



Swansea University  
Prifysgol Abertawe



## Evaluating the Children's Commissioner for Wales



This report is dedicated to the memory of Peter Clarke, the first Children's Commissioner for Wales and an outstanding champion for children and young people.



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## Who wrote the report

This report is the work of a group of young people and adults. We all contributed to the research, and we all agreed what would go into this report. (We all took part in the project as individuals, not representing our organisations.)

These are the members of the group:

### Young people:

Josey Cook	Neath Port Talbot
Hannah France	Torfaen
Joanne Hillman	Caerphilly
Cerys Jenkins	Neath Port Talbot
Lisa Michael	Torfaen
Toby Pearson	Pembrokeshire
Rhodri Pugh-Dungey	Pembrokeshire
Jamie Richards	Neath Port Talbot
Ben Sawyers	Neath Port Talbot
Mathew Taylor	Voices from Care Cymru

### Adults:

Mandy Cook	Swansea University
Anne Crowley	Save the Children
Nigel Thomas	University of Central Lancashire

This is a shorter and simpler version of our full report to the Children's Commissioner. The adult researchers wrote much of the text, but each of the young people has a page to give their own account of the work and what it means to them. There are also pages by some adults who helped us with the project.

## **People who we need to thank**

Former members of the steering group Jay Griffiths, Joe Williams, Katie Spendiff, Helen Cubberley, Lisa Stuart, Dean Wood, Stephen Ellis...

... the youth workers who supported us, especially Mike Jenkins and Janet Weaver of Neath Port Talbot...

... our advisors, Darren Bird and Richard Powell ...

... Sara Reid and her colleagues at the Commissioner's office...

... all the children and adults who helped us by completing questionnaires, taking part in interviews, or in other ways...

... Media Services at Swansea University and Roger Davies the University photographer...

... Anna Skeels of the Participation Unit...

.... and the staff of Baskerville Hall.

## **Abbreviations used in this report**

AM	Assembly Member
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
CCfW	Children's Commissioner for Wales
ESF	European Social Fund
ENOC	European Network of Ombudspeople for Children
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

## **1 – Introduction**

Peter Clarke was the first Children’s Commissioner for Wales, and he asked us to evaluate his work by doing a research study.

Peter was very keen that the research should be done with the active participation of children and young people, and that is what we have done.

The research was based at Swansea University. It started in 2005, and finished in May 2008.

Our report has been given to the new Children’s Commissioner, Keith Towler, and is now being published together with his reply to our recommendations.

We think this is the first time anyone has studied a Children’s Commissioner anywhere in the world – certainly the first time it has been done by children and young people.

It is not perfect, but we are proud of what we have done and we hope others will follow our example.

## **2 – The Children’s Commissioner for Wales**

### **Children’s Commissioners and ‘Ombudspersons’**

Norway was the first country to establish a commissioner for children, called an ‘ombudsman’. That was in 1981. ‘Ombud’ means a representative, who is there to safeguard people’s rights. The children’s ombudsman was there to safeguard the rights of children.

After the United Nations agreed the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989, other countries began to do the same as Norway – first Sweden, then others in Europe and around the world.

Until 2000 there was no Children’s Commissioner in the UK, although many people thought there should be one, especially in Wales.

### **The Waterhouse report and the Children’s Commissioner for Wales**

In 2000 Sir Ronald Waterhouse finished his Inquiry into child abuse in children’s homes in North Wales. His report showed that children and young people had not been listened to when they complained about being ill-treated and abused.

The first recommendation in the Waterhouse report said ‘An independent Children’s Commissioner for Wales should be appointed.’ At the time an Act was going through Parliament that was meant to improve care homes for children and adults (the Care Standards Act).

The Welsh Assembly Government persuaded the UK government to amend the Act, and so there came to be a Children’s Commissioner for Wales. At first the Commissioner was mainly there to protect the rights of children and young people in care. In 2001 another Act of Parliament gave the Commissioner more powers, so that he could protect the rights of all children and young people. This was the Children’s Commissioner for Wales Act. There are also Regulations made by the Government under the Children’s Commissioner for Wales Act.

### **What does the Children’s Commissioner do?**

The powers and duties of the Commissioner are set out in the Care Standards Act, the Children’s Commissioner for Wales Act and the Regulations, and the Children Act 2004.

The most important things that the Commissioner does are:

*In relation to complaints, advocacy and ‘whistleblowing’...*

- ‘review and monitor’ the arrangements for this, to make sure they keep children safe

*In relation to services provided to children and young people by health, education and social services...*

- examine cases of particular children and young people, where there is concern
- provide advice and assistance to a child or young person in making a complaint
- give advice and information

*In relation to policies of the National Assembly and other public organisations in Wales...*

- 'review and monitor' the effects of policies on children and young people

*In relation to policies of the London Government and other organisations...*

- consider and make representations to the National Assembly, about anything affecting the rights and welfare of children and young people in Wales

*In relation to communicating with children and young people...*

- make sure children and young people know about the Commissioner, and how to get in touch
- make sure children and young people know about their rights
- encourage children and young people to communicate with the Commissioner
- make sure public bodies in Wales know about the rights of children and young people
- seek the views of children and young people on what the Commissioner should do

## **The first Children's Commissioner**

The National Assembly for Wales appointed the first Children's Commissioner, and children and young people took an active part.

Peter Clarke, the head of Childline Cymru, was appointed. He started work on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2001. Peter Clarke had to start at the very beginning – what staff did he need, how would they be organised, where would the offices be?

He decided to have an office in Swansea and another in Colwyn Bay. It took a year to get the basic team together, with Assistant Commissioners for policy, communications, and legal services. Children and young people were involved in appointing all the staff.

Soon after Peter was appointed, he decided to hold a major Inquiry into the case of John Owen, a school drama teacher who had committed suicide after he was charged with serious offences against children and young people. This was a very important case, and made a big impact on the Commissioner's workload in his first two years.

## **Other Children's Commissioners in the UK**

After the Children's Commissioner for Wales was appointed, the other countries in Britain and Ireland all appointed Children's Commissioners too – Northern Ireland in 2003, Scotland in 2004, the Irish Republic also in 2004, and finally England in 2005.

The English Commissioner is not completely independent like the others, but he has responsibilities over policies that affect children and young people in Wales, like youth crime and asylum.

All the Commissioners meet regularly and try to work together.

## **3 – How the Research came about**

### **How it started**

The original idea for the research came when Peter Clarke and Nigel Thomas met soon after Peter was appointed. Then Anne Crowley of Save the Children and Darren Bird of Funky Dragon got involved. The idea was to evaluate the Commissioner's work honestly, and to involve children and young people in the whole work.

Various organisations were asked if they would pay for the evaluation, but no one was willing. Eventually Peter Clarke offered to pay for the evaluation from the Commissioner's budget, although he only had enough money for a small project. It was hoped that more money could be obtained later, to do more work.

The plan was for the project to run for three years, from 2005 to 2008. The main aim was 'to evaluate the effectiveness of the work of the Children's Commissioner for Wales, and in particular its impact on children and young people.' It was stated that 'the research will be planned and carried out with the active participation of children and young people.'

The idea was that the detailed planning and design of the research would be done with a group of children and young people. The time plan for the three years was to spend Year 1 on planning, design and 'pilot' work, Year 2 on the main 'data collection', Year 3 on analysis and writing this report!

### **Appointing the researcher**

The first job was to appoint the researcher for the project. Young people were involved in this through an advisory panel which met three times – to agree a 'person specification', to 'shortlist', and to interview. Four young people took part in the shortlisting and interviewing, and two (Hannah and Joanne) were members of the University appointment panel. This was a first for the University, just as involving children and young people in the Commissioner's appointment had been a first for the Government. The researcher appointed was Mandy Cook. She started work on 24<sup>th</sup> May 2005.

### **Peter Clarke's illness**

In January 2006 Peter was diagnosed with lung cancer. Following surgery he was away from work for most of the year. He returned to work in September, but he never fully recovered. As is well known and deeply regretted, he died in January 2007. Peter's deputy, Maria Battle, headed the office until the new Commissioner, Keith Towler, took over in March 2008.

As a result Peter was not around when our evaluation project was going on, which is a shame when he was so committed to it.

## Hannah's page



I was lucky to be involved in the Evaluation for the Children's Commissioner from one of the earliest points – I was involved in the interviewing process appointing the researcher, Mandy. This set up the level of young people's involvement which was carried on throughout the research – full participation equal to that of Nigel and Mandy.

Since I went on to university it was hard for me to keep meeting dates and be as fully involved as some of the young people, but coming back to a meeting recently was wonderful. Seeing how far the group had come was amazing; the young people being so involved in the research and the group getting on so well and being very comfortable with each other. Mandy and Nigel have been amazing at involving every member and it was wonderful seeing the relationship that has emerged between them and the young people.

Doing my own research on the group I found that the young people had very positive views of the group and I myself have loved being involved. I hope that the success of the group encourages other individuals and organisations to include more young people, as I feel the group has proved that young people and adults can work together.

Thanks guys!

## Joanne's page

*My name is Joanne and I was involved in this project right from the beginning.*



**It was a good experience for me and I learned a lot from being involved with Nigel and Mandy. I also learned a lot from the other young people involved. It was good to see young people so dedicated to something.**

**I also had a lot of fun getting to know everyone and would like to thank all the members of the group. We shared plenty of laughs, had a few disagreements but we all came together in the end. Plus it gave me a sense of satisfaction to know what we achieved.**

**Thank you to Nigel and Mandy for everything they both did and I hope to work with them again in the future.**

**Gonna miss every1 loads**

**Joanne**

**xx**



## 4 – How the Research was done

### The steering group

Once Mandy had been appointed, her first job was to gather together a 'steering group' of children and young people who would be in charge of the research. We started with the young people who took part in appointing Mandy.

A bilingual leaflet was given out to young people's organisations. Young people from youth councils and forums in Neath Port Talbot and Pembrokeshire joined the group, and a first meeting was arranged for July 2005.

The members of the steering group came from all over South Wales, but sadly we had no members from North or Mid Wales. Because the money for the project was very limited, we had to concentrate our efforts in one area. We did make some contacts in the North, and we kept in touch with them from time to time. We also did not have anyone in the group younger than twelve. The group members at the start were aged from 12 to 22, average 16.

We have had 13 meetings as a steering group, held regularly in half-terms and holidays because some members attend school or college. The first was a half-day meeting, but since then we have had day-long meetings, with time for some fun as well as work!

A typical meeting would start with a news update and then work, with breaks for snacks and sometimes games. At the beginning Mandy and Nigel planned the meetings, but as the project went on young people took on more responsibility for this. After each meeting Mandy wrote up what had happened, and quickly circulated it to everyone for their responses.

In the first year, the meetings were mainly about **planning** the research, designing the tools we would use and trying them out ('piloting'). We also spent some time learning about the work of the Commissioner, and learning about research. At the end of the first year, with support from Anne and Darren, the young people met without Nigel and Mandy to evaluate the work of the steering group. They said they would like to contribute more, and to have some residential meetings. This was something we decided to do if we had enough money.

At the end of the first year we moved on to **data collection**, and everyone was keen to take an active part in this. Up to this point the project could have gone in one of two ways – either Mandy doing the work and simply consulting young people, or Mandy facilitating young people to be more directly involved. Because group members were keen to be 'hands-on', that was the way we went.

Because there were limits on young people's time with school, college, work etc, in practice Mandy still had to do most of the data collection as well as helping young people to be 'hands-on'. This meant that she had a lot of work, and we could not do all the research we wanted. However, we believe it was

worth doing it this way, because young people's active involvement was so valuable.

Although some young people moved on because of changing circumstances or interests, most members of the group stayed with the project to the end.

Midway through the project we were given additional funding from the European Social Fund (ESF) with the help of Anna Skeels and the Wales Participation Unit. This meant that we could hold three two-day residential meetings, which we had at Baskerville Hall in Clyro. These meetings gave us extra time and space, and really helped the work of the group. We had more chances to work together to analyse and discuss our findings, and to form stronger relationships in the group.

We built our own website in order to share information about work in progress within the group and with other people ([www.cceval.co.uk](http://www.cceval.co.uk) – thanks to Mathew).

Below is a list of the dates of steering group meetings during the life of the project.

- July 2005 (Funky Dragon, Swansea)
- August 2005 (Funky Dragon, Swansea)
- October 2005 (Environment Centre, Swansea)
- April 2006 (Swansea University)
- July 2006 (Swansea University)
- October 2006 (Commissioner's office, Swansea)
- February 2007 (Baskerville Hall, Clyro – *residential*)
- April 2007 (Commissioner's office, Swansea)
- July 2007 (Swansea University)
- October 2007 (Baskerville Hall, Clyro – *residential*)
- January 2008 (Commissioner's office, Swansea)
- February 2008 (Baskerville Hall, Clyro – *residential*)
- April 2008 (Commissioner's office, Swansea)

Mandy produced a 'timeline' of the project, and this helped us to keep track of what we were doing (**see section 7**).

We were really pleased that in October 2006 we had a chance to meet Peter Clarke. Most members of the group had not met him before, and they really valued this opportunity. It was obvious that Peter was really interested in our work. In January 2008 we also met Keith Towler, the new Commissioner, who also gave strong support to our research.

## **Planning and design**

At our first two meetings we started by looking at the Commissioner's functions as set out by law. We had a presentation from the communications and participation team, to make sure we all had a basic understanding of what the Commissioner does.

We looked at all the Commissioner's tasks and asked ourselves these questions:

- What do we need to know to find out whether this is being done well?
- How can we find the information we need to do this?

We also learned something about research methods, using lectures and discussions within the group. Finally we put all this together in a plan for our evaluation. This was drafted by Nigel and Mandy from the notes of our discussion at the first two meetings. Then it was discussed and agreed by the group. The plan is summarised on the next page. This was a very ambitious plan. We realised that we could not do it all at once, and we chose two tasks to work on first.

One of these we called '**tracking**', or observation of the Commissioner's team at work with children and young people. The other was a **survey** of children and young people to find out how much they knew about the Commissioner, and about their rights.

In the end we were not able to do everything in this plan, and we had to adapt and select as we went along.

## **Summary of Research Plan October 2005**

### **COMMUNICATION FUNCTIONS**

This is what we want to do:

- 1) Track what the Commissioner's team are doing to communicate with children and young people – by asking them, and by observing them
- 2) Measure the effectiveness of the Commissioner's work – by testing the knowledge of children and young people who have had contact with the Commissioner, and by measuring how many places the Commissioner has been to, and how many people know about the work
- 3) Survey children and young people's knowledge and understanding – of the Commissioner's role and functions, how to contact the Commissioner, and children's rights
- 4) Evaluate what the team are doing to consult children and young people about the Commissioner's work – by asking the team, observing them, and asking children and young people
- 5) Look at the work of public bodies – their knowledge and understanding of children's rights, and their relationship with the Commissioner

*This could mean:*

- *interviewing the Commissioner and his staff, watching the team at work, 'shadowing' them, reading work programmes, diaries etc*
- *interviewing children and young people or asking them to complete questionnaires*
- *interviewing staff of public bodies or asking them to complete questionnaires*

### **MONITORING AND REVIEW FUNCTIONS**

This is what we want to do:

- 1) Complaints, advocacy and whistleblowing – look at what the Commissioner has done, and assess the impact of the Commissioner's work
- 2) Policies and services 'made in Wales' – look at what the Commissioner is

- doing, and assess the impact
- 3) Policies and services made outside Wales – look at what the Commissioner is doing, assess the impact

*This could mean:*

- *reading the Commissioner's reports, reading research reports, interviewing staff of agencies or asking them to complete questionnaires, maybe interviewing children and young people*
- *interviewing civil servants and politicians, or asking them to complete questionnaires*

## **INDIVIDUAL CASEWORK FUNCTIONS**

These are the questions we want to ask:

- 1) How does the Commissioner deal with individual cases?
- 2) What are the outcomes?
- 3) What kinds of cases are referred and who by?
- 4) What are the issues about taking on major cases like *Clywch*?

## **Ethics**

It was important to do our research 'ethically' – that is, in the right way to make sure that no one was harmed. At our third meeting we agreed how we would plan the research so as to take care of ourselves and everyone who helped us, and to respect their rights. Our plans were later approved by a committee in the University.

## **'Tracking' and observation**

We wanted to see how the Commissioner's team worked with children and young people, and we thought we could do this by watching them at work.

We talked to the communications and participation team, and chose events when they would be working with groups of young people. We made a 'tracking form' to record and evaluate our observations. Members of our group observed 11 events in 2006, and two more since then.

Also, when the Commissioner's young people's advisory group was established one member of our steering group (Cerys) became a member of the advisory group. She invited other members of the advisory group to complete questionnaires at the start and finish of their work.

Later on we evaluated some of the leaflets and other materials that the Commissioner's team have produced for children and young people. A small group of us looked at a selection of materials and rated them for content, style and presentation.

## **School-based survey**

We wanted to learn about children and young people's knowledge of the

Commissioner. We decided that the best way to do it would be in school, with 7-16 year olds (Years 3-11).

We worked hard at planning the survey, to make sure that we got the questions right. We talked to other people who had done surveys, including a group in the Netherlands. We also decided to include some 'logos' to see how many children and young people recognised them.

We designed the questionnaire to look colourful and interesting, and to fit on one sheet of paper (with English on one side and Welsh on the other). Once we had a design that we thought would work, we 'piloted' the questionnaire, trying it out with groups in schools and other places where group members had contacts. We then made some changes in the questions and the layout, and had it professionally printed (with help and support from the Commissioner's team).

Then we had to get permission from the Welsh Assembly Government, and the local education authorities in Wales, to do the survey. Eight local authorities agreed to help, and in each of these areas we made a 'virtual school', with class groups from Year 3 to Year 11 in different schools across the area.

We wanted to offer children and young people something in return for helping us, so we produced an information pack on children's rights to give to every pupil who had completed a questionnaire. This included a summary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and leaflets about the Children's Commissioner and the other organisations, all in an intriguing envelope. We suggested to class teachers that they could use this to start a class discussion – after the pupils had completed their questionnaires, of course!

When the questionnaires were returned, the results were entered into a database for analysis. We also used the survey with a few groups of young people outside school, but the results of this were kept separate.

*The questionnaire and information pack are at the end of this report.*

## **Interviews**

Once we had started doing the observations and the survey, we asked ourselves what we should do next from our research plan. We thought the best thing would be to interview people who came into contact with the Commissioner's team or were affected by their work. We call these people 'stakeholders'.

At our fifth meeting we thought long and hard about who to interview. We listed categories of people, and individuals in those categories. We also thought long and hard about what questions to ask. We wanted to find out about what people thought the Commissioner did and what they thought of his work. We did four pilot interviews, and then revised the questions.

We did 67 interviews with participants all over Wales, mainly between May and July 2007. We explain who we interviewed later in the report. We organised some training for ourselves in how to interview and record what people said, and respect their rights. Most members of the group did some interviews, but the majority were done by Mandy (and quite a lot by Mathew). All the interviews were tape-recorded and 'transcribed' (written up) afterwards.

We also did another series of interviews with people who we referred to in the steering group as the 'big cheeses' – now we call them 'key players'! These were people like politicians and civil servants. For these we had some new questions, about what they had expected from the Children's Commissioner. We did 13 of these interviews, between July 2007 and March 2008. Again, we explain who we interviewed later in the report.

### **Documents and discussions**

We also looked at documents and reports. Some of this work was done in meetings of the steering group.

We looked at all the major reports produced by the Commissioner, such as Telling Concerns and the Clywch Report. We also looked at short leaflets on consultations with children and young people, and at the Commissioner's Annual Reports/Reviews.

Finally, we looked at some of the Commissioner's planning documents, and records of their policy and consultation work, which were given to us by the team or which we asked for.

We also had conversations with the 'policy' team, the 'communications and participation' team, and the 'advice and support' team at the Commissioner's office. These conversations helped us to understand our findings better.

### **Individual casework**

We had expected to talk to children and young people who had received advice and support from the Commissioner. In the end we were not able to do this, because the Commissioner's office did not think it would be right for us to contact these children and young people. Instead we looked at the figures about the advice and support service in the Commissioner's Annual Reports/Reviews.

Recently we were given contact details for a few individuals who had said they would be willing to be interviewed, but we were only able to see one of these young people before the end of our project.

### **Analysis**

At our first residential, we trained ourselves in how to analyse and interpret research data. This meant that all members of the group were able to take part

in analysing our results. We analysed the tracking data, the survey data, the interview data and the documentary material in different ways.

Then we began to pull together findings in our steering group discussions. We used different methods, including a 'debate', to pick out key questions that we wanted to follow up. These were –

- awareness of the Commissioner among children and adults
- the Commissioner's engagement with children and young people
- impact of the Commissioner on policy and services
- effectiveness of the Commissioner's advice and support
- overall strategy for work of the Commissioner's office



# BEN'S PAGE



The children's commissioners evaluation group was the best project I have ever taken part

I Joined when I was twelve years old, not really realizing the scale of the project. I came along to the first meeting in swansea and from then on I have loved the project ever since



I had so much fun doing the project but as well as that it was a lot of hard work too.



THE GANG



Nigel  
(the Professor)



Mandy  
(Oh I Say..)

With out these two people this project would have been impossible



This was our second home throughout the project, this was the place where all the work got done, and all the fun was had.



THANK YOU

## Cerys' page

I have been on the Children's commissioner for Wales' Evaluation committee for nearly three years. I went to my first meeting in August 2005, and only knew one or two people. It's now been nearly three years and my confidence and knowledge of the subject has grown. When I was told about the group I searched online about the children's commissioner to find out what it was about.

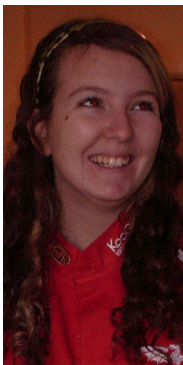
I've loved every minute of being on this group, from meeting two of the best friends I could ever make (Mah Boys!!) to learning interview skills and actually using them for the evaluation. The residential gave me a chance to get closer to my friends and these last three years will be an experience I shall never forget. I've met people from all walks of life, and got to understand their situations more, and also their wisdom has developed me as a person and changed me for the better. It has been an enormous honour to be involved with evaluating such a figure for children, and I hope we have done a good job, and hope to be involved in the next group.

I was also on the Children's commissioner's first advisory group and learned to keep both of them separate and was able to help more by using the advisory group to help evaluate the commissioner. I also found the staff in the office amazing; always willing to help us and also very informative to me. The office has a welcoming atmosphere and if I were given the chance to do this evaluation on the group anytime, I would do it over and over again.

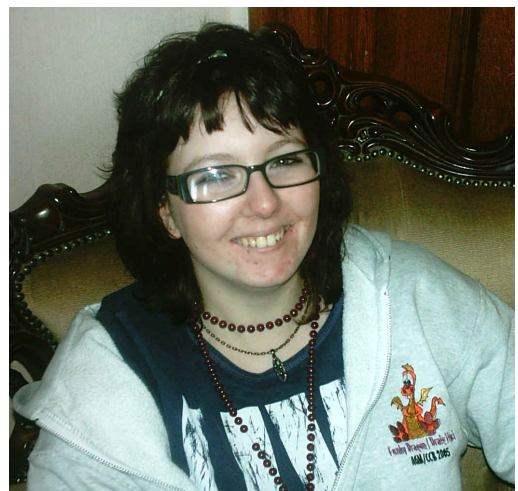
The staff, or adults aiding with the evaluation; Mandy and Nigel, have been amazing to us, letting us hold the reins and steer the project and also providing a good input too, helping us if we didn't understand and also sending out fifteen ba-jillion questionnaire's to be filled.

I've totally enjoyed my time on the group and as I said above would do it over again. The people I have met and friends I have made will hopefully stay with me the rest of my life, and I am grateful to have met such an amazing group of confident intelligent young people and am honoured to have shared my time on the group with you.

Peace out dudes x



<-Before  
After ->



## 5 – Results of the Research

### Results from ‘tracking’ and observation

The events we observed included workshops for children and young people in schools, groups for young carers and looked after children, annual consultation events, and the Commissioner’s advisory group. Most of the events were led by members of the participation and communication team, but other staff were also involved in some of them.

We rated each event on a scale from 1-4, in terms of:

- How well did the team communicate with children and young people? (Average score 3.3)
- Was it appropriate for their age? (Average score 2.8)

Most of the events were aimed at quite a wide age range.

Observers thought the team always engaged with children and young people well, especially younger ones, and that this had got better. Sometimes at larger events, we were not sure that everyone understood the purpose of the meeting.

The young people’s advisory group told us that they enjoyed being in the group, and they were glad to have a chance to influence the Commissioner’s office. They felt that their views made a difference.

### Evaluation of materials aimed at children and young people

Some members of the steering group evaluated these materials:

- an information poster from before 2005
- a leaflet ‘Who, what, why, how’ from 2006
- a leaflet and wallet card ‘Your voice your choice’ from 2007
- the Ambassador Pack for under 11s from 2007
- a USB flash drive from 2008

The group rated the materials against these questions:

- Is it young person friendly (in presentation)?
- Does it say who the CCfW is and what they do?
- Is the language child and young person friendly?
- Does it contain lots of jargon?
- Are the graphics appropriate for the target audience?

All the materials were evaluated as being ‘young person friendly’ in presentation, especially more recent ones. The content was clear in all the materials except for the ‘Your voice your choice’ leaflet and wallet card. The language was appropriate in all the materials except for the poster. The layout and graphics were not so good in the earlier materials, but very good in the recent ones.

## Results of school-based survey

We sent out the questionnaires to schools in autumn 2006. Some came back at once, and the last ones were returned in the spring of 2007. We did the same thing again in autumn 2007, and collected the final results in the spring of 2008.

In some of our charts it says 2006-7 and 2007-8, but mostly we call the two surveys the 2006 survey and the 2007 survey.

Over the following pages we present the results from both years, so that we can compare the two sets of results.

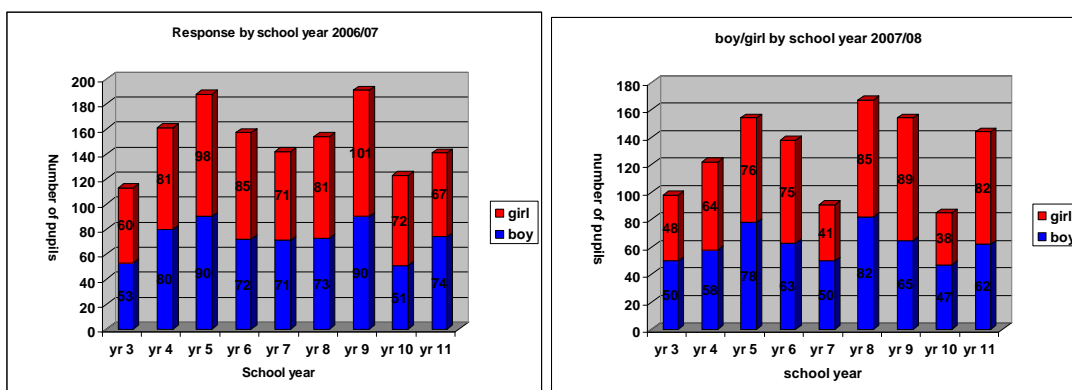
### Who took part in the survey?

In 2006 we sent the survey packs – the questionnaires, instructions for completing them, and the information about rights – to 72 school classes in the eight local authority areas. Of these, 62 sent them back. In 2007 we sent the packs again to these 62 classes (which now had new pupils, because it was a new school year), and 53 of them returned the questionnaires.

In the first year 1373 questionnaires were returned, 1134 in English and 239 (17%) in Welsh. Of the total 716 were from girls and 654 were from boys (3 did not say).

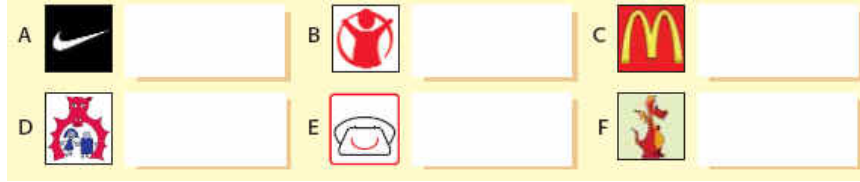
In the second year 1155 questionnaires were returned. There were more in Welsh – 285, or 25%. The proportions of girls and boys were the same as before.

The charts show how many completed the questionnaire in each school year each time we did the survey.



## How many recognised the logos?

Participants were asked 'Can you say what each of these pictures stand for?'

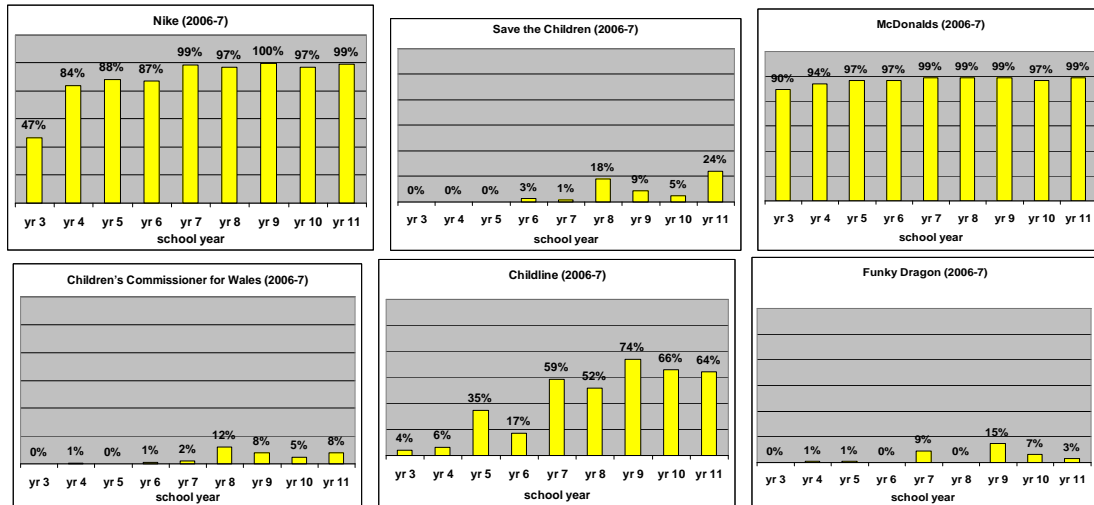


The numbers who correctly spotted each logo each time are in this table.

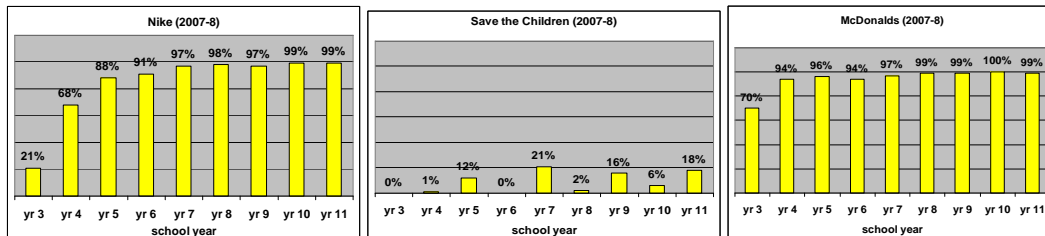
Logo	2006	%	2007	%
A (Nike)	1231	90	994	86
B (Save the Children)	93	7	98	9
C (McDonalds)	1333	97	1097	95
D (Children's Commissioner)	57	4	56	5
E (Childline)	583	42	581	50
F (Funky Dragon)	56	4	98	9

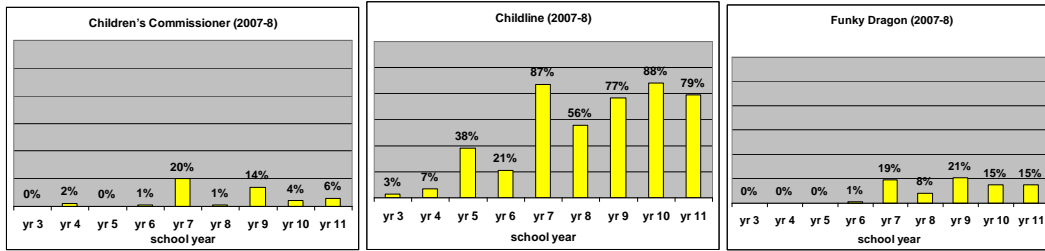
The results by school year group are shown in the charts below.

### 2006:



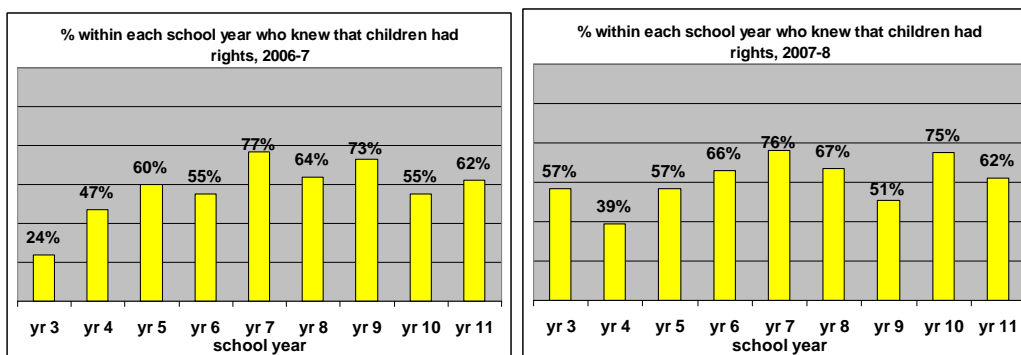
### 2007:





## What did children and young people know about their rights?

Participants were asked 'Did you know that children have rights?' In the first year 59% said 'yes', and in the second year 60% said 'yes'. These charts show the proportion in each school year from 3 to 11.



When asked 'what rights do you think children have?', nearly half gave examples (49% in the 2006 survey, 47% in 2007). The results were very similar in both years.

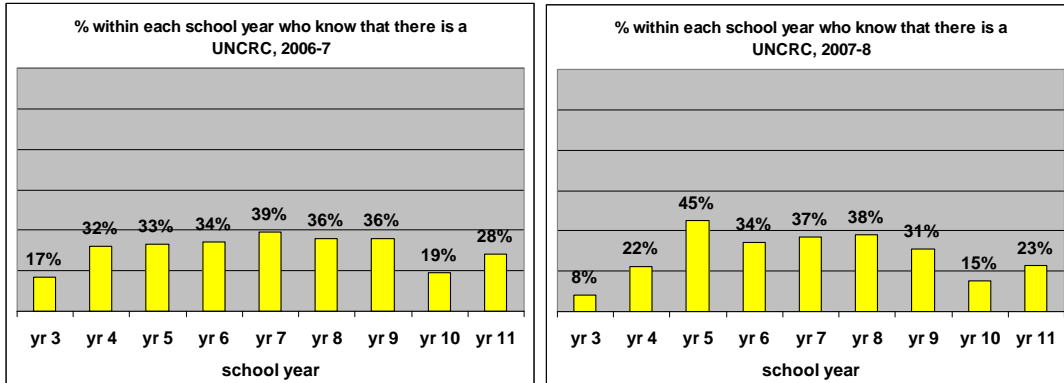
- Some were about food and water, warmth and shelter, to be looked after and to stay healthy.
- Some were about education.
- Some were about free speech, having an opinion or being heard
- Some were about freedom, respect and equality.
- Some were about being safe, not being bullied, abused or hit.
- A few were about play, fun and friends.

This table shows how many times each of these kinds of rights were mentioned in each year.

What rights children mentioned	2006	2007
Health and wellbeing	219	193
Education	181	186
Speak and be heard	156	114
Freedom and respect	145	104
Not being hurt	102	95
Play	82	63

## Did children and young people know about the UNCRC?

Participants were asked ‘Did you know that there is a United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child?’ In the first year 31% said ‘yes’, and in the second year 30% said ‘yes’. These charts show how many in each school year said ‘yes’.



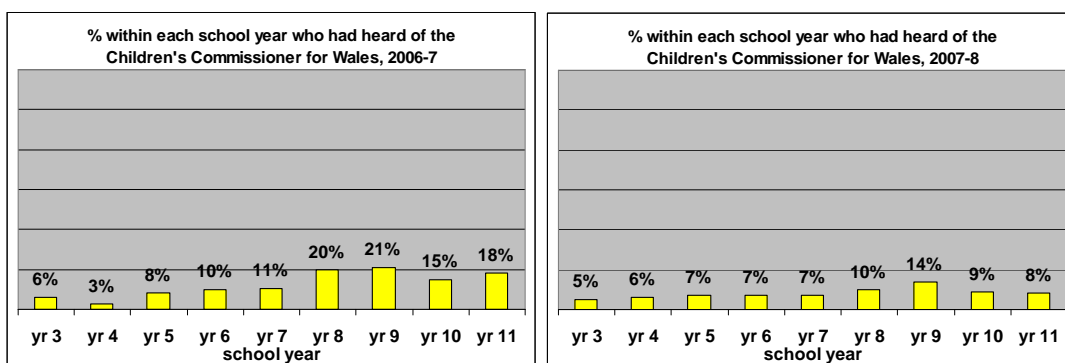
Participants who said ‘yes’ were asked ‘how did you know?’, and they all ticked one or more boxes. The results of this are in this table.

How did you know about the UNCRC?	2006	2007
school	154	126
TV	146	107
internet	143	84
newspaper	104	89
magazine	96	69
friends	70	49
library	46	27
family	17	25
youth groups	15	9

*Funky Dragon did some research in schools which showed that only 8% of pupils had been taught about the UNCRC. Our results show that a lot of children and young people find out about it in other ways – but still, most of them haven’t heard of it.*

### Did children and young people know about the Children’s Commissioner?

Participants were asked ‘Have you heard of the Children’s Commissioner for Wales?’ In the first year 13% said ‘yes’, and in the second year 8% said ‘yes’. These charts shows the proportion in each school year.



Most of these also answered the question ‘Can you tell us something about what he and his team do?’ Some mentioned rights, some said ‘helping children’, some mentioned schools or education, and some said they did not know. Others mentioned bullying, fair play, listening or children having a say, or ‘going around Wales making things better’. A few mentioned that the Commissioner had ‘sadly passed away’.

In the second year a few children mentioned particular things that we think they may have done when they met the Commissioner – ‘made us fill out form about ourselves’, ‘phone them confidentially’, ‘help make DVD for school council’.

The most popular responses in both years are in this table.

What does the Commissioner do?	2006	%	2007	%
‘rights’	60	48	24	40
‘helping children’	52	41	25	42
‘schools’ or education	32	25	10	17

### Had children and young people met the Children’s Commissioner?

Participants were asked ‘Have you met the Children’s Commissioner for Wales or his team?’ Just 2% in the first year and 3% in the second year said yes.

### Did children and young people suggest ways in which the Children’s Commissioner could be better known?

Participants were asked ‘Can you suggest ways in which the Commissioner and his team could make their work better known amongst all children and young people?’ Most people made some suggestions – 832 (61%) in the first year and 629 (55%) in the second year. The most popular suggestions were school visits, TV, posters and advertising, and the internet. There were lots of other ideas, such as a newsletter to schools, meeting school councils, and making a cartoon.

### What were the differences between 2006 and 2007?

In general the results in both years of the survey were very similar, as we expected. The smaller number in the second year who said they had heard of the Commissioner was not what we expected. It may be because the

Commissioner was not ‘in the news’ much after Peter Clarke became so ill.

It is interesting that there are some things that older pupils are more likely to know – like the logos of children’s rights organisations, but that many children and young people of all ages seem to be aware that they have rights.

## **Results of interviews with ‘stakeholders’**

### **Who did we interview?**

We interviewed 67 people, all working to help children and young people.

- 9 were social workers
- 8 were teachers or education staff
- 7 were from the health service
- 5 were from ‘children and young people’s partnerships’
- 5 were lawyers
- 4 were from youth offending teams
- 4 were from young people’s forums and assemblies
- 25 were from NGOs (voluntary organisations) doing different things –
  - six doing advocacy work
  - seven doing campaigning work
  - ten providing services
  - two doing play work

### **What did they tell us?**

They mostly saw the Children’s Commissioner as an advocate, a champion or a voice for children and young people. They mostly thought the Commissioner’s team had an impact on their work. They mostly thought there had been improvements for children and young people in Wales, and that these were partly due to the Commissioner. ‘The Children’s Commissioner is the trail-blazer’, someone said.

Some of them said that life had got better for some children and young people, but worse for others – those who are poor or excluded. They wanted the office to do more to increase awareness of the Commissioner’s work, among children and young people and among professionals. They had different views as to what should be the Commissioner’s top priorities. Quite a few emphasised children and young people having a voice, or wanted attention paid to marginalised groups such as looked after children.

Most people had some direct contact with the Commissioner’s office, and found the Commissioner’s team easy to deal with. We asked people if they were aware of any particular projects by the Children’s Commissioner. A lot of people mentioned the reports on complaints and advocacy ‘Telling Concerns’ and ‘Children Don’t Complain’, or the *Clywch* Inquiry, or ‘Lifting the Lid’ which was about the state of school toilets. Most people thought the team were determined in making things happen, and many could give examples where things they did had been affected by the Commissioner. People did not think organisations in Wales were good at acting on the Commissioner’s recommendations. Often

people thought good policies were made but things didn't change in practice.

We asked people how effective they think the Commissioner's team is at making sure children and young people know how to contact them. Most people were not sure about this, but they thought it was a very important part of the work. Some people thought the team were very good at asking children for their views and giving them a chance to influence plans. A lot of people were themselves unclear about the Commissioner's role or felt they did not know enough about the work. Some thought it would be better if the Commissioner's offices were in a more prominent place.

Many people pointed out that there were important issues which the Commissioner's office had taken up, but where nothing much had happened – like child poverty, child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS), advocacy and school toilets. Some people thought the Commissioner's office had not paid enough attention to the needs of looked after children. Some people wanted more opportunities to work together with the Commissioner's office. Many people mentioned cases where the Commissioner had made things better for individual children and young people, but many also thought the Commissioner's office were taking on too many cases that other people could help with. People thought the Clywch Inquiry had been very well done by the Commissioner, but some people thought he should not have taken it on because it took a lot of time away from other work.

We looked at the interviews to see how well people understood the Commissioner's work, and rated this using a five-point scale. We found that how much people understood seemed to depend on what kind of job they did. We show this in a table.

<b>Professional group</b>	<b>Average score</b>
NGO – Advocacy	5
Legal	4.2
Health	3.86
Children's Partnerships	3.6
NGO – Play	3.5
NGO – Campaigning	3.43
Education	3.25
NGO – Service provision	3.1
Social services	2.55
Youth Forum / Assembly	2.25
Youth Offending Teams	2

## **Results of interviews with ‘key players’**

### **Who did we interview?**

We interviewed 13 people –

- three Assembly Members, from different party groups
- a senior local councillor
- two civil servants in the Welsh Assembly Government
- a trade union leader representing staff who work with children and young people
- a church leader
- a political journalist
- a judge who presided over an important inquiry
- Children’s Commissioner from another part of the UK
- a representative of ENOC (the European Network of Ombudspersons for Children)
- someone who used to work for the Commissioner

We were very keen to include Government Ministers in these interviews – especially the ones who played a part in appointing the Commissioner in the first place. We thought we could learn a lot from what they had to say. Unfortunately the Government decided not to take part.

### **What did they tell us?**

They mostly expected the Children’s Commissioner to be a champion for all children, but a few wanted priority for looked after children. Some also said that they wanted someone who would emphasise children’s voices. Some of them thought the Commissioner had lived up to their expectations, others were not so sure. Some thought the Commissioner had engaged well with children and young people, others were not so sure. Mostly they thought it was a problem that most children and young people had not heard of the Children’s Commissioner.

Some thought the Commissioner took on too much individual case work, and that the office should be much more selective about which cases they take on, to maximise the impact. Most thought the team were persistent and effective, but that organisations in Wales were not too good at acting on the Commissioner’s recommendations.

In general, they thought things had improved for children and young people in Wales as a result of the Commissioner.

They all thought there were ways in which the Commissioner could improve things further for children, especially by –

- prioritising groups like children in care
- challenging and criticising government
- standing up for children and young people

Most thought the status of children and young people had been raised by

having a Commissioner.

Asked about a particular project, most mentioned Clywch, although some questioned whether it had been right to take on the inquiry.

When we asked what should be the Commissioner's highest priority, people talked about –

- deprivation, advocacy for the most vulnerable
- the rights of all children
- listening to children and young people
- standing up and 'speaking out fearlessly'

### **Results from study of policy documents**

By looking at the Commissioner's policy documents we could see clearly how many different kinds of work the team are doing – big inquiries like the ones into complaints procedures, working on issues raised by children and young people like bullying or school toilets, responding to consultations by government, etc.

We tried to understand this work by looking at (a) where the policy issues come from and (b) what happens to them. Policy issues arise in lots of different ways, and the team have to decide what priority to give them.

Policy issues can be –

*Inherited* - things that the Commissioner was expected to work on when the job was set up, like complaints

*Adopted* – things that the Commissioner chooses to take on

*Child-led* – things that come straight from children and young people

*Responsive* – things the Commissioner decides to take up when someone asks

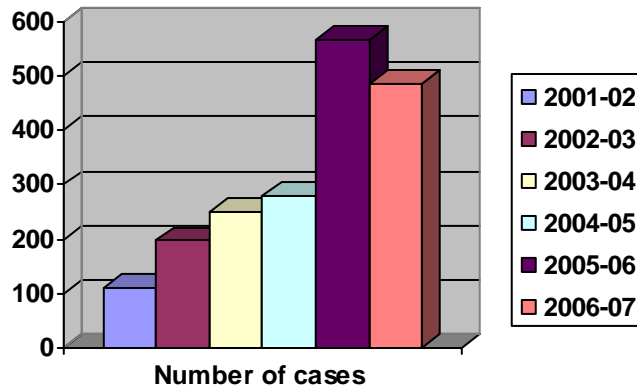
*Reactive* – things the Commissioner does because something happens

*Imposed* – things the Commissioner is told to do – this doesn't really happen in Wales because the Commissioner is independent

We are still discussing these labels with the Commissioner's team to see how well they fit. We are also looking at policy issues to see what happens to them – how they come up, what the Commissioner does, what other people do, what the result is.

### **Results from study of advice and support work**

The Commissioner's Annual Report/Review gives a summary each year of the advice and support work that has been done. This shows that the amount of work is rising each year. The numbers are shown in this chart.



Most calls come in by telephone or letter (but emails are starting to catch up). Most come from parents, and a lot from professionals like social workers, nurses and teachers. Very few calls come directly from children and young people. Most calls are about education and special needs, or about social services and child protection. Family disputes, health and bullying also come up.

In May 2007 the Commissioner’s office started a ‘freephone’ service, with a lot of publicity, but this does not seem to have resulted in more calls from children and young people.

The following ‘vignette’ is based on a true story reported to us by a young person. It shows what difference the service can sometimes make. The names have been changed.

### **A school bus conversation**

After school one day Sophie was talking to a younger boy Tom on the school bus. Tom was saying how he was being bullied by a teacher at their school. He was upset, as he felt he wasn’t getting any support from the school about this and didn’t know who else to talk to. He had been to the head teacher but hadn’t got anywhere.

Sophie told him about the new advice line at the Children’s Commissioner for Wales. Tom didn’t feel confident enough to phone on his own, so Sophie agreed to sit with him whilst he was on the phone.

The advice worker listened to Tom and, with Tom’s consent, next day the Commissioner’s Office contacted the school for him. They also sent out to Tom some information on how children can complain about things. The result was that the head teacher took up the issue with the teacher – in fact the teacher was suspended.

*Summer term 2007*

## **Results of discussions with the Commissioner's team**

Towards the end of the research we had discussions with members of the Commissioner's team. These discussions gave us a better understanding of how they do their work, and how they aim to achieve things. These are some of the things they said to us.

### *Raising awareness –*

They aim to raise awareness about the work of the CCfW as well as the UNCRC, by working in groups with

- all children and young people
- vulnerable or marginalised groups in particular
- professionals who work with children and young people.

The aim is for all children and young people to know about their rights and to know where to go if they need advice and support, but especially children and young people who lack a voice or who are most likely to need the Commissioner. They are planning to use local radio and newspapers to reach more children and young people.

### *Impact on policy and services –*

The team realise that the slow pace of change can be frustrating, especially for children and young people. It can take time to get changes, because people have to learn to do things differently, and sometimes because it needs more money. Sometimes things are changing but it is not always easy to see at first.

### *Advice and support –*

The team aim for 'quick solutions', working wherever possible with local agencies and 'signposting' children and young people to local services. They are concerned that some people think they do too much of this work. They say they could be better at informing advocacy workers about what they do, and give feedback about common concerns. Although most referrals come from adults, the team always talk to the child or young person directly. The 'freephone' service is not producing more calls from children and young people.

### *The office –*

Members of the team agreed that the main office was 'too tucked away' and that it would be good if it was more central and visible.

## Jamie's page

I have thoroughly enjoyed my time spent on the CCfW evaluation committee.

I've learned a lot about interviewing techniques, analysing documents and most importantly what the commissioner's aims and goals are!



I've made many new friends, and had many fun days with the committee, from eating pizza, to playing cricket and having water fights!



I will now in future spread the word about the Children's Commissioner in far more detail and understanding than before I was part of this group, something I'm quite proud of having achieved.



I'd just like to thank Mandy, Nigel, Mike and Jan for all their hard work throughout the 3 years of the project.

## Josey's page

Okay, where to start? It's been a long 3 years, but every bit has been worth while, if I could go back I would still have joined because it has been an amazing experience. I can remember my first meeting being scared and nervous to our last meeting feeling entirely comfortable to talk and have my opinion heard. Throughout the 3 years we have all flourished from what we have learned, I know personally my confidence has grown and so has my self-esteem. Without this study I wouldn't have been aware of the problems the children commissioner's office face and just how much there is that needs to be done for young people across Wales. I cannot imagine how much we have covered over 3 years, it sounds a long time but it accounts to about 12 meetings which I think is pretty amazing. The residential have been great, it's weird because from the start it felt like a team and I can't remember not talking or laughing with everyone. I've just enjoyed this whole experience so much, and I would love to give my thanks to all the people involved for making it great. I'll truly miss our meetings. It's going to be something I'll never forget, and I know everyone else feels the same. I know we have achieved something and that's what I am most proud of. I appreciate all the hard work everyone has put in, including Mandy and Nigel. So yeah that's about it, thank you all.



## 6 – Our evaluation of the Children’s Commissioner

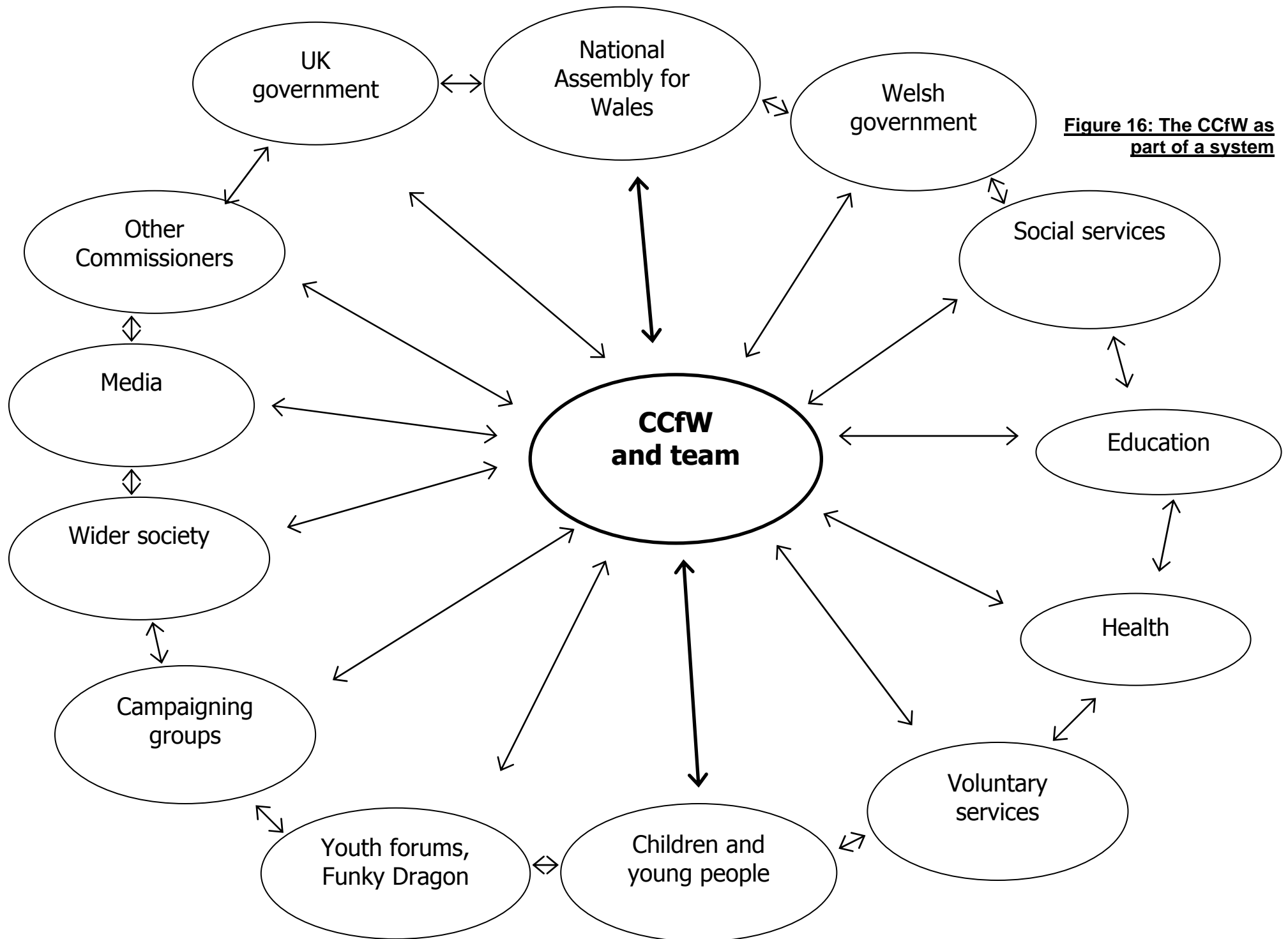
### Looking at a ‘system’

When we evaluate the Children’s Commissioner for Wales we do not just ask if these particular people are doing a good job. We are also asking how all those people, whose job it is to help children and young people or promote their rights, are working together in a bigger system – of which the Children’s Commissioner is one part.

Having a Children’s Commissioner is a big change in the system for providing services and promoting rights for children and young people in Wales. It will make a difference only if the Commissioner works with the rest of the system, and if the rest of the system works with the Commissioner.

By ‘the rest of the system’ we mean government, public bodies, charities and voluntary organisations. We also mean the press and media, churches, businesses, clubs and societies. All these organisations can work with the Children’s Commissioner to make things better. We show what we mean by a ‘system’ in the diagram on the next page.

In doing our research we have looked at many of the different parts of the system, and we have talked to many of the people who work in it – civil servants, politicians, people who work in education, health and social services, youth workers, advocacy workers, campaigning groups and child welfare charities, representatives of the church and the media, the Commissioner’s staff, and children and young people. Our evaluation is based on what they told us.



**Figure 16: The CCfW as part of a system**

## **Awareness of the Commissioner**

Our research has shown that children and young people in Wales are not generally aware of the Children's Commissioner. This is disappointing, but we suspect it is the same for other Commissioners in the UK. It would be wonderful if all children and young people knew about their Commissioner, but maybe this is not realistic. It would be good if enough children knew, so that every child had a friend who knew about the Commissioner. In times of trouble that could be a help!

The Commissioner's team have tried hard to get information to children and young people who are most vulnerable or likely to need help, about the Commissioner and children's rights. They have also made regular visits to schools to raise awareness about the same things. However, they cannot visit every class in every school in Wales – it would take them a hundred years!

Children and young people learn information in different ways;

- in school
- from parents and family
- from the media
- from other children and young people

Some children and young people also get information from professionals like social workers.

We think it is right for the Commissioner's team to do lots of different things to get information to children – not just visits to schools and groups, but the 'Ambassadors' scheme, using local newspapers and radio, getting the Commissioner 'in the news', etc.

However, the Commissioner's team is one small group of people, and they cannot make sure all children and young people in Wales know about the Commissioner. The Government also has a job to do, making sure that children and their parents know about the Commissioner, and about the UNCRC. Other organisations like hospitals, health centres, social work services can provide information to children and families. The media should report the Commissioner's work properly (and not mix up the Children's Commissioner for Wales with the Children's Commissioner in England ).

Pupils in our school survey suggested that the Commissioner should be advertised on television, in newspapers and on billboards. These could be good ways to spread the word, but they would be very expensive, and the Commissioner does not have a lot of money set aside for this. (Some other Commissioners spend more, we think.)

## **Engagement with children and young people**

The Commissioner's team work well with children and young people, in lots of ways. They also work hard to learn **from** children and young people about their concerns, and to use this information in the Commissioner's work. The

Commissioner campaigned about the state of school toilets just **because** children and young people told him it was important, even though some adults thought it was not.

The team have used voting, big consultation events, and the Backchat/Atebnôl email group, to let children and young people help to decide the Commissioner's priorities. They have also set up advisory groups (in the North and the South) so that a representative group of young people could have an influence on the work of the office. These young people have told us that they think they are making a difference.

All these seem to us to be really good ways to engage children and young people in the activity of the Commissioner. We hope that in future the Commissioner will find new ways to do this – perhaps appointing young people to jobs where they can lead some of the Commissioner's work. Children and young people have also played a big part in the appointment of the Commissioner's staff.

### **Impact on policy and services**

In the long run it is really important that the Children's Commissioner for Wales makes a difference to policy and services for children and young people, like all Children's Commissioners. Of course, it is sometimes hard to tell if it is the Commissioner who has made the difference, or someone else.

We have seen some issues on which they do seem to have made a difference already – like advocacy and complaints, how children are protected from abuse in schools, and other subjects. We have also seen some issues where not much has happened, like CAMHS – but even on these issues the team have worked hard and not given up. Sometimes the problem is that the Government has not listened as it should.

### **Individual advice and support**

We are sorry that we have not been able to evaluate the advice and support service in the way that we hoped to. This was because we were not able to contact children and young people who had been helped.

We have tried to use information from the Commissioner's records of the service, but this has not given us as much information as we would like. We can see that the Commissioner has been giving more and more individual help, but we think some of this may be inappropriate.

The advice and support work should concentrate on cases that are important for many other children, or where other services have tried and failed to get children their rights. It should not be doing things that other advocacy services can do, and it should be working more closely with them.

## Overall comments

Creating a new office of Children's Commissioner from the beginning is a huge task. It was particularly hard in Wales because Wales was the first to have a Children's Commissioner. Because the first Commissioner became ill and then died, this has been a very difficult time for the whole team. We have been studying them in a very difficult period.

In spite of all these difficulties, it is clear that the office has already become an important part of the services for children and young people in Wales.

- The team have been very active in working on issues like complaints, whistleblowing and advocacy, and have made a big difference.
- They have worked really hard to spread the message of children's rights and where children can get help.
- They have provided a growing service of advice and support for individual children and their families.
- They took on a major inquiry and did it very effectively.
- They have done much to raise the image of children and young people, and to demand respect for them.

However, we do think the office needs a clearer sense of purpose. Lots of people expect lots of things from the Commissioner, and the Commissioner has to make firm choices about what to concentrate on.

Thinking again about the 'system', the important question to ask is how the Commissioner's office can do the important things that other parts of the system cannot do. The Children's Commissioner has powers to make people like the Government listen and act. These powers can be really valuable if they are used well. It is also important that the other parts of the system think about what they can do to help the Children's Commissioner!

Some of the work the Commissioner can do would need more money. If the Government does not provide this money, that work will not get done.

People who spoke to us disagreed about whether the Commissioner does enough for children and young people who are 'looked after' in local authority care or accommodation. This needs careful attention.

# RHODRI'S PAGE!!!!!!

During my time as part of the Children's Commissioners Evaluation Group 2005-2008 I have made numerous amounts of friends, learnt many new skills and techniques, shared many fun times with people on residentials and meetings and generally had an amazing time over the past 3 years! And if we could do it all over again I'm sure I would have just as amazing time!

I have learnt many new skills including, interviewing techniques, communication skills, organisation skills and generally bettered my self as a person and now have a wider perspective of life.

The people younger and older people that I have worked with no longer seem like colleagues or peers but friends that I hope to see again in the near future!

After reading the report it has amazed me how much work we have actually done, not to seem modest but the meetings and residentials that we went on were amazing fun and didn't seem like work as the activities we under took were enjoyable and we learnt something from them and got the work done as the report shows, much has been done!

To finish I would like to thank all the members off staff for an very memorable time that has helped me in life and will hopefully help me in future events. I hope to see all who I have worked with and become friends with again in the near future!



## Toby's page

Three years already, wow!! Working in this group has been a fantastic opportunity, id just like to thank Nigel and Mandy for all their hard work preparing the meetings and residentials as well.  
I think I speak for all the young people on the group when I say this has been



one of the most interesting projects I have ever worked on, the work of the children's commissioner's office is never ending and it is extremely important, I'm proud to say I've worked with them and the other members of the group, all of whom have talents that will help them in the future, as one of the oldest young people on the group I've noticed the changes in the younger members over the last three years, keep an eye on this lot they will be the politicians of the future.

After three years it's going to be strange not having meetings anymore but I



hope that we will all keep in contact as we have really created some special friendships, some of us more than others but i will miss them all I've had a great time and I've learnt so much id just like to thank Nigel, Mandy, Mike, Jan and all the other adults who made it possible for us to take part in this project.

## 7 – Our evaluation of the research project

This was a very ambitious project. Studying the effectiveness of a Children's Commissioner is something that has not been done before, let alone doing it with children and young people, and on a very small budget! We have not been able to do everything we wanted to do.

The part played by children and young people in this project has been really important. The 'young researchers' have had a real influence on the project, and it would have been completely different without them. The younger members of the group want to say very strongly how they always felt included and listened to, and that the project belonged to them.

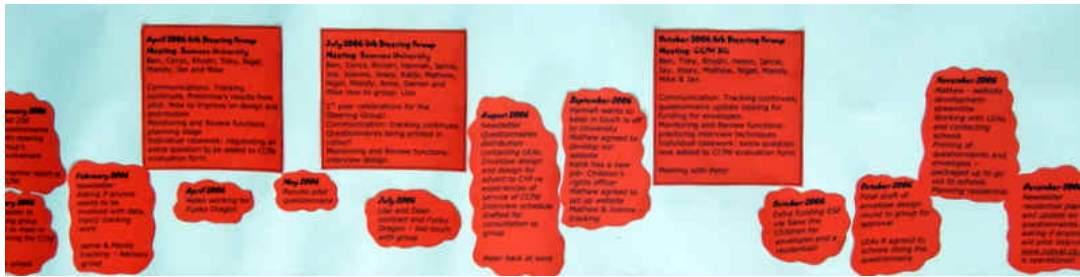
Young people have been directly involved in every part of the research. They took a full part in the planning and design, in deciding what we would do and how we would do it, in collecting data, in interpreting and analysing, and producing the final report. We are now planning for everyone to help in telling other people about our research.



Most of the young people who joined the project at the beginning are still here at the end, and are keen to carry on, if we can. They have all contributed a huge amount to this project, and we have all learned a huge amount from being part of it. For all of us – both young people and adults – it has been a marvellous opportunity to meet and share our skills and interests, and to get to know each other through working together.

The research we have done has been limited by the time and money we had. We would have liked to have seen more of the work of the team, in particular their work with disadvantaged groups including children and young people in care. We would have also liked to do more analysis of our interviews with people.

There are other things that we could not do because other people did not agree – for example, talking with Government Ministers, and with children and young people who have been personally assisted by the Commissioner's office.

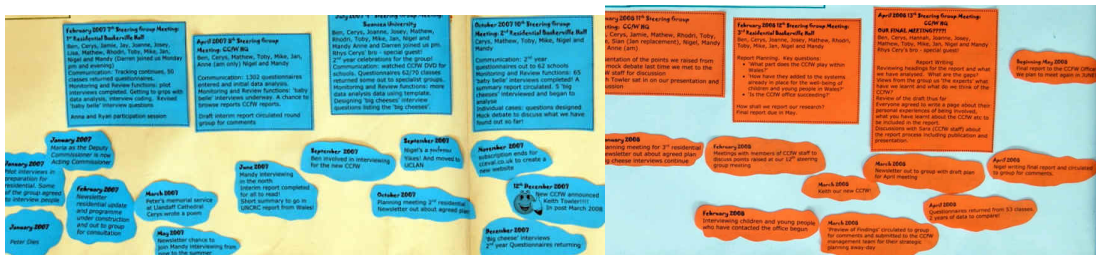


The Commissioner's team have been really helpful and looked after us well, including quite a lot of pizza! They have also given us lots of information, but sometimes we could not get all the information we needed.

We were supposed to develop a plan for future evaluation of the office, but we ran out of time to do this. However, we do think a plan can be made using some of the things we have done – the interviews with stakeholders and 'key players', the school-based survey, and the tools we have begun to develop for studying the impact of policy work.

In relation to the school survey, we should also say that feedback from pupils and teachers who took part was very good, with comments such as 'led to a very good PSHE lesson on teacher and pupils rights'.

We also believe that involving children and young people should be part of any future evaluation. We have shown that young people can contribute actively and constructively to the process, if they have the knowledge they need. This is the Children's Commissioner, after all, and so children and young people should help to evaluate the work.



## Lisa's page

I joined the steering group as a member of Torfaen Young peoples forum, i was taking the place of my friend Hannah who was going to University and could no longer take part.

My first meeting was in Swansea and it was great fun, the steering group was celebrating their first year and we had a bit of a party. I was made very welcome by everyone and took part in many discussions on that day.

Due to other commitments I was unable to take part in many other meetings, however I joined the group for a weekend at Baskerville hall where we did a lot of work in smaller groups and as one large group. We had many great discussions and had a great time.

Sadly I wasn't able to make it any other meetings but have been kept up to date on everything thats been going on via post,email and telephone. It has been a pleasure to take part in this project.

Lisa Michael



## Mathew's page



*“Evaluating the office of the first Children’s Commissioner for Wales is an experience I’m not going to forget in a hurry”*

I joined the evaluation group in October 2005, and I think it’s fair to say I had a pretty firm opinion of how I felt the office was functioning. Coming from a care background myself I felt there was so much more the office could be doing on behalf of children and young people looked after or leaving care.

As the research went on it became apparent to the group what a huge role the Office really had to fulfil, they were the first established Children’s Commissioners Office in the UK and were viewed by some as the saviour to all things related to children and young people. This really was a big expectation to live up to.

Being part of a group with members from a range of backgrounds and with different experiences helped us in conducting a fair and honest piece of research. Opinions were able to be aired and discussed in a way where everyone was able to contribute, followed always by a group conclusion. Mandy and Nigel did a great job in facilitating and keeping us all on track when we began to waffle!

It is my opinion that this report has reached a balanced conclusion on the impact of the Children’s Commissioners Office and we have made some excellent recommendations, which if implemented will further enhance this impact.

For me what this report has highlighted is the fact that the Office really does take the views of children and young people seriously. Particularly evident during “Lifting The Lid”, this was a favourite of mine! It may not have been what organisations and adult groups were hoping for, but it was what children and young people wanted and, what they were concerned about. An excellent example of where these views were acted upon, which led to a Wales wide review of the state of the nations school toilets.

I’d like to thank the whole group for making this process such a great experience. Also to the Children’s Commissioner’s Office for making us feel so welcome and being so open during the research.

My only hope is that the Office continues to develop and achieve great things under the leadership of the new Children’s Commissioner.

None of this could have been possible without Mandy and Nigel, thank you so much guys. What a wonderful example of true participation with children and young people at its very best. ☺

## 8 – Our recommendations for the future

The Commissioner has asked us to end this report with some recommendations. We hope all our recommendations are seen to be helpful and constructive.

1. We recommend an action plan to tackle low levels of awareness of the Commissioner among children and young people. The Government and the media should help with this.
2. We recommend a new package of information for schools to explain the Children's Commissioner with learning about rights and citizenship. A good DVD could reach many more schools than the visits by the Commissioner's team. For younger children, we pass on the suggestion from one or two children in our survey of a story or cartoon book to introduce the Commissioner.
3. We recommend that the survey we have started should continue each year, to keep track of changes in awareness among children and young people. We recommend that the other Commissioner's offices in the UK be invited to use this too.
4. We recommend that all organisations which provide services for children and young people think about how they can make sure their staff know about the Commissioner.
5. We recommend further research to evaluate the impact of the Commissioner's interventions in policy and services.
6. We recommend an evaluation of the Commissioner's advice and support service, which should ask the views of children and young people who have been helped.
7. We recommend a review of the advice and support service be done, working with other advocacy providers. We want to see an independent national advocacy service, as recommended by the Commissioner, and we think the Commissioner's office should work closely with that service to help all children and young people.
8. We recommend that the new Commissioner undertake a review of what the Commissioner is there to do and how the office is organised.
9. We recommend that the Commissioner think about setting up a special team for looked after children and care leavers.
10. In October 2007 the Deputy Commissioner made some recommendations to the Government for strengthening the powers and functions of the Commissioner. We support these recommendations.

11. We also support the recommendation of the UNCRC Monitoring Group that the Commissioner should be funded by the National Assembly, not by the Government.
12. We recommend that the Commissioner think seriously about having the main office in a city centre where it will be easier to get to, especially for children and young people. The same applies to any local offices.
13. Finally, we recommend that consideration is given to changing the name of the office to include 'young people' as well as 'children', so that it is clear that the office is for everyone up to age 18.

## Mike's page

The Children's Commissioner's Evaluation Committee Research Team has been a rewarding experience for not only the members but for the accompanying staff as well. The young people who are members are hardly recognizable from those who joined 3 years ago, not only in physical appearance but in mental capability as well.



They are now accomplished at interviewing important members of their community and Welsh assembly, in some cases. Reviewing and evaluating the work of the Children's Commissioner has been the main part of the group's performance but there has been a need to have fun. Playing Cricket, Baskerville Hall, Bowling have been some of the lighter activities but the examining of documents and past work has been the main job.



## Jan's page

The young people from NPT who worked with the research team have contributed their time 100% to the research & the work that was involved. The research programme involved a number of residential weekends, mid week evening meetings, half term holiday dates and also individual tasks in support of the project. I would also like to thank and acknowledge the staff support behind the scenes especially transporting young people together with some sleepless nights due to the extent of the work which probably made the young people even keener to work!

The young people have taken part in a substantial piece of work that can only be recognized as professionalism at its best for young people. The young people have carried out a number of tasks including interviewing Welsh Assembly Members, key stakeholders & Heads of Service within organizations and many more other people together with meeting new faces and making new friends along the way.

They have learnt so many things and had a realistic experience of both being behind the scenes of a piece of research as a young person and also understanding & evaluating the work of Organizations & Agencies to improve services for young people across Wales via reading policies and documents that were on many occasions described as "Jargon" instead of young people friendly which is understandable!. The work of the research team analyzed information and documents in order to gain information.

A favorite moment for me on a personal note was whilst visiting Chester University with the Youth Council & the British Youth Council, the late Mr. Peter Clarke, the Children's Commissioner for Wales was present together with the 3 Commissioner's from England, Scotland & Ireland. Mr. Clarke was familiar with NPT Youth Council members regardless of the research and he spoke personally and also called one member of the Youth Council by first name – this is an inspiration for young people to see & meet officials and to be acknowledged – the young people who were present surely were inspired and there proved a sense of learning, supporting and a genuine caring role regarding young people. The acceptance of not being physically able to be everywhere in Wales but being present at many events is important which makes young people feel included.

### **Buzz Words:**

**Confidentiality – More Publicity – Logos – Understanding Differences of Organizations – Culture Awareness – More Pizza – Young People & Needs – Citizenship – Sweets – Baskerville Hall – Young Person Friendly & Adaptable – Policy Reading – Jargon – Cold Water! – Empowering**

*Young people bring back key skills to their own environment by learning by example and become influential youngsters who want to contribute to society for the better by being involved*

## Anne's page

It has been a pleasure and an honour to be involved with the project, to work with the young people on the steering group and with Mandy and Nigel and to catch up from time to time with Jan and Mike. Sad for me that I missed out on lots of meetings but witnessing the young people (and the adults!) develop new skills and undertake a wide range of research roles (including interviewing, observation and analysis) with enthusiasm, rigour and with a GSOH has been a privilege and a joy. The fact that the project has produced such a worthwhile, informative and useful report is a bonus that I know the new Children's Commissioner for Wales will really welcome.

When Nigel first approached me in 2002 with the idea of working collaboratively and raising funds for an evaluation of the Children's Commissioner in Wales, I was surprised to learn that no other Children's Commissioner or Ombudsperson's Office had previously been evaluated. We are perhaps all so convinced that the Office of an Ombudsperson or Commissioner for Children is a 'good thing' in terms of safeguarding and promoting children's rights that we have failed to remember the lessons from history that show us that 'good intention' is rarely enough, in itself to protect children's rights. Logically and morally, the project has shown that it really does not make sense to establish an independent 'champion for children' and not to ask children and young people regularly and often, if he or she is doing OK.

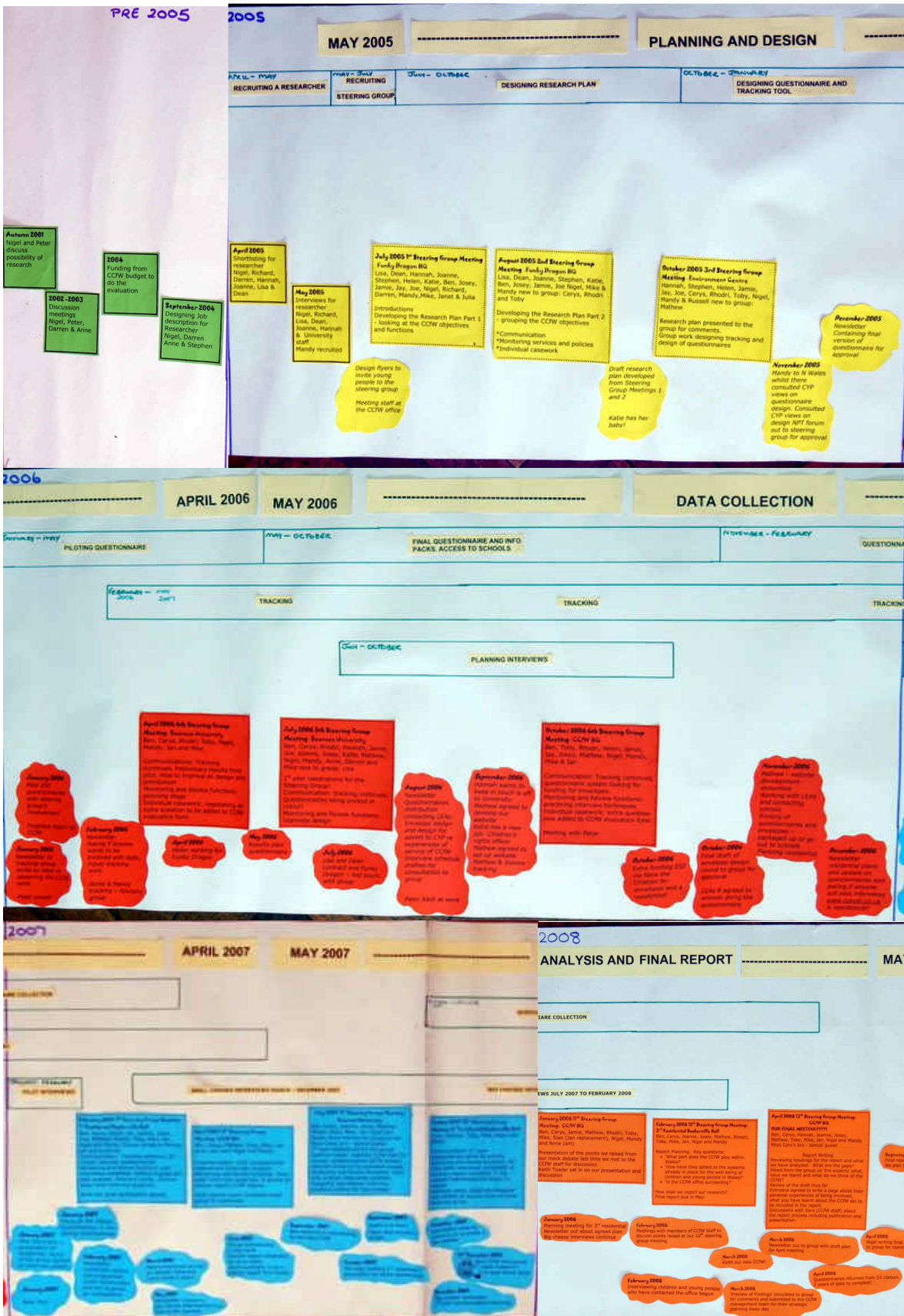
Peter Clarke embraced the notion of his and his team's accountability to children and young people and this is part of his enduring legacy. The project represents the fruits of his initial hunch to go along with the 'Professor's' (or Nigel to his friends) proposal and to insist on young people's full participation – whatever the limitations of the budget!

The steering group have of course proved Peter right and been an inspiration to us all. The young people have shown a level of commitment, diligence, intelligence, sensitivity, and skill (not to mention the buckets of personality) that would be hard to match elsewhere. Their example surely paves the way for renewed discussions with potential funders for establishing a Children's Research Initiative in Wales – an initiative that would provide support and accredited training for children and young people to undertake social research on issues of concern to them.

Thank you for the memories y'all.

Anne

# Our 'timeline'











# WHAT DO U KNOW? - U TELL US!

1 About you boy  girl  age

2 What town do you live in or are near to?

3 Can you say what each of these pictures stand for?

A 	<input type="text"/>	B 	<input type="text"/>	C 	<input type="text"/>
D 	<input type="text"/>	E 	<input type="text"/>	F 	<input type="text"/>

4 Did you know that children have rights? Yes  No   
If yes, what rights do you think children have?

5 Did you know that there is a United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child?

Yes  No  If yes, how did you know?

school <input type="checkbox"/>	newspaper <input type="checkbox"/>	internet <input type="checkbox"/>	friends <input type="checkbox"/>	youth groups <input type="checkbox"/>
library <input type="checkbox"/>	magazine <input type="checkbox"/>	TV <input type="checkbox"/>	other (please say) <input type="text"/>	

6 Have you heard of the Children's Commissioner for Wales? Yes  No   
If yes, can you tell us something about what he and his team do?

7 Have you met the Children's Commissioner or his team? Yes  No   
If yes, were you involved in any of their work and if so, how?

8 Can you suggest ways in which the Commissioner and his team could make their work better known amongst all children and young people?

THANK U!

NO: xxx

# BETH WYT TI'N EI WYBOD? - DYWEDA DI!

1 **Amdanat ti** bachgen  merch  oedran

2 **Ym mha dref rwyd ti'n byw, neu pa dref sy'n agos at dy gartref?**

3 **Allwch chi ddweud beth yw ystyr y lluniau hyn?**



4 **Oeddets ti'n gwybod bod hawliau gan blant ?** Oeddwn  Nac oeddwn

**Os atebaist ti 'oeddwn', pa hawliau wyt ti'n meddwl sydd gan blant?**

5 **Oeddets ti'n gwybod bod Confensiwn gan y Cenhedloedd Unedig ar Hawliau'r Plentyn?**

Oeddwn  Nac oeddwn  **Os oeddets ti'n gwybod, sut?**

ysgol  papur newydd  rhyngrwyd  ffrindiau  grwpiau ieuenctid

llyfrgell  cylchgrawn  Teledu  arall (dweda beth)

6 **Wyt ti wedi clywed am Gomisiynydd Plant Cymru?** Ydw  Nac ydw

**Os atebaist 'ydw', alli di ddweud rhywbeth am beth mae e a'i dîm yn ei wneud?**

7 **Wyt ti wedi cwrdd â'r Comisiynydd Plant neu'i dîm?** Ydw  Nac ydw

**Wnest ti weithio gyda'r tîm o gwbl, ac os felly, sut?**

8 **Alli di awgrymu ffyrdd y gallai'r Comisiynydd a'i dîm roi gwybod i fwy o blant a phobl ifanc am eu gwaith?**

## D I O L C H !

Information pack used in school-based survey

