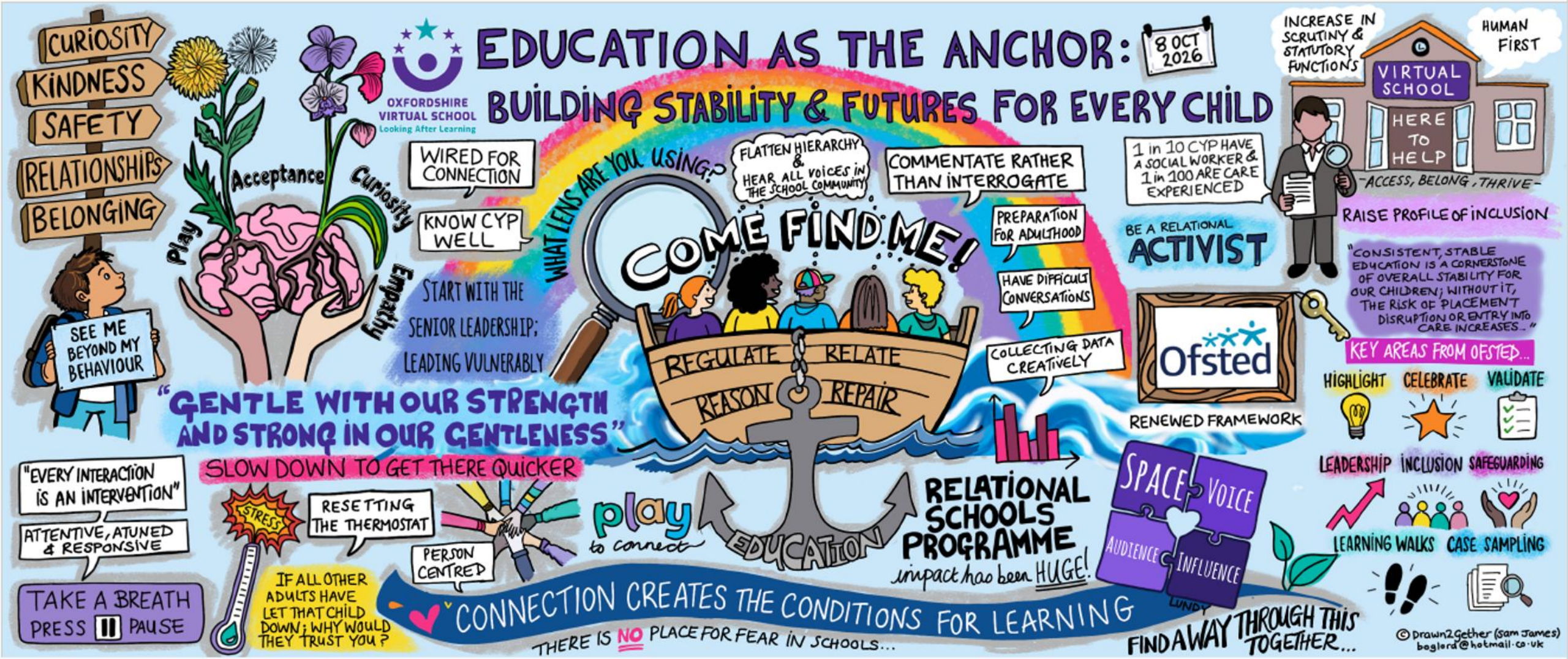
Delegate knowledge and understanding of how relational practice can support stability for children and young people increased from an average of 6.5/10 before the conference to 8.7/10 afterwards.

Anything else?

Great day, learnt lots, thank you so much 😊

Thank you all! Looking forward to seeing the graphic and loved having Waffle there!

Thank you so much it was another fantastic conference.


EDUCATION AS THE ANCHOR:
8 OCT 2026
BUILDING STABILITY & FUTURES FOR EVERY CHILD
OXFORDSHIRE VIRTUAL SCHOOL
Looking After Learning
CURIOSITY
KINDNESS
SAFETY
RELATIONSHIPS
BELONGING
SEE ME BEYOND MY BEHAVIOUR
Play
Acceptance
Curiosity
Empathy
WIRED FOR CONNECTION
KNOW CYP WELL
START WITH THE SENIOR LEADERSHIP; LEADING VULNERABLY
WHAT LENS ARE YOU USING?
FLATTEN HIERARCHY & HEAR ALL VOICES IN THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY
COMMENTATE RATHER THAN INTERROGATE
COME FIND ME!
REGULATE
RELATE
REASON
REPAIR
PREPARATION FOR ADULTHOOD
HAVE DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS
COLLECTING DATA CREATIVELY
1 in 10 CYP HAVE A SOCIAL WORKER & 1 in 100 ARE CARE EXPERIENCED
BE A RELATIONAL ACTIVIST
INCREASE IN SCRUTINY & STATUTORY FUNCTIONS
HUMAN FIRST
VIRTUAL SCHOOL
HERE TO HELP
-ACCESS, BELONG, THRIVE-
RAISE PROFILE OF INCLUSION
"CONSISTENT, STABLE EDUCATION IS A CORNERSTONE OF OVERALL STABILITY FOR OUR CHILDREN; WITHOUT IT, THE RISK OF PLACEMENT DISRUPTION OR ENTRY INTO CARE INCREASES..."
Ofsted
RENEWED FRAMEWORK
KEY AREAS FROM OFSTED...
HIGHLIGHT
CELEBRATE
VALIDATE
LEADERSHIP
INCLUSION
SAFEGUARDING
LEARNING WALKS
CASE SAMPLING
"GENTLE WITH OUR STRENGTH AND STRONG IN OUR GENTLENESS"
SLOW DOWN TO GET THERE QUICKER
"EVERY INTERACTION IS AN INTERVENTION"
ATTENTIVE, ATUNED & RESPONSIVE
TAKE A BREATH
PRESS ⏸ PAUSE
STRESS
RESETTING THE THERMOSTAT
PERSON CENTRED
IF ALL OTHER ADULTS HAVE LET THAT CHILD DOWN; WHY WOULD THEY TRUST YOU?
play to connect
EDUCATION
RELATIONAL SCHOOLS PROGRAMME
impact has been HUGE!
SPACE
VOICE
AUDIENCE
INFLUENCE
LUNDY
CONNECTION CREATES THE CONDITIONS FOR LEARNING
THERE IS NO PLACE FOR FEAR IN SCHOOLS...
FIND A WAY THROUGH THIS TOGETHER...
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Oxfordshire Virtual School Team