

Why do people's ages go up not down?



Our Rights – Our Story

A Funky Dragon report asking to what extent are children aged 7 to 10 in Wales able to access their rights (as defined by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child - UNCRC)



Our Rights
Ein Hawliau Ni

Ein Stori Ni
Our Story

A Funky Dragon Project
Prosiect Draig Ffyn-ci





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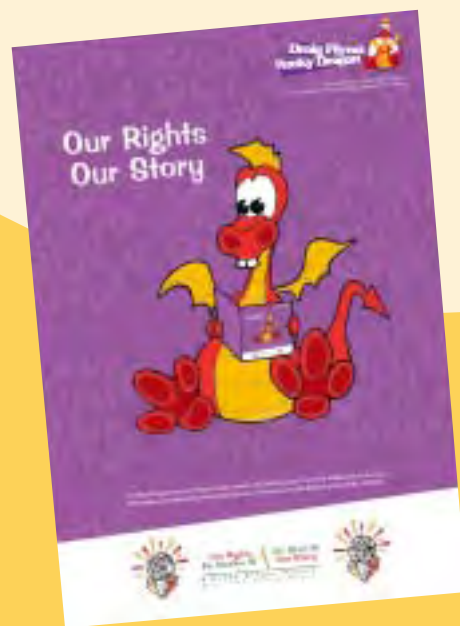
Foreword

Funky Dragon is the Children and Young People's Assembly for Wales.

The organisation was established as a charity in 2004. Funky Dragon's main aim is to provide an opportunity for 0 – 25 year olds to get their voices heard on issues that affect them. One of the most important things about Funky Dragon is that it is a young people led organisation. Funky Dragon is a way for young people in Wales to speak directly to the Welsh Assembly Government and other policymakers.

To do this we work with local authority wide youth forums as well as other local and national organisations to get representatives for our grand council. The Grand Council is made up of 100 11 to 25 year olds from all over Wales and they meet up with Welsh Assembly Government Ministers and Officials on a regular basis to put across the views of children and young people in Wales.

In addition to this children's report there is a separate report available for the results of the research that was carried out with 11 to 18 year olds, called Our Rights, Our Story.





Introduction

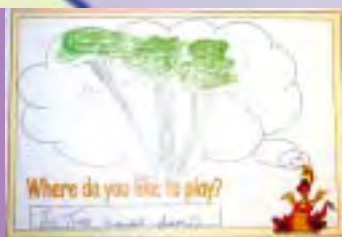
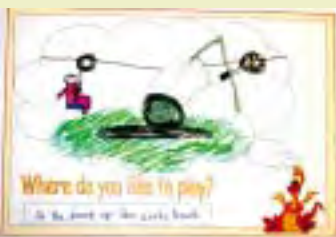
The United Nations (UN) was founded in 1945 to promote peace in the world. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) was ratified by the United Nations General Assembly in 1989, with the UK Government signing up in December 1991.

All the State Parties who have signed up to the Convention must implement all 54 Articles. These Articles outline Children's Rights and cover a number of different subjects including education, health, welfare and children's participation.

After devolution in 1999 Wales had its own Assembly who formally adopted the UNCRC on the 14th of January 2004 and use it as the basis of all their work for children and young people in Wales (Children and Young People: Rights to Action, Welsh Assembly Government, 2004).

All State Parties who have signed up to the UNCRC are subject to a monitoring process. This is where the Governments have the responsibility to report back to the UN on how the Convention is being implemented in their country. Alongside the Government's report, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO's) also submit an alternative report, to provide a balanced view on the country's progress.

The Welsh Assembly Government submits their report as part of the UK State Party Report which went to the UN in July 2007.





In February 2006 a steering group was formed of 16 young people aged between 14 and 22. The young people were already members of the Funky Dragon Grand Council and they volunteered to be part of the process of writing an alternative report to submit to the UN. The steering group were responsible for taking the lead on the project from the start, and were involved all the way from designing the logo to writing the report in the final stages. They also thought of the name of the project – Our Rights, Our Story.

The concept of Funky Dragon writing the children and young people's report originated from the last reporting process in 2002 where two young people attended the pre-session hearing in Geneva to report to the UN. The two young people involved felt that they only represented their personal views and not the views of the young people of Wales.

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Although the main aim of the steering group was to lead in the report for 11 to 18 year olds, Funky Dragon were able to include children aged 7 to 10 in the research when we received additional funding from the Welsh Assembly in early 2007. With the funding we were able to recruit two Children's Project Workers and a part time Web Designer.

The role of the new staff members would be to adapt the questions and methods designed by the steering group to be used with 7 to 10 year olds, and to create a new website that would be specifically for children of that age group to tell them of their rights under the convention.





Young people from the Grand Council were involved in the process of the recruitment of the staff from start to finish. The Children Project Workers were based in Funky Dragon's Swansea and Wrexham offices. The North Wales Project Worker was also a fluent Welsh speaker. Their first task was to adapt the methods being used with the 11 to 18 year olds into workshops that were more fun with an emphasis on play and creativity, while helping the children to learn about rights.

At the start of each session a DVD was shown that had been produced by Funky Dragon showing children their rights under the convention. The first session the

project workers ran with each group and class was designed to help them distinguish between a right and a privilege. This proved challenging at times as some children had little concept of rights and seemed to think that owning an iPod was a right and not a privilege!

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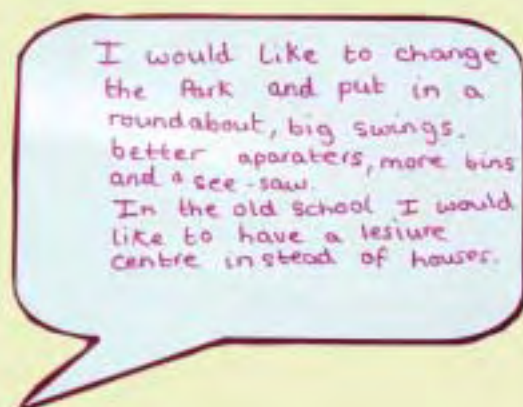


The best thing
were I live is
having lots of nice
friend around
me!



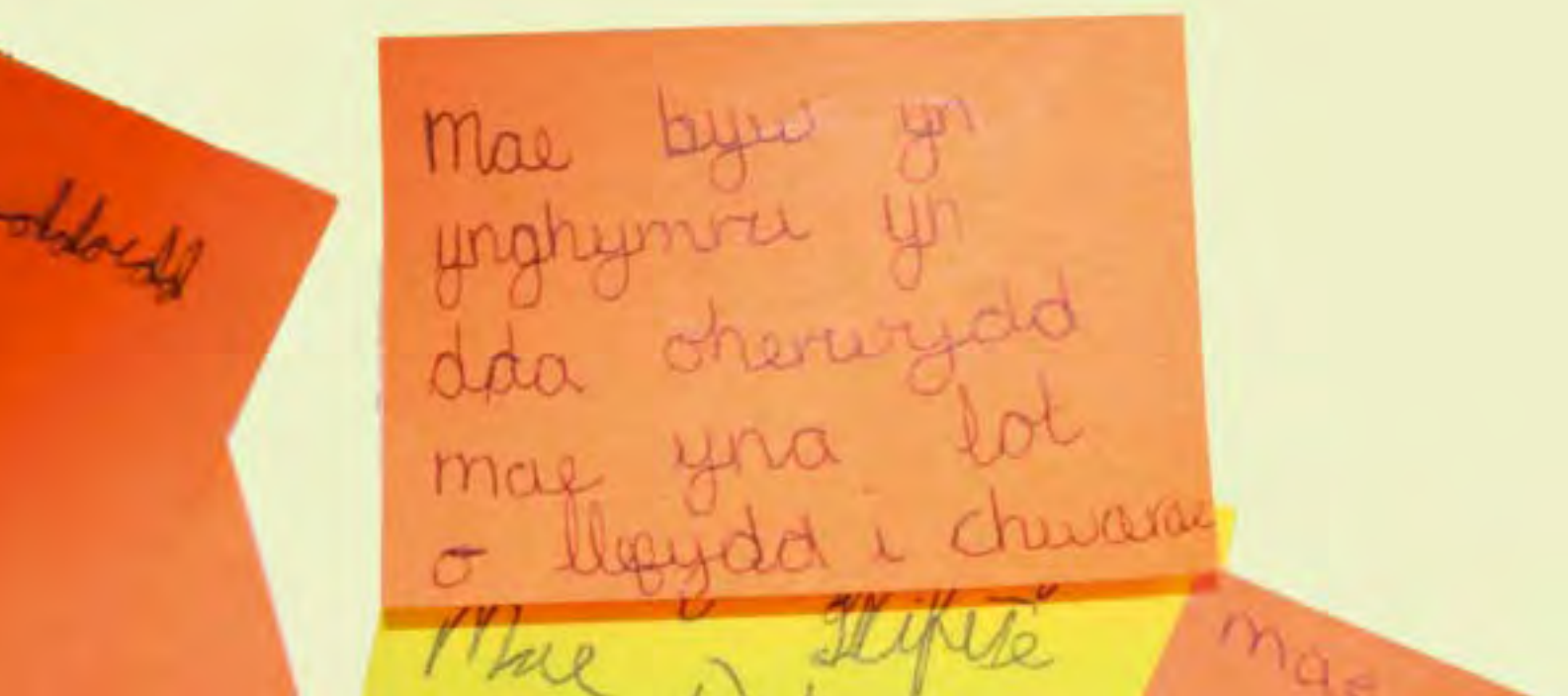


In total the project workers spoke to 2,525 children from all over Wales. Children were consulted in schools, play schemes, after school clubs, through children's events and various other groups. A more detailed demographic breakdown can be seen at the end of this report. The methods used to gather the information are briefly described at the beginning of each section.



The workshops were adapted slightly for play schemes as they were sometimes held outside which meant that they could be generally messier! There was also more of an unstructured feel to them as we didn't want to interfere with any other activities that were going on. This also allowed the children to opt in and were not forced to take part.

The final result of all of the research is contained in this report. We would like to thank all of the teachers, play workers and other staff members that allowed us to work with the children they work with. We would also like to thank all of the children who were so willing to give their views for this report and also made us laugh at the random and very imaginative comments they gave to some of our questions!





Throughout the report we have used actual comments from the children and have not corrected their spelling or grammar. We didn't want to translate any comments so there are a mixture of Welsh and English quotes on each page. We hope that many of the children who took part will be able to look through the report and will find a comment they wrote or picture they drew.



This report shows that children are more than willing and able to give their views when asked provided that appropriate methods are used. If we could do it again we would like to consult with even younger children and get a truly representative view of all children and young people from 0 to 18 on how they feel their rights are being met under the UNCRC.

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We also hope that the UN and the Welsh Assembly Government take note of the findings and it is realised by all organisations how important it is that children have an opportunity to have a say in the issues that affect them.





Living in Wales

This was an open-ended question where the aim was to highlight what issues children in Wales have and what rights they felt they did or didn't have.

We asked children:

'What's the best thing about living in Wales?'

'What would you change about living in Wales?'

The children wrote on colour-coded post it notes and placed them on a map of Wales.

The most popular answers we received are shown below.



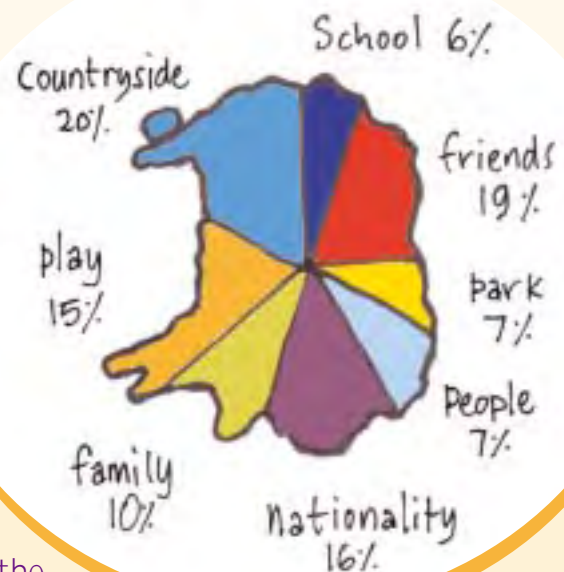
Living in Wales – What's the best?

- 20% of the children asked said they thought the countryside was the best aspect of Wales such as the hills, mountains and fields. In most cases this was because they provided areas of play.

- Friends were the next most popular answer with 19% of children saying that living close to their friends provides opportunity for play. A further 10% said their family was best and a further 7% of children liked the kindness of Welsh people.

- 16% of children said their nationality was the best thing about living in Wales and over half of these answers focused on the Welsh language as well as national sport and traditions.

- Another 15% of children said the ability to play was the best aspect of Wales and over half of these children named a sport with football being most popular.



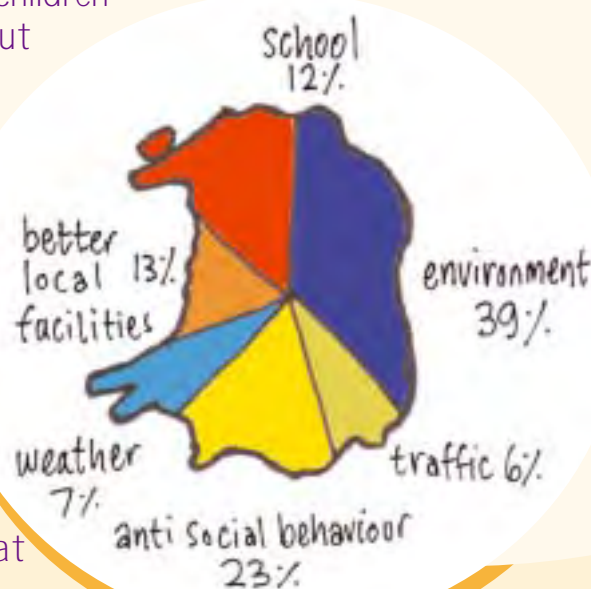


Living in Wales – What would you change?

- **39%** of the children asked said the worst thing about living in Wales was the environment with the majority of children disliking the amount of litter.
- The second most popular response with **23%** was anti-social behaviour and most of these answers focused on individuals such as 'druggies', 'drunks', 'smokers' and 'teenagers'.
- **13%** of children said they wanted better local facilities and most of these said they wanted better parks. Another **7%** of children said the weather was the worst thing about living in Wales as this stopped them from being able to play.

Recommendations

The children we asked said that the worst thing about living in Wales was the state of the environment. The countryside was the most popular answer when asked about the best thing about Wales. This shows that children are not always receiving their right to a clean environment and are unable to fully enjoy what they consider to be the best asset of Wales.



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The second biggest concern of children in Wales is the anti-social behaviour of others. It seems children feel intimidated and can easily name certain people associated with such behaviour. This infringes a child's right to feel safe, if you combine this with children's enjoyment of play with friends outdoors, it is easy to see how it prevents children playing.

This activity has highlighted the importance of outdoor play with friends and how a right to play in a clean and safe environment is ruined by the insecurity children feel due to an unclean environment and the anti-social behaviour of others.

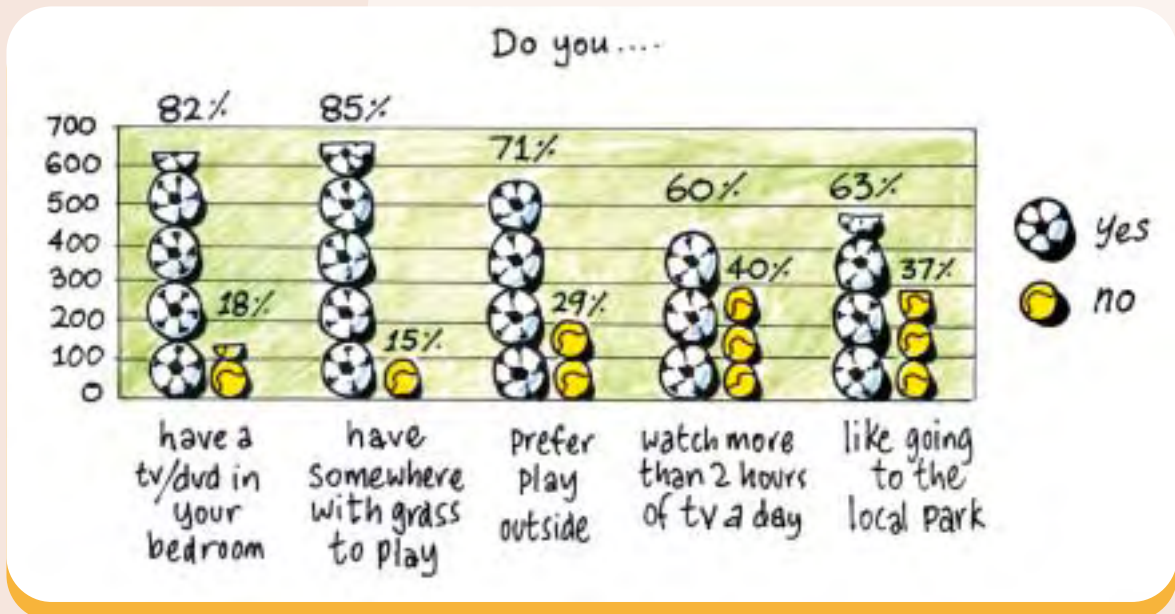




Play

Article 31 – You have a right to relax, play and join in a wide range of activities

For part 1 we asked children closed questions on how they spend their leisure time. Children answered through an adaptation of the game 'The wind blows'

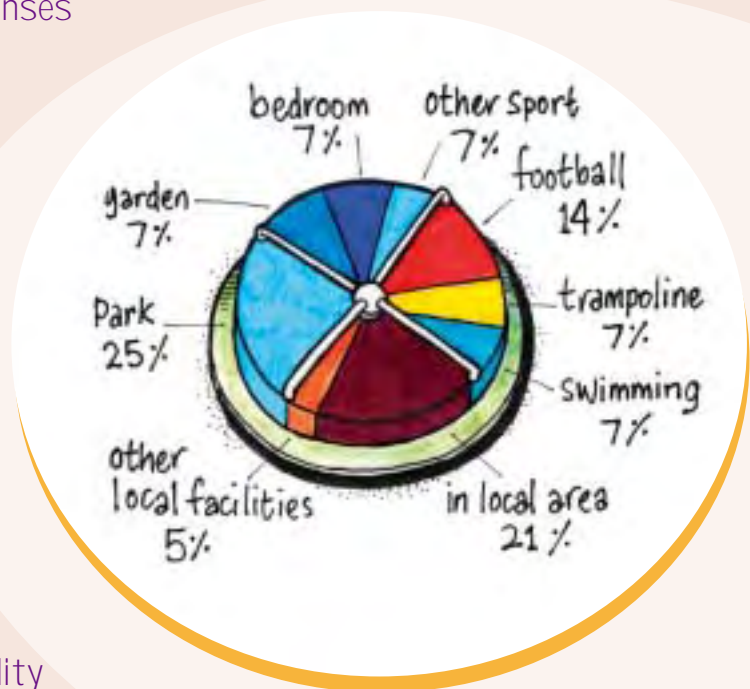


- When children were asked if they had somewhere with grass to play **85%** answered yes which means that **15%** don't have something as basic as this
- Only **63%** of children said they liked going to their local park.
- Children were asked if they had a TV/DVD in their bedroom and **82%** of children said they did and another **60%** of children said they watched more than 2 hours of television a day. However, **71%** said they would rather play outside.





For the second part we then asked the children an open ended question of 'Where or what do you like to play?' Children drew their favourite place or activity. We received over 1700 responses for this activity; answers were categorised and the top 10 responses are shown here.



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- 25% of children said their local park was their favourite place to play. Another 5% of children said another local facility such as the leisure centre or playscheme.
- 21% of children said they enjoyed playing in their local area: most of these responses were their local field or street.
- 35% of children said a sport was their favourite activity with football receiving the most responses followed by trampolining and swimming. Other sport included rugby and basketball.
- Game consoles and computers received such a small number of responses that they were unable to be included. Given the large number of children that have a television in their bedroom and the time children spend watching television it is surprising that watching TV only received 3 responses.
- Of all the responses given a massive **93%** named an outdoor space or outdoor activity, only **7%** of children favoured to play in their bedroom.





Recommendations

There are current concerns about the increased time children spend playing computer games and watching television as well as children's health and obesity levels. However these results show a huge majority of children would rather be playing outside doing something active. Given the choice, as they were in these questions, children are happiest outside. Outdoor play provides more stimulation for children as it is combined with a profound freedom children do not have indoors. Being outdoors allows play to be more self directed and in the majority of cases, interactive with peers.



This is also reflected by the response given to play in the local community. As only 5% of children named a local facility, such as a leisure centre, it can be surmised that the majority of children are playing their sports and games in their street. This not only accentuates the importance of outdoor play for children but also highlights the lack of outdoor facilities available for this age group. Whilst many children have access to a 'grassy' play spaces, this is rarely a dedicated play area and maybe close to a road, or used by dog walkers or spoilt by litter.



Attention needs to be given to providing more outdoor facilities for this age group such as an increase in outdoor sport and play centres. Where local facilities are available, such as leisure centres, adventure playgrounds and playschemes, attention is needed on encouraging this age group to utilise them and processes should be made as child-friendly as possible.

Children enjoy being outdoors and being active but they lack suitable opportunities and appropriate spaces in which to do this.

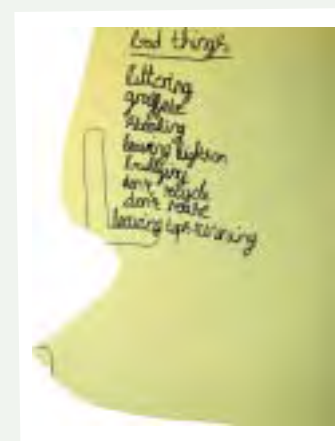




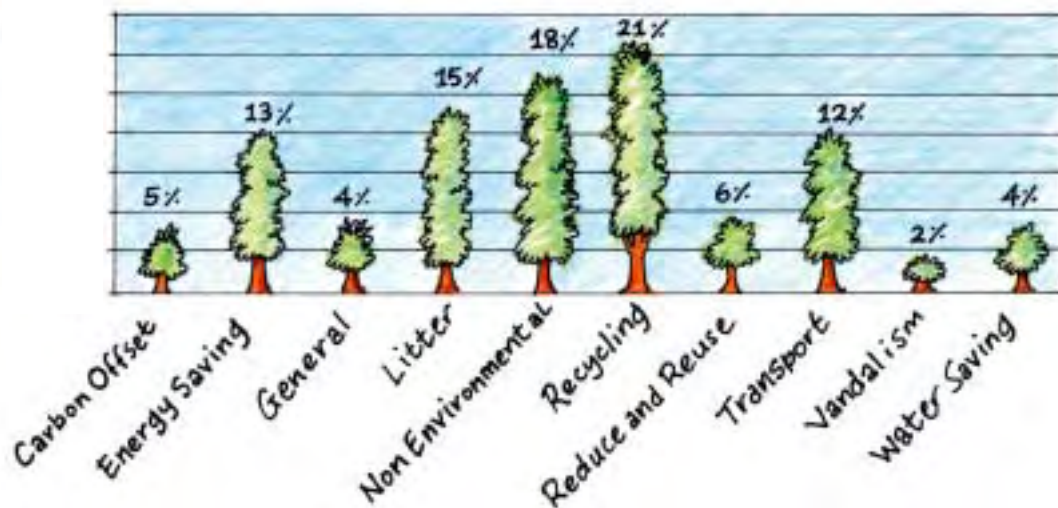
Environment

Article 24: You have the right to good quality health care and to clean water, nutritious food and a clean environment so that you can stay healthy

We wanted to know what effect the children had on the environment. We used jigsaw pieces which asked the questions:
"What do you do that is good for the environment?"
"What do you do that is bad for the environment?"

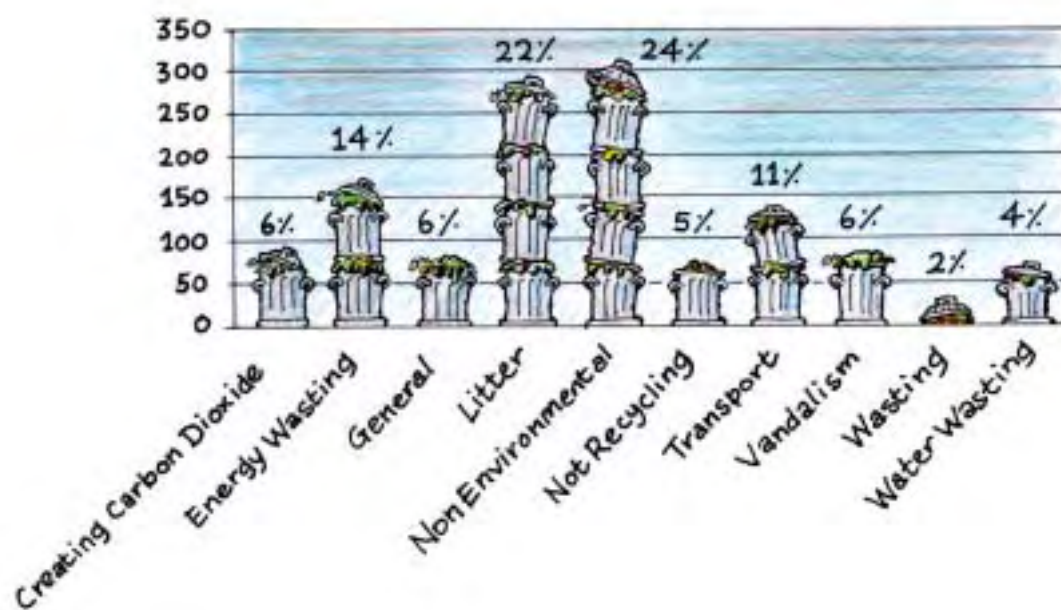


What do you do that is positive for the environment?



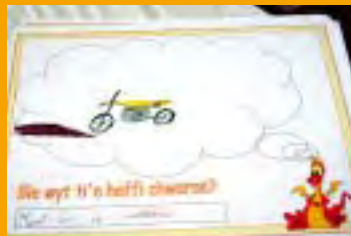


What do you do that is negative for the environment?



- The results show that children are aware of their effect on the environment and can list examples.
- We were concerned though that 22% of the total answers given were unrelated to the environment.
- There is a definite knowledge of the effects of different transport on the environment with 7% of children trying to use alternative means to cars, but 15% admitted to over-use of them.
- When we look at the "How do you get to school?" we can see a clearer picture of day to day transport use with 43% walking or biking, 12% taking the bus which means that 45% go by car.

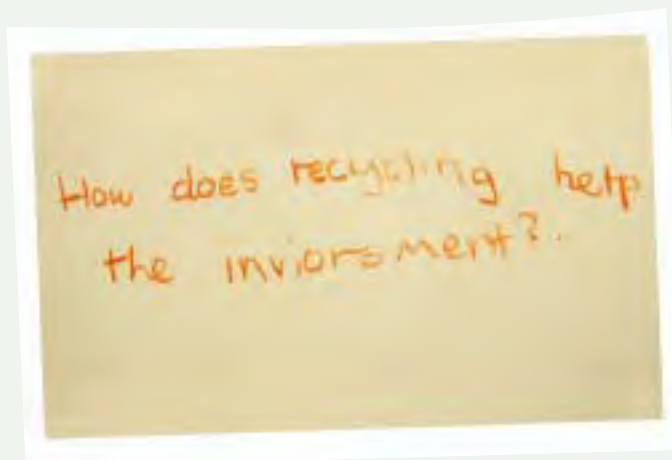




- Awareness of recycling is high, with **26%** saying that they recycle, while only **7%** admit to not recycling at all.
- Nearly a third of children admitted to littering, though **19%** stated that they didn't litter. In the Living in Wales activity **19%** listed litter as something they would change about Wales.

Recommendations

The results show that there are contradictory attitudes to the environment amongst children in Wales. Whilst some are aware of recycling and the effects of driving and littering on the environment, others are not so knowledgeable.



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Whilst some children know that recycling is the right thing to do, they don't know why they should recycle; which may answer why they don't do it. More effort should be given in demonstrating to children the benefits of recycling.

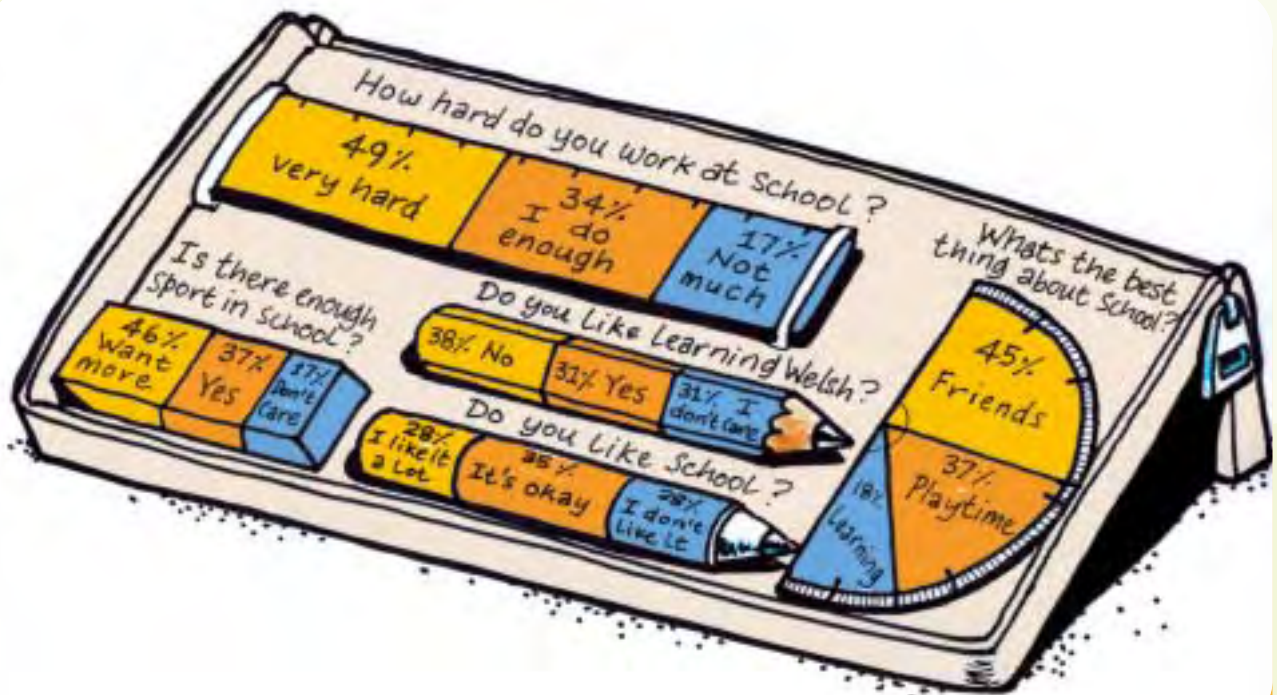


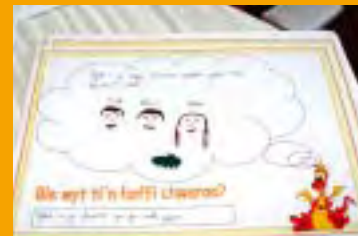
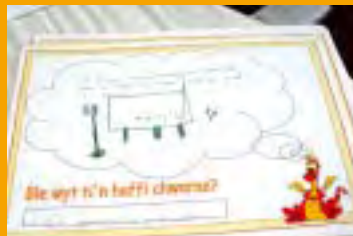


Education

Article 29 – Education should develop your personality to the full. It should encourage you to respect your parents, your own and other cultures

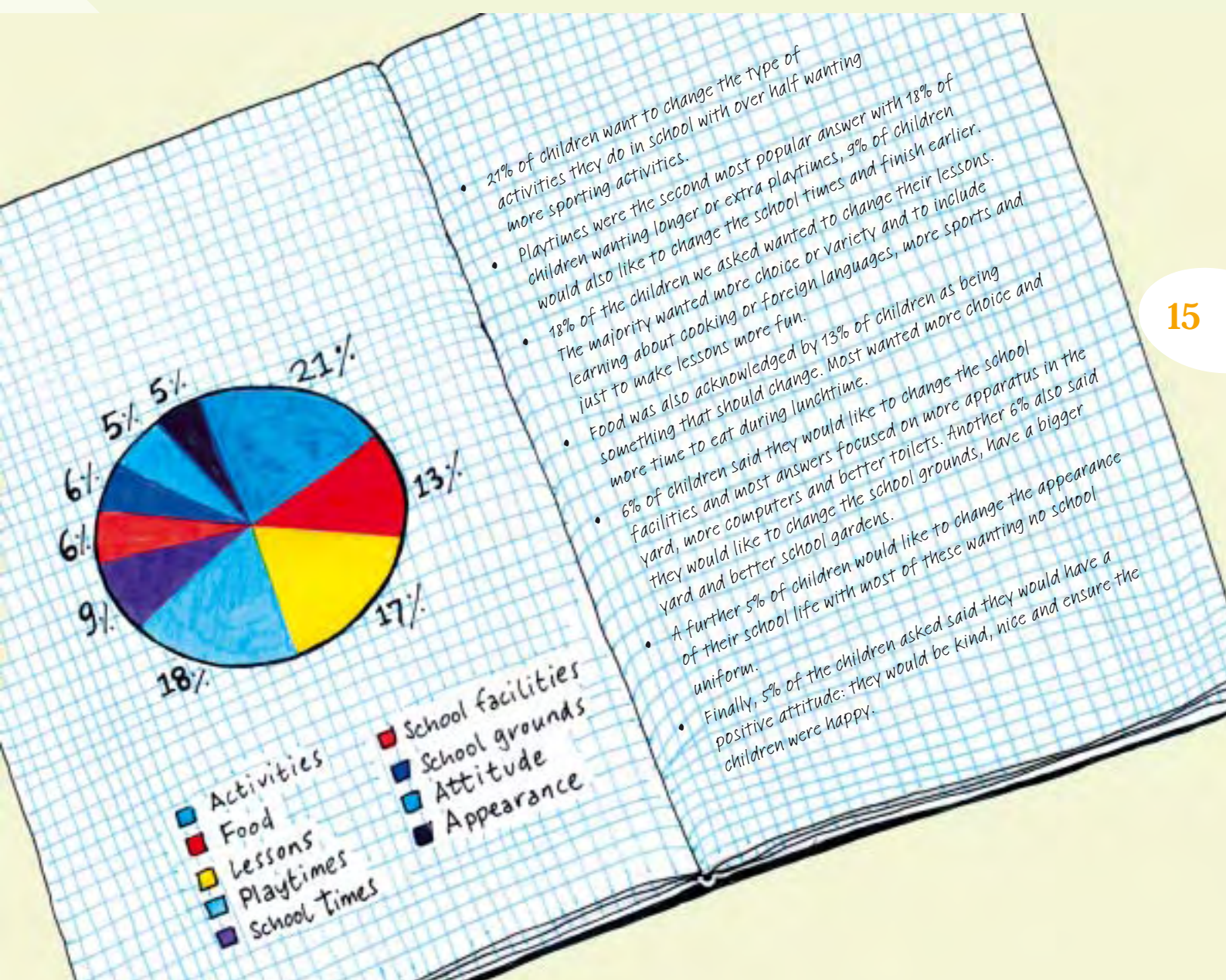
The first activity consisted of closed questions relating to children's attitude to school and school life. The results are shown below. The children gave their answers by running to 1 of 3 stations.

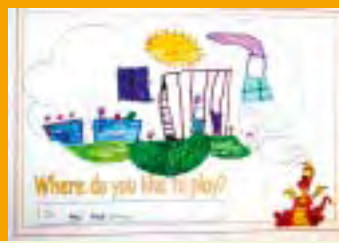
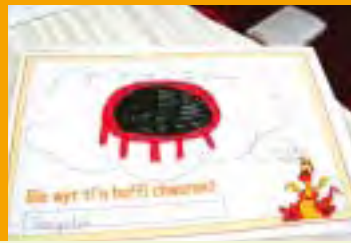




For the second part children were asked what they would do if they were Head teacher; we asked them to consider what they thought would make school life better for them and other children. Children were given a blank mask and asked to write their comments on one side and decorate the other.

We received over 1700 responses to this question and similar answers were grouped together in categories. Due to the varying responses we took the top ten answers.





Recommendations

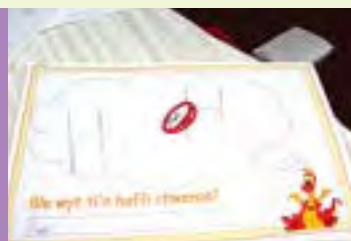
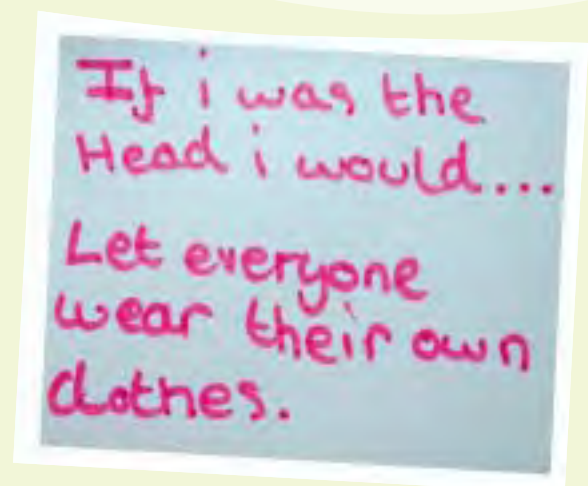
Only 18% of children enjoy the learning aspect of school and highlight a lack of variation and interest in their lessons. Attention needs to be given to addressing how lessons can be developed to make them more appealing and engaging. Children follow a strict Welsh curriculum but consideration should be given to different learning styles such as the positive effects of self learning. This would allow children freedom of choice and chances to discover their own interests and to develop independent learning. Ultimately this could establish the introduction of the importance of giving children the chance to develop and understand their own personality in schools in Wales.



The findings show that nearly half of the children we asked worked hard in school with the majority of children neither liking or disliking school. When asked what should be changed the largest response was to have more sporting activities and more playtime in school: over a third of children named playtime as their favourite aspect of school. Children also highlighted the

importance of better outdoor space and more apparatus in the school yard. This would ensure that play is active, interesting and interactive.

Play is an area overlooked by schools and the school yard provides the largest source of interactive social play for the majority of this age group. More attention needs to be given to the facilities available for children to play in school. Play is fundamental in a child's life as it allows them to grow, develop and nurture their social behaviour with others.





Health

Article 6 – You have a right to life. Governments should ensure that children survive and develop healthily

When we looked at children's access to healthcare we decided to focus on a trip to the doctors as we thought the majority of children would have encountered this service. We asked two open-ended questions:

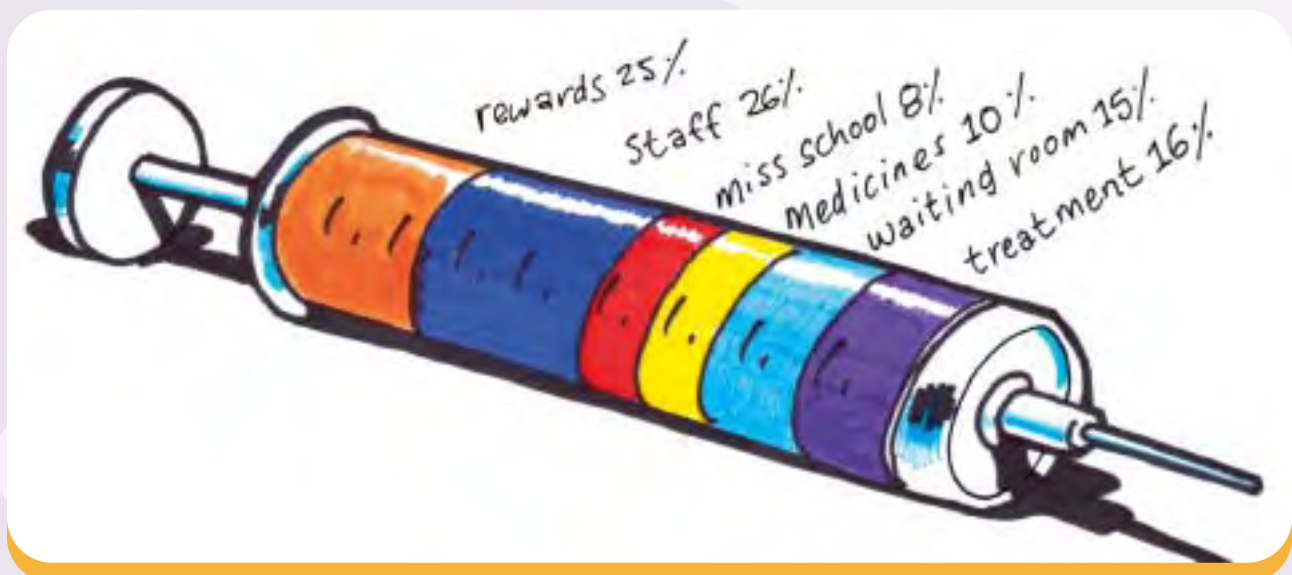
'What's the best thing about going to the doctors?'

'What should change about the doctors to make it better for you and other children?'

Volunteers from each group were given doctor accessories and asked to collect the children's comments on post it notes and a clip board.

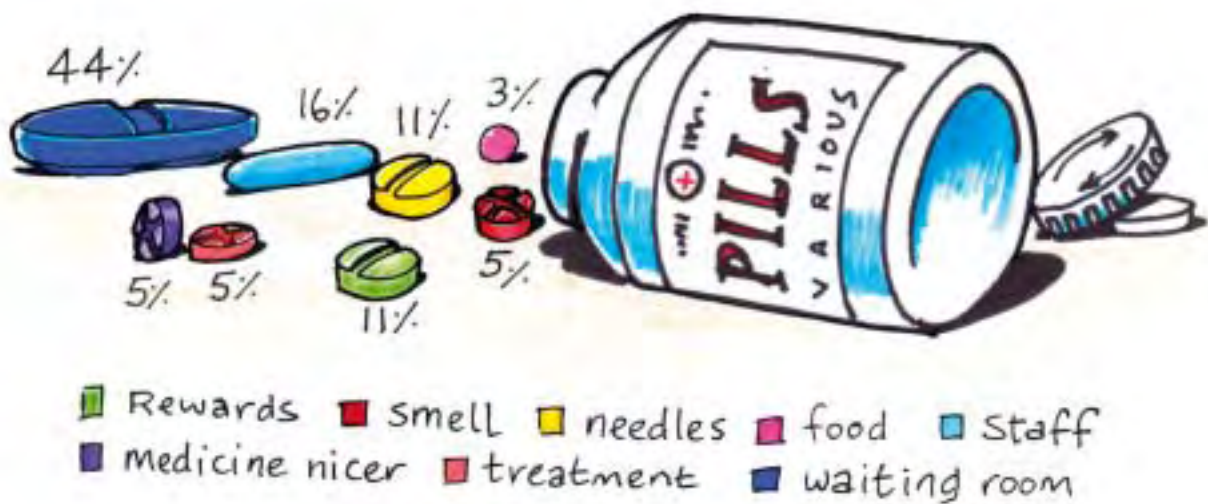
We received over 500 responses to these questions and the most popular answers are shown below.

What's good about going to the doctors.....?





What would you change about going to the doctors.....?



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- 26% of children said that the staff were the best thing about going to the doctors and most of the answers mentioned their kindness and attitude. However, 16% said they would like to change the attitude of the staff: it was felt that they lacked understanding or rushed patients.
- A quarter of children said getting a reward was the best thing about going to the doctors such as a sticker, lolly or praise. 11% of children however wanted to change the reward to include more choice or colours.
- 16% of children said that receiving treatment was the best thing about going to the doctors and being told that you're going to be okay.
- 15% of children said the waiting room was the best thing about the doctors while nearly 44% of children said this was what needed changing. The majority of children said waiting rooms need more play activities and that the atmosphere needs to be more cheerful.

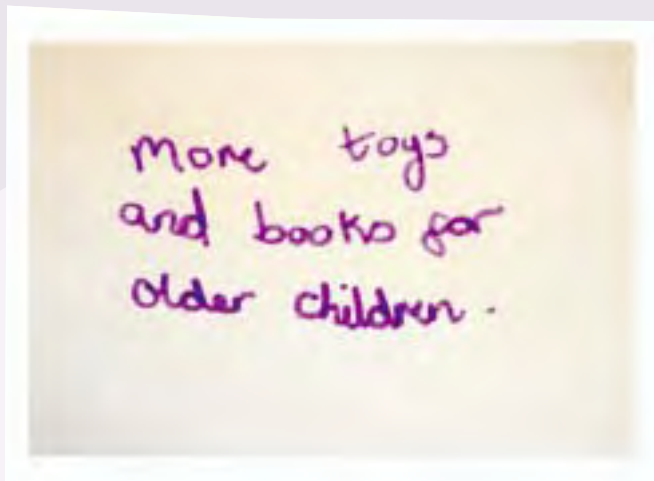




Recommendations

The majority of children would like to change the play facilities and atmosphere of the doctor's waiting room where play is usually discouraged. With this in mind attention needs to be given to how a balance between allowing children to play can be achieved while appreciating the nature of waiting rooms. This may be addressed by arranging a children's area or reading corner for children.

Where space is an issue attention could focus on visual displays for children. When exploring these issues there needs to be a focus on this particular age range as children feel the facilities available are for much younger children. If these concerns were addressed it would allow the whole process of visiting the doctor to become more child friendly.



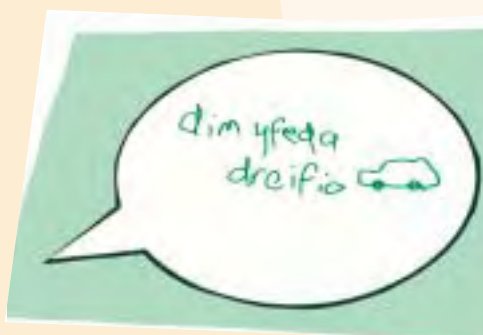


Participation

Participation means taking part and having a decision in issues that affect you.

Article 12 – You have a right to say what you think should happen when adults are making decisions that affect you, and to have your opinions taken into account

The participation workshop was split into three sections. We asked questions on participation in the family, in school and in the local area.



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Family

We asked a variety of questions on who makes decisions in the family – was it the child, the adult (mum or dad) or was it both; child and adult making the decision together. The questions were kept to issues that children had experience of and were not so far fetched as to expect them to decide on. Five closed questions were asked:



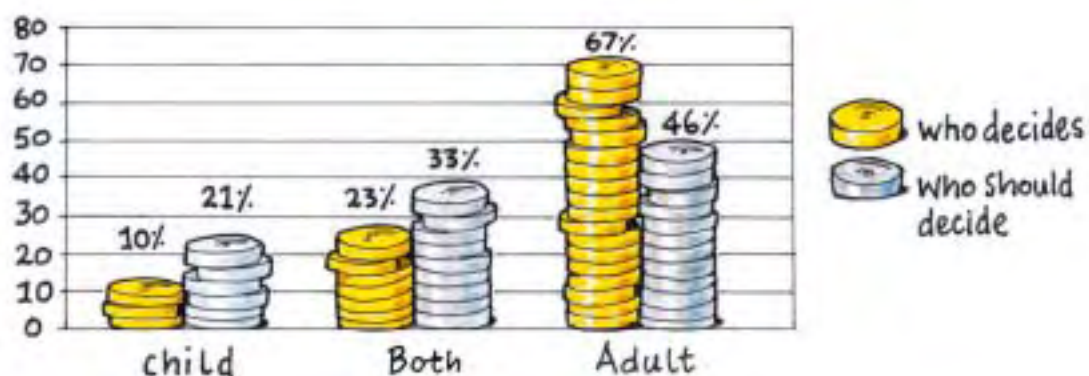
*Who decides how much pocket money you have?
Who decides how much TV you should watch?
Who decides when you go out to play?
Who decides what clothes you wear?
Who decides what food you eat?*

We then asked the children to think about who should decide with each of the above areas. The results were as follows:



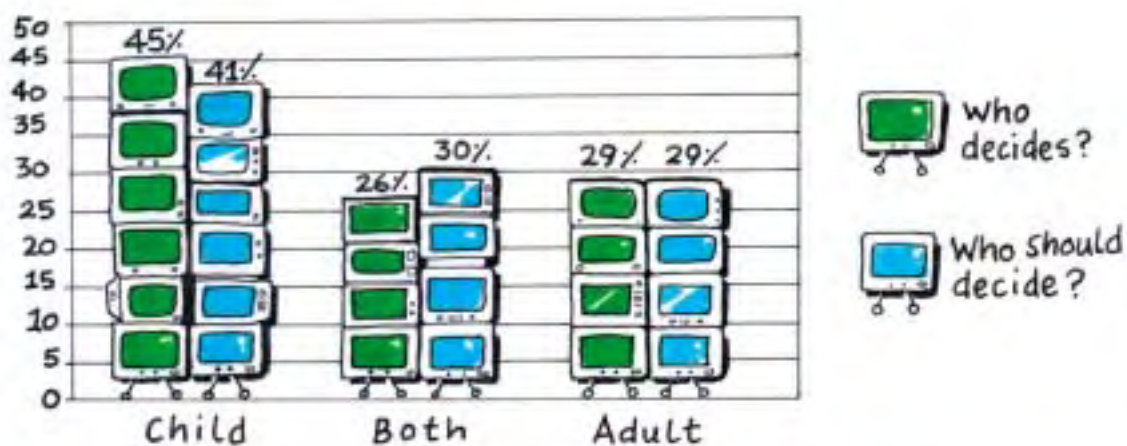


.... if you have pocket money ?



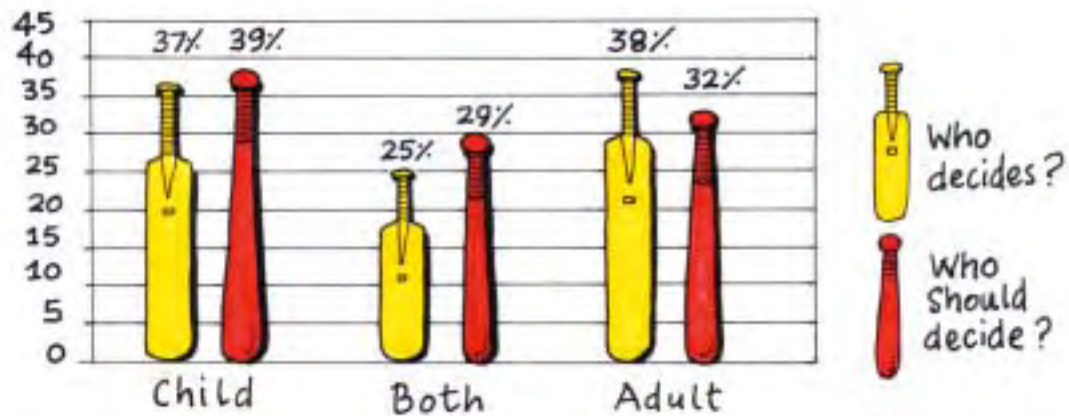
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... how long you watch t.v.?



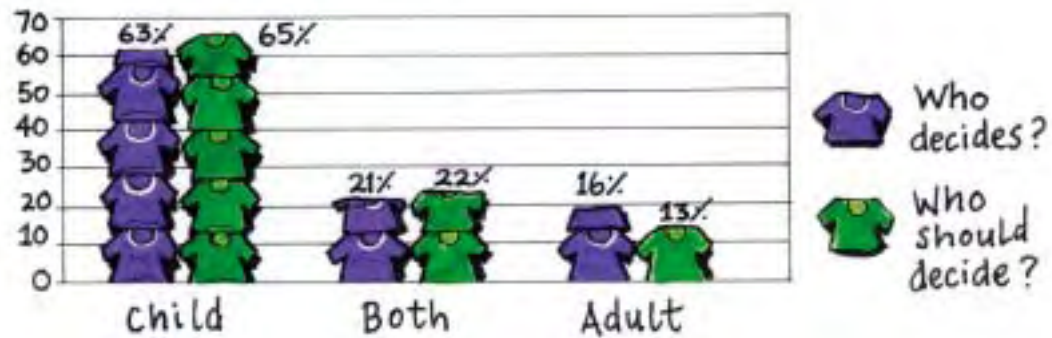


... if you are allowed out to play?



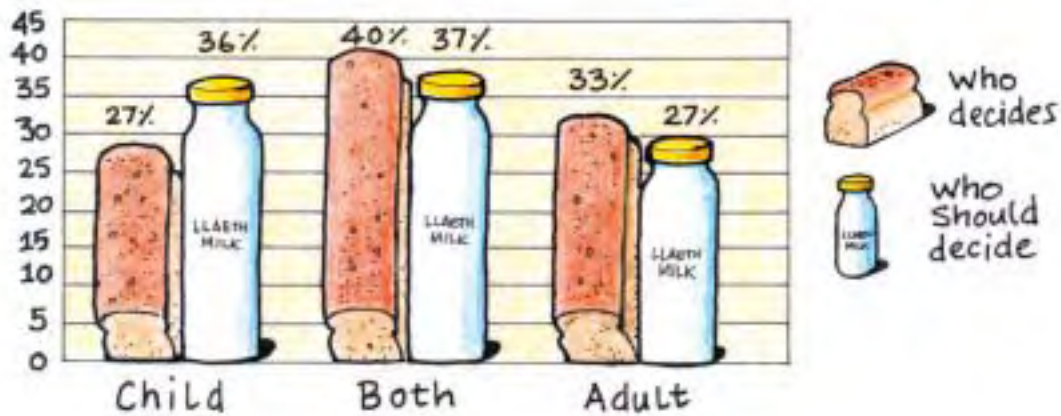
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... what clothes you wear?

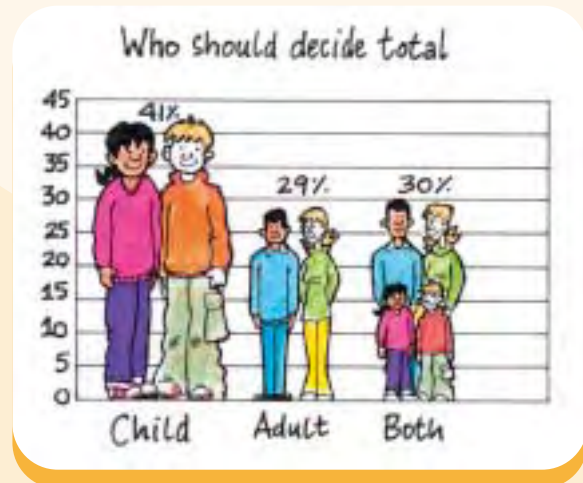
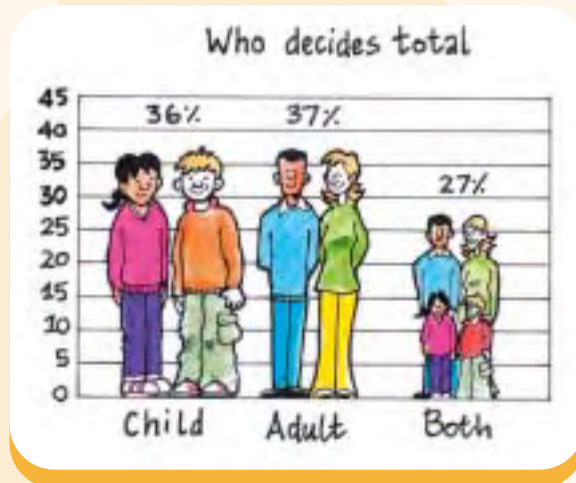




... what food you eat?



We added all the responses together which shows the following:



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From this we can see that:

- Children would like more of a say on the decisions that affect them – when adding the figures together there is an increase of 5% overall.
- The largest increase of children wanting a say was in pocket money, food and clothes – whilst the other questions saw an increase in adult and child making the decision together.





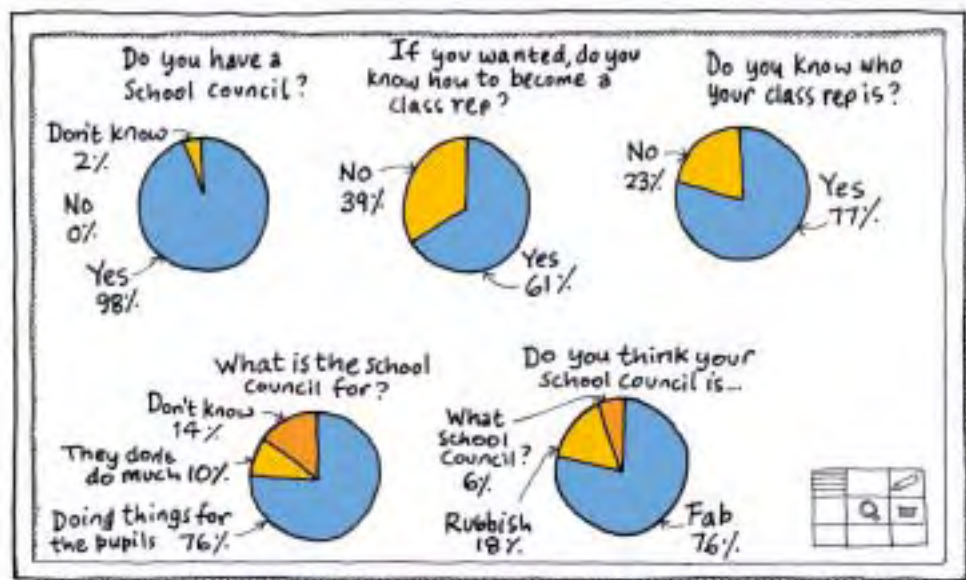
Recommendations

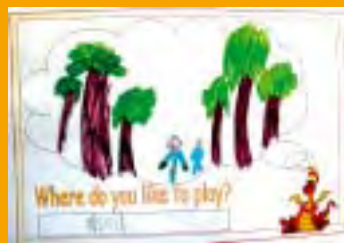
The most influential person in a child's life is their parent/guardian. Although there are areas where the child makes the decision, children would like more of an opportunity to do this – either alone or with their parent/guardian. However, in the overall results 29% still felt that parents should make the decisions in the questions asked above.

More emphasis is needed in promoting children's rights and the benefits of giving children a voice in their day to day lives to parents. By giving the child the choice in everyday things such as the clothes they'd like to wear, it gives them an opportunity and understanding of decision making, and an opportunity to express themselves as an individual.

Schools

We decided that the biggest opportunity for participation in the school was through the school council. The children were asked five closed questions and gave their answers through completing a questionnaire they administered themselves.





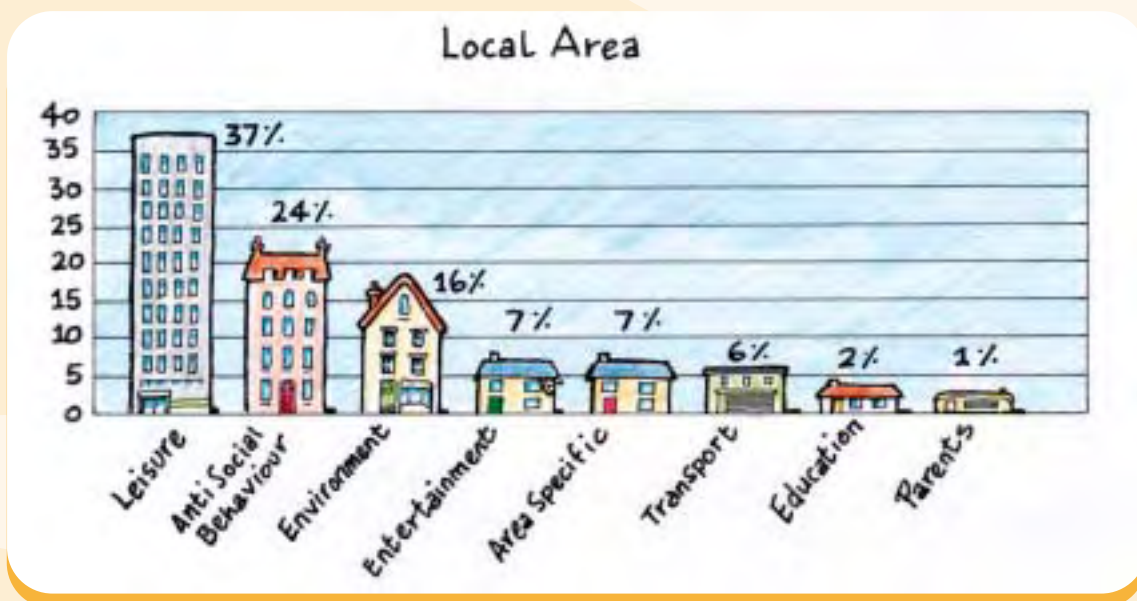
- It is encouraging to see that **98%** of children questioned knew they had a school council.
- It is a shame that only **61%** knew how to become a class rep, whilst **77%** knew who their class rep was.
- **24%** didn't know what the school council did or thought that it didn't do much.

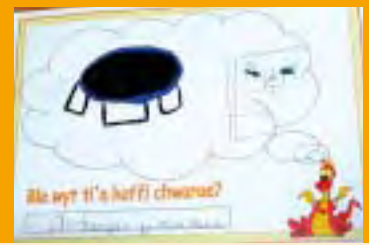
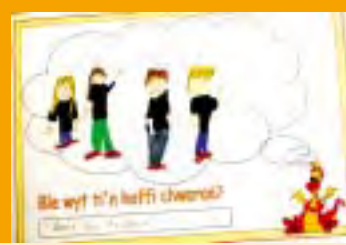
Recommendations

Under the School Council Guidelines produced by Welsh Assembly Government all pupils should be given the opportunity to become a rep. Schools need to be careful that the selection of reps isn't closed to any pupil and they should encourage all pupils to join. Schools should spend more time discussing what a school council is with pupils and how they can become involved. Schools should also ensure the opportunity to participate doesn't become a negative or elitist experience.

Local Area

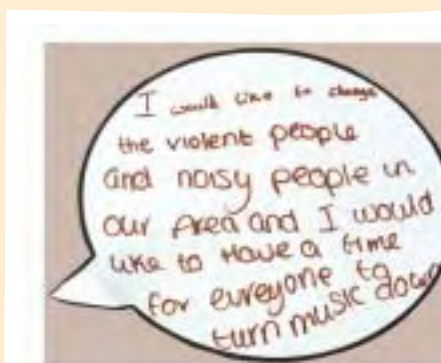
Children were asked an open question about what they would like to change in their local area. As it was an open question there were a variety of different answers so they have been grouped into the following categories:





- The biggest change children would like to make to their local area is better local facilities including more parks and better access to leisure facilities.
- Second was changing the anti social behaviour in their area including less graffiti, vandalism and no fighting in the streets.

A flavour of what the children actually said can be seen in their quotes below:



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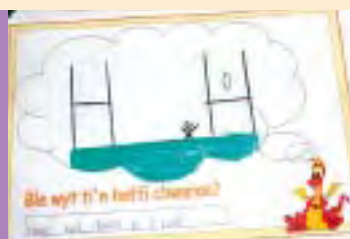
Recommendations

Local councils should include the views of children in any plans being devised for the local area. They are a large stakeholder but have no say in what happens to the area where they live.

These results are also backed up by some of the information gathered from the question 'what's bad about living in Wales' where 24% answered 'the anti social behaviour of others'.

When adults think about making changes to their local community do they think back to what they had as a child? Somewhere safe to play is something that adults took for granted when they were children but isn't available to children today. When new housing estates are built are local parks considered by the builders? Where do the children go and play? Or is it more about squeezing as many houses onto land as they possibly can?

By these results you can see that what children want is fairly simplistic; somewhere safe to play where they don't feel intimidated or scared.

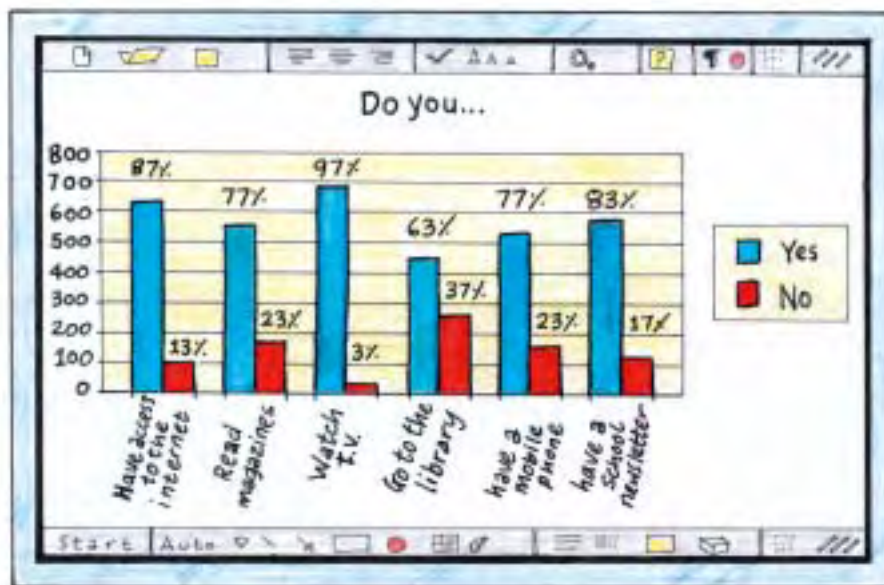




Information

Article 13 - You have the right to get and to share information, as long as the information is not damaging to yourself or others

We wanted to know how children access information. We asked them to hold up a yes face or a no face to tell us if they access information through certain ways, such as the Internet, Television, Libraries etc.

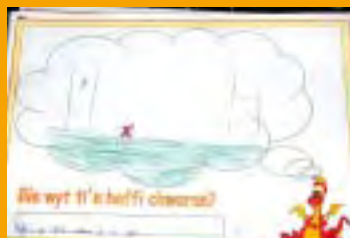
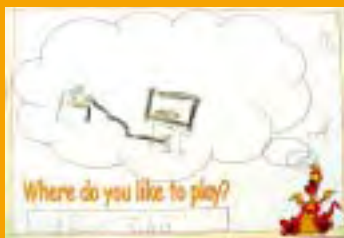


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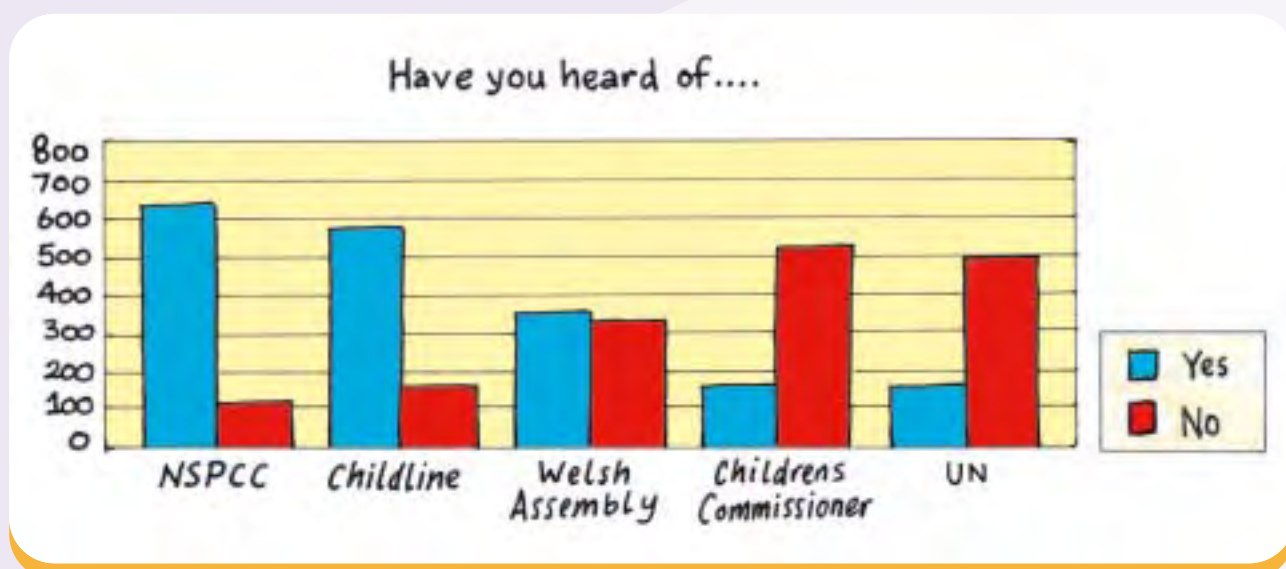
From these results we can see that:

- Children in Wales are highly computer literate with **87%** having access to the internet for information
- Mobile phone use is high, as **77%** have their own phone – many children told us that they thought they were important for safety.



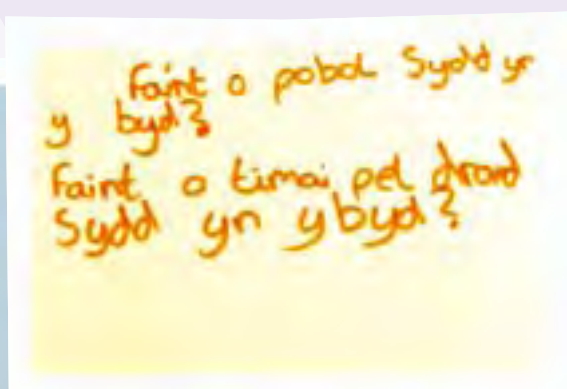


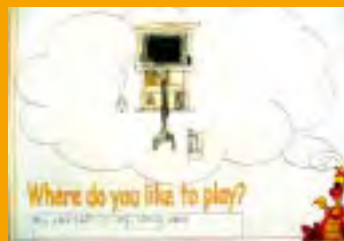
We then showed the children logos of some groups that work on behalf of children to see if they were recognised. We ensured that the children gave us their own opinion through asking follow up questions to ensure that they understood.



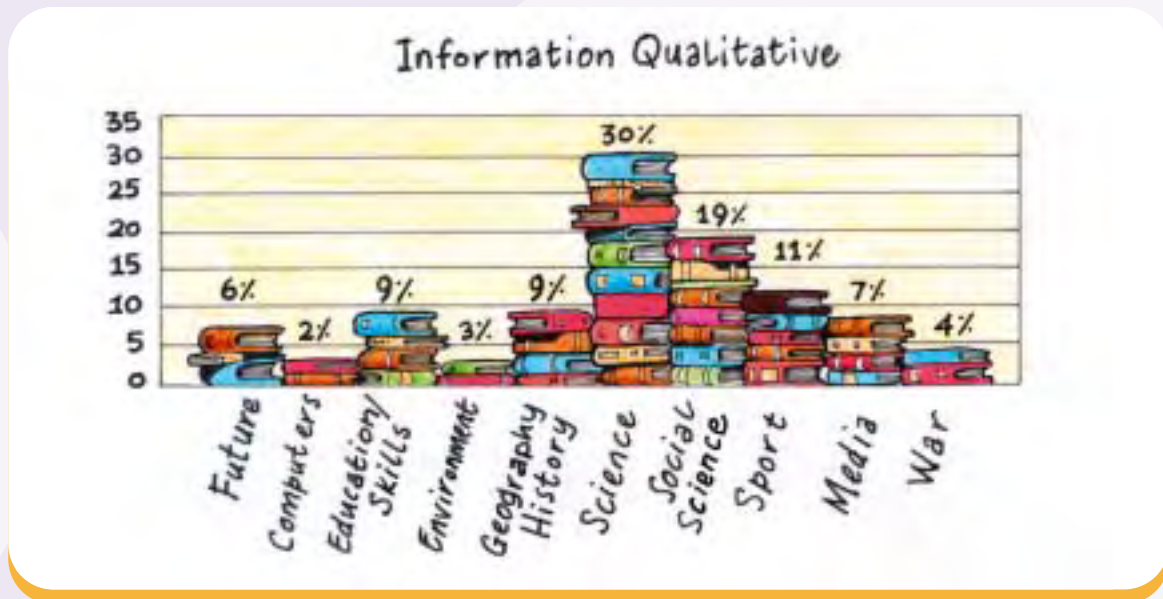
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- The more established organisations rated highly - 77% were aware of Childline and 86% recognised the NSPCC.
- Awareness of the Children's Commissioner was low at 22%, and only 23% of children recognised the logo of the United Nations.





For the final part we then asked them if there was anything at all they would like to find out about – they wrote their ideas on biscuits and fed them to Nana! This was an open question so we had an array of different answers that we have grouped into the following categories.



- We were impressed with the vast amount of different questions received, of which scientific subjects were most popular at **30%**. Of these questions a quarter wanted to know more about space, **9%** about the natural world and **6%** about dinosaurs.
- Television is a source of information for **97%** of children; of these **65%** watch the news which indicates that many children are interested in the world and current affairs. This is reflected by the **19%** of children who wanted to know about social issues.
- We were pleasantly surprised by the number of children who visit the library - **63%**, which means that many read to access information, which is supplemented by the fact that **77%** read magazines.





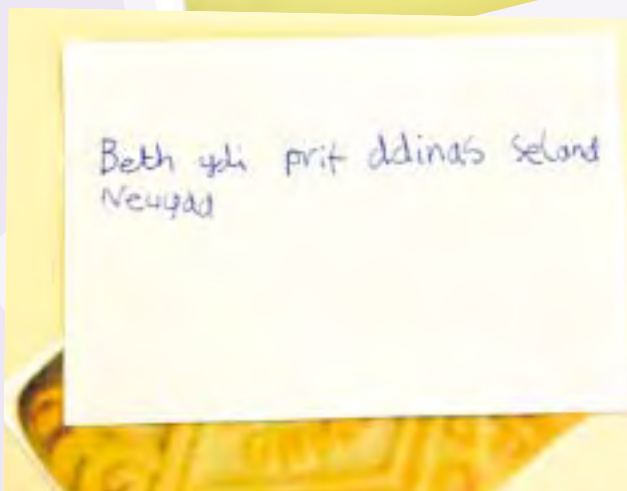
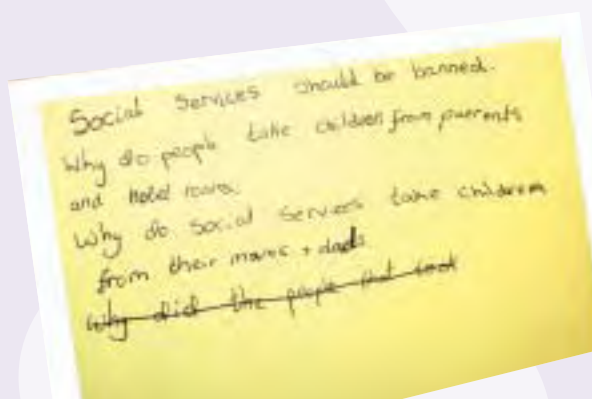
Recommendations

Children living in Wales know how to access information through a variety of methods with the internet and television being the most popular.

However, when discussing rights and privileges children struggled to tell the difference between them. Article 42 states that the government should make the UNCRC known to all parents and children. We recommend that more work be done on increasing awareness of the UN and the Convention for this age group.

Children in Wales also have a lack of awareness about the Children's Commissioners Office and its role which we feel needs addressing. As there are 1,600 primary schools in Wales with a population of 250,000 children it would be an impossible task to ask the Children's Commissioner to visit each and every school. Funky Dragon are therefore recommending that the role of the Children's Commissioner is taught in primary schools to all pupils.

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Summary of Findings

Wot no Play!?!

Throughout this report there is a recurring theme that was mentioned by the children in every workshop. These findings demonstrate that play is the most fundamental request a child could make, and that it affects them in all areas of their lives.



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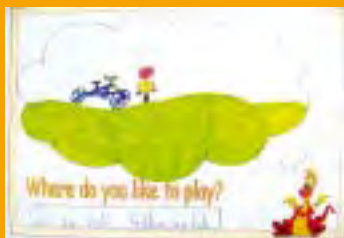
Living in Wales

The overwhelming issue that was apparent in this workshop was the number of children who felt their play was hindered by the amount of litter and other environmental issues that prevented free play. The countryside was highlighted as the best asset in Wales as it provided a place to play. Attention needs to focus on providing clean, safe and appropriate spaces for children to play outdoors.

Play

93% of children drew an outdoor or energetic activity as their favourite place when asked where or what do they like to play. The remaining 7% drew a picture of their bedroom.





Environment

In this workshop children gave several examples of where play is impacted by a lack of cleanliness; be that litter, glass on the playground floor or dog mess. The need for a safe and clean environment severely affects children's ability to play.

Education

The most popular responses from children with regard to changes they would make to their school life were more activities and more play. The significance of play is somewhat overlooked in schools and as this is the main opportunity for children to take part in supervised interactive play with their peers it should receive more attention. Children want more opportunity to take part in varied activities, with more apparatus available on the school yard, and more opportunities for sport such as football, swimming and rugby.

Health

The whole process of a trip to the doctor needs to be more child-friendly. The children we consulted felt overlooked when it came to facilities that were available to children in doctor's surgeries and felt that what was available was for considerably younger children. Attention needs to be given to how doctor's surgeries can incorporate the needs of this age group. Specific areas or activities need to be established especially for children and not just babies.

Participation

When we asked the question about local area we were surprised to find how many children were concerned about safety and how it affected their ability to play. Children were concerned with the state of the playground, and how safe it was to get to. Children also wanted access to more play facilities in their local area.

Information

Sport received significant attention with further information being requested on football and rugby.





Conclusion

This report has shown us that children feel there is a lack of opportunity, facilities and appropriate spaces available for them to play freely. The aim of this research wasn't to draw on one aspect of a child's life but that has been the result. We didn't set out to concentrate on play in the conclusion but as it has been the dominant theme to come from the majority of the workshops we felt it had to be noted.

Play is fundamental to children, whether it is in or out of school, structured or free, supervised or interactive. It is also a right under Article 31 of the UNCRC.

With all the recent media coverage concerning obesity amongst children and the emphasis on informing children on what foods are healthy, it's ironic that all children want to do is play. However when children want to play they do not have the opportunity to do so.



This report demonstrates that children want to play but there are too many barriers being put in their way. Rather than putting the onus on children to exercise, the obligation should be put on adults to remove the barriers in allowing them to play. Play should not be seen as a childish act that needs eradicating when children get older, but as a form of exercise where they can run around, play sport and ultimately stay fit. By allowing access to play and play provision children may grow up continuing with sport and exercise, and enjoying it.





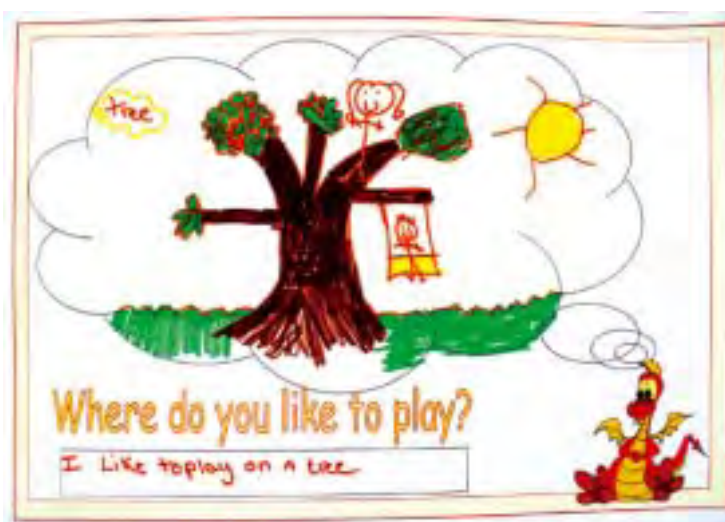
It is encouraging to see that the Welsh Assembly Government has written a policy dedicated to increasing play opportunities for children and young people – Play Policy Implementation Plan (February 2006). The aim of the action plan is to ensure that ‘all children and young people should have access to a range of play, leisure, sporting and cultural activities’ (p1).



Recognition is being given to the importance of play by the Assembly but it does not mention consultation with children over what play provision they would like to see. Out of 24 recommendations made by the Play Policy Implementation Group there is only one mention of including the views of children which is through local authorities working ‘with partnerships with voluntary organisations, and through them children within local

communities’ (Play Policy Implementation Plan p22). Without proper consultation how can adults realistically understand the needs of children?

As the guidance was issued by the Assembly in February 2006 it would be interesting to run the research again in 2010 and hopefully see a much better response to play provision in Wales. Although the Assembly should carry out consultations with children on all issues they are affected by and not just play.





How this could work needs further exploration and funding. There is no national structure currently in place for children under 11 where the Assembly could find the views of children. The Funky Dragon Grand Council is for young people from the age of 11 and its structure wouldn't work for children.

At a Local Authority level there are very few structures that enable consultation for children whilst there are youth forums for young people from the age of 11. It seems that the current position in Wales is that you are not allowed an opinion on matters that affect you until you reach the age of 11. This is also true of hard to reach groups – when we tried to locate groups for children that had specific issues they were very scarce.

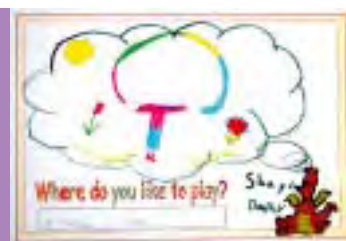


However, the onus shouldn't be on the Assembly alone. It is important for all adults that work directly or indirectly with children to consult with them over issues that affect them. This includes parents, teachers, play workers, local authorities and the Welsh Assembly Government.

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When we started this research we had pre-conceived ideas as to what the children would like to change – we were wrong. This alone demonstrates how important speaking to children about what affects them. Article 12 states the importance of children being consulted and having their voice heard. We have asked the children of Wales what they think and they replied – let us play!



you have a sticker





Recommendations

We've pulled together a list of the recommendations made throughout the report.

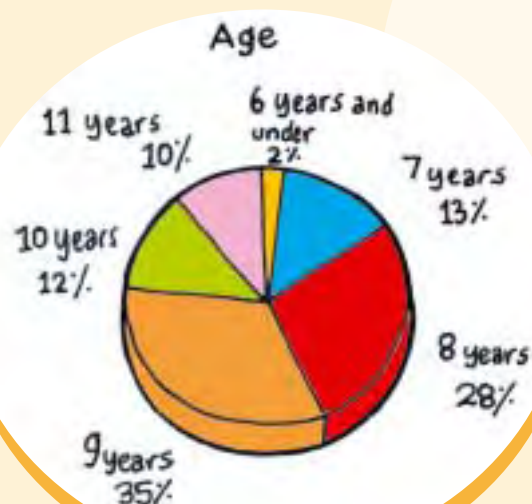
- All children should have access to a park that is safe to get to, is clean and has working apparatus.
- Attention needs to be given to providing more outdoor facilities for this age group such as an increase in outdoor sport and play centres. Where local facilities are available, such as leisure centres, adventure playgrounds and playschemes, attention is needed on encouraging this age group to utilise them and processes should be made as child-friendly as possible.
- More effort should be given in demonstrating to children the benefits of recycling.
- More facilities and apparatus should be made available for children to play within school.
- We recommend that GP's waiting rooms provide an area where children can play or reading material suitable for all ages are made available.
- More emphasis is needed in promoting children's rights and the benefits of giving children a voice in their day to day lives to parents.
- Schools need to be careful that the selection of school council reps isn't closed to any pupil and they should encourage all pupils to join.
- Schools should spend more time discussing what a school council is with pupils and how they can become involved.
- Schools should also ensure the opportunity to participate doesn't become a negative or elitist experience.
- Local councils should include the views of children in any plans being devised for the local area.
- We recommend that more work be done on increasing awareness of the UNCRC to all primary school children.
- We recommend that the role of the Children's Commissioner is taught in primary schools to all pupils.
- We recommend that further work is needed in developing structures at a local and national level to increase the participation of children in issues that affect them.



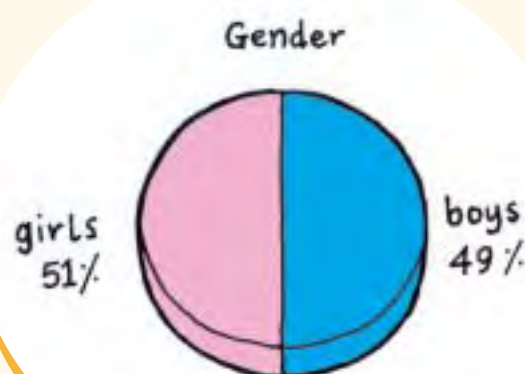


Demographics

When recording the demographics of the children it was fairly easy to gather information on age, county and gender. It proved more difficult however to ask them to distinguish their ethnicity – after the first couple of sessions we stopped asking them as most children didn't understand what ethnicity was, and we didn't feel it was our place to make any assumptions.

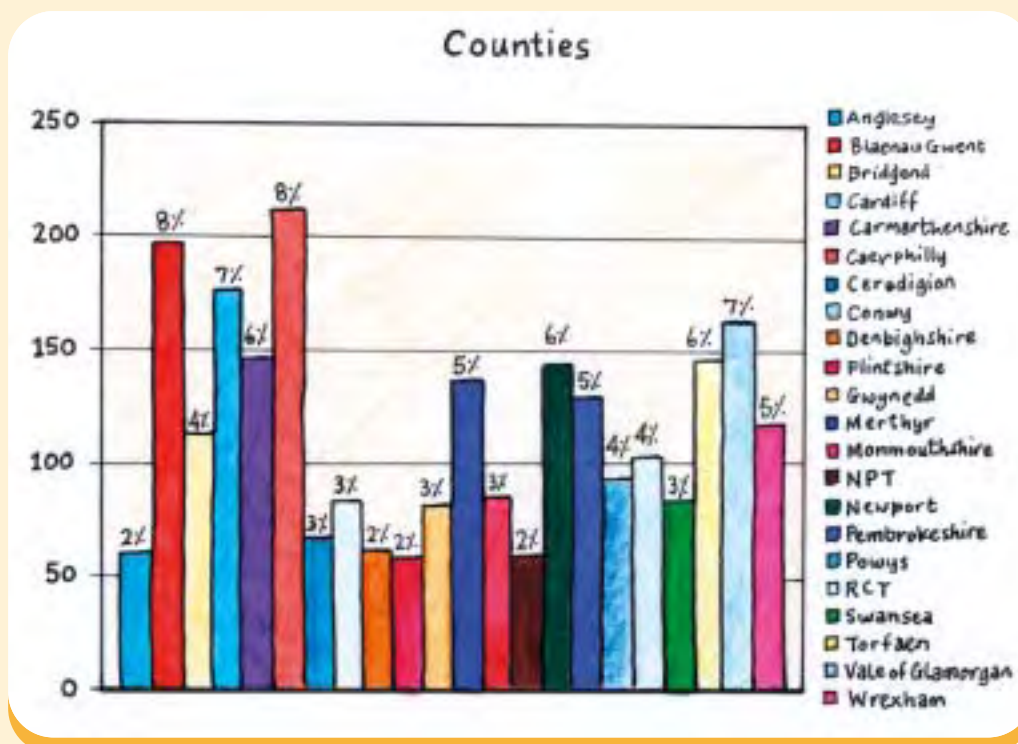


Over a third of the children we consulted with were 9 years old.



There were slightly more girls than boys involved.





As mentioned in the introduction we made a point of visiting all 22 local authorities in Wales. We went to two schools in each local authority – 44 in total. We also visited groups and after school clubs. Over the summer holidays we visited 25 play schemes throughout Wales.

We did a lot of work in trying to find groups for disadvantaged children and found that they were in very short supply. It seems that you are not deemed a hard to reach child until you reach the age of 11 when a lot more opportunities to join a support group exist.

There are 1600 primary schools in Wales with a population of 250,000 primary school aged children living here. Although we only managed to reach 1% of that population at 2,525 it is still the biggest piece of research that has been carried out with this age group in Wales.





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Ein Stori Ni
Our Story

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