




Cymru Ifanc  
Young Wales



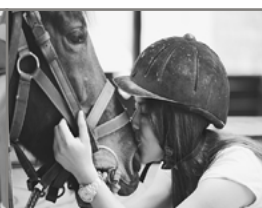
# YOUNG WALES REPORT TO THE UNITED NATIONS COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

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## ➤ About Us

Young Wales is a brand new initiative which aims to give children and young people in Wales a voice in issues that affect them, so that their views can be heard, particularly by Ministers in Welsh Government and other policy makers. It is a model that aims to be as inclusive as possible, so that those children and young people who find it hardest to have their views heard are able to do so as well as those who find it less difficult. Young Wales is based at Children in Wales, the national umbrella organisation for organisations working with children and young people and is funded by the Welsh Government. It involves partner organisations Tros Gynnal Plant, Voices from Care Cymru, Promo Cymru and Youth Friendly and there is a Memorandum of Understanding with Action for Children and Barnardo's Cymru.

Over the next three years Young Wales is committed to representing the views of children and young people across Wales, bringing together the fantastic work being undertaken within national and local groups and forums, schools, local authorities and other projects.

We will be sharing children and young people's voices and opinions with the Welsh Government, supporting them in meetings with Ministers and policy makers and ensuring that they are listened to and positive changes that affect their lives are made.

The project website can be found at <http://www.youngwales.wales/>

## ➤ About this Report

At the Young Wales launch event in March 2015, the young people who attended from county Youth Forums across Wales identified six key priorities that they would like the initiative to concentrate on during the first year. These topics are:

- Healthy Relationships
- Online Safety
- Mental Health
- Bullying & Hate Crime
- Substance Misuse
- Children & Young People's Rights

We have also included other, wider issues raised by young people (that are not covered in the six priorities), covering topics under the headings of health, education and the environment.

This report is primarily concerned with the experiences of young people in relation to their human rights. It will be submitted to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and will also be available to children and young people in Wales through the Young Wales website and to workers through the Children in Wales website.

We would like to thank all the young people, organisations and groups who contributed to this report. No individual children or young people have been identified and all direct quotes have been anonymised.



# Background to the UNCRC and Reporting

The United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is an International Agreement on how countries should treat children. There are 42 Articles in total and each one contains a children's right:

Rights are something everyone has as a result of being born. No one has power to give them or take them away from people. Examples of rights: the right to life, the right to a name, the right to be listened to and the right to get information.

(Children Rights Wales, UNCRC Decoded

<http://www.childrensrights.wales/images/PDF/ActivityToolkits/RaisingAwareness/UNCRCTheUNCRCDecodedEnglish.pdf>)

Every five to seven years each country (called a State party) has to submit a report on how well it is promoting the Articles in the UNCRC. Several reports are submitted, one from the UK Government and others from organisations not associated with the Government. One of these is the Children's Commissioner's report which gives the issues that are of concern to children and young people in Wales and the rest of the UK, and their views and opinions of how their rights could be improved. There is also a report from Non Governmental Organisations (NGO's) in Wales interested in monitoring the UNCRC.

The previous Children and Young People's Report to the UN, 'Our Rights, Our Story,' was produced by Funky Dragon in 2008. It was the culmination of 18 months of researching and canvassing the opinions of children and young people. Funky Dragon also ran a project call FUNC, up until 2014, in preparation for the current reporting round.

This Young Wales report covers the period from March 2015, with information collected through workshops, events (including the National Eisteddfod for Wales) and an online survey. Earlier material collected on young people's views in Wales through organisations' projects has also been gathered.



# Data Collection

The information in this report is taken from three different sources:

## ➤ Online Survey

The survey ran from 10<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> August and received 122 responses from children and young people in that short period of time, which was a good response rate.

The survey consisted of 36 questions, made up as follows:

- Seven demographic questions
- Twelve closed, with Yes/No options, for example 'Have you heard about the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child?'
- Seventeen open questions, inviting views and comments on how things can be improved for children and young people

Some of the questions were based on the six priorities identified by young people themselves, as outlined above. We then asked questions based on 'If you were First Minister in charge of the Welsh Government, what would you change about ...?'

- Education
- Health
- Social Services
- Poverty
- Climate Change/Environmental Issues
- Leisure and Culture (including Welsh language)
- Anything else not mentioned

We also asked what young people thought had improved over the last seven years - any actions the Welsh Government has taken to improve things for children and young people? Respondents were not required to answer every question and were able to skip questions, if they chose to. The number of responses we received gave us a good idea of which topics were of most concern to children and young people in Wales. These are given at Appendix 3.

## Forums, Workshops & Events (including the National Eisteddfod of Wales 2015)

Views, opinions and comments were collected and analysed from a number of events conducted between March and July 2015, organised by Young Wales and other organisations.

## ➤ Secondary Research

A desktop literature review was undertaken via the internet and requests to national and local partner organisations to identify relevant research, reports, policies and guidance in relation to the UNCRC and children's rights in Wales and the wider UK.



# Young Wales Priorities

## Online Safety

### Our Concerns

Online life is very different to reality, but not all children and young people fully understand this. Young people who discussed this at the Young Wales launch event said “....that it’s too easy to hide behind a screen and they need to be made more aware of online safety.” Since then, several other young people attending Young Wales events have said that they know someone who had been bullied online and the effects it can have on them.

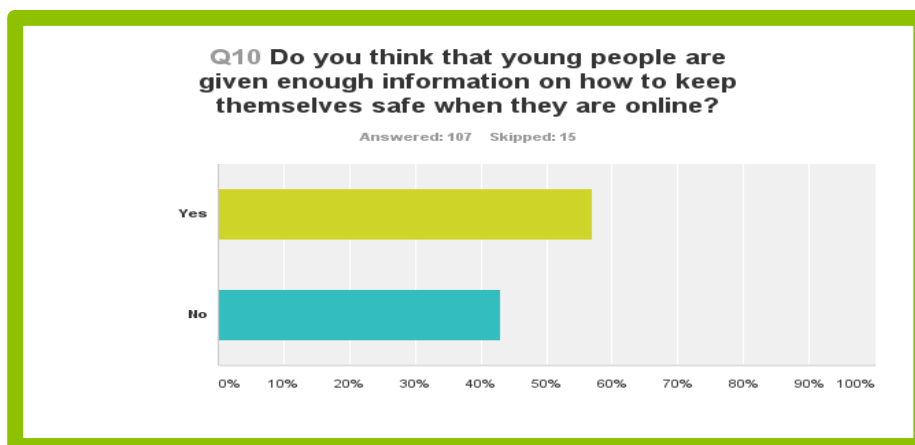
Young people feel there needs to be better monitoring systems and restrictions for under 18s. Also recurring themes have included matters like the dangers of putting things online and the fact that you can’t take them back off and false identities.



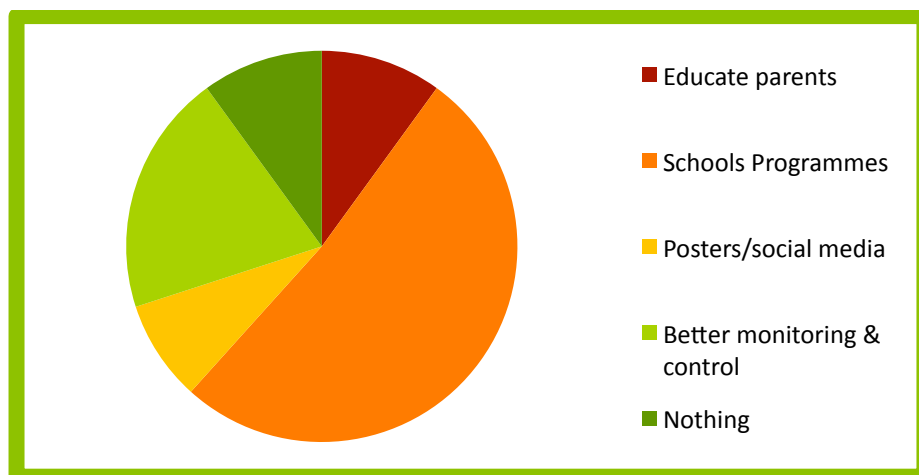
*“The Internet and digital technologies are changing the personal and social experiences that children have, providing ubiquitous connection to peers, content, services and communities.”*

(Wise Kids, Generation 2000: The Internet and Digital Media Habits of Year 9 Pupils in Wales, 2014)

### Survey Results



Question: Is there anything the Government could do to improve online safety for CYP?





## Our Voices

*“Once something’s online, you can’t take it down”*

*“Is the CEOP button really effective? (CEOP is the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre)*

*“It’s easier to bully online because you can remain anonymous”*

(Young Wales launch event, March 2015)

*“Teach it in schools and improve the module on online safety”*

*“Promote internet safety from a younger age ...”*

*“Encourage parents to take more interest in what their children are doing online”*

(Young Wales UNCRC Survey, August 2015)

*“It’s not an option not to be on Facebook at our age. You can’t make friends without Facebook, you would be seen as weird if you didn’t have Facebook.”*

*“If I argue I expect it to be between me and the other person. If it goes out to others and I don’t know who they are, like when they put it on Facebook, it’s then worldwide. Everyone knows your name.”*

(‘The complexity of girls’ social interactions and the impact of negative peer relationships’ - Barnardo’s Cymru 2011)



## Other Voices

In 2013, ChildLine launched an online survey which asked young people key questions about their experience of Sex and Relationship Education (SRE) in school. Of the 378 responses, 74% of young people aged 11 – 18+ felt that pornography should be addressed in sex education (NSPCC website, accessed 11/8/2015).

Findings from a study carried out by Wise Kids into internet use by 13/14 year olds in Wales found that 78% of children surveyed accessed the internet in their bedroom, 70% reported using it whilst outside the home and 97% use it for schoolwork. 45% of children had seen ‘upsetting content’ and 42% had received ‘rude or upsetting messages.’ (‘Generation 2000: The Internet and digital media habit and digital literacy of Year 9 pupils’, Wise Kids 2014).

Ralling (2015) argues that it is unsurprising that policy makers are only just beginning to fully comprehend the effect that the internet has had in changing the nature of childhood in a digital age. He says the results of research into the effects of IT on the development of young people, although largely inconclusive, indicate that empathy levels in young people today have significantly decreased from previous generations. Ralling concluded that “the online and offline worlds inhabited by our young people are already intricately entwined together in ways which we wouldn’t have dreamed possible even a decade or so ago.” The internet has changed their lives so dramatically and perhaps policy makers should have thought more about the effects we are beginning to see now and what we are learning now can influence future policy for future generations.” (Ralling J, Youth and the Internet: a Guide for Policy Makers, Barnardo’s 2015).



A collaboration of children's organisations in the UK have signed up to an initiative that seeks to make the digital world a more transparent and empowering place for children and young people (under 18), by delivering a universal framework of digital rights so that young people are able to access digital technologies:

### **iRights**

- **The right to remove:** Every child and young person under the age of 18 should have the right to easily edit or delete any and all content they themselves have created
- **The right to know:** Children and young people have the right to know who is holding and profiting from their information, what their information is being used for and whether it is being copied, sold or traded
- **The right to safety and support:** Children and young people should be confident that they will be protected from illegal practices, and supported if confronted by troubling or upsetting scenarios online
- **The right to make informed and conscious choices (agency):** Children and young people should be free to reach into creative and participatory places online, using digital technologies as tools, but at the same time have the capacity to disengage at will
- **The right to digital literacy:** To access the knowledge that the internet can deliver, children and young people need to be taught the skills to use and critique digital technologies effectively, and given the tools to negotiate emerging social norms.

*([irights.uk](http://irights.uk) website - accessed 11/08/2015)*

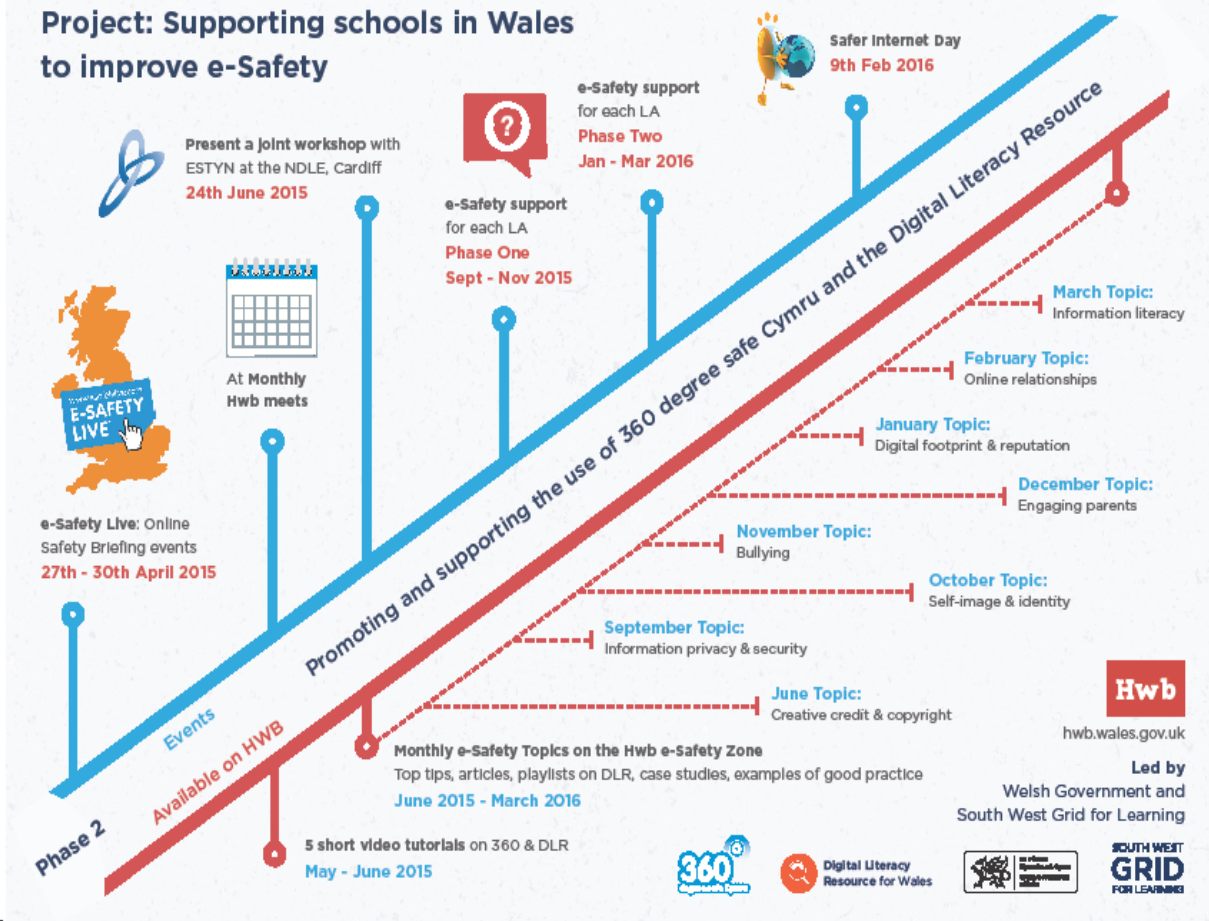
It is unclear how much awareness there is in Wales of the irights website.

South West Grid for Learning (SWGfL), together with the Welsh Government, are launching a project that will consolidate and enhance an E-safety Strategy for Wales and develop a variety of revolutionary online safety resources specifically adapted for Wales. Focusing on schools, these will include adapting the 360 degree safe online safety self-review tool that guides schools through better protecting their staff, and children, when online.





## Project: Supporting schools in Wales to improve e-Safety



### Recommendation

Children & young people would like information about online safety to be more widely available, through schools and educational programmes, with up to date information on how to keep safe. Child friendly posters and publicity could be used as well. Children & young people think there should be better monitoring of unsafe websites, more restrictions on what is available to children and bigger penalties for those who break the law. They also think that parents and carers need more education on how to keep children safe online.



# Domestic Abuse & Healthy Relationships

## Our Concerns

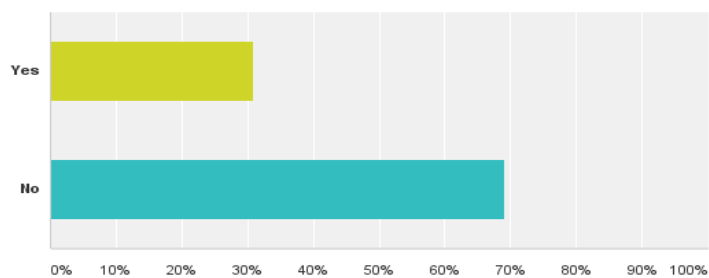
Young people identified a number of issues in relation to domestic abuse and healthy relationships:

- Knowing the difference between a healthy and an unhealthy relationship and the need for education about this
- Raising awareness of services that can help with domestic abuse and healthy relationships, such as domestic abuse services, through poster or leaflet campaigns.
- Making people aware it can happen to anyone and that help should be available for particular groups, eg, same sex couples
- Raise awareness of CEOP and how to report abuse
- Need for age appropriate information and services available for everyone

## Survey Results

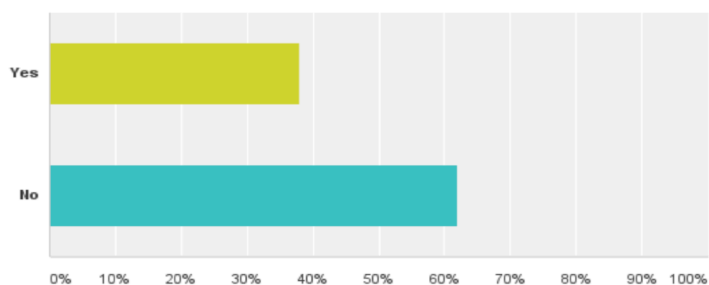
### Q19 Do you think there is enough help for young people who have been affected by domestic abuse at home?

Answered: 94 Skipped: 28

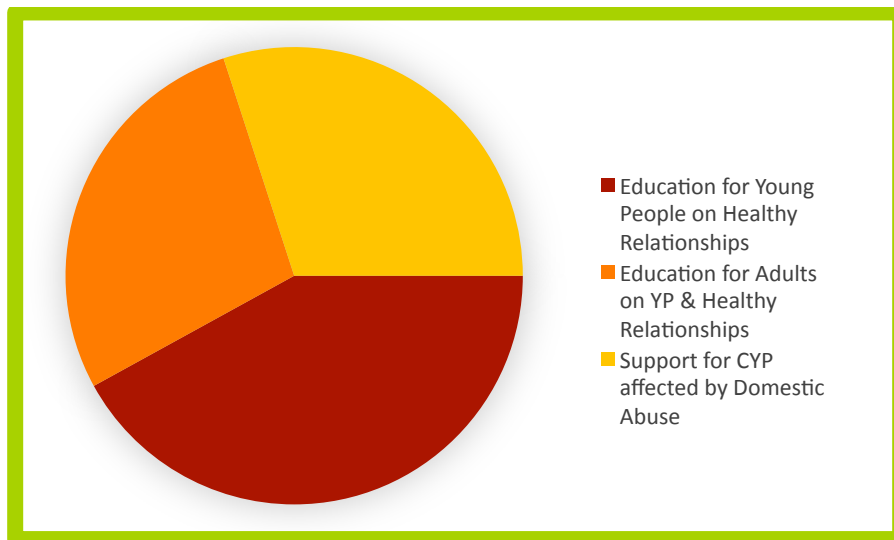


### Q20 Do you think young people know enough about healthy relationships and what is acceptable and unacceptable in their personal relationships?

Answered: 100 Skipped: 22



Question: What do you think the Government should do to improve things for young people affected by domestic abuse and help young people form healthy personal relationships?



### Our Voices

*"Healthy relationships ... if you teach people how to have a healthy relationship then domestic violence can be prevented"*

*"Last November we did a youth conference about domestic abuse and we're trying to get it taught in secondary schools"*

*"Domestic abuse and healthy relationships, we paired them together....the need for a helpline and education on healthy relationships, counsellors, stuff like that"*

*"Our youth forum's priority issue this year is all about domestic abuse and healthy relationships, and making sure there are services available for children between ages 11 and 18 who may be in an abusive relationship"*

Young Wales Launch Event, March 2015

At a conference organised by Carmarthenshire Youth Forum, called '**Abuse at Home, You're Not Alone**', these are some of the views young people had about domestic abuse and healthy relationships:

- Young people wouldn't discuss domestic abuse with their parents, for fear of being taken into care and would break up their parents. Young people would more likely tell a friend or buddy
- Young people would not turn to the police for support in an abusive relationship as that was seen as an 'extreme option' and there were concerns that the police may press charges against their wishes
- Some professionals can't be trusted
- Domestic abuse and healthy relationships should be taught in schools, as early as primary school



- More services and help for young people locally, who are experiencing abuse or know they are being abusive, but don't know how to stop it
- There's a need for more local helplines
- Training for teachers
- More funding should be diverted to refuges
- Police do not respond soon enough
- More preventative work is needed, rather than focusing on supporting young people after they have been abused

Another issue children and young people are concerned about is trafficking and child sexual exploitation. To highlight the risks and how people are targeted, Merthyr Tydfil Youth Forum, in partnership with Safer Merthyr Tydfil made a film called '**Caught in Traffick**'. The film has been viewed over 1,100 on YouTube and the group produced an education pack to go with the DVD to be shown in schools and community settings.



### Other Voices

As far back as 2008, when the National Assembly for Wales' Communities and Culture Committee conducted an Inquiry into Domestic Abuse, concerns were expressed about young people and healthy relationships.

'The Committee heard disturbing evidence about general attitudes to violence and abuse within our society, including what children and young people consider to be a safe, healthy relationship' (*Domestic Abuse in Wales, Welsh Government Community & Cultures Committee, 2008*)

Key findings in a report published by the NSPCC, based on a qualitative study conducted across Wales by Cardiff University, found:

- Children are actively negotiating and learning about the ways sexuality affects them and their lives
- Boys and girls talk about "looking older" in a very different way to "looking sexy"
- All children, but especially girls, feel pressurised to conform to gender norms
- Many schools have a strong boyfriend-girlfriend culture, making boy-girl friendships almost impossible
- Children experience verbal sexual harassment, but find it hard to tell parents or teachers and are ill equipped to deal with it
- Children are more worried about "scary" rather than sexually explicit images
- Many children are angry about sexism amongst their peers and in society as a whole
- Policy and practice needs to be informed by children's own experiences



The key recommendations from this report were that there was a need to improve sex and relationship education and consider what might be appropriate for primary school children; the need to take a rights-based approach to sex and relationship education that challenges gender stereotypes and prejudices; thirdly to develop a robust framework of work in schools to promote equality and diversity and to support the social and emotional needs of children.

*(‘Boys & Girls Speak Out: a qualitative study of children’s gender and sexual cultures,’*

*Renold E, NSPCC 2013)*

On a UK level, Imogen Parker in her report on sex and relationships, observes that:

*“A more measured, nuanced response (by Government) is necessary, which incorporates policy, education, technology and parental involvement ... It is not straightforward, with the debate touching on large and difficult issues of gender and sexual politics. Any discussion of how best to support young people negotiating new or emerging social and sexual norms is closely bound up with cultural values, individual maturity and personal attitudes and beliefs about relationships.”*

The recommendations Parker makes include:

*“Sex and relationship education should be taught in every school by specialists, and must be broader in scope. Parents, educators and young people need a single point to access advice and support and local authorities’ public sexual health responsibility for young people should be broadened.”*

*(“Young People: Sex and Relationships: The New Norms” Parker I, IPPR, 2014)*

### Recommendation

Children and young people think there should be more awareness that there is help available for children affected by domestic abuse. Children often won’t talk about it because they feel no-one can help them or because they are frightened to talk about it. This needs to be done with child friendly material like DVDs, posters and through social media. Healthy relationships should be taught properly in schools by people who know about the subject. It should be introduced at a younger age. Things like ‘consent’ should be taught and better sex and relationship education, not just the biological side and how to put on a condom. It should be part of the curriculum, not just an add-on.



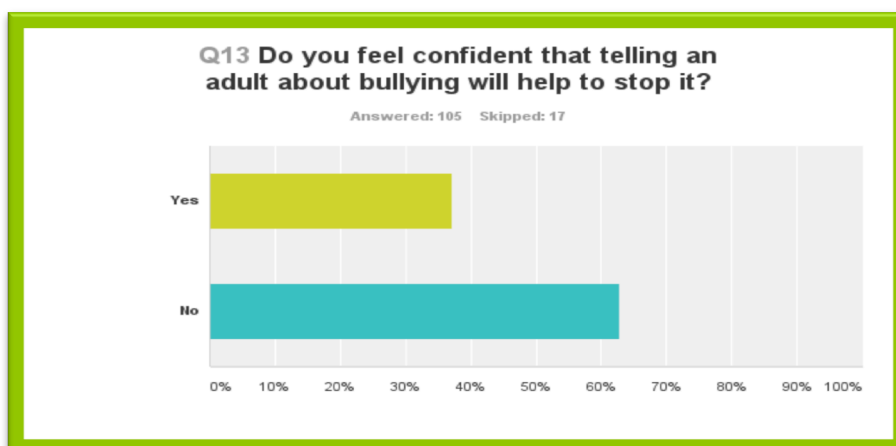
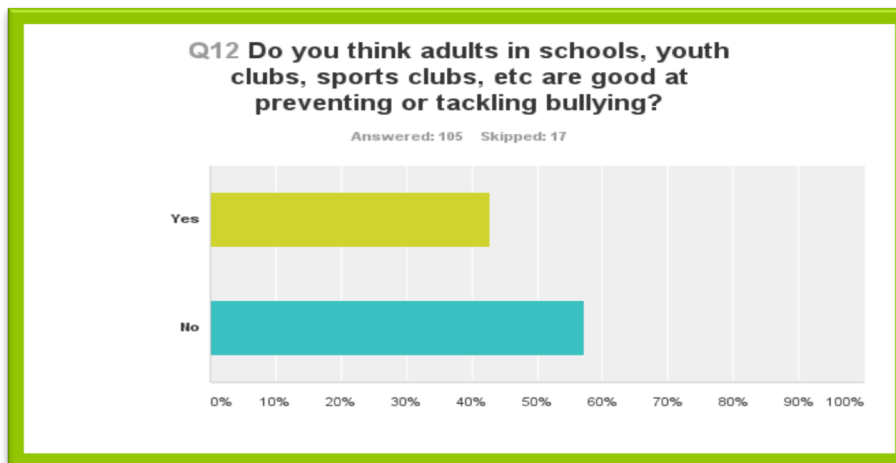
# Bullying & Hate Crime

## Our Concerns

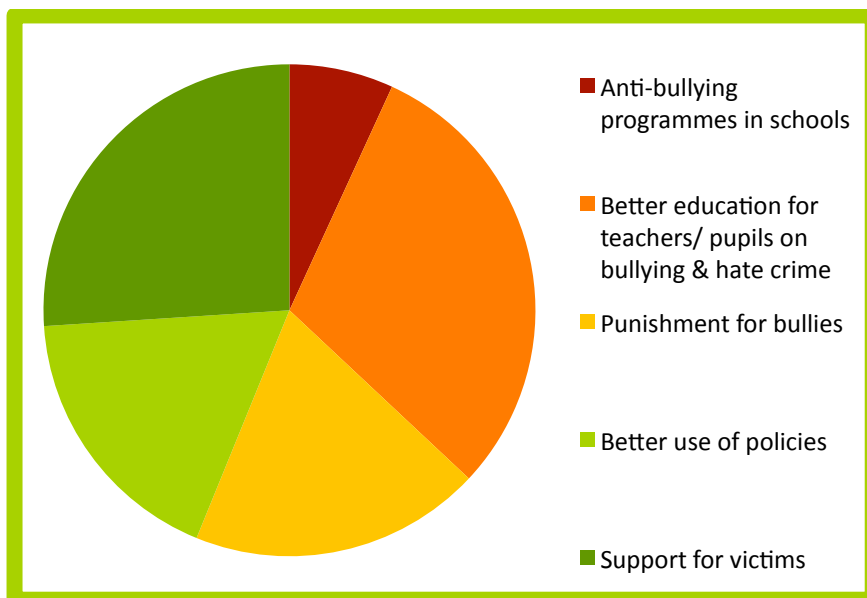
Young people attending the launch of Young Wales identified the following issues in relation to bullying and hate crime:

- Hate crime:
  - Young people don't know enough about hate crime and receive no education about it
  - Hate crime happens because people stereotype others, like people from a different minority background
  - Need for better guidelines on hate crime for young people
- Bullying:
  - Clearer advice about who you can talk to
  - Can be the result of or cause mental health problems
  - Lack of consistency in addressing bullying
  - Some people are embarrassed to admit that they're being bullied
  - Support after bullying is needed.

## Survey Results



Question: How can Welsh Government help schools and other settings tackle bullying and hate crime?



 Our Voices

Comments from Young Wales events include:

*"Bullying where discussions were held around more support and mental health links, and becoming more preventative"*

*"We chose hate crime because it's always been a big thing, but I think this year it's got a bit bigger"*

*"Everyone has the right to a voice and choice whether that be their religion or what they wear"*

*"Facebook should put blocks on offensive/nasty words"*

*'Some people post statuses saying things like 'I hate you - they swear etc. Young people (who bully on-line) should be banned from Facebook'.*

In August 2015, for Anti-Bullying Week, the All Wales Anti-Bullying Network conducted a survey on the theme of 'Bullying is Everyone's Responsibility' which included young people. Some of the comments from those who participated in the survey, included:

*'It is a brilliant theme because it's the truth and everyone needs someone to talk to about bullying'*

*'Bullying isn't everyone's business though? It's embarrassing to tell people you get bullied? I wouldn't want everyone to know because I'd be so ashamed'*

*'It's a good theme...even if you feel like you're not directly affected by it, someone you care about will be, and that makes it your business'*



In September 2015, Young Wales brought together representatives from youth forums across Wales in order to set up a Young People's Anti Bullying Network. The aim of this new Network will be to feed into the Welsh Government All Wales Anti Bullying Leadership Group.

Conwy Youth Council produced a short video with Ysgol Bryn Elian, called **"People are Gay – Get over It"** to help tackle the issue of young people using homophobic language.



### Other Voices

Barnardo's Cymru undertook some work with children and young people affected by parental imprisonment in relation to their experiences of school. When asked about bullying, their responses were:

Yr 4 *"I see bullying"*

Yr 6 *"I was bullied, but the school sorted it out and I was happy with that."*

Secondary school *"I do see bullying, but they are really good at sorting it out, they have an LSO (learning support officer) and you report it to them and they sort it out for you."*

(Transcription of conversations with children and young people affected by parental imprisonment, Barnardos Cymru, 2014)

Youth Cymru has set up a project called Trans\*Form Cymru who have produced a film called 'Humanequin,' with Mess Up The Mess production company, to educate people about transgender issues. A recent survey undertaken by Youth Cymru in relation to hate crime, found that young people thought:

- Lower level hate incidents are less likely to be reported than hate crimes.
- 24% of people reported feeling less safe than they did 12 months ago and this tended to be as a result of: moving away from friends or family and feeling more isolated as a result. There is some evidence people can become more bigoted in times of austerity. Less police presence and the effects of media reporting and social media also contribute to people feeling less safe.
- The main barriers to reporting are a lack of response from the police and concerns around the confidential nature of reporting, people don't want their trans status being disclosed without their knowledge or consent.
- Building confidence and awareness in young people is key to them reporting in the future.
- Police and support providers need to be sensitive to how different protected characteristic intersect on individuals.

In 2011, Barnardo's Cymru published a report on girls, aged 13 – 17, and peer relationship patterns and how these can lead to bullying situations. They concluded that these relationships often involve developing close friendships, where secrets are shared and intimate matters discussed. The repercussions of falling out with close friends can result in emotional pain, where girls resort to verbal abuse and manipulation. Exclusion from groups, cyber bullying and indirect bullying, such as spreading rumours, were all features of these relationship breakdowns. Physical violence was not so evident amongst the participants. Quotes from some of the participants demonstrate this:





*'I was on the edge of the crowd. I could be in the middle one day and the next a "dead person walking'*

*'When girls fall out with each other they may lose some of their friends'*

*'Bullying really affects your confidence, your confidence goes, if you are bullied it really affects your self-esteem'*

*'I think anti-bullying should be taught younger, like at primary school'*

(*'The complexity of girls' social interactions and the impact of negative peer relationships'* Barnardo's Cymru, 2011)

In 2013/14, Childline saw an 87% increase (across the UK) in the number of counselling sessions provided about online bullying. Childline's annual report adds:

*"Proportionately the number of counselling sessions about bullying has remained at about 10%, but the contacts we are receiving suggest the nature of the bullying is increasingly moving online"*

(*'Under Pressure'* ChildLine Annual Review 2013/14, p11, 2014)

The All Wales Hate Crime Project considered hate crime experiences for adults and young people over 16. One of their conclusions was that it is important that young people and school staff know where to get help for identity-based bullying. The report recommended *"...more age-appropriate, preventative hate crime awareness training in schools, starting at the primary level before attitudes and values become entrenched and more difficult to change"* (p20). They also recommended that it would be beneficial for local authorities to instigate more restorative approaches in schools, *"...to equip children and young people with the skills to manage and resolve conflict and enhance consequential thinking"*

(Time for Justice: All Wales Hate Crime Project, Williams, M and Tregidga, J  
Race Equality First & Cardiff University, p24, 2013)

In reviewing progress on the UN Committee's Concluding Observations in relation to gypsy/traveller children and young people, Save the Children, states that young people engaged with the **Travelling Ahead Project** continue to highlight the negative attitudes that they experience, both in their everyday lives and through the media. The rise in popularity of TV 'reality' shows such as Big Fat Gypsy Wedding perpetuate stereotypes of Gypsies, Roma and Travellers in the UK and have been cited by educationalists as leading to 'physical and sexual assault, racist abuse' and harmed children's self-esteem at school. In 2014, young people from Save the Children's Travelling Ahead project worked with young people from Article 12 in Scotland to identify the rights they felt most strongly about as Gypsy, Roma or Traveller young people in Wales.

(*'A review of progress in Wales on the Committee for the Rights of the Child Concluding Observations to the UK made in 2008'* T Aspinwall, Travelling Ahead Project, Save the Children, 2015)

In 2015 the Children's Commissioner for Wales published a Guide to challenging the negative media reporting of gypsies and travellers.



A significant proportion of perpetrators of hate crime in the UK are under 20 years of age (Understanding who commits hate crime and why they do it, Cardiff University 2013). The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) states that work in schools with young people who are developing their values and ideals has a significant role to play in changing attitudes to disabled people. *Real Human Being* is an All Wales project, undertaken by Taking Flight Theatre Company and Disability Arts Cymru, to tackle disability hate crime amongst young people, through preventative work with young people.

In 2014, Estyn (the education and training inspectorate for Wales) published a report on bullying in schools, 'Action on bullying,' which found that even schools with good strategies to address bullying do not have a common understanding of the risks to vulnerable groups of students, such as gay, lesbian and transgender pupils, those with a disability and pupils from a minority ethnic background. Very few schools consult with groups of pupils to gain a true picture of the extent and nature of bullying at the school. The report examines how effectively schools take action to address all instances of bullying and recommendations from the report include:

- Raise awareness of bullying on the grounds of protected characteristics with pupils, parents, staff, and governors and take a more proactive approach to preventing and mitigating its effects (see Appendix 3 for a checklist)
- Consult pupils, parents and others to identify the extent and nature of bullying in the school and to agree the contents of strategic equality plans
- Plan age-appropriate opportunities in the curriculum to discuss issues related to the protected characteristics and to build pupils' resilience to bullying
- Ensure staff have a clear understanding of the extent and nature of bullying that may take place in school, including cyberbullying
- Make sure that staff know how to deal with and record incidents of bullying
- Record and monitor incidents of bullying in relation to the protected characteristics, and use this information to review strategic equality objectives
- Make sure all policies and procedures meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010

#### Recommendation

Children and young people would like more education for teachers, pupils and parents about bullying, including hate crime against protected groups and how to stop bullying. There should be anti-bullying programmes in all schools, primary and secondary. Schools do not always follow their anti-bullying policies and we want the Welsh Government to make it compulsory. Children and young people think there should be stricter sanctions for people who bully children and young people.



# Mental Health

## Our Concerns

Many of the representatives from local youth forums who attended the Young Wales launch and who we and member organisations work with, raised mental health and emotional wellbeing as a serious problem for children and young people. They stressed the need for greater support in schools and better signposting to counsellors and advice services.

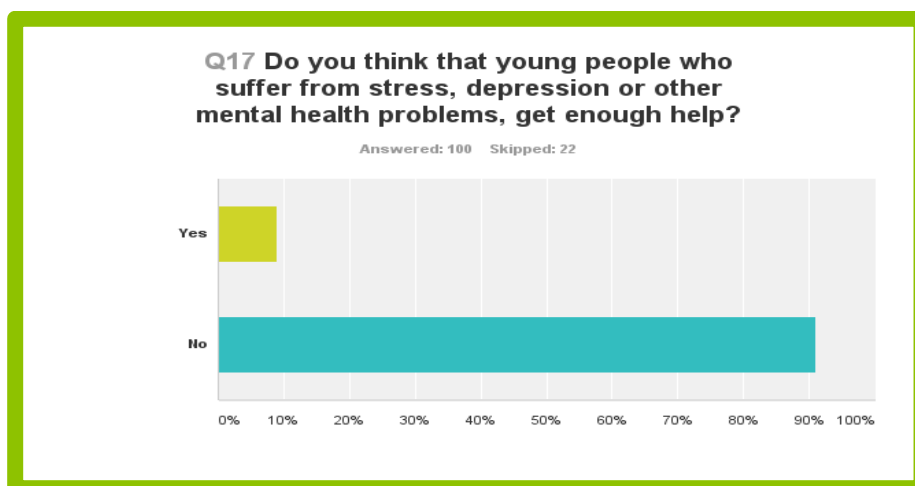
*“Mental health links to so many of the other issues, like bullying and domestic violence”*

Further discussions at Young Wales events identified a number of other issues:

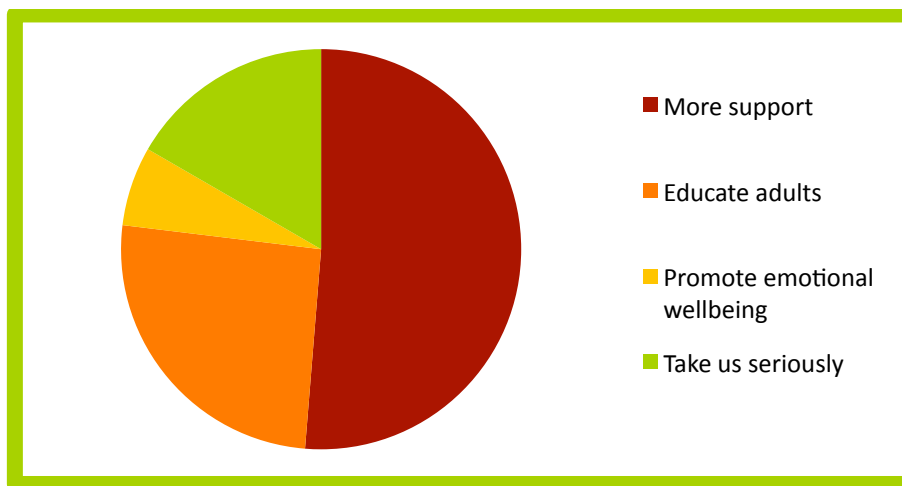
- Services and information on mental health need to be more age specific
- Mental health needs to be taught about to reduce stigma
- More information about where to get help locally and signposting to other services, eg, Kooth (voluntary sector counselling service)
- Free counselling for mental health problems
- Counselling needs to be more anonymous, more available, accessible and advertised

There were different opinions about whether young people would prefer face-to-face counselling, or preferred anonymous online counsellors. Most young people attending the event at the National Eisteddfod thought that schools were not good at supporting young people with mental health problems, but some did say their school was supportive. There was a general consensus that there should be a dedicated person, whose job it is to be there to talk to young people and support them when they have issues, as it is not fair to expect teachers to do everything when they are already very busy.

## Survey Results



Question: What do you think the Government could do to promote the emotional wellbeing of young people?



### Our Voices

*'Schools need to do more. There should be a dedicated person in every school that pupils can go to, to talk to and discuss anything that's bothering them.'*

*'It's not fair to expect teachers to do everything as they're really busy which is why it would be better if there was one person whose job it was to be there to talk to young people and support them when they go to them with issues.'*

(Young Wales National Eistedfodd event, 2015)



### Other Voices

The Inquiry undertaken by the Children, Young People & Education Committee of the National Assembly for Wales in 2014, found a number of shortcomings in the services delivered to children and young people with mental health problems, under the statutory Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS). Young people told them they were not getting the help they needed; they had to wait too long to be seen and this made their mental health worse. They thought the 'rules' about who could or could not access CAMHS were too strict and others stated they would rather have had therapies than just be prescribed medication. The transition from children's to adult services was disjointed and did not always work well.

*"Increase access to specialist services...early intervention services and CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) provision"<sup>1</sup>*

*'Why fund statutory services when other services work better'*

*'CAMHS needs a lot more staff and a lot of reorganisation of their policies and procedures'*

*'CAMHS were not very helpful – they were more interested in what my mum had to say than in me'*

<sup>1</sup> Feedback from the National Mental Health Forum, Together for Mental Health Annual Report 2013/14, Welsh Government 2014

<sup>2</sup> Callers to Samaritans are connected to the nearest open branch where they live. However, as not all branches are open 24 hours a day, it



*'They just passed you on to other people'*

*'CAMHS didn't really make a difference'*

*'Waiting lists are too long – they need more staff'*

(Inquiry into Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services: Children Young People & Education Committee, NAFW, 2014)

The Committee did not make firm recommendations from the Inquiry as the Minister for Health and Social Services had announced that an external review was to be undertaken into CAMHS. The following are the key priorities that the Committee felt should be addressed by the external review:

- Ensuring that children and young people get access to appropriate child and adolescent mental health services in a timely way
- Resources for specialist CAMHS
- Referrals that are inappropriate or not accepted
- Primary Care provision
- The configuration of services and the appropriateness of clinic based services
- Arrangements for access to CAMHS on an emergency basis and out of hours
- In-patient provision

Referrals to CAMHS has doubled in the last 4 years and on 22 May 2015, Mark Drakeford AM, Minister for Health and Social Services, announced that £7.6 million will be made available for CAMHS services. The Minister said the money has been invested to expand access to psychological therapies, improve provision at primary care level and ensure services intervene early to meet the needs of young people who develop psychosis. (Welsh Government, May 2015)

Nearly 7000 children and young people contacted the Samaritans in Wales<sup>2</sup> during 2014. 4.1% of all telephone, 15% of all emails, and 8.2% of SMS messages were from under 18s. Not all can be assumed to feel suicidal, but suffering from a range of mental health problems, including eating disorders and self-harming behaviours.

#### Looked After Children

In June 2015, NSPCC Cymru published a report on a programme of field work, which interviewed looked after children and care leavers, their carers and professionals from health and social care services, to understand their views on how the care system currently supports young people's emotional wellbeing and what changes they would like to see. Work with children and young people on this project highlighted that the emotional well-being and mental health of looked after children can be thought of as something that is the responsibility of specialist mental health services alone. The project highlighted 5 of priorities for change:

- Embedding an emphasis on emotional wellbeing throughout the system - In Wales, research by Meltzer et al (2003b) found that 49 per cent of children looked after by local authorities had a mental disorder.

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<sup>2</sup> Callers to Samaritans are connected to the nearest open branch where they live. However, as not all branches are open 24 hours a day, it cannot be assumed that every young person who called the Samaritans resided in Wales



- Taking a proactive and preventative approach – specifically, The Government in Wales should issue equivalent guidance on the content of mental health assessments as part of the code of practice on part six of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014
- Giving children and young people voice and influence
- Supporting and sustaining children’s relationships
- Supporting care leavers’ emotional needs

(Achieving emotional wellbeing for looked after children: a whole system approach, NSPCC 2015)

### Recommendation

Children and young people think there should be a lot more support for children and young people who suffer stress, anxiety, depression, self-harm and other mental health problems, through Government funded services which need a lot more investment. They also think that there should be more support groups and counsellors in schools, and don’t think adults take them seriously when they have problems and don’t really listen. There needs to be a lot more education for adults and teachers about mental health in children and young people and how to promote emotional wellbeing. There should be more education for children and young people on how they stay emotionally well and also activities to promote this.



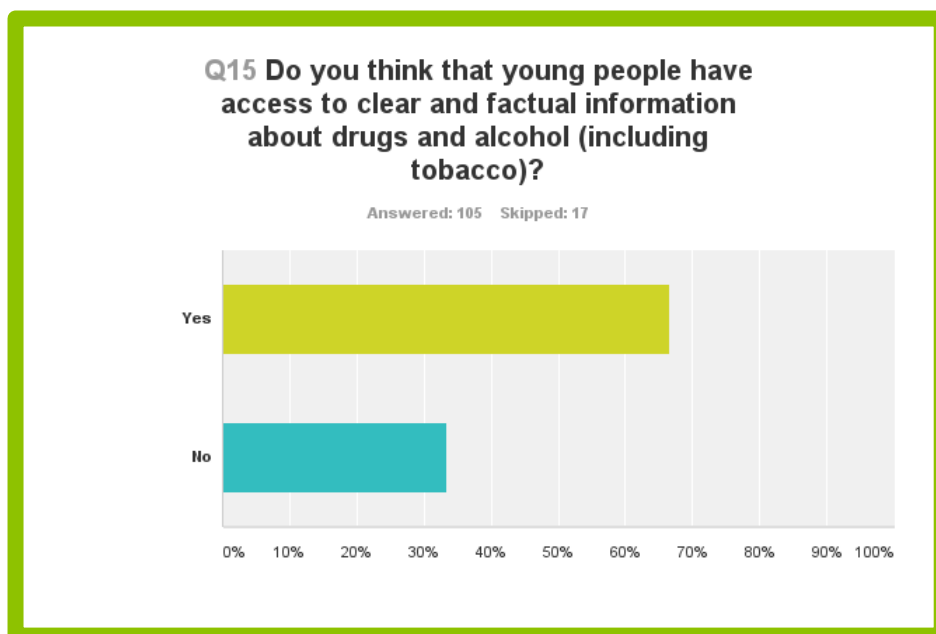
## Substance Misuse

### Our Concerns

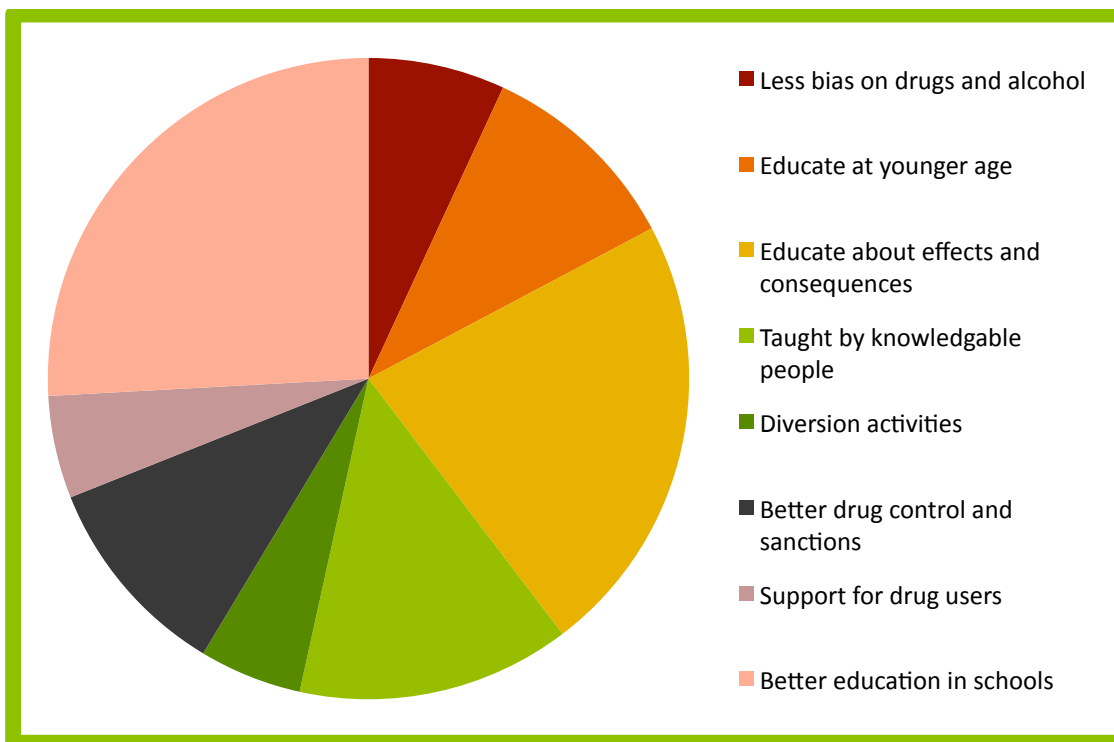
The main concerns expressed by young people centre around the availability and accessibility of clear, factual information about drugs and alcohol, including the laws (as they change frequently) and information about 'legal highs.' This could be made available through local youth support services and these services need to be more accessible, eg, opening in the evenings and weekends. This is a particular issue in rural areas. Activities that divert young people away from drugs, like music workshops and outdoor activities should be made widely available.

Young people wanted to know more about what advice and support is available – many felt it was not something they could talk about with the GP. Some young people thought that more attention should be given to the long term effects of alcohol and drugs, rather than focussing on the immediate effects in prevention work. Many thought alcohol and drug education in schools was poor, some saying that they should get in ex-users to talk to young people.

### Survey Results



What needs to be done to keep young people safe and help them make informed choices around drugs and alcohol (including tobacco)?



#### Our Voices

*“Young people should be taught about the long term effects and damage, as well as the short term”*

*“Substance use affects family and friends too”*

*“Legal drugs are not always safe”*

*“Drug use is an individual thing, it doesn’t affect a huge group of people”*

*“Get officials involved!”*

*“It would be better if topics like substance misuse were delivered by young people who had direct experience of the issues rather than by a class teacher.”*

*Young Wales Launch event, March 2015*

*“Teach them before they get involved not after, teach them younger”*

*“Give out more information and more posters around places like school, show them exactly what it is doing to them and what could happen to them later on in life.”*

*“Less bias, young people are told that drugs are bad and that’s that. Omitting information will never lead to children making safer choices.”*

*“Need to move away from the PSE model where teachers say drugs/alcohol/tobacco is bad, don’t do them.”*

*“We get talks on drugs and alcohol in school but they’re always rubbish but in youth club the talks are more interesting.”*





The Welsh Government's Substance Misuse Delivery Plan for 2013/14 identifies a number of actions in relation to the All Wales Schools Core Liaison Programme (AWSCLP), as well as producing a leaflet for parents of children and young people and for Public Health Wales to promote the Healthy Schools Network Quality Awards.

The Substance Misuse Strategy Annual Report (2014) follows up on some of these actions. In response to the action:

*“Steering Group to review educational content of the AWSCLP to ensure it remains fit for purpose and includes current trends, ie, psychoactive drugs, volatile substances etc” (October 2013)*

There is little recent research on substance misuse and young people in Wales and very little about what children and young people think, whereas in Scotland the Scottish Government carries out an annual Schools Adolescent Lifestyle and Substance Use Survey.

A discussion paper published by NHS Wales and Public Health Wales in 2010 identified that the most common drugs that young people use in Wales are alcohol and cannabis, and acknowledged that managing substance misuse with young people is different to that used with adults. The discussion paper identifies unresolved problems in care pathways, including a postcode lottery for access to services. Their recommendations included that Service development should be based on local needs assessments, particularly vulnerable groups of young people should be targeted, including the homeless, those looked after by local authorities or in foster care, truants and those excluded from school, young offenders, those with conduct disorder or mental ill health, such as depression, and children having parents or siblings who misuse substances.

(Interventions and models of care for substance misuse in children and young people  
Public Health Wales, 2010)

Public Health Wales Observatory published a report in 2014 in relation to alcohol use in Wales. It found that *“drinking in children and young people remains a concern with 17% of males and 14% of females aged 11-16 in Wales drinking alcohol at least once a week. This is higher than in Scotland, Ireland, England and the survey average.”* However, the study showed that more young people aged 16-24 had reduced or abstained from alcohol between 2008/09 and 2011/12. Also, alcohol related hospital admissions for young people under 18 in Wales had reduced during the same period.

(Alcohol and Health in Wales, Public Health Wales Observatory, 2014)

A study undertaken by Smoke Free Cardiff, into interventions with young people to help them stop smoking, found that in a six week smoking cessation course for young people, positive change in attitude toward quitting was greatest in specialist youth settings (79 per cent of attendees were more determined to quit).

(Bowles H, Maher A, Sage R, Helping teenagers stop smoking: Comparative observations across youth settings in Cardiff, Health Education Journal June 2009 vol. 68 no. 2 111-118)

In March 2015, the Welsh Government announced £2.2m over the next 10 years, for the All Wales Schools Liaison Core Programme, which educates children and young people about some of the dangers of substance misuse, anti-social behaviour and problems associated with personal safety.



The Welsh Government's current strategy is set out in the published document: *Working Together to Reduce Harm: The Substance Misuse Strategy for Wales 2008-2018*. One of the four priority areas of the strategy is the 'preventing harm' action area focusing on helping children, young people (and adults) to resist or delay starting substance misuse. This is to be achieved through the education of young people and diversionary activities. Much of the education is delivered via the All Wales Schools Liaison Core Programme (AWSLCP).

An evaluation of the AWSLCP was carried out in 2011, by way of a survey, which showed that after participating in the AWSLCP 83% of primary pupils, 57% of Year 8 pupils and 37% of Year 11 pupils 'now' thought about what would happen if they used illegal drugs or alcohol. Results from focus groups also indicated that there were some changes in attitude towards substance misuse. The evaluation also examined changes in behaviour regarding substance misuse. The authors explain that although fewer in number than other examples given, "they nonetheless suggest the lessons were having an impact in this area"

(All Wales Schools Liaison Core Programme Evaluation Report, p9, 2011)

However, Bennet & Parry in their report *Evaluation of the Implementation of the Substance Misuse Strategy for Wales (2013)*, found that:

"Overall, the evaluation provides some fairly weak evidence to support the effectiveness of the programme. The absence of pre-test measures means that changes following the programme have not been properly assessed, and the absence of a control group means that any effects cannot be attributed to the programme with any certainty."

### Recommendation

Children and young people would like better education on alcohol, drugs and tobacco, not just 'Don't do it' but proper lessons that include the long term effects of drugs, to be able to discuss and debate drug use. This education should start at a young age, around Year 7, not wait until young people have already experimented with their use. Children and young people need accurate, unbiased, up to date information delivered by people who know and understand drugs, like youth workers. One survey response said "Create a fun and interactive way to teach young people about the effects of drugs and alcohol. Saying 'It will kill you' isn't good enough".



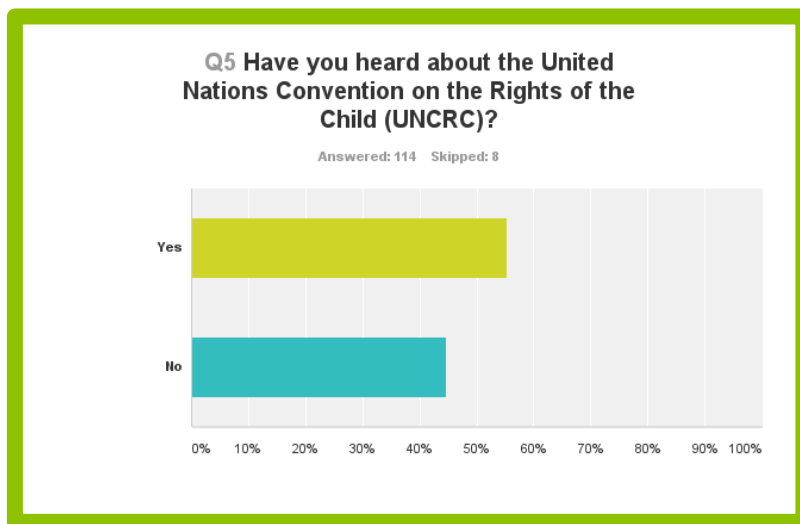
# Children's Rights, Participation & Advocacy

## Our Concerns

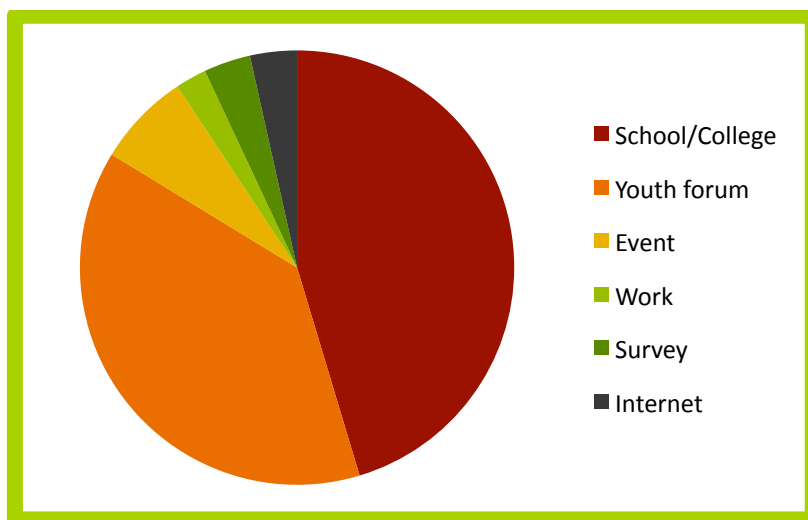
Young people have identified children's rights and participation as a key priority and would like more opportunities to express their opinions and views. As children and young people don't have the right to vote in local or national elections in Wales, they have to seek other ways in which to get their voices heard, and get things that matter to them 'started, stopped or changed'. Many young people still do not know about the UNCRC, what rights they have or what to do if their rights are broken. Many feel that they are not listened to by adults, are discriminated against because of their age or are simply ignored.

Cuts and changes to national and local services and reduced opportunities at a local level for young people to exercise their right to participate have been identified as particular concerns. Advocacy services remain patchy, and many looked after children continue to be unaware that they have a right to an advocate and support from an independent advocacy service.

## Survey results

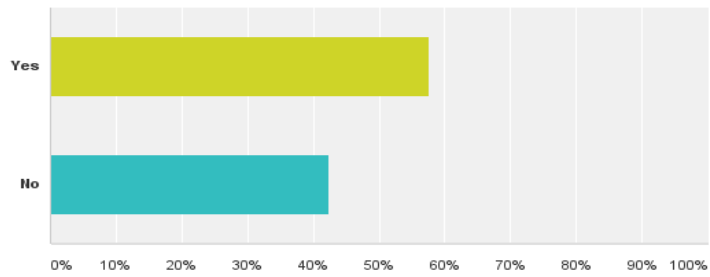


Question: How did you learn about your rights (at school, youth group, etc)



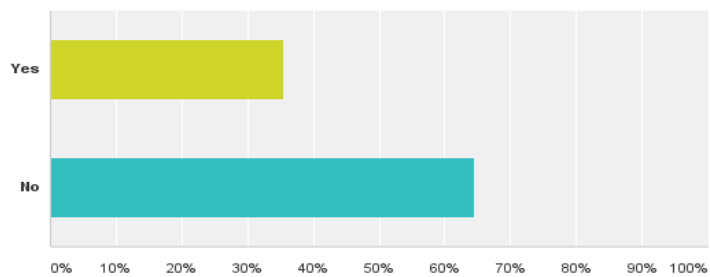
### Q7 Do you know that Wales has a Children's Commissioner?

Answered: 113 Skipped: 9

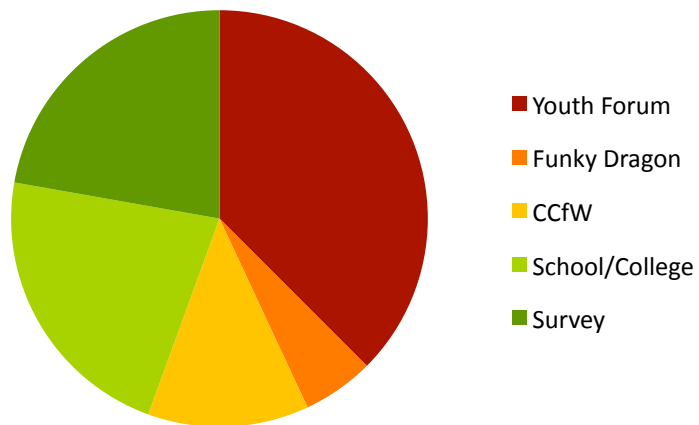


### Q8 Do you know what the Children's Commissioner does?

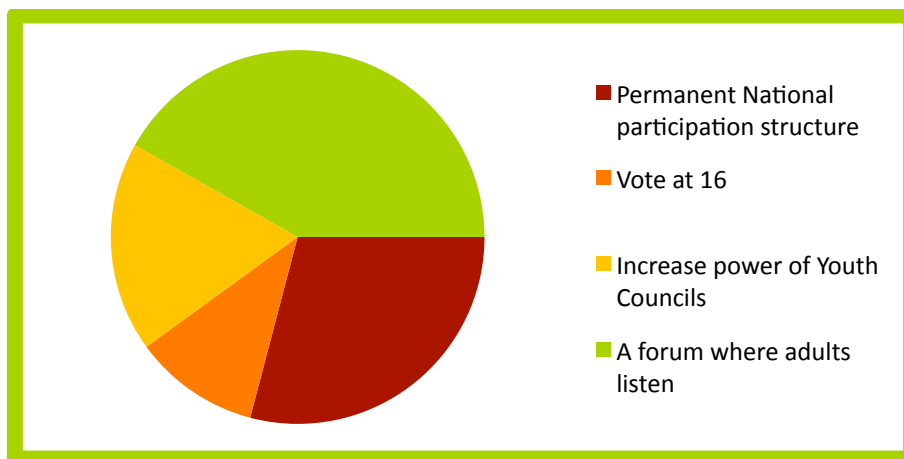
Answered: 113 Skipped: 9



Question: How did you learn about the Children's Commissioner?



Question: What would you change to make sure your opinions and views are heard, by adults?



### Our Voices

From Young Wales Launch:

*“Everybody should be educated on their rights that they can access”*

*“Be taught in schools/colleges”*

*“Who do we go to if rights are broken? Government? Child Commissioner?”*

*“Raise awareness of Children’s Commissioner’s Office”*

*“A simplified UNCRC. A lot of people are aware that they have rights but maybe there’s not that understanding of where do we go if our rights are broken”*

*“I know a load about peer education and have learned about my rights and can say my opinion and get my voice heard”*

In a Young Wales survey, a question was asked: “What would you change to make sure adults listen to you?” The young people told us:

*“Make a law that adults have to listen and take into consideration what young people have to say”*

*“Make them see that we aren't all bad. Have meetings with them”*

*“Although at city level we have a good chance and have had our voice heard, recent cuts to things like Funky Dragon have made us nervous as we don't have enough of a connection to Welsh Government. I believe if more AMs became more transparent, particularly Ministers, then more young people would know their voice is making a difference”*

*“Wales needs to reintroduce a national platform for young people's voices.”*

*“More opportunities and feedback from WG needs to be improved, in fact it needs to start.”*

*“Well, it’s not the fact that adults don’t attempt nor that children don’t say – it’s the fact that nothing gets done with any of the suggestions.”*

*“Less cuts to Youth Services! People moan about young people being on the streets - if there were more hours to Youth Clubs they wouldn't be on the streets!!”*

*“Less discrimination of age groups, eg, the stigma that teenagers 'don't know' about things as well as adults”*



*“I was never taught my rights in high school or primary school and I find this embarrassing. We do not live in a third world country and have the RIGHT to know our rights. I believe we need to start practising what we preach and teach more young people from primary school age their rights”*



## Other Voices

NSPCC Cymru’s Response to recent review of the national curriculum in Wales stated:

*‘Help young people become active and engaged citizens: this involves teaching them about their rights and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and skills such as financial literacy. This will help fulfil young people’s health and emotional wellbeing, by providing them with skills for living well. ‘ (NSPCC 2014, p3)*

The report also cited the establishment of schools councils and the pupil participation project as good examples of how the UNCRC, particularly Article 12, is being put into practice.

*(NSPCC Cymru Response to Independent Review of Assessment and the National Curriculum Wales, 2014)*

Tros Gynnal Plant has a project called Fair & Square that works with young asylum seekers in Cardiff and Newport, offering advocacy to them. In the last two years they have advocated on a range of topics including access to services, particularly education, GPs, mental health and dentists. Fair & Square support young people undergoing age assessments and to get involved in social activities, including participation groups in Newport and Cardiff. They have also run a campaign on bullying in schools and young people have painted pictures depicting their experiences of bullying and their feelings of isolation.

Meic (Welsh for ‘microphone’) is a 24-hour advocacy and advice helpline for children and young people aged 0 – 25 years, run by a consortium of children’s organisations in Wales and funded by the Welsh Government. It operates a telephone helpline, text messaging and email service. They support and empower children and young people to find their voice when they are finding it difficult to do this for themselves. Between 2011, when the service started and 2014, children and young people contacted them about the following topics:

- |                              |             |
|------------------------------|-------------|
| • Relationships              | 8,507 (24%) |
| • physical and mental health | 6,791 (19%) |
| • abuse                      | 2,553 (7%)  |
| • self harm and suicide      | 2,257 (6%)  |
| • general information        | 2,268 (6%)  |



In the Children’s Commissioner for Wales report on advocacy services in Wales, it was found that many children and young people, who were consulted, did not understand what the term ‘advocacy’ meant:

*“Never heard of it – it sounds like a disease.”*

*“I know what it is cos I watch CSI Miami”*

*“An avocado?”*

*“I didn’t know just by ‘advocacy’ what it meant. It had to be explained to me.”*

(CCfW Report Missing Voices, 2012)

A further review by the CCfW in 2013 found that all (advocacy) providers reported some restrictions in relation to the groups of children and young people who could access advocacy, particularly children in need. The Commissioner said *“We cannot underestimate the value and benefits that advocacy can make to the lives of children and young people”*

(CCfW Report Missing Voices, Missing Progress 2013)

Welsh Government has produced a booklet called ‘Your Voice, Your Choice/Eich Llais, Eich Dewis’ on children and young people’s participation in the work of the Welsh Government. It is not known how widely this publication has been promoted amongst children and young people, or how accessible the information is, in terms of how and where to find it. In fact the Welsh Government have produced a number of publications, in child and young friendly formats, in relation to a range of different topics, from school councils, to poverty, to recycling. The Government are therefore fulfilling their duty under the 2011 Children and Families Measure but it is unclear how effective they are at getting the information to children and young people.

### Recommendation

Children and young people overwhelmingly believe that they should have their own, permanent, democratic voice to access both the Welsh Government and the National Assembly for Wales, to enable them to participate in shaping government policy on subjects they have an opinion on. Forty two percent of young people who completed the Young Wales survey said that they wanted a forum where adults listen to them. The Welsh Government should strengthen its links with young people, through Young Wales and find better ways to let young people know about their rights. Forty five percent of young people in our survey said they had not heard about the UNCRC and in the response to the question ‘Do you know what the Children’s Commissioner Wales does?’ 65% said ‘No’.



# If you were the First Minister in charge of the Welsh Government for a day, what are the things you would like to change?

## Education

Survey question “What would you change in education”:



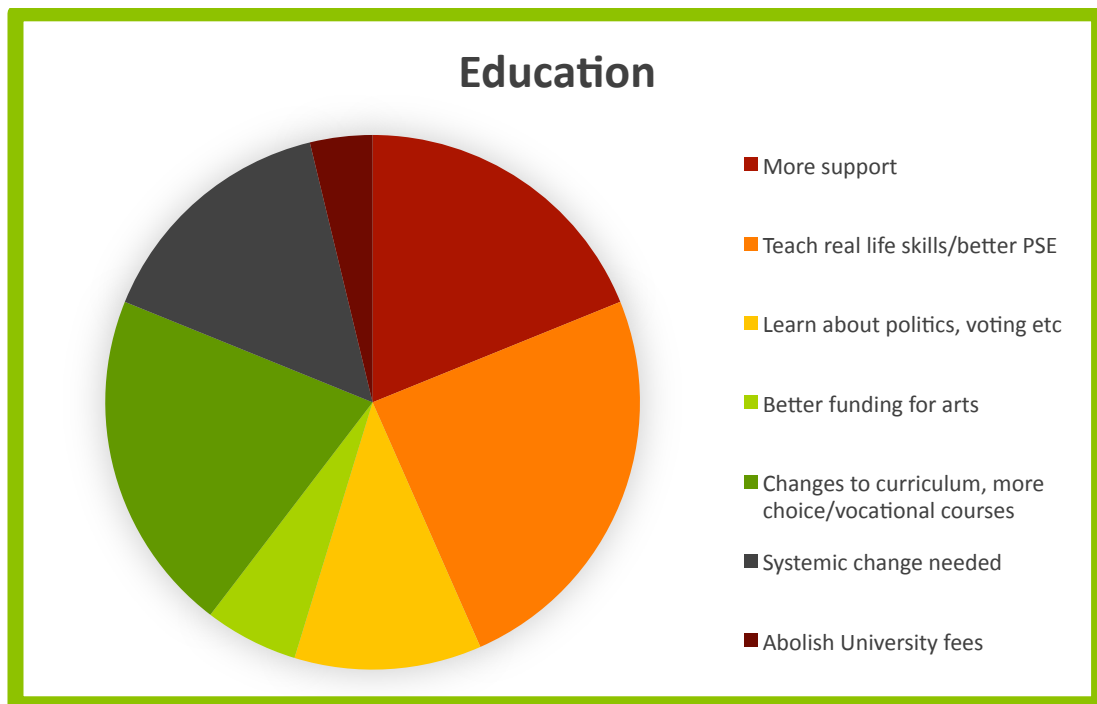
Our Voices

*“A more happy, encouraging environment with more praise rather than grades/results defining someone. Education should not appear as a chore.”*

*“Uniformed teaching of PSE across Wales”*

*“I would change the education system almost completely to a system which is more like that of Scandinavian countries where education is more focused on personal development and (arguably) education, than it is aimed at getting results and achieving high grades (which we can see through statistics is damaging young people's mental health).”*

These are a few of the comments taken from the Young Wales survey, which reflect the large majority of survey responses, that there should be less emphasis on academic subjects and good qualification and more on personal, social and life skills.



Cardiff Youth Council undertook a survey of young people to find out how well the current Personal and Social Education (PSE) system in Wales prepares young people for life. 47% of young people who responded to the survey said the thought it did not. Some of the topics they felt should be included in PSE were employment and taxes; independent living; how to get official documents, such as a driver’s license and passport; housing and parenting. Comments from the survey included:

*“Although some of the work we are taught in PSE has relevance, it seems to lack substance in some areas ... lots of the subjects need to be backed up with more detail ...”*

*“At the moment it feels like a time killing subject ... it’s not given enough importance ...”*





*"I think we should be taught more about independent living and democracy and rights ... I feel like our education system doesn't teach us enough about life skills, such as housing, parenting, mental health and national politics, rather than healthy eating and smoking, which are common sense really."*

(Cardiff Youth Council survey, 2015)

*"I don't like school, it is boring, you just sit there for 6 hours and listen to a teacher talking at you. I don't like learning like that, where you are just spoken at."*

*"In my school they tell you what to do and then ask if you understand, then if you don't understand, they can give you one to one support, but it's not always easy to say you don't understand."*

(Transcript of conversations with children and young people affected by parental imprisonment, Barnardos Cymru, 2014)



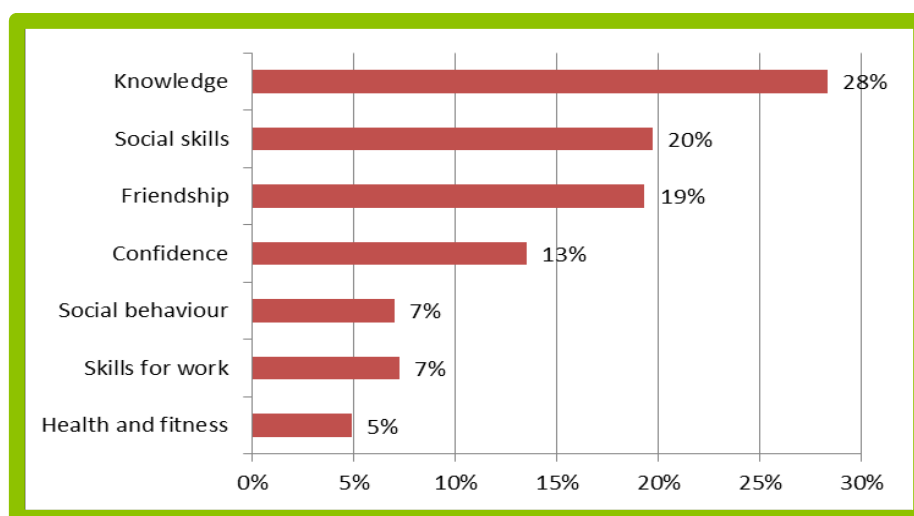
### Other Voices

Professor Graham Donaldson, in his review of the education system in Wales reflects these views:

*"A recurring concern of the children and young people who spoke to the Review Team was their perception that the current school curriculum was out of date in relation to digital technology... It is essential that the curriculum is designed in ways that will engage the interest of all children and young people and enable them to achieve. A curriculum that promotes high expectations for all can help schools to defeat the circumstances that condemn so many to educational underachievement."*

(Successful Futures, Independent Review of Curriculum and Assessment Arrangements in Wales, Donaldson 2015, p10, p15)

His analysis of questionnaire responses for the report is detailed in the graph below, showing that social skills, friendships and confidence score highly in what young people think is important to gain from school (excluding qualifications)



(Donaldson Review, Analysis of Questionnaire Responses 2015)



Donaldson noted that pupils felt that it was important for schools to help them gain skills such as becoming independent, getting on with people and communication. They wanted lessons to be more practical, interactive and relevant to their lives outside of school.

Young people's view gained through events and workshops were generally quite negative about PSE, stating that there needs to be dedicated and properly trained teachers to deliver PSE and the teachers did not have enough knowledge or confidence in the subjects they covered, some suggesting that there needs to be a qualification developed to teach PSE. The content and quality of PSE lessons was variable across and within local authorities and it was felt that PSE should be given equal status to academic subject and not just an 'add on' lesson.

(Successful Futures - Independent Review of Curriculum and Assessment Arrangements in Wales  
Professor Graham Donaldson CB, February 2015)

Carmarthenshire Youth Council published a report on its conference on PSE in 2012. The report states:

*"We were told all about what they think PSE is and we were shocked to learn that some basic topics in the PSE framework were not mentioned and when people were then told about what should be in their lessons the young people were surprised to hear that some topics had not been taught at all in their lessons."*

(Let's Talk PSE Youth Conference Report, Carmarthenshire Youth Council 2012)

The conference found that the quality of lessons was inconsistent between schools, with some delivering excellent lessons others 'boring' lessons, which pupils are likely to truant from. There is much repetition of lessons between years and many of the resources are out-dated and thus irrelevant to the pupils. The recommendations that came out of the conference included:

- The need for qualified staff
- Equal status of PSE lessons
- More practical and interactive lessons
- A more structured framework for lesson and consistent delivery

Another concern expressed by children, young people and their parents is the reduction in subsidised school transport being introduced by councils across Wales. Under legislation introduced in 2008 by the Welsh Government, local authorities have a legal obligation to provide free school transport for pupils living more than two miles away from their nearest 'suitable' primary school and three miles from their nearest 'suitable' secondary school (Welsh Government Learner Travel (Wales) Measure, 2008). With local authorities having to make drastic budget savings, it is felt that it parent who choose to send their children to faith or Welsh language schools will be unfairly discriminated against, where there is another school nearer to them.

In July 2015, the Welsh Government announced a £15m subsidised bus travel scheme for 16-18 year olds, to make it easier for young people to access jobs and training opportunities. The scheme started in September.



# Health

## Survey Question: 'What would you change to get a better health service for you?'



### Our Voices

*"Have those who over see our health listen to us and explain things clearly. To greatly improve I/ put in place mental health services."*

*'Be able to have more doctors surgeries in more rural areas like villages and better opening times'*

*'A tiered system for children's wards in hospitals, eg. A room exclusively for ages 8-11, a room exclusively for ages 12-14, another for ages 15-17 and so on. There is clearly different needs each of these age groups has, so splitting them up should make care easier and more straight forward.'*

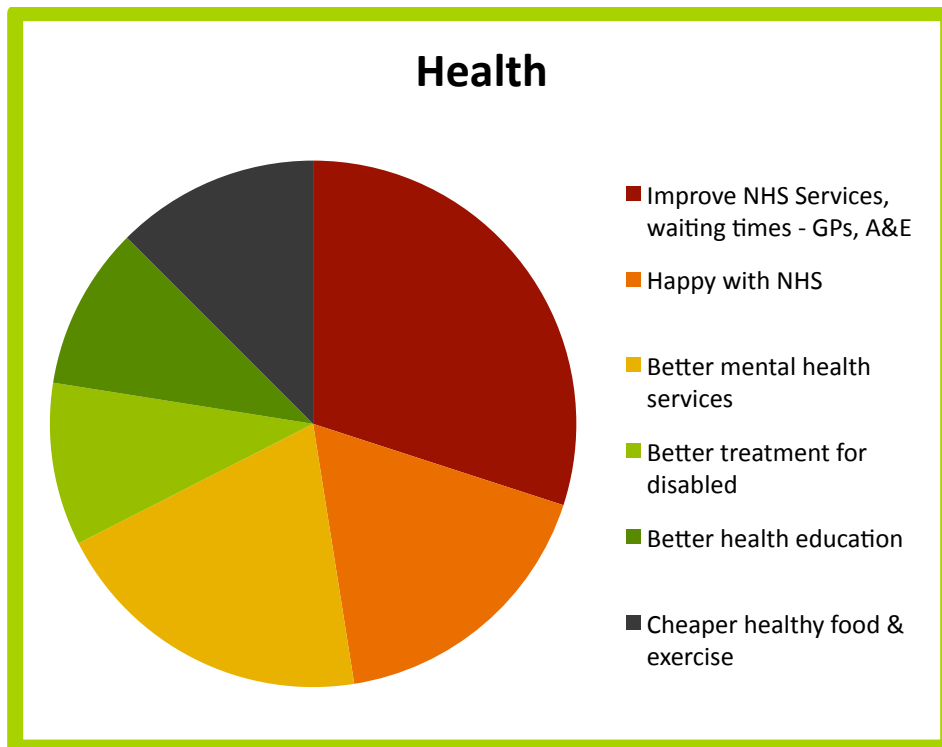
*'I'm very happy with the health service.'*

*'Funding. Lots and lots of NHS funding. It is vital that it remains nationalised'*

*'For all children to be checked younger for disabilities and for one to ones to be more readily available to those that need it. The statement is very idealistic.'*

*'Introduce a tax on unhealthy foods and make fast food much less available also have free government funded sports clubs so everyone can participate in exercise'*

*'My overall experience of the health service has been very positive, having been to hospital over 50 times!'*



20 per cent of the responses to this question specifically referred to better services for children and young people with mental health problems. This adds to the responses under the Mental Health heading in the Young Wales Priorities section of this report. Ten percent of responses directly referred to better services for disabled children and young people.



**The Public Health Wales Observatory** statistics indicated that:

“Over 1 in 5 (142,600) children and young people aged under 20 live in poverty, ranging from around 1 in 8 in Monmouthshire and Powys to 1 in 4 in the south Wales valleys. Higher percentages of children living in poverty are also seen within the cities.”

“In 2011/12, around 1,250 (45%) of the 2,770 households that were accepted as homeless and temporarily accommodated by local authorities were households with dependent children.”

“Health and behaviour developed during childhood and adolescence is often carried through into adulthood and can affect health later in life. In Wales:

- only 30% of those aged 11-16 eat fruit and/or vegetables each day
- only 36% of 5-14 year olds participate in activity for one hour or more each day
- only 37% of 16-24 year olds undertake 30 minutes of vigorous activity five or more times a week
- almost 3 in 10 children aged 4-5 are classified as overweight or obese
- 26% of those aged 16-24 reported smoking
- 46% of those aged 16-24 drink above the recommended guidelines
- around 1 in 10 children aged 11-16 have tried a drug at sometime in the previous year”

*“Transport crashes are the biggest cause of death in the injury/poisoning category for children and young people. The highest transport crash death rates are seen in Pembrokeshire and Carmarthenshire.”*

The Report concludes that *“Whilst improvements have been made in some areas, there is still much more to do. Co-ordinated interagency action at national and local level is needed to address the health of children and young people and its determinants; working with children and families to build on assets and address weaknesses.”*

(Summary of Key Messages, Public Health Wales Observatory, 2012)



## Social Services

**Survey question: 'What would you change to make things better for children who live in local authority care (Looked After Children)?'**



### Our Voices

*"Social workers often change on a regular basis with no warning"*

*"Young people should have a say in who their social worker is, as if they don't get on with their social worker it can cause problems."*

*"I think we're often kept in the dark, social workers should keep us better informed."*

*"The 'love' is being taken out of fostering... sometimes its seen as just a job and an income for some families."*

*"I had a good experience in foster care but when I turned 18 and had to leave care there was practically no support available, it was really hard."*

(Workshops run by Young Wales and WG about young people experiences of the care system, July and August 2015)

Many young people at this event said there should be better training for foster carers so they can better understand the challenges and stresses faced by young people who are moving into care and / or changing placement.

*"Education and awareness. Also positive stereotypes enforced, to replace the 'Tracey Beaker' stereotype of care homes being violent hell holes."*

*"Perhaps programmes designed specifically for each Childs needs. They are all not able to be given the same treatment and then expected to be better. Time is imperative."*

*"Train more foster carers and support foster parents more."*

*"Try not to move them around to much, make sure they can stay in the same school so they have their friends and make sure they have a holiday"*

*"Life skill training"*

*"I don't know enough about this to make a comment"*

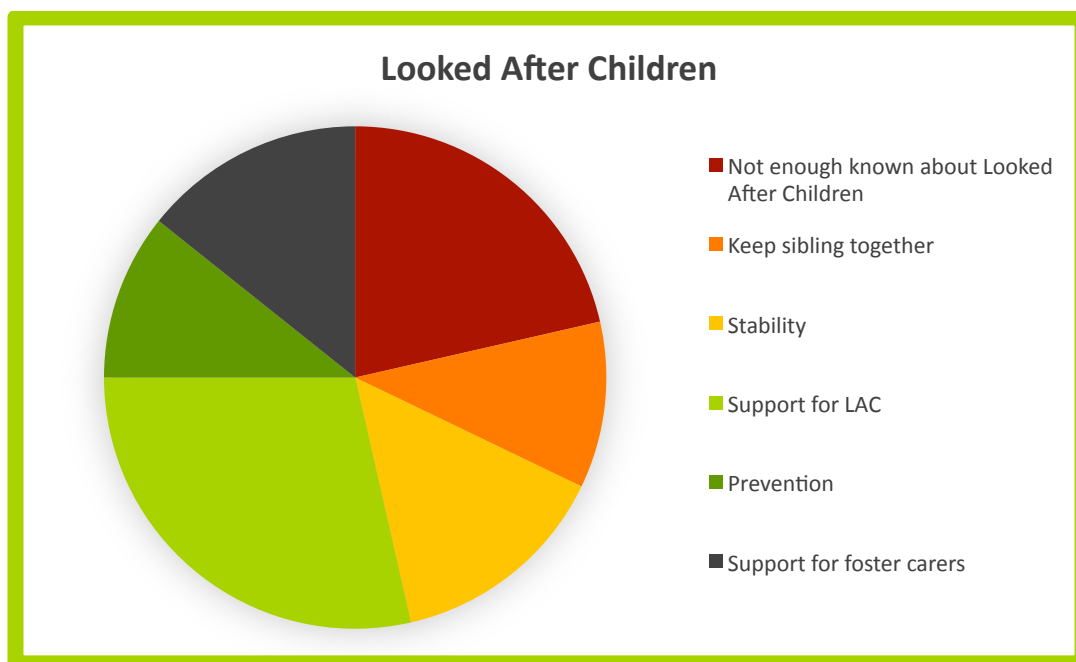
(Young Wales Survey on UNCRC, 2015)

The majority of children and young people answering this question, thought that support, including advocacy, for looked after children was important, to give them the best chances in life. The second largest response to this question, was that children and young people felt they did not know enough about social services or the care system to comment. The fact that they made these comments, rather than skipping the question is significant.

Voices From Care, the national peer led organisation for LAC and Care leavers, has been actively working to train professionals and has been involved in helping local authorities to develop their



‘Corporate Parenting ‘ work so that they can meet their responsibilities. ‘There is a very long way to go before the rights of children in care are met’



#### Other Voices

The Welsh Government is responsible for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children and young people in Wales in Wales. When the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 (SSWB Act) comes into force in April 2016 Wales, it will have its own framework for social services. The Children’s Commissioner for Wales has said that she will be monitoring the raft of changes it will bring to current legislation, which includes the repeal of Part 3 of the Children Act 1989. The changes which will affect children in need, looked-after children and leaving care provisions. The Children’s Commissioner welcomes the fact the UNCRC is ‘right on the face of the Act’ and welcomes the principles behind it; however, she has expressed concerns that children’s needs might be swamped in “*generic regulations and codes of practice around things like assessment, service provision and service user involvement*”.

(Article published in Community Care, 11/5/2015)

Barnardo’s Cymru talked to young people affected by parental imprisonment. One who had had contact with social services said:

*“I feel uncomfortable talking about my past, I want to start a fresh, I don’t want to think about my past all the time. I suppose it is their job to help you through things, but I don’t want to be reminded of my past.”*

(Transcript of conversations with children and young people affected by parental imprisonment, Barnardos Cymru, 2014)



The NSPCC identified that there was a 13% rise in police recorded cases of sexual offences against under 18s in Wales, between 2012/13 and 2013/14. This increase is reflected in the increase in the number of calls received by ChildLine about sexual abuse, during the same period.

Neglect remains the most common form of child abuse in Wales, closely followed by emotional abuse. The SSWB Act, when enacted in 2016, will have a strong emphasis on early intervention in cases of neglect. Within the current economic climate of national and local government funding cuts, this is likely to be the most cost effective option.

It could be argued, however, that services that meet the needs of 'vulnerable people' under the new legislation, it may be that those who should the loudest will drown out the voice of the child and thus the needs of the 3,000+ children on child protection registers in Wales, will go largely unmet.

At events organised for children in care and leaving care called 'It's My Life' in 2015 by the Children's Commissioner for Wales, young peoples in local authority care, were asked if they felt listened to by professionals: 43% said 'Yes'; 33% weren't sure and 23% said 'No'. Other comments made included:

*'Social workers don't understand what it's like to be a young person in care, the rule book is too complicated.'*

*'Why don't they answer their mobiles?'*

*'Social workers are often on sick leave or stressed'*

*'I don't really feel listened to'. 'Decisions are not explained.'*

But also:

*'Feel listened to and informed. When something was asked for it was done.'*

*'Feel included in decisions.'*

Young people involved in the events put together a video called Top Tips for Professionals. The five top tips for professionals were:

- Listening
- Honesty
- Being Respectful
- Actually doing something
- Giving good advice

Other topics discussed at the event included housing options for care leavers, education and work opportunities and advice and support.

('Our Lives', CCfW 2015: <http://www.childcomwales.org.uk/uploads/publications/530.pdf>)



# Poverty

Survey question: What would you change to help families affected by poverty? There was a wide variety of responses to this question. Here are some of these answers we got.

## Our Voices

*“Allow the children to succeed in school. If they can't keep up with the workload as a result from it, cater different resources for them. Do everything possible. If we ignore a young persons attention, they will leave without a substantial education and feed off the government's money.”*

*“More easily accessible trade apprenticeships for poverty stricken families aimed at getting them qualified and working again for businesses who need workers.”*

*“Being someone who has grown up in poverty I felt that thanks to my parents, even though they split when I was young, I feel that with all he modern day stuff coming in families should be taught about priority spending. I didn't need a PS2 I needed food yet I saw so many kids spoiled and parents drained because they felt that it was important. The perception that parents feel this brings needs tackled and ended as it adds to poverty because of the extreme capitalist monster growing in Wales”*

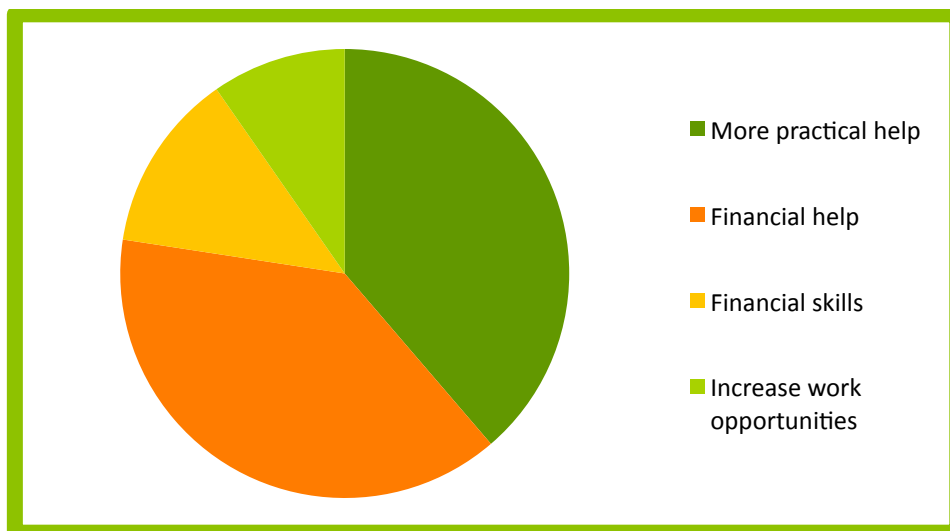
*“Stop school uniforms being so expensive.”*

*“I would make SURE there are options for them to receive help such as food, clothes etc because not everyone would feel comfortable walking into a food bank and it could make them feel embarrassed or ashamed so maybe making it more discreet, and not so out there.”*

*“Instead of benefits there should be more free youth services and education and things like clothes and food should be paid for or partly paid for by the government”*

*“Better adult education. Funded by the tax companies like amazon avoid paying and pay politicians less expenses.”*

*“Families in poverty are at risk because of many factors, not primarily monetary factors. Personally I would initiate a Basic Citizens Income which would provide every family in the country a certain amount of government funding. I would expand services to make sure that whatever help families need they are able to receive some form of aid. And most importantly, I would make sure that services like Citizens Advice are known by everyone so that any family knows to go to these organisations to be sign posted towards any help they may need.”*







## Other Voices

The Children's Commissioner for Wales is piloting a Community Ambassadors scheme. Its intention is to target children and young people living in socially deprived areas and/or from disadvantaged groups. To offer them opportunities to be a voice for the Children's Commissioner on the ground, to be a two-way communication vessel between the local community and the Children's Commissioner. The scheme is being piloted in two areas in South Wales and there are plans to expand the scheme. The pilots identified a number of poverty related themes, including drug use, racism, age and disability discrimination, access to politicians, social services and housing.

(CCfW, Child Poverty Strategy Progress Report, 2013)

It is known that socio-economic factors are a significant contributor in education attainment and research indicates that pupils eligible for free school meals perform less well in education than others, at all key stages and in all performance measures.

Small Voice, Big Story is a report published by the Participation Unit in 2013. It looked at how poverty impacts on children's education outcomes and considered the views of children aged 11 to 14. Most of the young people said that they did not think that a lack of money stopped them from achieving in education but they did think it affected what activities they could do in school. The young people identified a number of things that would help them and these were translated into recommendations by the authors:

- A safe place to learn – a home from home in schools, where children can go to study and get extra help and support.
- A peer learning support system in schools.
- Somebody to talk to about home and school, through a key-working system.
- A special fund for children living in poverty so they can 'join in', to pay for things like books, stationery, travel and equipment.
- Set up a scheme in schools where community role models come in to give career advice, based on real life experiences.
- Ongoing research to provide a voice for children and young people in Wales.

(Reducing the impact of poverty on the educational achievement of young people in Wales

By the Young Welsh Researchers January 2013)



# Climate Change & Green Issues

Survey Question: 'What would you change to make sure Wales is a clean environment to live in?'

## Our Voices

*'Enforce recycling rules and make sure all government building have a sustainable energy supply'*

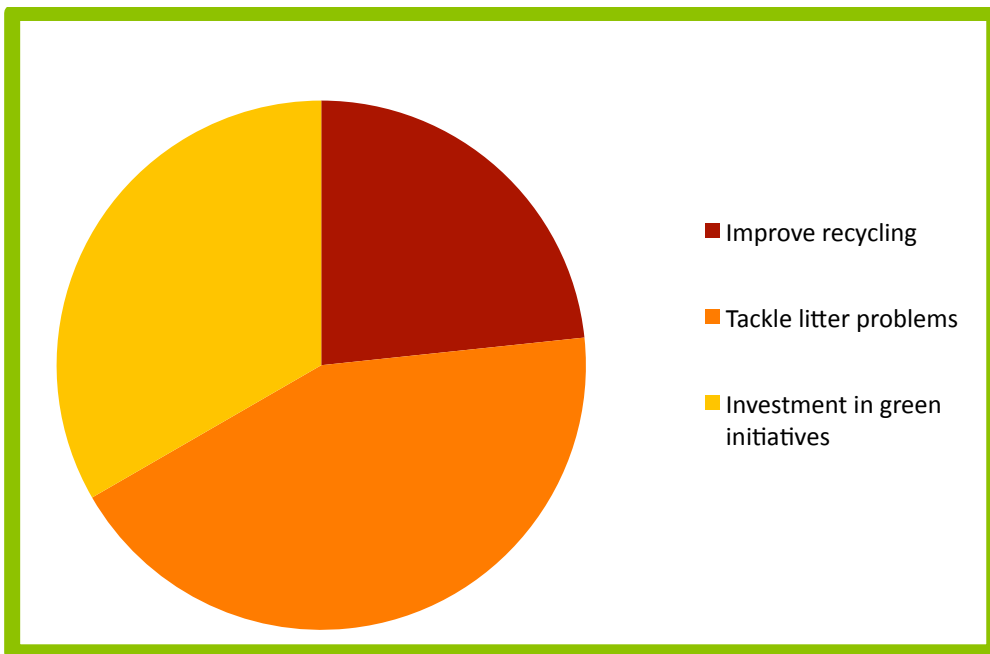
*'Tackle litter and promote and teach about recycling more'*

*'More rubbish bins around and CCTV to give out fines to people who thrown their rubbish on the floor or out of car windows'*

*'Community spirit needs raising ... Attitude pollutes our perception of the environment.'*

*'More funding for clean energy'*

*'Fund the production of more eco-friendly transport and lifestyle'*



## Other Voices

One of the Welsh Government's key objectives is the promotion of education for sustainable development and global citizenship (ESDGC). In 2014, Estyn published a thematic report on Progress on ESDGC in schools in Wales. The report identified that the schools which had identified members of staff with clear responsibility for leading and developing ESDGC, performed better than schools which did not and the quality of the teaching depended on the training and confidence of the staff involved. The inspectors concluded the most schools visited would benefit from further training in specific aspects of ESDGC for both staff and school governors, as well as the provision of a variety of extra-curricular opportunities to support ESDGC.

*(ESDGC Progress in education for sustainable development and global citizenship, Estyn 2014)*



The Welsh Youth Forum on Sustainable Development (WYFSD) was founded in September 2003 on the principles of Education, Empowerment and Action for Sustainable Development with the aim of providing a voice for young people in Wales on issues of sustainable development they feel strongly about.

Sustainable Wales, a grassroots charity focused on enabling sustainable lifestyles has created an awards scheme for schools who perform well in educating children on sustainability.

The Welsh Government has set up a website for people to have their say on issues that matter to them. It's called 'The Wales we want'. Young peoples comments posted on this site include:

I want a Wales where:

*"Everyone has somewhere to live"*

*"Schools empower young people to live sustainable lives"*

*"Everyone has somewhere to work"*

*"Everyone is proud to be who they are"*

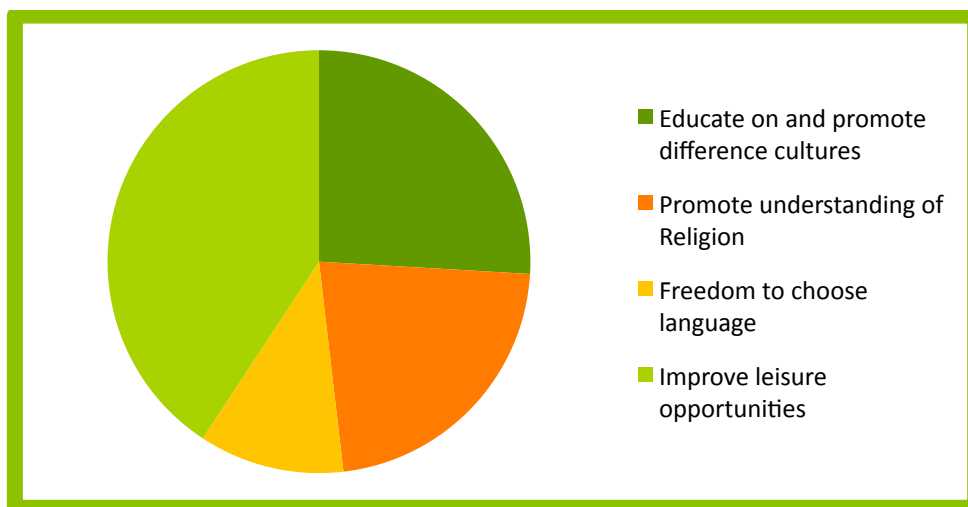
*"Everyone and everything is healthy"*

This year, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 received Royal Assent from the Queen and is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The Welsh Government are currently recruiting a Future Generations Commissioner for Wales.



## Leisure & Culture

Survey Question: What would you change to make sure children and young people's rights set out in Articles 15 (leisure) and 30 (language & customs) are met?



### Our Voices

*"Make public transport more available (especially in rural areas like Powys)"*

*"I would change the lack of opportunity for young people. Abolish gender roles, promote more sports for girls and dance for boys."*

*"More variety of clubs and activities for children"*

*"Race awareness, make RE lessons enjoyable. Create a space for groups to meet and encourage adults to set up and run these groups."*

*"Stop cuts to youth groups. Fund more youth clubs and detached workers."*

*"Educate about other cultures and religions, so everyone is aware of how other people live."*

*"We should ensure that Wales is a tolerant society where personal identity is valued and allowed to develop."*

*"Give more youngsters the freedom to change their language, it's their decision"*



### Other Voices

Play Wales, in their publication on play and mental wellbeing, identify 5 ways to achieve mental wellbeing through play, endorsed by Public Health Wales:

- Take notice – slow down, appreciate,
- Recognise your own and others' talents
- Connect – meet up, join in, phone a friend, listen
- Be active – get up and have a go, walk, run, cycle, dance, garden, sing
- Keep learning – try something new, have a go, ask how, where and why
- Give – share what you have, smile at others, volunteer

(Play: Mental Health & Wellbeing, Play Wales, 2015)



A study undertaken by the Bevan Foundation into play opportunities for disabled children in Wales found that there has been a plethora of legislation and policy documents produced by the Welsh Government to promote leisure and culture activities for children over the last 15 years. Apart from the UNCRC, included in the list are the National Service Framework for Children & Young People(2005) , Culture Strategy (2002), Rights to Action (2004), Extending Entitlement (2002), Welsh Government Play Policy and Implementation Plan (2006), National Youth Strategy (2007) and the Children & Families (Wales) Measure in 2010. (*Fair Play for Disabled Children & Young People, Bevan Foundation, 2011*).

A study on the impact of poverty on minority ethnic groups in Wales, reported that “Some people, particular white British/Welsh adults and younger people from all ethnic groups, talked about the limited leisure and social opportunities open to them and often expressed the desire to have enough money to have some ‘fun’.” The report recommended that the Welsh Government should ensure investment in public spaces, arts and cultural activities to strengthen social capital and to support schools’ communities to focus on developing social capital.

(*Poverty and Ethnicity in Wales, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2013*)

With the incorporation of Children & Young People’s Partnerships into local authority Single Integrated Plans in 2012, the focus on play and leisure for children and young people became somewhat neglected, until publication of the Government’s Youth Work Strategy for Wales in 2014. Shortly after, a guidance document was published on the principles and purpose of youth work in Wales. It is built around 5 key pillars of youth work – educative, expressive, participative, inclusive and empowering. The document has been produced by representatives of the voluntary and local authority youth work sectors in Wales and is intended to complement the Government strategy.

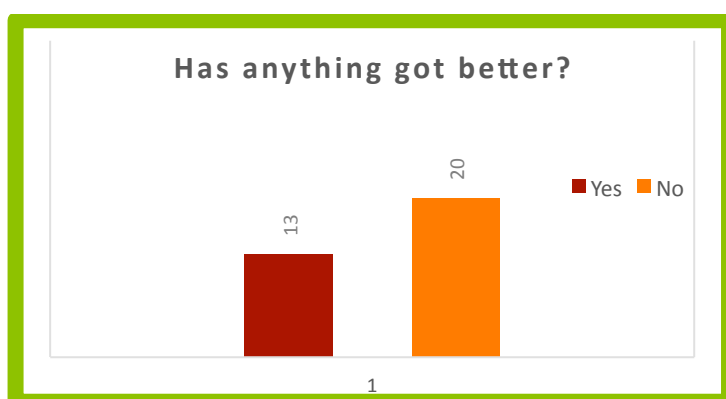
Play Wales have recently published a Manifesto for play in Wales, calling on all political parties to continue to maintain the momentum of the Welsh Government’s Play Policy, by undertaking a number of new initiatives and investing in play in schools, public parks and spaces, in neighbourhoods and staffed play facilities. The Manifesto states that:

*“Decision makers can be confident that investing in these asks will result in improvements in children’s health and well-being, and hence a reduction in the pressures on the National Health Service in Wales and the public purse.”*

(Play for Wales, Issue 45, p6, Autumn 2015)

## Improvements in Last 7 Years

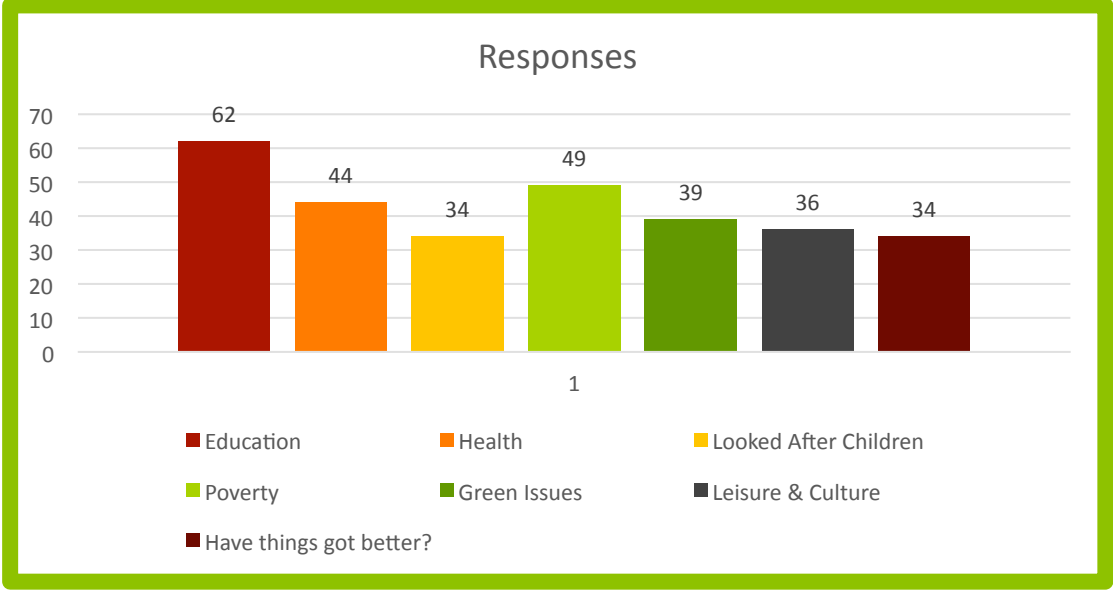
The young people’s survey asked whether young people thought anything has improved since the submission of the previous report to the UN Committee.



Out of 33 young people who responded to this question, 13 said 'Yes'. These included the 5p bag charge, young carer services, grants for student fees and the smoking ban. One young person said that they felt safer and had their voice heard, another said they thought there was more youth provision and 3 simply answered 'Yes'. Of those who did not see any improvement a significant number cited that this was because no national voice for children and young people to be heard. Some opinions were conflicted, for example one young person said they thought education in Wales had got worse and they were disappointed with their education, whilst another said they were grateful to the Welsh Government for resisting the temptation to follow England in making sweeping changes to the education system.

### **Summary of answers to the survey question 'If you were First Minister for a day...'**

The numbers of children and young people answering questions in this section is shown in the chart below.



The survey shows that children and young people had most to say about education, followed by poverty and health.



## Conclusion

This report has highlighted some of the main priorities for children and young people in Wales supported by a series of Recommendations for Government and others with responsibility for implementing policy and law. Some of the major findings of the survey were that 45% of the children and young people who responded had not heard of the UNCRC, although 57% knew that Wales has a Children's Commissioner. In relation to online safety, just over half of children and young people thought they were given enough information on how to keep themselves safe online and thought there should be more programmes in schools to educate them in online safety.

Many of the young people believed that there was not enough help and support for young people affected by domestic abuse at home and that more education is needed about healthy relationships. Many were critical of the teaching of this in schools and this was discussed in the section on education in the report.

There were concerns around bullying and hate crime that adults are not good at preventing or tackling bullying. It was felt by young people that schools should do more to tackle bullying and hate crime, with more education for teachers and pupils on the subject and better use of anti-bullying policies.

For children and young people who answered questions on mental health and emotional wellbeing, over half thought there should be more support to help with mental health problems and promote emotional wellbeing. Some children and young people felt adults did not take their mental health seriously and thought that adults should receive training in child and adolescent mental health.

Most children and young people did think they had access to clear and factual information about alcohol and drugs (including tobacco) but had strong views of how it should be taught, including teaching it at a younger age.

In response to the question 'What would you change to make sure your opinions and views are heard by adults, 42% said they wanted a forum where adults listened to them and 29% specifically mentioned having a permanent national participation structure.

The views of children and young people were also sought on a range of topics for this report, through events, meetings and in the survey, including education, health, poverty, looked after children, climate change, leisure and culture. Most responses to the survey were received on education, poverty and health. Education and personal and social education (PSE) in particular, were the hot topics at events and looked after children held their own events to express their views.

It is important that the views of children and young people continue to be heard by the Welsh Government and acted upon. The Concluding Observations from the UN will be important to help ensure that children's issues are at the heart of policy making.



# Young Wales Report to UN Committee

## Recommendations

### Our Priorities

#### Children's Rights and Participation (Articles 12 and 42)

Children and young people overwhelmingly believe that they should have our own, permanent, democratic voice to access both the Welsh Government and the National Assembly for Wales, to enable them to participate in shaping government policy on subjects we have an opinion on. Forty two percent of young people who completed the Young Wales survey said that they wanted a forum where adults listen to them. The Welsh Government should strengthen its links with young people, through Young Wales and find better ways to let young people know about their rights. Forty five percent of young people in our survey said they had not heard about the UNCRC and in the response to the question 'Do you know what the Children's Commissioner for Wales does?', 65% said 'No'.

#### Online Safety (Articles 13 & 17)

Children and young people would like information about online safety to be more widely available to them, through schools and educational programmes, with up to date information on how to keep safe. Child friendly posters and publicity could be used as well. Children and young people think there should be better monitoring of unsafe websites, more restrictions on what is available to children and bigger penalties for those who break the law. They also think that our parents need more education on how to keep them safe online.

#### Bullying and Hate Crime (Articles 13, 14 & 16)

Children and young people would like more education for teachers, pupils and parents about bullying, including hate crime against protected groups and how to stop bullying. There should be anti-bullying programmes in all schools, primary and secondary. Schools do not always follow their anti-bullying policies and children and young people want the Welsh Government to make it compulsory. They think there should be stricter sanctions for people who bully children and young people.

#### Mental Health & Emotional Wellbeing (Article 6)

Children and young people think there should be a lot more support for children and young people who suffer stress, anxiety, depression, self-harm and other mental health problems, through Government funded services – which need a lot more investment. They also think there should be more support groups and counsellors in schools. They don't think adults take them seriously when they have problems and don't really listen. There needs to be a lot more education for adults, teachers etc. about mental health in children and young people and how to promote emotional wellbeing. There should be more education for children and young people on how they stay emotionally well and also activities to promote this.





### Domestic Abuse & Healthy Relationships (Article 19)

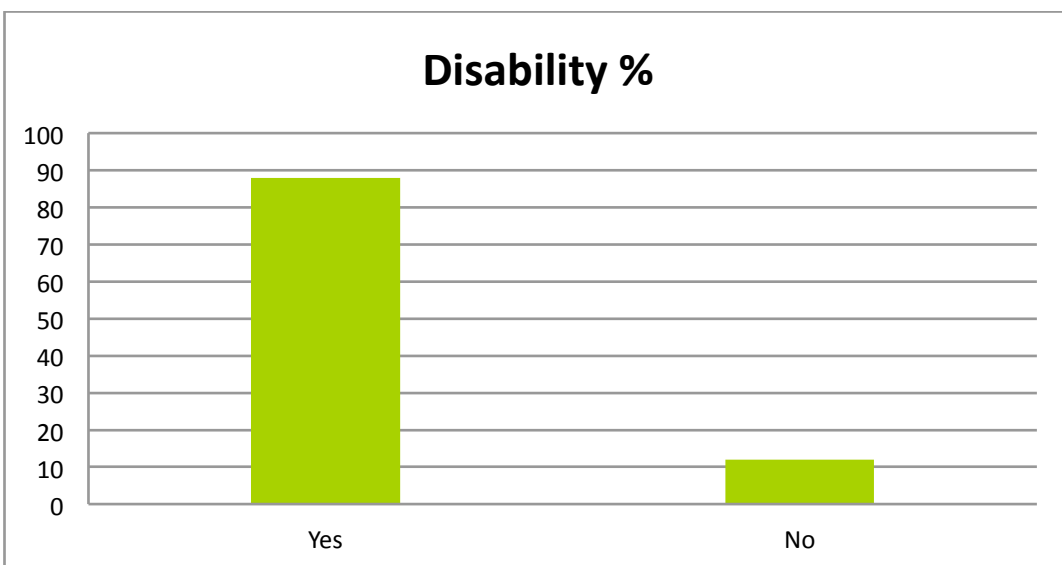
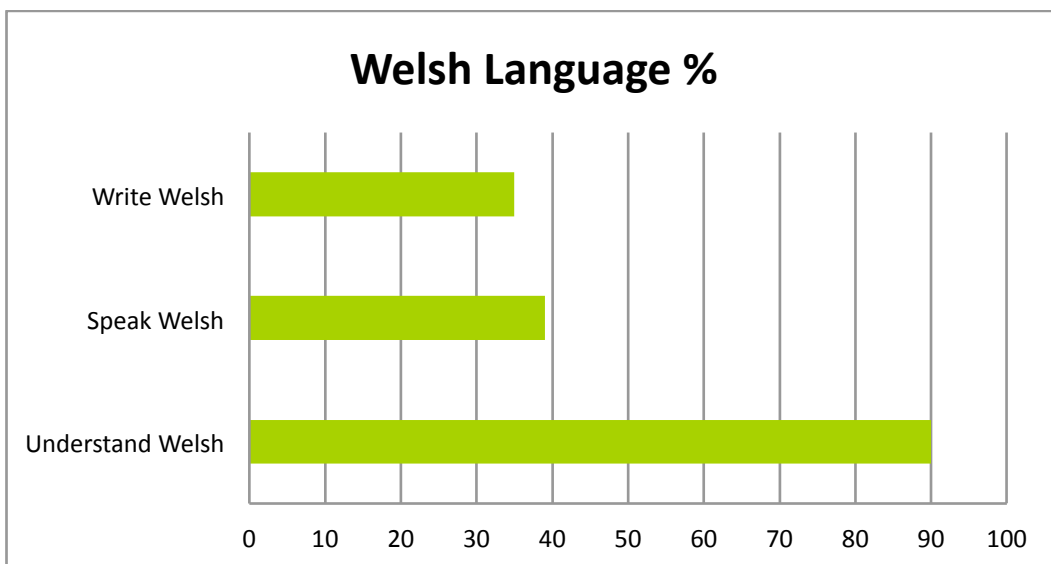
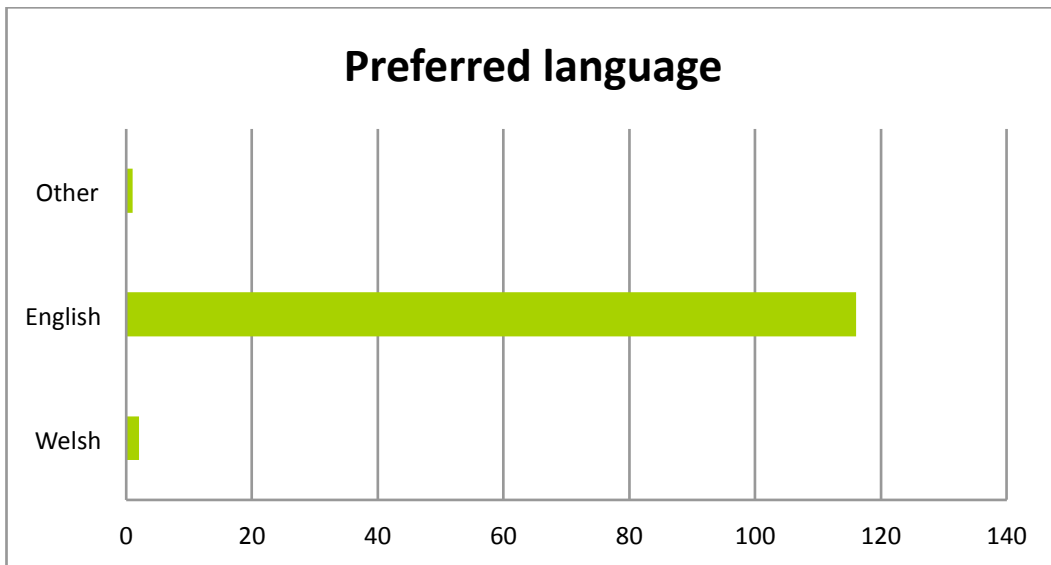
Children and young people think there should be more awareness of what help is available for children affected by domestic abuse. Children often won't talk about it because they feel no-one can help them or because they are frightened to talk about it. This needs to be done with child friendly material like DVDs, posters and through social media. Healthy relationships should be taught properly in schools by people who know about the subject. It should be introduced at a younger age. Things like 'consent' should be taught and better sex and relationship education, not just the biological side and how to put on a condom. It should be part of the curriculum, not just an add-on.

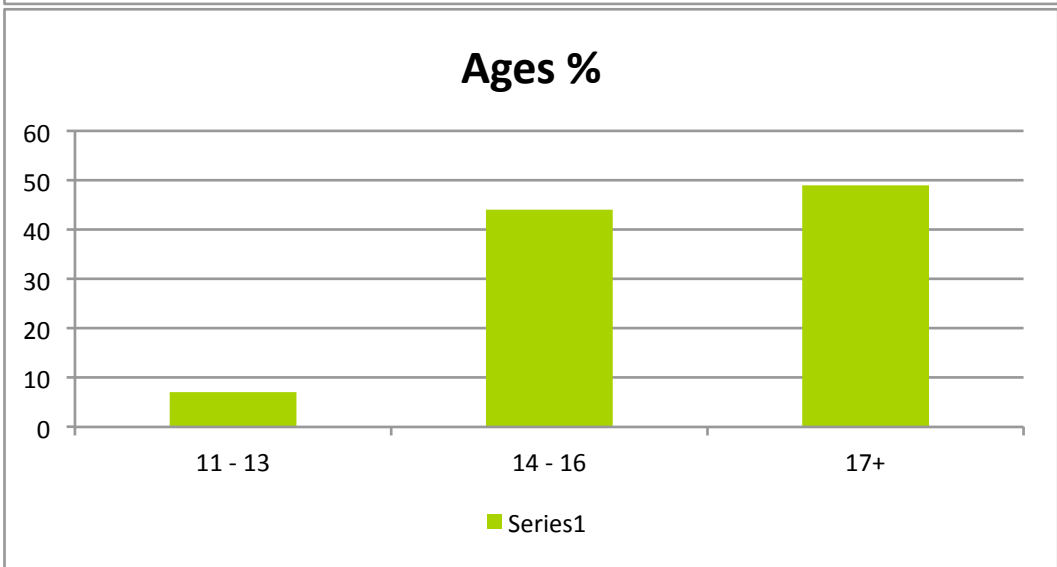
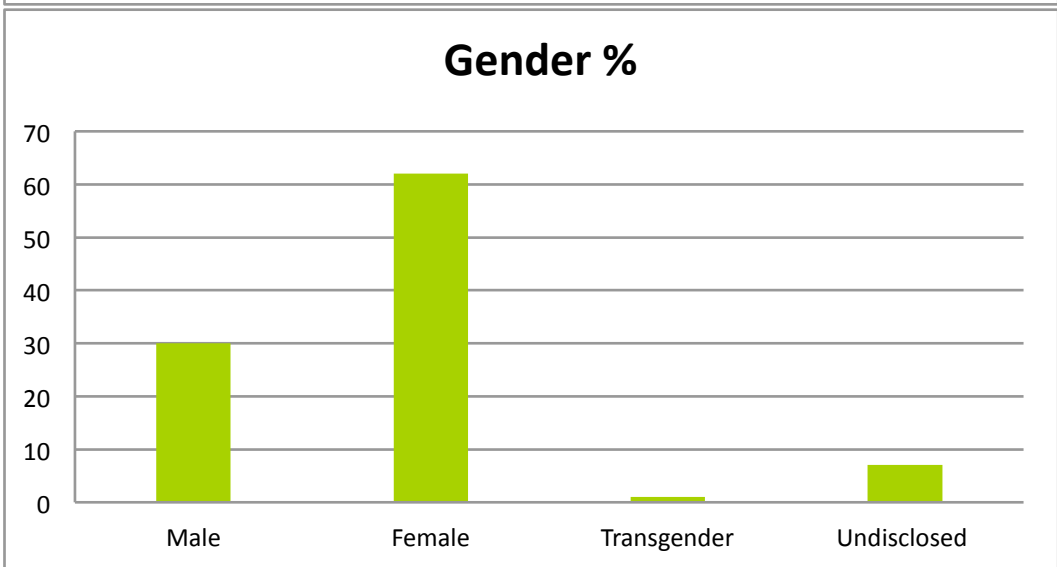
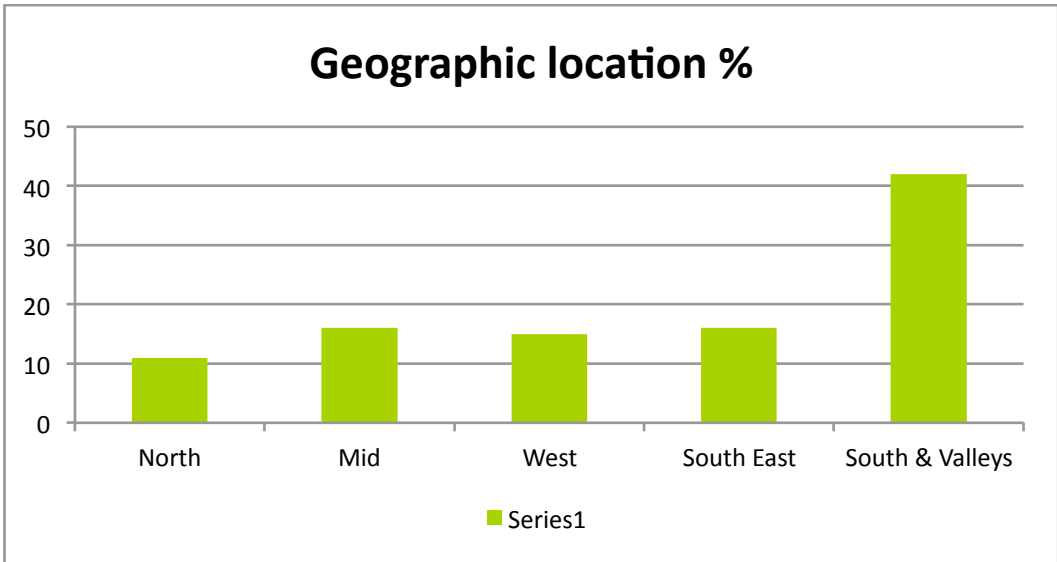
### Substance Misuse (Articles 33 and 36)

Children and young people would like better education on alcohol, drugs and tobacco, not just 'Don't do it' but proper lessons that include the long term effects of drugs; to be able to discuss and debate drug use. This education should start at a young age, around Year 7, not wait until young people have already experimented with their use. Children and young people need accurate, unbiased, up to date information delivered by people who know about and understand drugs, like youth workers. One survey response said *"Create a fun and interactive way to teach young people about the effects of drugs and alcohol. Saying 'It will kill you' isn't good enough"*.



**Survey Demographic Information**





### Young Wales Priorities – Numbers of Responses to Questions

QUESTION	Responses	Yes	No
Have you heard about the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)?	114	63	51
Do you know that Wales has a Children's Commissioner?	113	65	48
Do you know what the Children's Commissioner does?	113	40	73
Do you think that you people are given enough information on how to keep themselves safe when they are online?	107	61	46
Do you think adults in schools, youth clubs, sports clubs, etc are good at preventing or tackling bullying?	105	45	60
Do you feel confident that telling an adult about bullying will help to stop it?	105	39	66
Do you think that young people have access to clear and factual information about drugs and alcohol (including tobacco)?	105	70	35
Do you think that young people who suffer from stress, depression or other mental health problems, get enough help?	100	9	91
Do you think there is enough help for young people who have been affected by domestic abuse at home?	94	29	65
Do you think young people know enough about healthy relationships and what is acceptable and unacceptable in their personal relationships?	100	38	62
Do you think that you are able to influence the decisions that are made about you, by adults?	95	48	47
Do you know where you could go for help to get your voice heard by adults?	98	43	55

