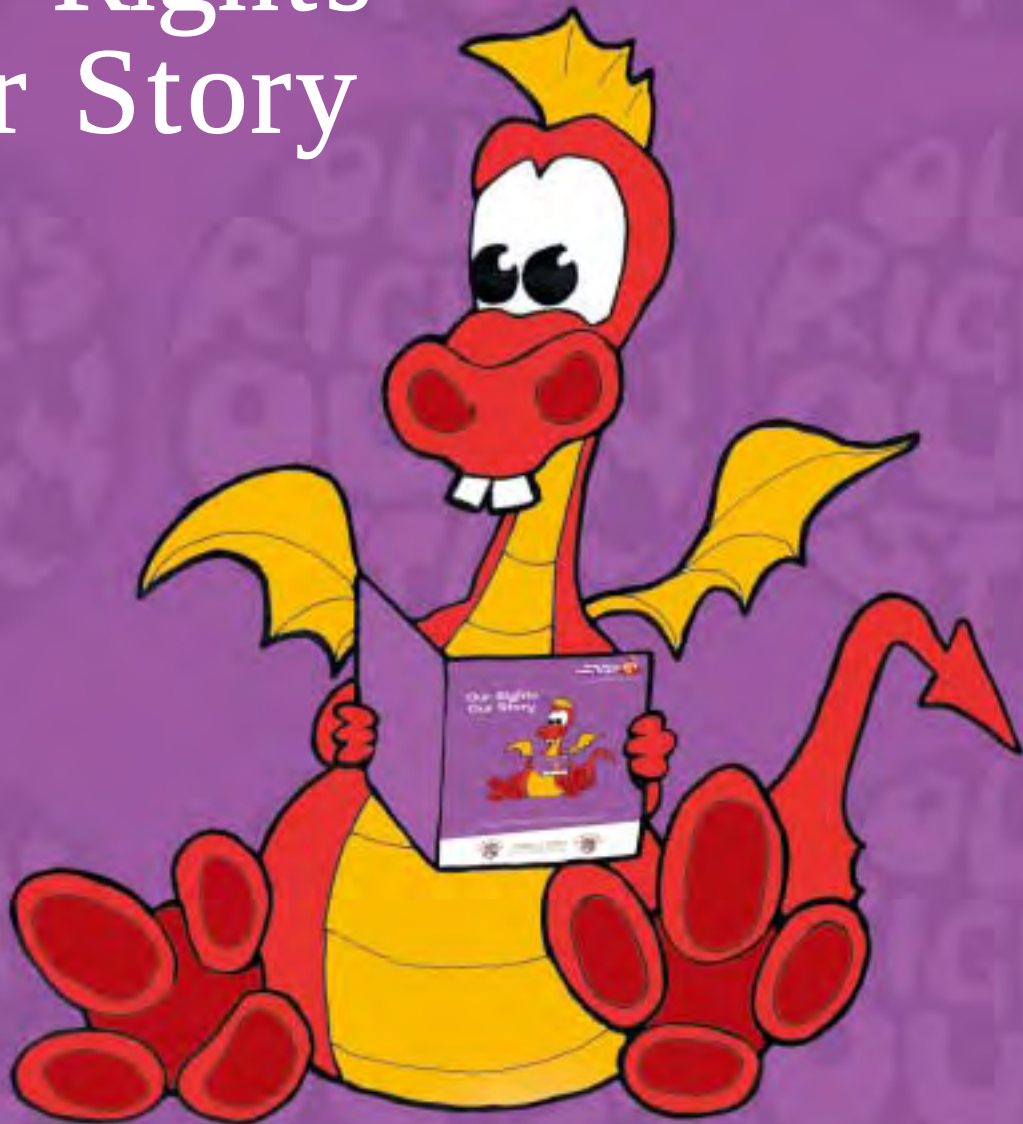


Our Rights Our Story



A Funky Dragon report asking to what extent are young people aged 11 to 18 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



Glossary of terms

A Right is a power or liberty to which one is justly entitled, or a thing to which one has a just claim.

Alternative Reports These are reports produced by NGO's and children's organisations, which are submitted to the Committee alongside the main Government report.

Articles An article is a division in a legal document, so is just a different way of saying parts.

Committee on the Rights of the Child or **the Committee**. A group of 18 experts on children's rights nominated by state parties to examine reports on children on behalf of United Nations.

Concluding Observations When the Committee has heard all the evidence from a country they then produce their own report which contains recommendations on how Governments can improve their record on children's rights.

Government A body that can make and enforce laws within a country. In this document Government means Westminster and not the Welsh Assembly.

NGO's (Non Governmental Organisations) Organisations that are not part of Government. Examples could be Oxfam, Amnesty International or Greenpeace.

Participation In this document participation means the right to be involved in decisions about you.

Ratified The process of adoption of a legal document or treaty.

Rights Holder A person who is entitled to claim rights.

State Party Another word for Government.

Substantive Articles Articles 1 to 41 of the convention. These articles contain all the rights applicable to children.

UNCRC United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.



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Introduction

In 2002 when the UK last reported to the **Committee on the Rights of the Child**, two young people from Funky Dragon (then known as Young Voice) were given the opportunity to accompany **non-governmental organisations (NGO's)** as part of the alternative reporting process. Whilst the two young people had very different experiences of the process, both clearly stated that next time young people had the opportunity to meet the committee they should go more prepared and as national representatives, not individuals.

Unlike with any of the other conventions of the United Nations, **the Committee** on the Rights of the Child does not just listen to governments. The Committee also invites NGO's and child-led organisations to submit reports. These are known as the **alternative reports**.

If a country has one, it's children's commissioner is also invited to submit a report. After listening to all the reports, the committee then compiles its **concluding observations**, and presents these to **government**. Although the Committee has no way of enforcing its views, it is argued that the open reporting process makes governments publicly and internationally accountable.

We would like to thank all the schools, groups and individuals who helped make this project a reality. No individuals have been named in this report. Where you see a quote the person's name has been changed. No schools or groups have been named as the research was about general findings and not about evaluating specific organisations.

One of the many challenges we faced when carrying out this project was that for the vast majority of young people we spoke to, this was the first time they had discovered they had rights. You will see in the report that only 8% of young people had heard of the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)**. We feel that the research and its findings would have been very different if the young people we spoke to already had an awareness of their rights and an understanding of how they claim those rights.

Everything we have done in this project has been available in both English and Welsh. This includes all publications, the DVD and both the workshops and the National Survey which have been conducted in the young people's language of choice. When we first embarked on this journey we searched for a copy the UNCRC in the Welsh Language. As we have been unable to find one, we have produced our own. So one of the many results of this project has been that for the first time welsh speaking young people can now read the UNCRC in their first language.

This report is the product of nearly 18 months hard work by four dedicated teams, made up of Funky Dragon Staff and young people, determined to reach as many young people in Wales as possible. In total 12,242 young people took part in the research. This large number lets us feel confident that when members of Funky Dragon present this report to the Committee on the Rights of the child, they will be doing so as representatives of young people in Wales, not as individuals.



About Us

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 meets with Welsh Assembly Government Ministers and Officials on a regular basis to put across the views of children and young people in Wales.



We have 66 places for young people representing their local authorities. The aim is to have three young people from each local authority, one to represent the statutory sector, one from the voluntary sector and one from school councils.

Each local authority is responsible for electing their representatives for the Grand Council.

Nearly all local authorities in Wales have youth forums in place.

Specific interest representatives

The voices of all young people are important, which means that Funky Dragon tries to work with as wide a range of young people as possible, so that it is as representative as possible. Because we recognise the additional challenges minority groups have in being listened too we have specific places for their representation:

- o Gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender
- o Black and minority ethnic
- o Young people with disabilities
- o Homeless or have been homeless
- o Young carers
- o Been in the youth justice system
- o Looked after young people
- o Long term health problems (but not a disability)





Background

In February 2006 Funky Dragon started discussing the next round of U.K reporting to the Committee on the Right's of the Child. There was a clear commitment from all the young people involved that Funky Dragon should do its best to gain the views of as many young people in Wales as it possibly could.

Following this first discussion all members of the Funky Dragon Grand Council were invited to be part of a steering group to take this project forward. In total 19 members took up the challenge to develop and lead the project, reporting back to the Grand Council on a regular basis.



Adam Evans



Alex Davies



Ben Sawyers



Cameron Struthers



Chris Gibbins



Danielle Richardson



Darren (Skwirel) Thomas



Emma Bettany



Erika Borley



Heidi Carter



Holly Mae Price



Hywel Davies



Lee Ellery



Mark Gough



Paul Lewis



Rebecca Harris



Rob Gillet



Scarlet Brown



Stephen Marshall



In line with the ethos of Funky Dragon, from the outset the project was run by young people. The steering group recruited the staff for the project, wrote the questions for the survey, designed the activities for the workshops, analyzed the findings and decided on the content of the report.

The role of the staff within this project has been to support, inform and give the young people on the steering group the necessary skills to carry out their work. They have also delivered the national survey and workshops in accordance with the young people's directions and most importantly reported back to the steering group.

At the very start of the project the steering group spent time looking at the UNCRC in detail. Whilst the 54 articles within the convention cover a wide range of areas it was felt that not all were suited to this type of research or a Welsh context. Eventually after much discussion it was decided that we would cover 5 themes.

Education	Participation
Health	Specific interest young people
Information	

Having looked at the UNCRC, the steering group felt that there were a number of issues in their lives they wanted to explore which were not covered. There would have been no point in reporting the findings from these areas to the committee as they lie outside the UNCRC's remit and as such they would not be able to comment on them.

It was therefore decided to run the project in two parts: the part that concerns the UNCRC and the part that concerns the young people in Wales. Part two of the project will cover:

Culture	Leisure
Environment	Transport

Work on these areas will take place between September and December 2007. It is hoped that findings from this work can be used in Wales to affect change for Welsh young people.







Timeline for OROS project

February to December 06
Thinking, dreaming and planning the project

Date: Feb 06

Event: Grand Council Residential, Bala.

Purpose: To establish a steering group for the project.

Comment: "Steering group was recruited, group discussed the prospect of the project and staff told us about the aims and funding. It was sooo cold!!"

Date: April 06

Event: Grand Council Residential, Llangranog.

Purpose: To update grand Council on work.

Comment: "Name OROS thought up ...voted on."

Date: April 06

Event: Belgium Trip

Purpose: To meet a group that had already done a similar project.

Comment: "Met with Brussels team from their project. Discovered Do's, Don'ts and Waffles!"

Date: May 06

Event: Project staff Interviews, Llandrindod Wells.

Purpose: Involve young people in the interviewing of project staff.

Comment: "Love interviewing."

Date: June 06

Event: Steering group residential.

Purpose: To plan AGM.

Comment: "The project starts to feel real"

Date: July 06

Event: Funky Dragon AGM

Purpose: To inform young people of project and ask "what would you ask?"

Comment: "Took OROS to grand council. Questions exercise ran."

Date: Sept 06

Event: Steering group residential.

Purpose: To see mapping that project workers had carried out and begin to develop research.

Comment: "A very confusing time, work to be done looked enormous"
"Themes/issues debate-took forever but was very useful."





October to December 2006

Piloted survey questions and workshop methods with groups of young people

Date: October 2006

Event: 2 Young people travelled to India to attend Concern for Working Children's training conference about children's role as protagonists.

Comment: "wow..."

Date: Dec 06

Event: Two Project Launches at the same time in Ammanford and Caernarfon.

Purpose: "Project Launch & DVD Launch.

Comment: "Best part. Very, very funny."

January to July 2007

Research phase including National Survey, workshops and interviews

Date: Jan 07

Event: Steering group residential, Cardiff.

Purpose: Update on work.

Comment: "National Survey started."

"learnt that stratification is a good thing as there is no such thing as reality!"

Date: Feb 07

Event: Grand Council Residential, Bala.

Purpose: Talk about phase II of the project and times of events for the rest of the year.

Comment: "Loads of newbies join.."

Date: March 07

Events: Steering group residential, Cardiff.

Purpose: Recruit children's project staff.

Comment: "still love interviewing"

Date: April 07

Events: Grand Council Residential.

Purpose: How to achieve phase II workshops. Assistant Directors of Education in Wales.

Comment: "More in-depth information"

Date: June 07

Events: Steering group residential, Swansea.

Purpose: Begin to Analyze and prepare presentations for Grand Council.

Comment: "Hardcore SPSSing", "Hard work to ensure presentations were ready"



July to October 2007
Analyzing and Writing and Writing And Writing

Date: July 07

Event: Grand Council Residential.

Purpose: National Survey finished. Results presented to Grand Council.

Comment: "Hard but very good workshops."

Date: Oct 07

Events: Steering group residential, Port Talbot.

Purpose: Look at all information gathered and decide what to put into the report.

Comments: "I never thought we'd get here"





The DVD

The DVD was produced to tell young people about the history of the UNCRC and how it applies to Wales. It explains what the OROS project is and how everyone can get their voice heard not only for the purposes of our report but also in their daily lives.



**No one can
take your
rights away
from you**

It stars Funky the dragon, a cartoon character, who takes the viewer on a journey of discovery from the First World War to the present day outlining all the major landmarks of children's rights on the way. He then introduces people who explain the UNCRC in more detail and talk about the reporting process in particular. This is told in a Welsh context with examples of how children are not necessarily able to access all of their rights in Wales at the moment.

The DVD also shows what is happening in Wales right now in terms of participation with examples from Funky Dragon staff, Jane Davidson AM (The then minister for lifelong learning and skills) and a school council.

The OROS steering group explain their part in the process and also stress how important it is that the submission of a young people's report should be young people led.

Finally the DVD shows how everyone can get involved in the OROS project and how children's rights are something that everyone needs to be aware of. The best thing about the DVD is that it is fun and entertaining as well as stuffed full of information. Everybody loves Funky the Dragon and before they know it they find that they have learned something. Making it fun was probably the most difficult as well as the most important thing we did. If it didn't hold young people's attention to the end it wouldn't have been worth doing at all.





The Research

Having established the themes which the project was going to cover and asked over 100 young people "what would you ask young people if you were doing the research?", the steering group began to think about how they would conduct their research.

It was decided to carry out 3 very different types of research in order to reach as wide a range of young people as possible, whilst at the same time exploring young people's issues in depth.

The National Survey

50 questions and statements were generated from what young people had told us they would ask. All of the questions were closed, which meant they all had a different set of multiple-choice answers. These answers ranged from yes, no, don't know to always, sometimes, occasionally, never. With the statements we asked young people to agree or disagree with them to varying degrees.

The steering group wanted to conduct the research in a fun and interactive way, doing something very different to the normal, paper based survey. Further to this they felt it was vitally important that all the young people taking part in the survey must have a clear understanding of both the questions and answers the survey contained. This meant making sure that the survey was accessible to all young people, even if their reading skills were not great.

It was felt the only way to do this was to make sure that every question and its answers were read out aloud and explained. As well as giving all young people the opportunity to clarify any points.

In order to carry out the survey in this way Funky Dragon purchased a "voting system". The system has 180 individual remote controls and works in conjunction with a Powerpoint presentation. We also purchased a PA system because some of the audiences were big and some of our worker's voices were small.

The surveys were carried out in a school assembly setting. Each of the questions and their corresponding answers were projected onto a big screen and then read aloud by Funky Dragon staff. Once satisfied that everybody understood the question, young people were then told to "vote". Each young person had their own remote control and then pressed their chosen answer. As no record was kept of which young person had which remote, the survey was completely anonymous.

All information was then collated and stored on a central computer in the office.





The Workshops

A series of fun and interactive methods were developed within the 5 themes. Each theme has a number of different activities.

As well as activities to gain information from young people, there were also icebreaker games, scene setting activities and evaluation exercises. The full session with all activities included would take around 2 hours to run.

Project staff adapted the sessions to take into account the time available, the size of the group and the needs of individuals. The games and activities were never changed. This was to ensure that all those taking part did the same thing.

The Interviews

In total 37 interviews were carried out with young people from specific interest groups. Each young person was given a disposable camera and asked to take pictures of their community and important people and places to them. This was to help them put their rights into the context of their own lives. The pictures were then used as discussion points throughout the interviews. Due to the nature of specific interest groups, using these methods allowed for differing levels of confidence and competence to be taken into account. It also provided them with the opportunity to express their opinions in a variety of ways.

Introduction to research findings

As you read through the different sections of the research findings you will very soon notice that they have been written by different people, with different styles of writing. As so many people have written the various parts of the report we have not attributed any of the sections to any individuals.





Our Rights, Our Story Demographics

Number of workshops	140	2,170 young people
Number of National Surveys	45	10,035 young people

Age

7-10*	45	0.37%
11-15	11485	94.10%
16-18	622	5.10%
19-24*	53	0.43%

12205

*There were young people outside of the 11 to 18 age range, these young people would have been present during workshops. We felt that it was important not to exclude them.

Gender

Male	5883	48.20%
Female	6279	51.45%
Not Answered	43	0.35%

12205

Welsh speaking

Yes	3017	24.72%
No	8019	65.70%
Not Answered	1169	9.58%

12205

Disabled

Yes	225	1.84%
No	10709	87.74%
Not Answered	1271	10.41%

12205

Ethnic Minority

Yes	354	2.90%
No	9901	81.12%
Not Answered	1950	15.98%

12205

A further 37 young people from our "specific interest" groups of young people were interviewed for the purposes of this research.





Confidence Level and Confidence Intervals

When conducting quantitative research, most researchers use a **confidence level** to express how accurate the findings can be in relation to the rest of the population. For the National Survey we had 10,035 young people take part. There are 225 Secondary schools in Wales with a population of 215,000 pupils (General Statistics 2004-05 NAW). This figure means we have a confidence level of 95%.

The **confidence level** tells us how sure we can be that the results reflect the target population. It is expressed as a percentage and represents how often the true percentage of the population who would pick an answer, lies within the confidence interval. A 95% confidence level means we can be 95% certain that if we went out to question all 215,000 secondary school pupils in Wales we would have the same results as are contained in this report.

"The **confidence interval** is the plus-or-minus figure usually reported in newspaper or television opinion poll results. For example, if you use a confidence interval of 4 and 47% percent of your sample picks an answer you can be "sure" that if you had asked the question of the entire relevant population between 43% (47-4) and 51% (47+4) would have picked that answer". <http://www.surveysystem.com/sscalc.htm>

From our figures we have a confidence interval level of 1.26 – therefore we can be sure that if we asked the entire secondary school population of Wales a question where 8% of our sample answered yes, the result would be between 6.75% and 9.26% would have picked the same answer.

<http://www.surveysystem.com/sscalc.htm>





Living in Wales

Fundamentally the 'Our Rights Our Story' project has aimed to find out about the experience of young people living in Wales, in order to determine how well they are able to access their rights under the United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child. However, as we will demonstrate later in this report, many young people have no knowledge or understanding of what their rights are; and so would struggle to answer whether or not they are accessing them. Therefore, during the qualitative research that Funky Dragon has undertaken, we attempted to ask some more 'general' questions to provoke thought amongst the participants. One such activity asked young people to tell us their ideas about what is good, and what they would change about living in Wales.

Predominantly young people felt very positive about living in Wales and being Welsh, and there was an overwhelming sense of 'pride' about the country.

*"Wales is the best. Welsh 'n' proud."
(Sara, Aged 12 from Flintshire)*

The traditions, cultures, history and language all played a big part in what young people saw as the positive aspects of living in Wales. Although, in terms of language, there were some mixed opinions. A number of young people highlighted the sometimes negative experiences of learning Welsh, and the segregation that can exist between Welsh and English speakers. Largely young people were happy that Wales has its own unique language, and when asked what they would change about living in Wales, their responses were often to do with increasing the use of Welsh, and improving the way that it was taught to allow this to happen. Young people also mentioned the sometimes difficult relationships which exist between those who speak Welsh and those who don't.

*'There should be less pressure on young people to be as Welsh as possible.'
(Sioned, Aged 16 from Powys)*

According to our research young people feel very positively about the environment in which they live in Wales. It seems they appreciate the countryside, coastlines and mountains which surround them. Whilst there were some comments about the number of 'things to do' in Wales (in terms of wanting to increase the number of bowling alleys, cinemas, shopping centres etc.), on the whole, young people were happy with their surroundings and highlighted this as one of the best things about living in Wales. Specifically, young people referred to the 'views', 'scenery', 'sea', 'mountains', 'wildlife', 'lakes', 'forests' and 'beaches'.

One concern which young people seemed to raise in this research was to do with feeling safe on the streets. This related to a number of issues including anti social behaviour, graffiti, vandalism, drugs and violence. When asked what they would change about living in Wales, one young person replied:

*'Everything! People stealing killing and fighting, bullying.'
(Dafydd, Aged 14 from Monmouthshire)*





Another issue which young people highlighted was that of there being a lack of things to do for young people in Wales. Generally, there were a large number of participants who responded to the question by saying they would like to increase the number of shops, cinemas, restaurants, theme parks, playgrounds, swimming pools and sports facilities. However, there were also a large number of young people who suggested that they would improve the experience of living in Wales by increasing the amount of specific youth provision. This may be in the form of youth clubs, more youth workers, and generally just having places that young people can go in their free time.

'There should be more facilities for young people, as there isn't much to do. This means that young people end up out on the streets.'

(Jac, Aged 17 from Wrexham)

Linked to this desire for more 'things to do' was the issue of transport. It seems that a lack of facilities is not the only barrier to young people finding things to do in their spare time. When asked what they would change about living in Wales, one young person replied:

'There's not a lot of transport, so even where facilities exist, they can be hard to get to in rural Wales (i.e. most of it).'

(Mark, Aged 15 from Blaenau Gwent)

According to the young people we asked, it seems that the current transport provision in Wales is not suitable considering the rural nature of much of the country.

Whilst there were a large number of suggestions for ways that Wales could be improved, there were an equal number of reasons highlighted by the young people, which make Wales an enjoyable place to live. Aside from the environment and their pride at simply 'being Welsh', young people were largely extremely positive about the people and communities which exist in Wales. Some young people mentioned the importance of their family and friends, and the advantages of living close to those who are important to them. More than this, young people seem to feel that there is a sense of 'community' in Wales, where the majority of people get along, and care about each other.

'Everyone feels close to each other - feeling of togetherness.'

(Sophie, Aged 13 from Merthyr Tydfil)

It is difficult to summarise all that was said during this activity. As is to be expected, all young people had different views on what was good, and what was not so good about living in Wales. In the main young people feel quite positive about their country and the experiences they have here; however, this doesn't mean that life couldn't be improved for them, and they have highlighted a number of practical suggestions as to how this could happen.



Education

According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, all children and young people have a right to education. There are a number of articles of the Convention which relate directly to the area of education, such as Article 28 which says that State parties should:

'Make educational and vocational information and guidance available and accessible to all.'

There are others which do not mention education directly, but which may have an impact in an educational setting, such as Article 16, which could relate to bullying:

'No child shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his or her privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to unlawful attacks on his or her honour and reputation.'

During the 'Our Rights Our Story' project, a number of questions relating to education were asked during the National Survey. There was also a more 'qualitative' exercise which asked young people what they would do 'If they were head teacher'.

The main themes which arose from all areas of research were: bullying; Personal Social Education; the effects of education on their future; knowledge and understanding of the UNCRC; teaching methods; school transport; religious needs in education; Careers advice and information; GCSE subject choices; discipline; and personal support and guidance.





Bullying

The issue of bullying arose as the major concern of young people in Wales.

Of those who responded to the question of whether they had ever been a victim of bullying, almost 46% of young people, who took part in our National Survey, said that they had.

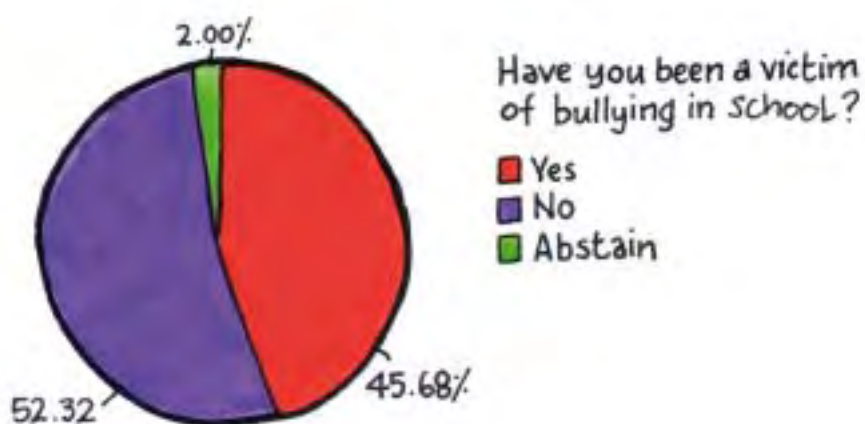


Figure 1

It was a conscious decision in designing the questions of the survey that no definition of 'bullying' was given to the young people before they answered. We were interested to know young people's 'feelings' on the subject, and recognise that the experience of bullying is personal to each individual; therefore it would not be appropriate for Funky Dragon to attempt to define what constitutes bullying and what does not. The fact that almost 46% of young people have felt bullied is hugely significant.

Funky Dragon acknowledges the importance of the Welsh Assembly Government's anti-bullying guidance (*'Respecting Others' 2003*), which states that every school must have systems in place to tackle bullying. However, results show that 42.21% of young people didn't know about the systems that existed in their schools.

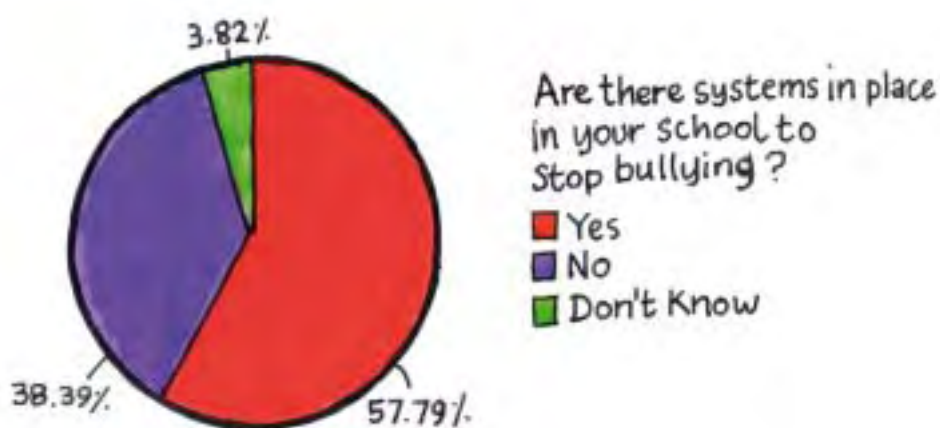


Figure 2

In the more qualitative research some young people have suggested that although they may know about the policies which exist in their school, they are dissatisfied with the quality and implementation of them.

"If I were head teacher I would...set up a proper anti-bullying scheme to acknowledge the fact that bullying is happening, rather than deny that it happens at all."
(Billy, Aged 13 from Wrexham)

'Respecting Others' also says that young people should be involved in the development of anti-bullying policies and that these policies should be reviewed by ALL members of the school at least once per academic year. This is clearly not happening in many secondary schools at the moment.

Interestingly, the results show that those young people who have experienced bullying in school, are less likely to know about the anti-bullying systems which exist.

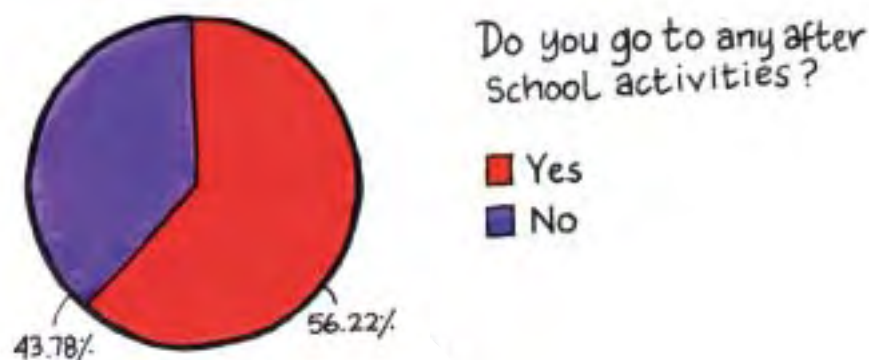




Figure 3

The young people on the steering group found this particularly concerning, as they felt it may mean a large number of bullied young people feel isolated and do not know the appropriate route to take for support. Further analysis of the results also seems to indicate some of the effects that bullying has on the lives of those who have experienced it. For example, we asked young people whether or not they took part in after-school activities. More than 56% of those who answered said that they did.

Figure 4





However, Figure 5 shows that those who have experienced bullying are less likely to engage in after school activities than those who had not been bullied.



Figure 5

Young people taking part in the National survey were also asked how safe they feel when travelling on school transport. Significantly, those young people who had been bullied, were more likely to feel either 'unsafe' or 'very unsafe' when asked this question (see figure 6). This may suggest that whilst bullying can happen in a range of settings, one of these is on the way to and from school.



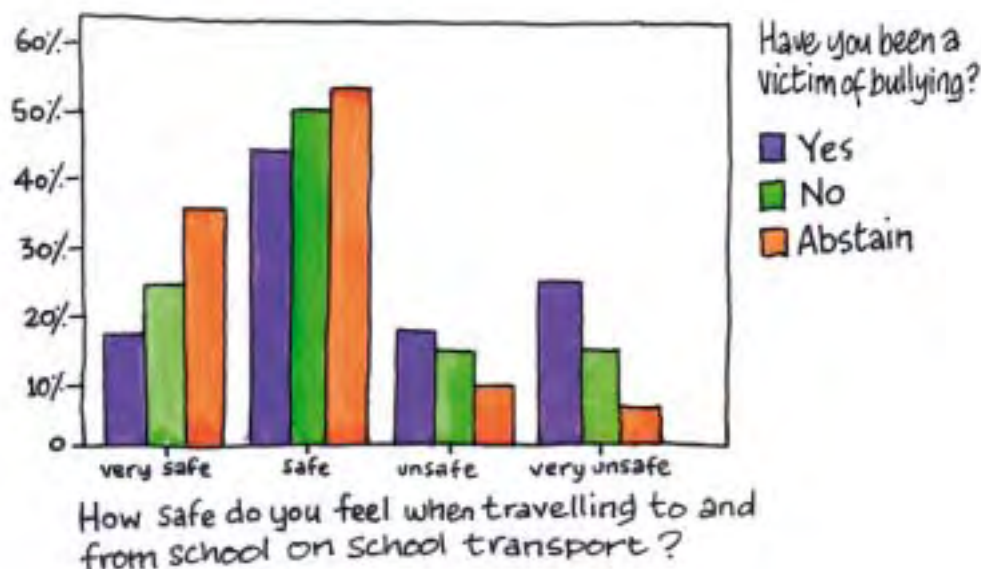


Figure 6

The experience of being bullied is clearly a traumatic one which can infringe upon a young person's right to education. It can affect a young person's self esteem, and ability to learn effectively. When asked what they would do if they were head teacher, one young person replied:

"I would look after all the pupils and kick out all the bullies. Make sure all the pupils are happy and learn what they need to learn, and not be afraid to go to school."
(Charlie, Aged 14 from Newport)

Recommendations

- Funky Dragon recommends that anti-bullying policies within schools need to be promoted more, so that ALL members of the school (staff and pupils) are aware of the systems which are in place.
- The design of these policies should be worked on with pupils, so that they are as effective as they can be in meeting young people's needs.
- Funky Dragon also recommends that more is done to monitor and evaluate the implementation of these policies, to ensure their constant improvement and effectiveness.
- Finally, Funky Dragon recommends that anti-bullying policies are extended to cover both after school activities and school transport – ensuring young people's safety and well being in all aspects of their education.



Personal Social Education

Young people taking part in the National Survey were asked whether they felt that PSE (Personal, Social Education) lessons were useful and informative. Previous work that Funky Dragon has undertaken with its Grand Council seemed to suggest that young people generally, held quite negative feelings about PSE. However, the National Survey results actually suggest that a large proportion of young people who answered this question do find these lessons useful and informative (45%). However, this leaves 55% of young people who either said it wasn't useful, or weren't sure.

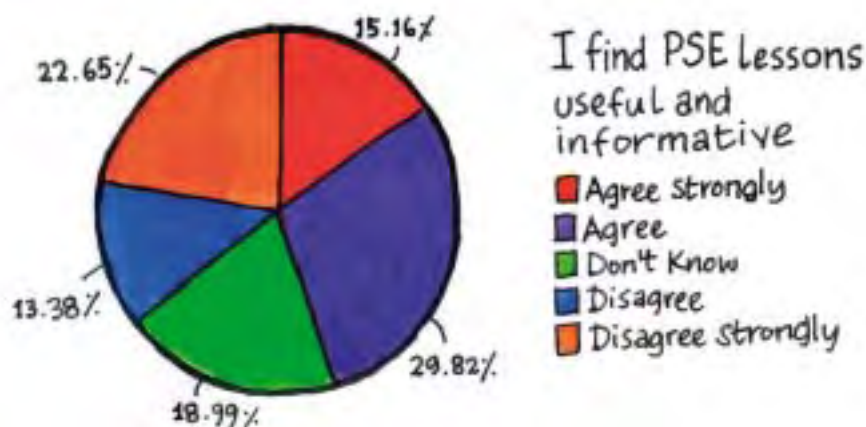


Figure 7

The results of the survey show that generally the older age group (14-19) find PSE lessons much less valuable than those in the 11-13 age group.

(It should be noted that the age ranges are not equal in this case – 1 being 3 years, the other being 5. However, in gathering data approximately 2/3 of the young people were aged 11-13; just under 1/3 of young people were aged 13-16. There were also a very small number of young people aged 16-19. It was therefore decided to create 1 larger older age group of 14-19).



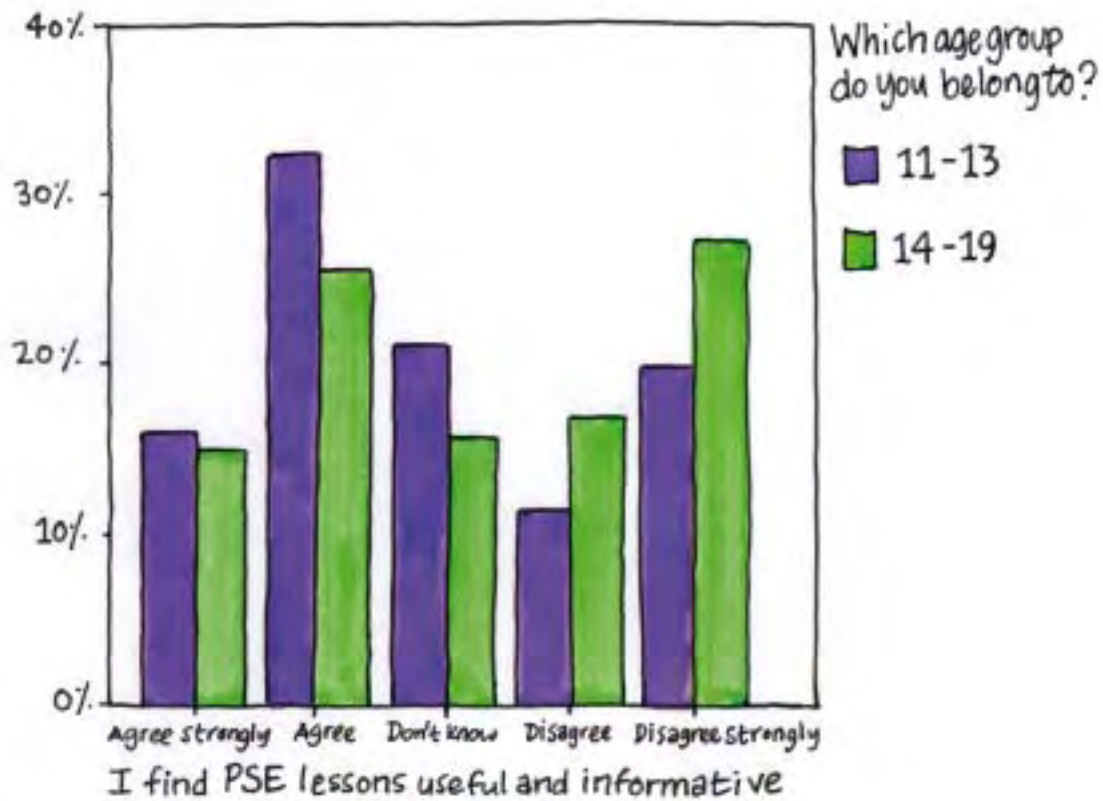


Figure 8

In analysis young people suggested a number of reasons for this divide; such as the fact that in Years 7 and 8 of school, PSE is a new subject, which maybe captures the interest of the younger pupils as a 'new' experience.

It is interesting that despite having the same PSE curriculum, young people around Wales seem very divided about their opinions of this subject. This would seem to suggest that the problem may not be the content of the lessons, but the way in which they are taught. Below, we can see that when asked if they were happy with the methods of teaching in their school, those young people who found PSE least useful, were also least happy with the methods of teaching used.

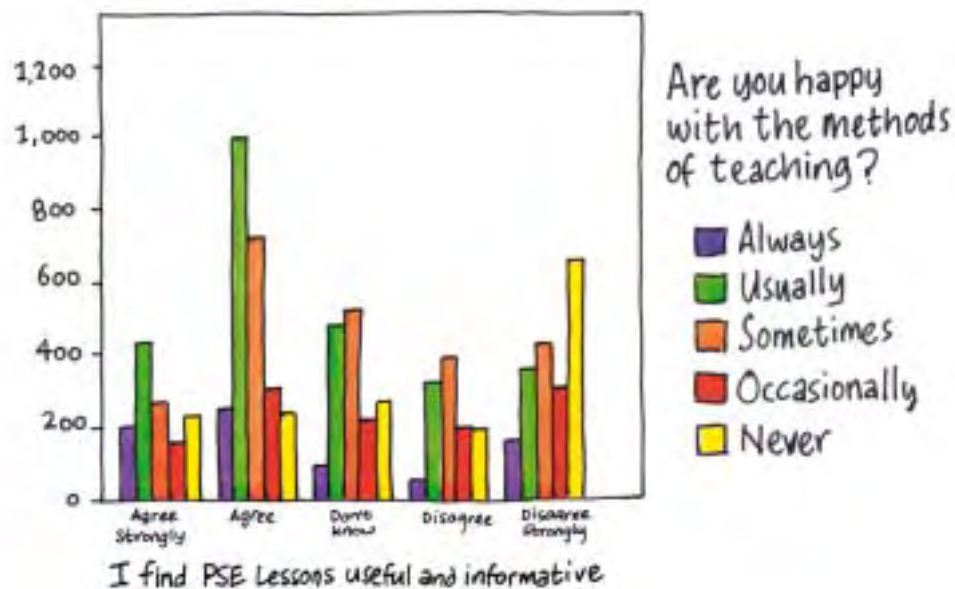


Figure 9

In a recent consultation around the new PSE curriculum (due to come into effect in 2008), young people suggested a number of alternative teaching methods to those currently used to teach PSE. These included quizzes, projects, presentations and debates. A number of young people also expressed a concern that PSE is not taught by the most appropriate people, and that bringing in outside organisations to cover particular parts of the curriculum may be more effective.

As PSE is unlike other subjects on the curriculum in Wales, in the sense that it is not taught by specific, qualified teachers and it does not offer a qualification, its 'usefulness' may be judged on different qualities than other subjects. For example, PSE may not be seen as useful for entry into college or university, as it offers no 'academic value'. (It should be noted that under the new 'Welsh Baccalaureate' qualification, PSE does form part of the 'core' subjects. However, the 'Welsh Bacc' is not offered in the majority of secondary schools in Wales. The government's target is that 25% of students will be studying under this new qualification by 2010).

Recommendations

- Funky Dragon feels the government needs to give clearer directives as to how PSE is taught. Currently schools have the freedom to deliver PSE as they see fit (whether this be as an individual subject or across the curriculum). Funky Dragon feels this is leading to inequalities in the experiences that young people are having in this area, despite the existence of a national curriculum for this subject.
- Funky Dragon also recommends that more 'value' be given to PSE in schools. We suggest the government looks towards offering a qualification in this subject, and that specialist teachers should deliver lessons.
- Funky Dragon recommends that the Government (possibly through its inspecting body ESTYN) look at the various ways in which PSE is taught across Wales, and highlight examples of good practice.





The Effects of Education on Young People's Futures

The UNCRC States that education should prepare children and young people for a '... responsible life in a free society...' (Article 29). Therefore, our National Survey asked young people about how well they think the things they learn in school will help them in the future.

The vast majority of young people responded positively to this question, with 65.54% of young people feeling that their education would help them in the future in either work, life, or both. However, more than 20% of those young people did not see that what they were learning about would help them outside of employment. Added to those who felt that their education would be of no help to them at all, this makes over 46% of the young people we asked who can see no relevance of what they're learning to their future life (outside employment). Taking into consideration the explicit mention of preparation for 'life' and 'active citizenship' in Article 29 of the Convention, this clearly means that almost half of the young people we asked, felt that they were unable to fully access their right to an education which prepares them for life.

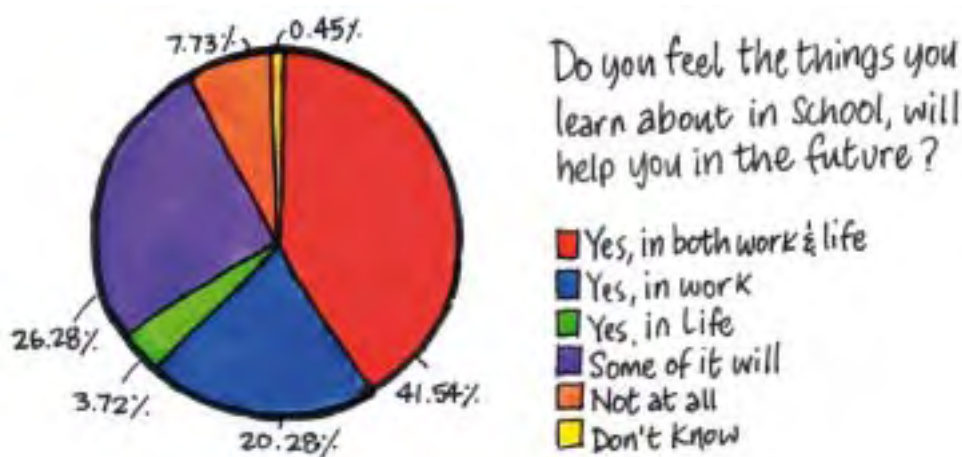


Figure 10

The figures show that the young people who had the most negative responses to this question were the older age group (see figure 11). Obviously further research would need to be done to ascertain the reasons for this; though in analysis some of the young people felt that this could be because it is only when you reach this older age that you begin to realise what you need for your future, and can properly evaluate whether your education has been useful in contributing to this. Other young people commented that it is impossible to know the usefulness for 'life' until you have at least begun to live that 'life'.

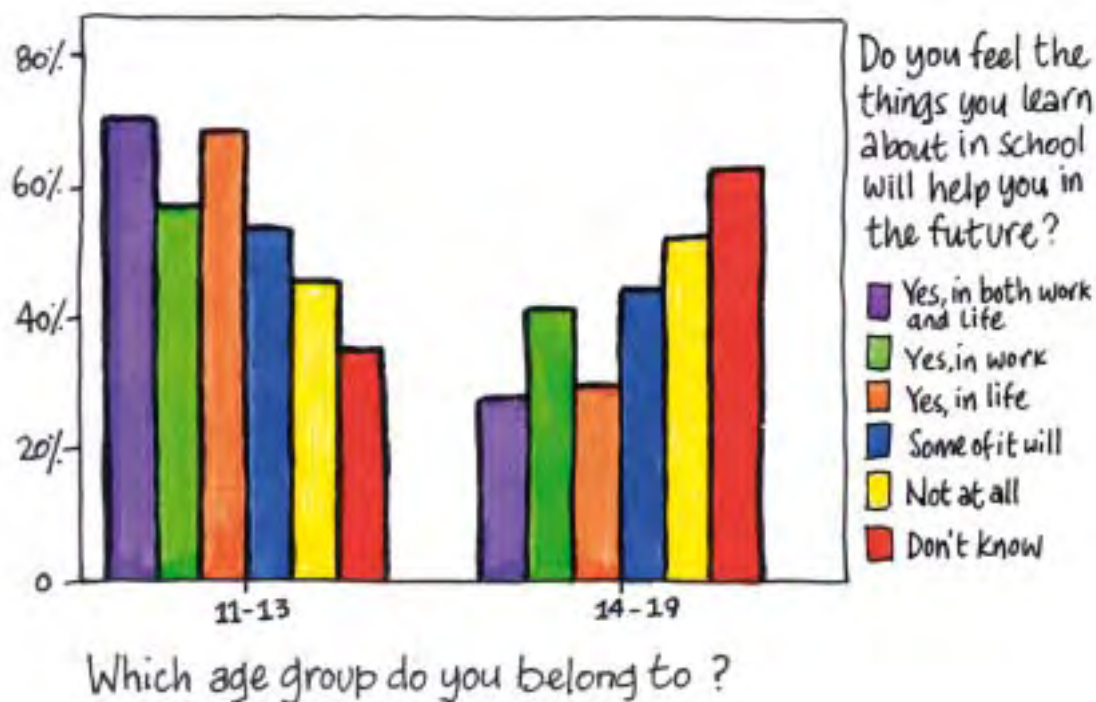


Figure 11

We can also see from Figure 12 that generally, those young people who had a positive view of the usefulness of Personal Social Education, also saw that their education would be helpful to them in the future, in either work, life or both. Those who 'disagreed strongly' that PSE was useful and informative also did not see that their education would be at all helpful for their future. As PSE is intended to teach young people about the personal and social aspects of their life, it seems that it is falling short of this in some way. This could be that young people are failing to see the relevance of the PSE curriculum on their lives, or that the delivery and content of the PSE curriculum needs to be improved in order to better equip young people for their futures.



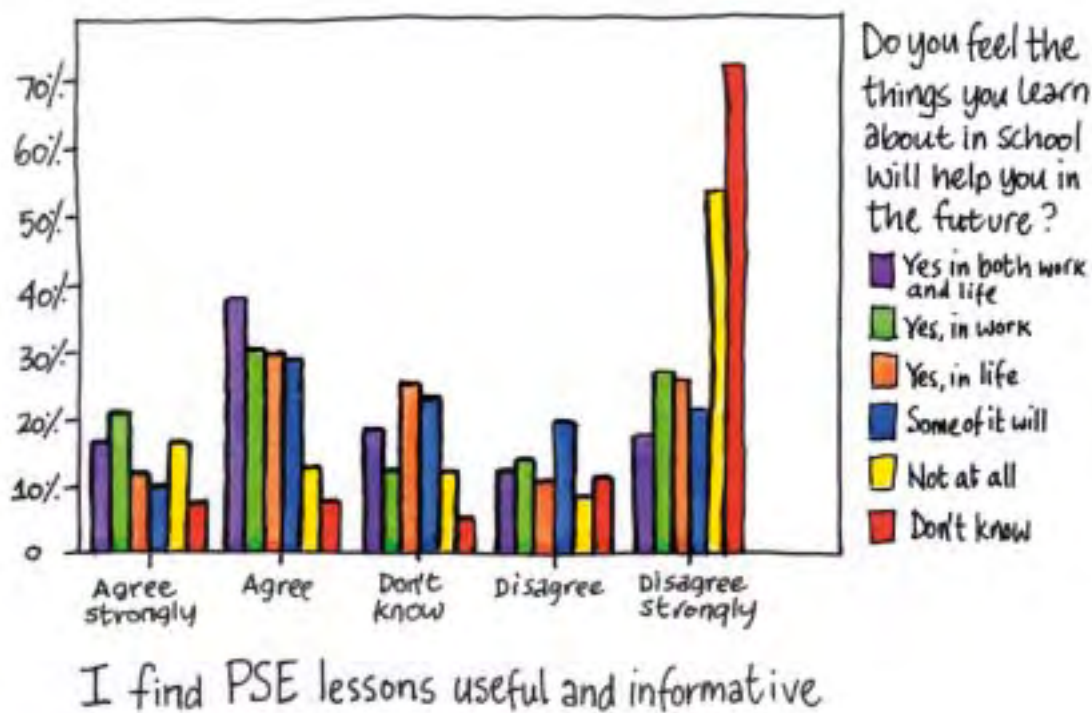


Figure 12

Recommendations

- Funky Dragon recommends that school curricula are amended to include more useful information for young people's futures. We suggest there should be some flexibility, so that young people may make positive suggestions as to what they feel they may need to learn about.



The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 42 states that all children and young people should be made aware of their rights as outlined in the Convention. As education and school is a major part of young people's lives, it would seem an appropriate place for them to be taught about these rights. Therefore, young people taking part in the National survey element of the Our Rights Our Story project were asked whether the UNCRC had ever been explained to them in school. Astonishingly only 8% of young people answering the question said that it had. (It is important to note that in delivering the National survey, researchers made it clear that they were referring to whether the UNCRC had been explained prior to their visit).

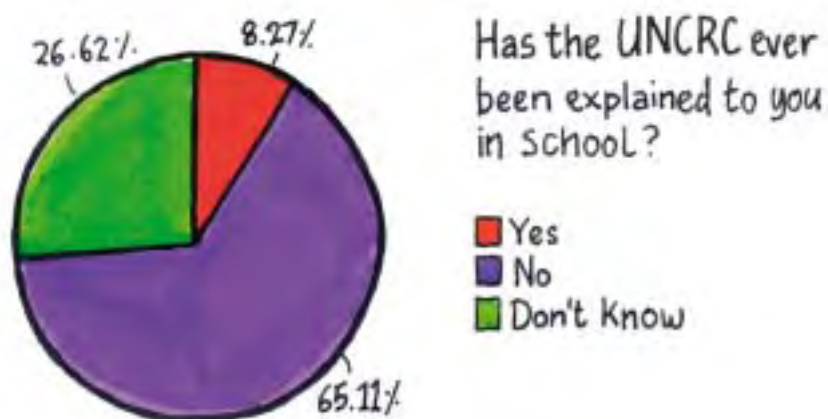


Figure 13

Whilst 26% of young people were unable to decisively say that they either had or hadn't been taught about it; this in itself raises concerns. If young people are being taught about their rights, it would seem that the way in which it is being taught is having little impact on them; they cannot recall ever having discussed this subject. If the Convention is not being covered within formal education, it begs the question where else it might be taught? As school is the most universal 'service' provided to young people in Wales, we feel it is the most appropriate place for this to be taught.

Funky Dragon recognises that in 2008 a new PSE curriculum will come into effect, which will highlight the need for young people in schools to be taught about their rights and entitlements under the UNCRC and other legislation, such as 'Extending Entitlement'. This is a huge improvement on previous curricula, which have failed to even mention this area. However, as mentioned previously, Funky Dragon's concern is that unless something is done to improve the way in which PSE is delivered in schools, the Convention is merely being added to the curriculum of a subject which is often ineffective and undervalued by teachers and pupils alike.





A major concern is that as this is new to the school curriculum, teachers will have no experience of delivering lessons around it. Also, as the Convention currently does not appear in teacher training courses in Wales, it is likely that school staff have little or no knowledge and understanding of this subject. Funky Dragon feels it is vital that pupils are not simply 'told' about their rights, but that they understand the historical context of rights. They understand what their rights are in the context of their own lives; and they are given opportunities to discuss and explore the responsibilities that come with having these rights.

Recommendations

- Funky Dragon recommends that clear directives are given to schools as to how they should teach young people about their rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Funky Dragon also recommends that Government takes action to ensure that teachers and other school staff have a good knowledge and understanding of the UNCRC. This will mean specialist training for teachers so that they can deliver the curriculum effectively.



Teaching Methods

As mentioned previously, Funky Dragon feels that the methods used to teach particular subjects can have a major influence on how much young people learn and enjoy a particular subject.

According to our National Survey, just over 40% of young people said that they were always or usually happy with the methods of teaching used in their school. Just over 27% said they were sometimes happy and sometimes not. Whilst almost 32% of young people asked said that they were only occasionally or never happy with the way they were taught.

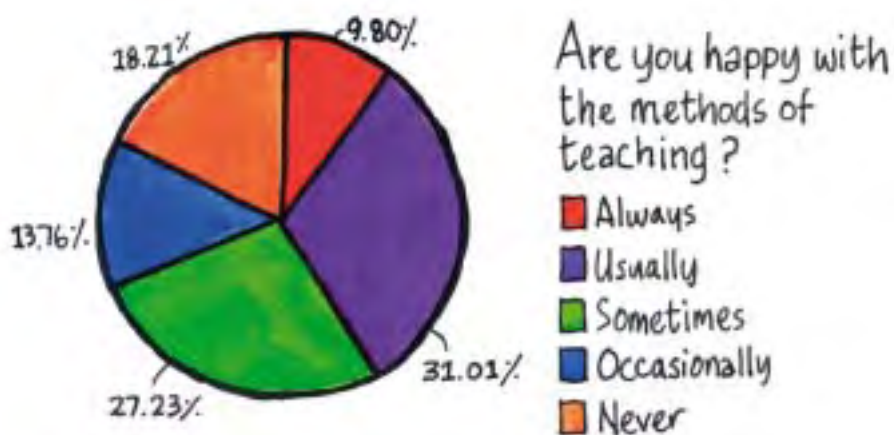


Figure 14

We can also see from our results that in general it was the older age group (aged 14-19) that were least happy with the methods of teaching. One possibility may be that by the time young people reach the latter years of schooling, they are bored or are looking for more variety in the way that they are taught.



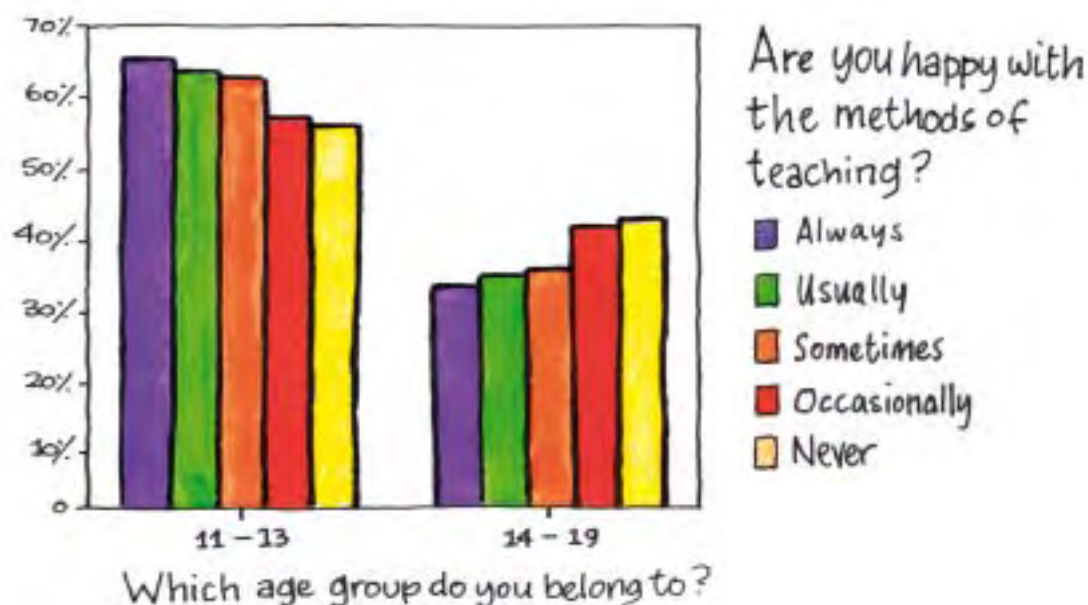


Figure 15

The qualitative data which we have gathered allows us to see some of the suggestions which young people have for improving teaching methods. Generally, when asked what they would do if they were head teacher, many young people answered that they would simply 'make it more fun'. More specific suggestions for improvement were to make lessons more 'active' and 'practical', as these lessons would be more 'memorable'. A number of young people also highlighted the need for greater interaction between pupils and teachers during lessons, so that pupils are more actively involved in their own learning.

"I would make all lessons physical and energetic and fun"
(Sam, aged 14 from Ceredigion)

There has been a wealth of research over the last 10 years, stating that different people have different ways of learning, and that some styles of teaching are better suited to certain individuals than others. Therefore it is reasonable to suggest that in a school setting, a variety of teaching methods should be employed in order to meet the needs of the wide range of young people. Article 29 of the Convention states that children and young people have a right to an education which is:

'directed to the development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential.'

Our research suggests that for almost a 1/3 of young people this is not happening.



Recommendations

- Funky Dragon recommends that the Government places greater emphasis upon the use of a variety of teaching methods in schools. The use of such methods should be closely monitored by schools and outside agencies (such as ESTYN).
- Funky Dragon also suggests that young people are involved in designing different methods of learning, and are consulted as to how they learn best – so as they are able to participate fully and achieve to their fullest potential.

School Transport

Of the young people we asked in our National Survey, almost 63% of them said that they used school transport. Of those that said they use it, 32.06% said that they felt either unsafe or very unsafe whilst using it.

For users of school transport only

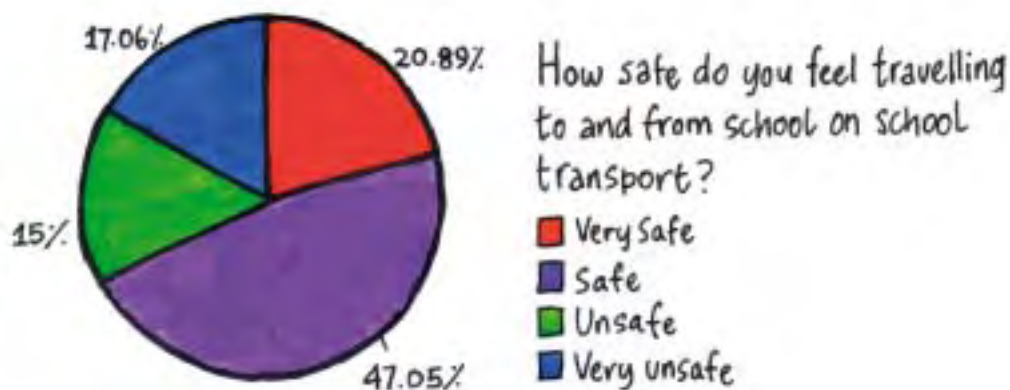


Figure 16

The research shows that generally males feel less safe on school transport than females, and that the older age group (age 14-19) feel much more unsafe than younger pupils.



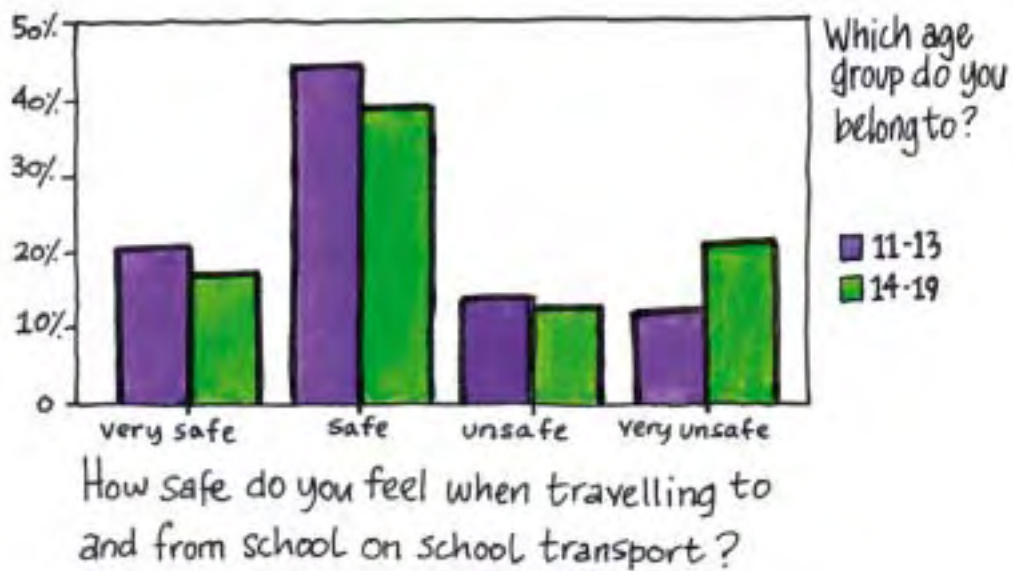


Figure17

In analysis, young people commented that there may be a number of reasons for feeling unsafe on school transport. These may include: the quality of driving, the condition of the vehicle and the experiences that young people have whilst on school transport. As mentioned previously, we can relate this issue of safety to bullying, as the survey showed that those young people who have been victims of bullying feel more unsafe than those who have not. This would seem to suggest that young people are experiencing bullying during their journeys to and from school. See Figure 18.

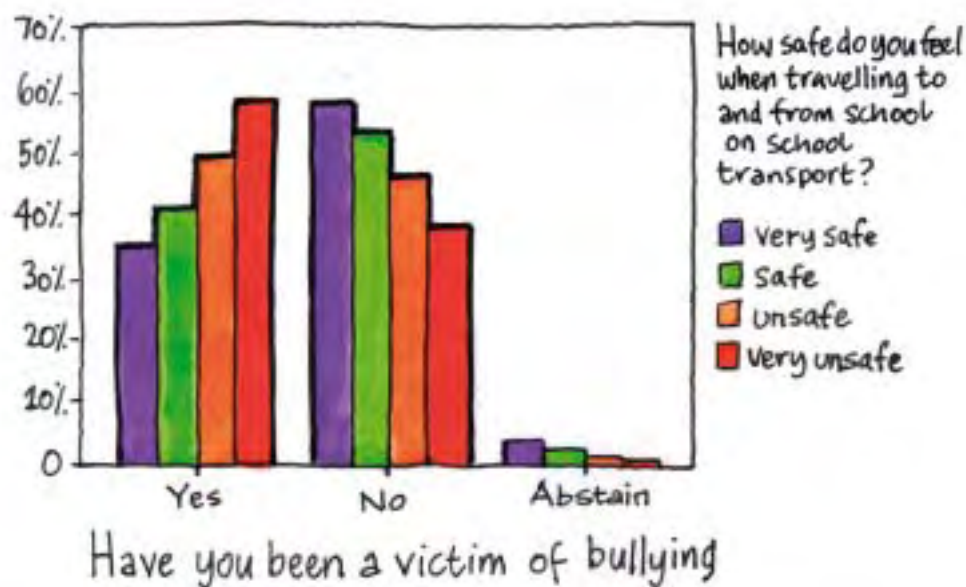


Figure 18

During a recent consultation with young people around the issue of 'learner travel', young people mentioned safety as being a major concern. They felt that school behaviour policies should be extended to include school transport, and that more needs to be done to monitor pupils' behaviour and experiences on the way to and from school.

Recommendations

- Funky Dragon recommends that anti bullying and behaviour policies are extended to cover school transport.
- We also recommend that there is greater monitoring and evaluation of health and safety standards on school transport.





Religious Needs within Education

When Funky Dragon asked young people whether they felt that their religious needs were considered in school, (as is their right under Article 30), 56% of young people said that they did not have any religious needs. (It is important to note that this may not be a true indication of religiosity of young people across Wales, as only one of our National Surveys was conducted in a specifically religious school). However, of those who said they did have religious needs only 44% of young people felt that these were either sometimes or always considered in education, with almost 45% saying that their religious needs were 'never' taken into account.

For those who have religious needs



Figure 19

Recommendations

- Funky Dragon recommends that education reflects the increasingly diverse society and religions which exist in Wales. This may mean intervention from Government, training for staff and changes in school curricula. We also recommend that pupils are consulted more within schools about the experience of their education.



Careers Advice

The National Survey asked young people how much useful advice and information they receive about future career options in school. Of those young people who were of an appropriate age (in most schools careers advice doesn't begin until Year 9) 48.40% of young people said that they received either 'quite a lot' or 'loads' of advice and information. 34.25% said that they received 'not much' or 'none'. Whilst 17.34% were unsure as to whether the info and advice they received was useful.

For those who think they are at the appropriate age

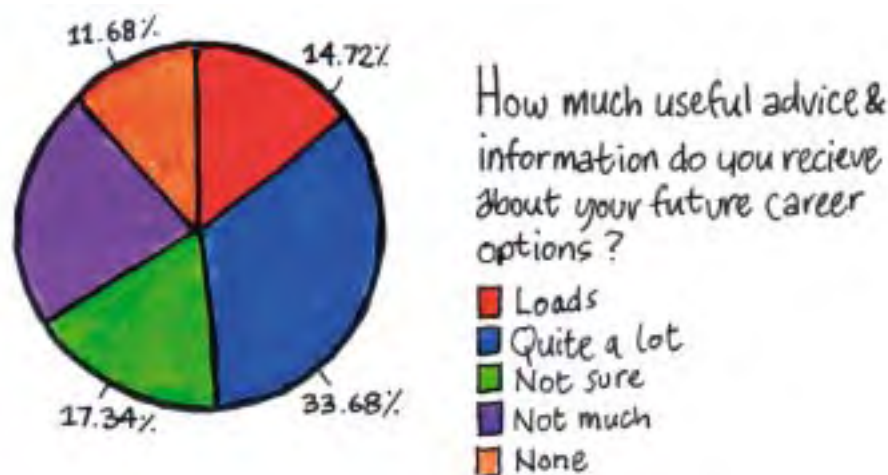


Figure 20

The qualitative research we conducted also seems to suggest that young people would like more advice around careers and their futures. One young person said:

"If I was head teacher I would ... advise pupils more on future employment ... give kids as much information for the future as possible."
(Jamie, Aged 16, Swansea)

This part of the research also suggested that young people are dissatisfied with the opportunities for work experience that they have. This will clearly have an influence on their future career expectations, choices etc.

Recommendations

- Funky Dragon recommends that young people in schools are offered better quality and greater levels of careers advice.
- We also recommend that young people are given more relevant and useful work experience placements. Young people should be involved in designing and locating suitable work experience placements.





GCSE Subject Choices

Young people were asked whether they were happy with the options that were presented to them when it came to choosing which subjects they wanted to learn. Of those young people who were of the relevant age, the majority of young people were happy with the selection of subjects they were given to choose from. 16.25% of young people said that they were not happy.

For those who think they are at the appropriate age

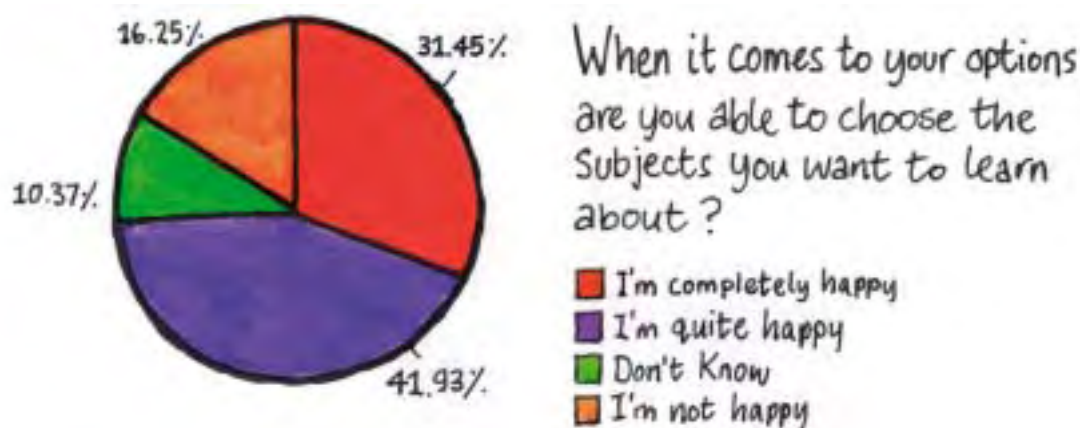


Figure 21

However, our qualitative research seems to indicate slightly different results, with the majority of young people saying that they would give pupils more choice about what they learn in school. Some suggestions were that these decisions, (currently made at the end of Year 9) should be made at an earlier age, to allow pupils to spend more time learning about the subjects they are most interested in. Young people also suggested that they would like a wider variety of subjects to choose from.

"There's not many 'non-academic' choices before GCSE..."
 (Chris, Aged 15 from Caerphilly)

It was also commented upon by young people that they often cannot see the relevance of the subjects that they learn about in school; therefore, it may be unreasonable to expect young people to make informed, well reasoned choices about what they do and don't wish to gain qualifications in.

Recommendations

- Funky Dragon recommends that the Government seeks to ensure all young people across Wales have a wide variety of subjects to choose from, when shaping their own education.
- We also recommend that young people are taught the relevance and usefulness of academic subjects, so that they may make more informed choices.



Discipline

Article 28 of the Convention states that within education, discipline should be '*... administered in a manner consistent with a child's human dignity and in conformity with the present Convention.*' No specific questions were asked about discipline during the course of Funky Dragon's research, however during our qualitative research, we found that it appeared to be an area of concern to young people (with more that 200 references being made to this topic).

Generally it seems that young people are dissatisfied with the way in which 'punishments' are administered, with the overwhelming message being that young people don't like detention! It seems that the young people we met feel that discipline is very important; however, the systems currently in place seem not to be very effective. One young person commented that;

'...don't give people lines to do because you don't learn a thing.'
(Sara, Aged 12 from Flintshire)

There were also a number of young people who suggested that using rewards for 'good behaviour', as opposed to punishments for 'bad behaviour', may be a more effective and motivational way of working. If young people can see that good behaviour and high achievement are rewarded, there may be less need for punishments.

'If I was head teacher I would ... make sure that all the people that don't ever get told off get a trip so they know that they are getting noticed and not feeling left out.'
(Dom, Aged 15 from Pembrokeshire)

It is important to highlight that the predominant message coming from this qualitative research is that given the opportunity to be head teacher, the young people said they would be strict and enforce discipline. It seems the issues they have are with the methods of 'punishment' and 'reward'. Concerns include: current punishments involve no 'learning'; they are not administered 'consistently', and they fail to recognise when pupils are doing well.

Recommendations

- Funky Dragon recommends that schools consult with pupils to determine methods of 'punishment' and 'reward' which will have the most impact.
- Funky Dragon also recommends that schools work with pupils in order to design and implement more successful and effective 'behaviour policies'; and that these are monitored and evaluated regularly to ensure their effectiveness.





Personal Support and Guidance

Our qualitative research has shown that a large number of young people feel that there should be more personal support and guidance given to young people in schools. A number of young people highlighted the need for the opportunity to discuss problems and receive 'extra' support, as and when this may be necessary. Funky Dragon's concern is that this lack of support within schools may be affecting young people's rights to an education which develops them to their 'fullest potential' (Article 28).

Some young people, when asked what they would do if they were head teacher, mentioned the need to support specific groups such as young carers and young disabled people. However more generally young people seem to be asking for support and 'someone to talk to', to be available when they feel they may need it.

More specifically a number of young people highlighted the stress and pressures that young people currently face.

'If I was head teacher I would ... Put less stress on pupils because they get pressure from school and home life (It makes them feel like giving up).'
(Caradog, Aged 14 from Powys)

Therefore it is important that young people feel that they are able to discuss these pressures and stresses, so that they can achieve to their full potential.

Recommendations

- Funky Dragon recommends that Government looks to provide more personal support for young people in schools.
- We also recommend that schools work with pupils to design support systems, and therefore ensure they are able to deliver support as and when it is most suitable for young people; and in a way which is accessible and meets young people's needs.



Health

The information we found out about young people accessing healthcare in this section was gathered from workshops, interviews and our national schools' survey. The questions we asked were chosen in consultation with young people and guided by the articles relating to health matters in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, **(UNCRC)**.

The United Kingdom ratified the UNCRC in 1991 and the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG), on its formation, decided to use the UNCRC as the basis of '**Extending Entitlement**' its strategic framework for the provision of services to young people which is warmly welcomed by Funky Dragon. Two of the ten entitlements are particularly useful when considering our overarching question for this section:

'To what extent are young people in Wales able to access their rights in health?'

They are '**Feeling Good** - To feel confident and feel good about yourself' and '**Health and Wellbeing** - To lead a healthy life, both physically and emotionally'.

The national schools' survey covered general issues about access to information on health (covered in our information section rather than here), health services, barriers to accessing services and more specific issues relating to young people's experiences.

The workshops asked young people what in their opinion was good and bad about the health service. Their answers covered a wide range of services and included their general knowledge, their personal experiences and those of people close to them as well as their feelings about how they are treated by professionals.

Interviews carried out with young people who have specific interests were less structured in their questioning.

The information from each of these activities has been organised into a number of sections as follows, to illustrate young people's understanding, experiences and wishes, for how they would best claim their rights on their health matters:

Active Participation

Young people demonstrated that they are acutely aware of current affairs and the current criticisms of the health service.





Waiting Lists

One of the main issues was waiting lists with one young person in Rhondda Cynon Taff referring to "waiting lists for minors". Another from Denbighshire said 'Referral times are too long i.e. had to wait 5 yrs for braces!!'

As well as quoting personal experiences, young people often quoted instances involving people close to them which had caused them distress. One young person told us of 'The wait on the NHS - my dad had to wait 2 years to have his aorta valve changed, and a catheter, it (the wait) caused him great pain being as he is already a sufferer of multiple sclerosis disease.'

Waiting Times

Waiting around to be treated, caused similar distress and tended to be focused on accident and emergency services, ambulance response times and in-hospital services. In Rhondda Cynon Taff, one young person described 'Spending many hours in agony waiting to see a doctor' and another in Conwy explained how 'We had to wait 35 minutes for 2 pain killers for my brother while he was screaming in pain.' In Flintshire a young person commenting on ambulance response times said 'Takes 8 minutes to get 2 the scene wherever u are but its never true.'

Shortages

Staffing and hospital bed shortages were of concern. In Merthyr one young person referred to "Not enough doctors", another in Wrexham more generally referred to 'Not enough staff available.' In Bridgend, a young person mentioned 'Hospitals discharging people unfit for it because there are no beds. You have to wait ages to get one anyway.'

Cleanliness

'The cleanliness of hospitals' was an important issue for young people, who kept referring to 'hospital diseases' and in particular 'M.R.S.A.'. They offered plenty of reasons for and solutions to it. One young person in Blaenau Gwent said that they 'don't like going to hospital because of what you could catch' and another in Anglesey asking for 'better healthcare-making sure wards are really clean'.

Food

Young people had a single, very definite opinion that hospital food was 'bad food'. This is discussed in more detail in a later section called 'Healthy Eating – Healthy Lifestyles'.



Finance

Young people demonstrated that they understood the principles of financing healthcare. We were told many times over, that 'it's free mostly because of the NHS' which itself was funded by 'paying taxes' and that 'you have to pay for your privilege', which shows how young people pin a sense of worth to the service and understand the responsibilities that go with it. Young people demonstrated understanding that it has limits, noting that the cost of some dental procedures and non-essential operations were outside it. They expressed dissatisfaction about charges at hospitals for car parking and gave mixed views on the prices charged at hospital canteens.

We became aware though reading the above that, young people's views of the health service were somewhat tainted by negative media coverage within the framework of today's league table culture and that it provided the starting point for young people's expectations. If opportunities existed for young people's involvement in health service provision, it could provide young people with a deeper understanding of the positive aspects and conflicting priorities, as well as those media reported negatives.

From our national schools' survey we discovered that many young people (over 20%) were involved in consultations (see Participation section). We did not ask further questions about the types of consultations they took part in through our survey and were therefore unable to conclude whether any of them would have been about health services. When we looked at what young people had said during our workshops however, we found that the issue of consultation was simply absent.

We thought that it was important to consider this further in the context of young people's rights: **Article 12** of the **UNCRC**, in UNICEF's young people friendly version reads 'You have the right to say what you think should happen when adults are making decisions that affect you, and to have your opinions taken into account'.

More locally, one of WAG's ten **Extending Entitlements** for young people states '**Being Heard** - It is your right to have the opportunity to be involved in making decisions, planning and reviewing an action that might affect you. Having a voice, having a choice, even if you don't make the decision yourself, your voice, your choice.'

As well their relevance to individuals in the role of service users, these rights can be interpreted on a much broader, strategic scale. From what we have found, young people have demonstrated their broader interest, understanding and their capacity to comprehend strategic issues. As a result, Funky Dragon makes the following recommendation:

Recommendations

- Funky Dragon recommends that health service providers actively seek opportunities to involve young people in making decisions about the planning and reviewing of health services.





Accessing Healthcare

As stated in the introduction to this section, our overarching question is, 'To what extent are young people in Wales able to access their rights in health?' and here, we asked this. When we considered the issue of access, we also needed to consider barriers to accessing services and the quality of those services young people were trying/able to access.

In Article 6 of the UNCRC we see that '1. States Parties recognize that every child has the inherent right to life' and '2. States Parties shall ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child.'

The Welsh Assembly Government, in its **Extending Entitlements** for young people is more explicit about what young people in Wales should receive. One of its ten entitlements is '**Easy Access** - Easy access in getting the best services that you should have, locally and nationally, and to have someone available to help you find them.'

We asked young people if anything had stopped them from accessing healthcare and discovered that just over a quarter of those who responded, have experienced a barrier to accessing healthcare at some time (See fig 1 below).

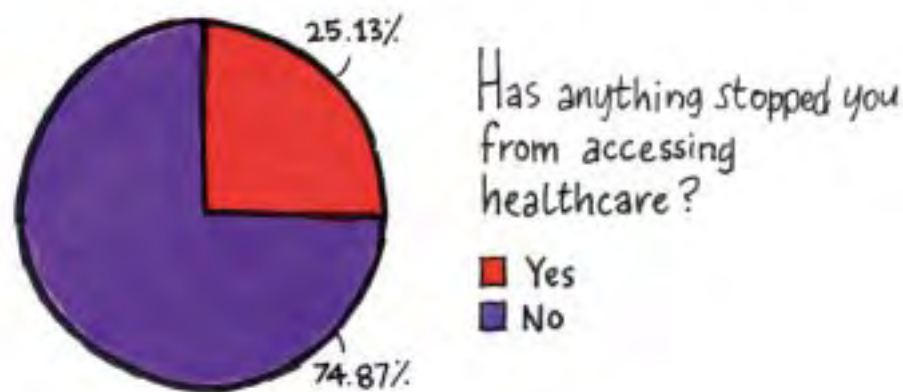


Figure 1

Comparing 'Has anything has stopped you from accessing healthcare?' with 'Do you get free/discounted school dinners?' (a socio-economic indicator), we found that those in receipt of free/discounted school dinners, were more likely to be stopped from accessing healthcare, see figure 2 below. It suggests that there are significant costs when accessing healthcare. From our workshops, we heard 'Dentist prices ridiculous! (eg £40 for tooth pulled out)', 'Parking in hospitals – money' despite the fact that many young people acknowledged 'free prescriptions'.

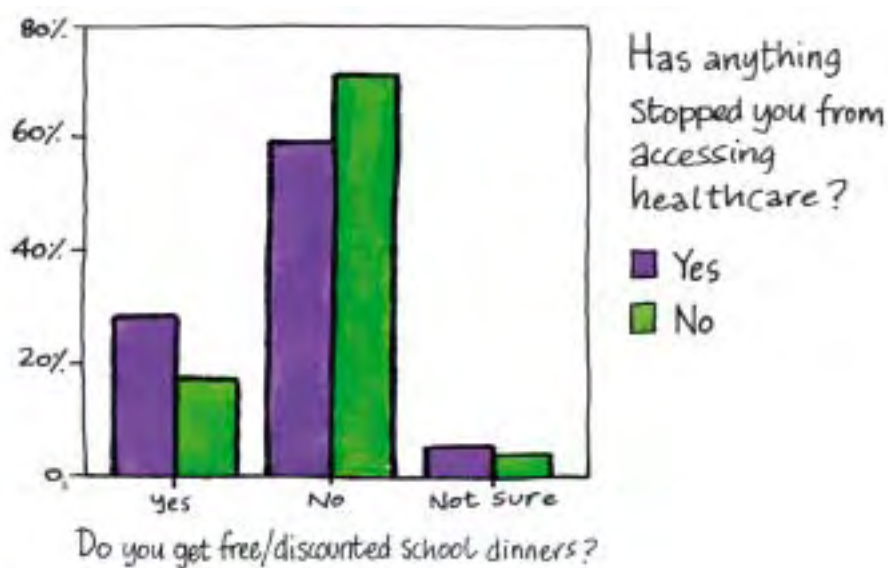


Figure 2

As well as economic issues, other issues can act as barriers to young people. To illustrate this we have included some of the comments and issues which appeared at workshops in terms of those things which were positive and would assist access as well as the barriers. See table 1 below.

Issue	Positive, assisting access	Barriers to access
Location & access	'My dentist is local' 'Good access' 'Always available' 'not difficult to get to'	'XXXXX hospital is too far away so by the time you're there you're could be dead (nearer hospital)' 'It's being closed' 'Not 24-7 ring services' 'Not all night service'
Timely appointments	'Very easy to get an appointment at the local practice' 'But got refered to a physiotherapist quickly.'	'Dentist because you can never get an appointment' 'Having to explain symptoms to nurse before getting a doctor appointment'
Parking	'More parking places for disabled'	'lack of parking spaces'
Competence	'Very professional and effective' 'They are very careful and accurate with medication'	'I was discharged by a nurse saying there was nothing wrong with me when actually I had meningitis' 'Dentist - too rough'
Efficiency	'Dentists are quick and easy' 'Optician are very quick and professional' 'Good technology'	'I wait for ages for my dentist' 'Dentist - doesn't pay enough attention any more, to busy' 'Not enough time with doctor'





Issue	Positive, assisting access	Barriers to access
Systems	'Very organised dental practitioners. Friendly'	'Notes are always lost and aren't shown/shared between departments' 'unreliable, say they'll book an appointment and don't' 'Often don't get your right to a second opinion if you ask'
Gender	'Females should have female drs'	'Most gp's are men' 'Cancer medication not available for us (Women)'
Approachability	'Doctor talked to me and gave me advice and was very helpful' 'Caring and very professional dentist' 'Doctors have a laugh sometimes ' 'Co-operate - if they can't do every-thing you want, will try and do what they can' 'Friendly and supportive nurses and doctors' 'The dentist gives me stickers and don't hurt me'	'Impatient at times' 'No empathy' 'Lack of people skills' 'Orthodontist - Rude, unaware, stuck up'

On balance young people gave a far greater number of positive than negative comments. Comments made illustrating perceptions and expectations of the health service tended to be mostly positive whereas those illustrating young people's experiences were more mixed.

With these barriers in mind, we asked young people how they would rate health care services, through our national schools' survey:

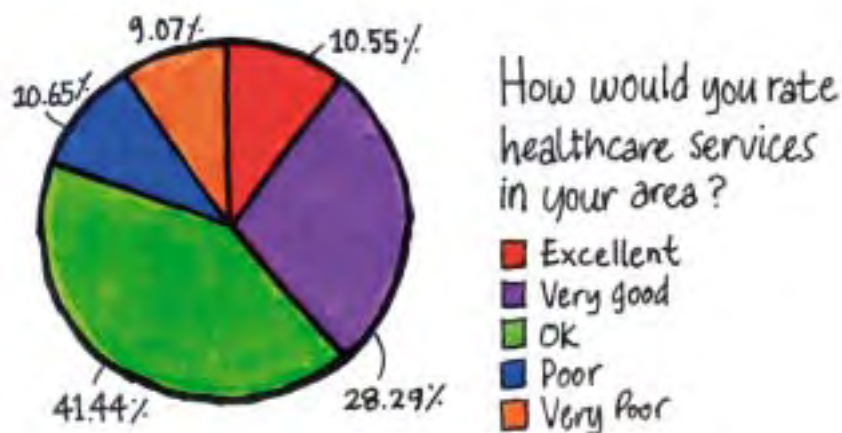


Figure 3.



Figure 3 shows us that four in every five young people (80%) rated health care services as 'ok', 'very good' or 'excellent' which indicated that they were not unhappy with them whereas one in five young people (20%) regarded them as 'poor' or 'very poor'. Even though this was considered to be positive, the number of young people who rated the services poorly, at one in five, was regarded by Funky Dragon as too high. Funky Dragon recognised the limitation of the term 'healthcare' which covered a wide range of services (e.g. dentist, hospital) that young people may have experienced and chosen to rate differently and in any future study could be further broken down.

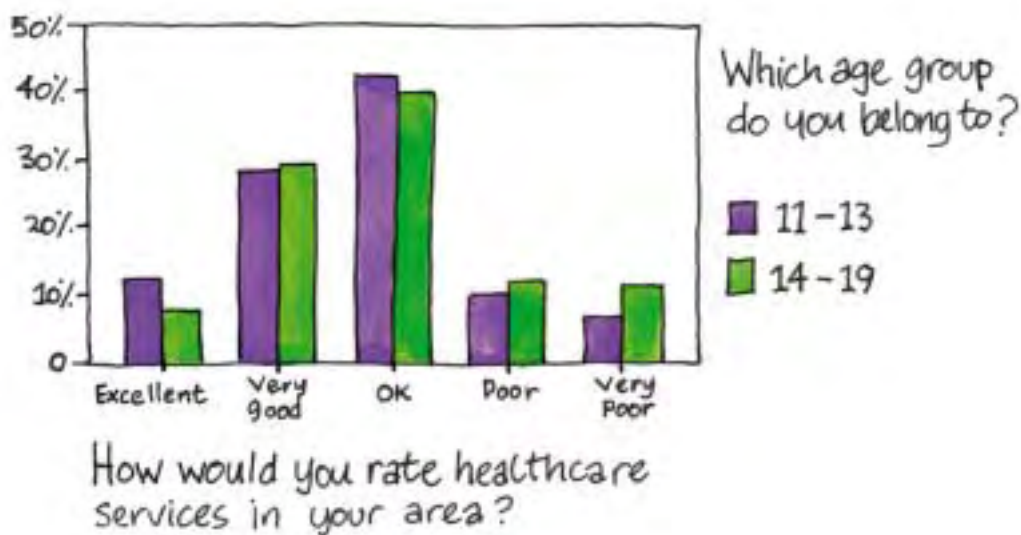


Figure 4

When comparing the two age brackets we surveyed (see figure 4 above), we found that those in the older age bracket were more critical, rating healthcare services lower. There was however almost no difference in opinion between young people living in urban and rural areas.

When criticising services, young people offered comments such as: 'Lack of dentists' and 'not enough Welsh speakers'. Hospital based and lack of specialist services were highlighted, noting 'there should be more hospitals in the countryside', 'No children's hospitals around here', 'only 2 adolescent mental health residential units in Wales' and 'Neurologists & brain doctors – the closest good one's in London'.

In conclusion, Funky Dragon regarded the rating and accessibility of healthcare as mainly positive. While our research identified a range of barriers preventing young people from accessing healthcare, further research is needed to better understand the nature of these barriers and design strategies to remove them/help young people overcome them. The employment and training of people to help young people overcome these barriers should then follow.





Recommendations

- Funky Dragon recommends that further research is carried out to explore the range and nature of barriers preventing many young people from accessing healthcare. Where gaps are identified, the training/employment of people to help young people overcome these barriers should follow.

Talking to Health Professionals

Young people communicate with health professionals over personal matters affecting their own health and wellbeing. (In the case of young carers, this extends to include the health and wellbeing of people they care for, too).

Article 12 of the UNCRC refers to the role of young people in decision making which, translated for young people by UNICEF, reads 'You have the right to say what you think should happen when adults are making decisions that affect you, and to have your opinions taken into account.'

To find out about how young people engage with health professionals, we asked a series of questions about going to the doctor's in our national schools' survey. We chose going to the doctor's as almost all young people will have done this on a number of occasions and each of them, for a variety of issues. Here's what we found out:

When we asked young people about who goes with them, we found out that seven out of ten young people go to the doctor's with a parent/guardian and less than one in ten (7%) go/have been to the doctor's alone. See Figure 5.

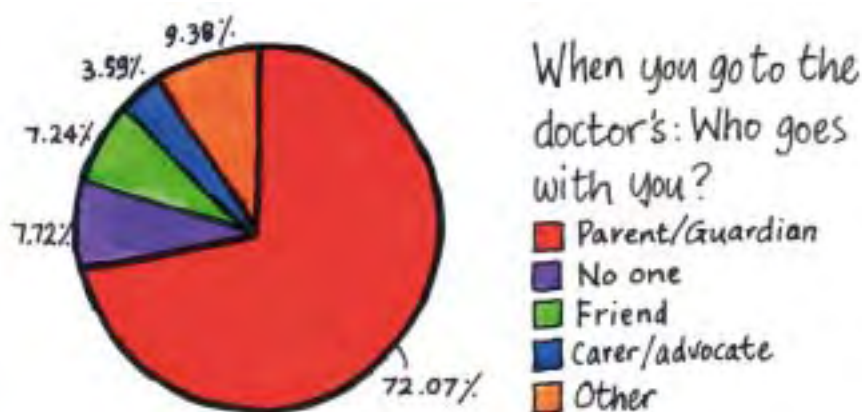


Figure 5



To give a profile of differences within the young people we surveyed, we broke this down and discovered that comparing this with age groups, those in the older age group are more likely to have gone to the doctor's alone or with a friend than those in the younger age group (see figure 6) as we would have expected.

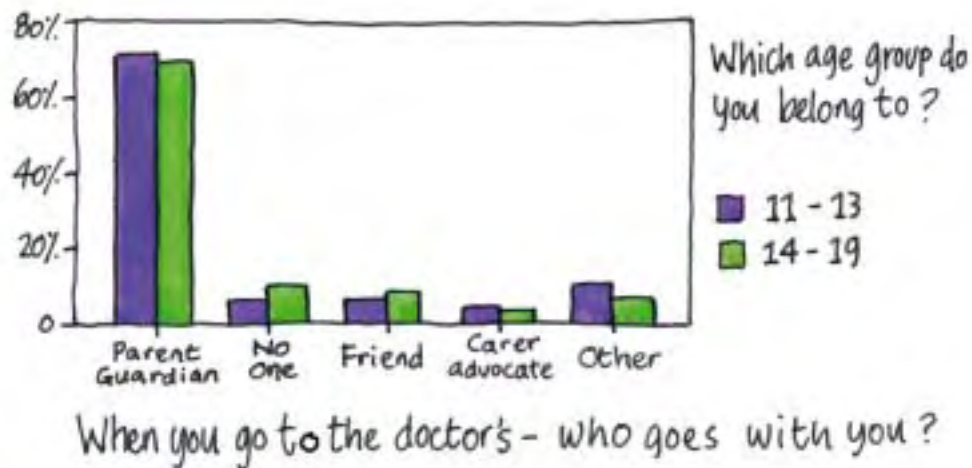


Figure 6

Interestingly, from the following graphs we see that boys tend to have gone alone, or with someone other than their parent/guardian (friend, carer or other person) more often than girls (see figure 7) and this is similar for rural young people, compared with those in urban areas (see figure 8) and for young people who were in receipt of free/discounted school dinners, when compared with those who were not (see figure 9).

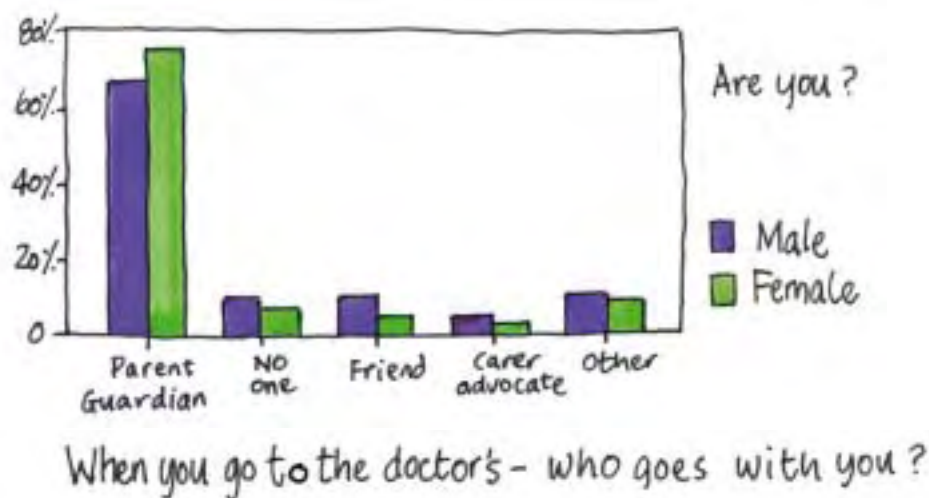


Figure 7



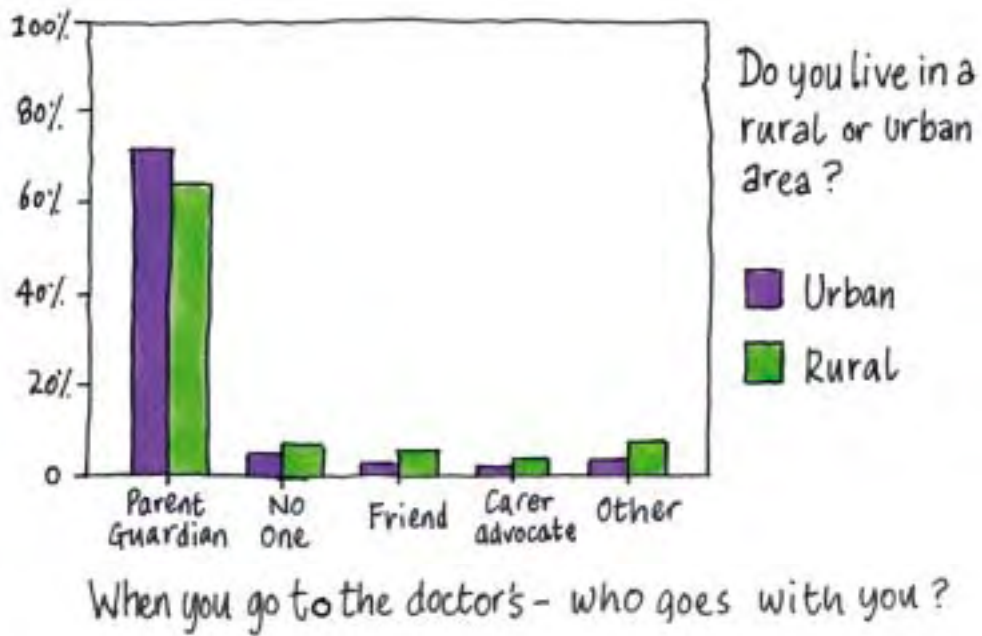


Figure 8

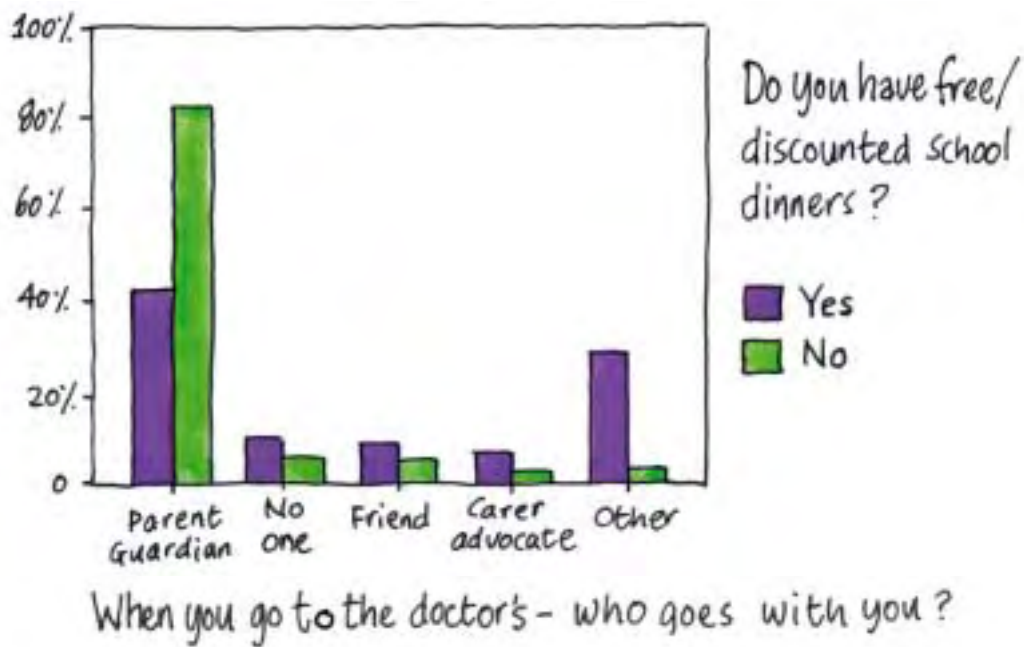


Figure 9



One important issue for young people is being treated with respect and as individuals in their own right by adults. Taking Article 12 of the UNCRC into account, health professionals need to talk and listen to young people in their professional roles. This has recently been reinforced by the General Medical Council's policy '0-18 years: guidance for all doctors' 2007 which came into effect on 15 October 2007 and gives practical advice when talking to children and young people.

We discovered that more than nine out of every ten young people are accompanied when going to the doctor's and more than eight of those are accompanied by an adult and this potentially three-way exchange, when going to the doctor's provided an interesting situation to explore.

We asked two questions. Who talks to the doctor? And, Who does the doctor talk to? (see figures 10 & 11)

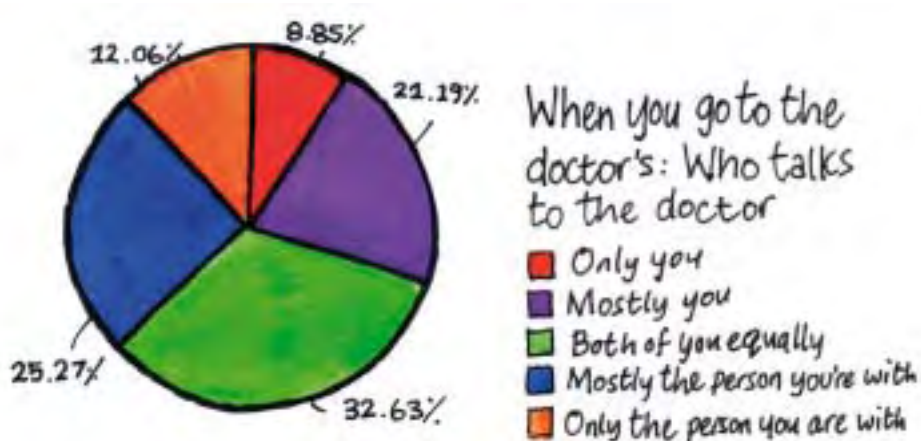


Figure 10

From figure 10 above & table 2 below, we see that almost a third (29%) of young people 'only' or 'mostly' talk to the doctor, almost a third (33%) talk to the doctor equally with those who accompany them and more than a third (38%) of young people talk less than the person accompanying them.





Figure 11

From figure 11 above & comparison table 2 below, we see that in every case, doctors talk to the young people to a greater degree, with 43% speaking 'only' or 'mostly' to the young person, 37% speaking to 'both equally' and 20% 'mostly' or 'only' to the other person.

When you go to the doctor's:	Who talks to the doctor?	Who does the doctor talk to?
Only/mostly you	29%	43%
Both of you equally	33%	37%
Mostly/only the person you are with	38%	20%

Table 2

During our workshops, we found that the comments made about talking to and being listened to by doctors, were in the same proportions as our survey showed. Some examples of young people's anxieties both positive and negative included:



Embarrassment

Some young people felt embarrassment and even shame when talking to doctors about their health issues, one young person from Powys explained that '(I) feel out of place and stupid and so not comfortable discussing my health' and another that she was 'Ashamed of having a baby', another young person expressed 'Humiliation for suicide attempts - made to strip clothes to check for scarring - very very uncomfortable.'

Being spoken to directly

Some young people were not spoken to directly; in Anglesey one referred to health professionals 'Talking to parents instead of me!' and another explained 'My mother had a bad back and couldn't get to the phone; they refused to speak to me and said they needed to speak to her directly'. On the flip side young people offered compliments: 'Orthodontist Doctor talked to me and told me what was going on' and 'Dentist - good, talks to me'.

Unable to understand what was being said

Some young people didn't understand what was being said to them and there appeared to be three main reasons for this:

Firstly, young people often didn't understand the **medical language** used by doctors but were quick to express their appreciation when they were given good explanations 'Doctors use long words - feel stupid because you don't understand' and 'Don't explain things properly - long words (and get stressed)'. 'Sometimes they do explain things so you do understand, depends on doctors', 'Doctors - kind easy to understand' and 'Nurse - really nice told me what the injection was for, friendly, talked to me not over my head'.

Secondly, young people did **not feel listened to**. In Conwy one young person's concerns were about 'Doctors not taking you seriously', in Denbighshire 'Dentists ignore me - put a brace on me even though I didn't want it/need it' and in Bridgend 'Don't listen to you properly and don't try to understand you'.

Thirdly, young people didn't understand what the doctor was saying to them because of **language difficulties**. One young person from Caerphilly explained 'All my doctors are foreign + I find it extremely hard to understand them' and in Swansea one young person said that they had been looked after by someone who 'didn't speak English!'. Some of the comments made were expressed as racial prejudices rather than as language difficulties, such as 'Forren doctors/nurses/dentists don't understand the problem', 'Brain surgeon was very quiet and unsympathetic – but he was Italian' and 'not enough white doctors'.





Many of the young people who took part in workshops had been happy with how they were treated by healthcare professionals; 'Went to doctors and got upset and Dr was supportive and willing to talk', 'Counselling - they talk to you as well as you talk to them. They give you advice', 'Makes you feel better about yourself – reassurance', 'Doctor puts up with my random tears', 'Positive - when I was 15 they asked me away from my parents if I needed a pregnancy/drugs test! Confidentiality' and 'GUM clinic - very supportive reassuring staff'.

Funky Dragon applauds the work of health professionals in giving young people positive experiences. It believes that continuation of this is vital, so that young people are offered opportunities to build their confidence to become independent and assertive in dealing with their own healthcare throughout their lives.

Funky Dragon is concerned that one in five young people (20%) feel that they are spoken to less than the person accompanying them when visiting the doctors', giving them secondary status. Throughout our workshops, young people's perceptions of services were high, their experiences less so. Despite what was a generally positive picture, negative experiences continue to affect individuals and this gives health services room for improvement.

Recommendations

- Funky Dragon recommends that health professionals further develop their practices in working with young people based on their rights under Article 12 of the UNCRC, the GMC's recent policy '0-18 years: guidance for all doctors' 2007 and the evidence of this report.
- Funky Dragon recommends that as Wales is a multicultural country and that globalisation, will continue to influence people's mobility in the future, it is essential that health service providers in Wales support those employees who need to develop their language skills to ensure effective communication and reduce patient anxiety.

Healthy Eating – Healthy Lifestyles

Healthy eating had been in focus as part of preventative health strategies in Wales for many years and in 2007 WAG issued its 'Developing a Whole School Food and Fitness Policy' to address and measure schools performance in promoting and providing healthy diet and lifestyle choices for young people .

During the last few years, media attention has turned to the health merits (or otherwise) of school dinners which has led to some changes in spending and meal choices by local authorities and individual schools.



The UNCRC gives clear direction on this issue through two of its articles: Article 24, when translated by UNICEF for young people states '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.' This puts the onus for ensuring its availability squarely onto governments. Article 27 places the responsibility for affordable, healthy food and water as well as a clean environment, on public services, saying 'You have a right to a standard of living that is good enough to meet your physical and mental needs. The government should help families who cannot afford to provide this.'

As part of our survey, we asked young people how healthy they thought school dinners were. We can see the results in a pie chart in figure 12, below.

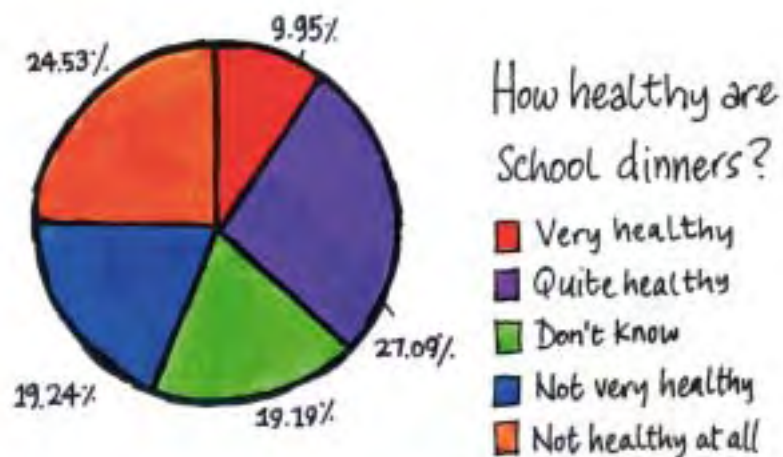


Figure 12

From our findings, 44% of young people thought that school dinners were 'not very healthy' or 'not healthy at all', while 37% thought they were 'quite healthy' or 'very healthy', leaving 19% who answered that they did not know either way.

When comparing these figures with those in receipt of free/discounted school dinners, we found that those receiving free/discounted school dinners (a socio-economic indicator) regarded school dinners as being healthier than those who were not possibly indicating lower expectations among this group. See Figure 13 on the following page:



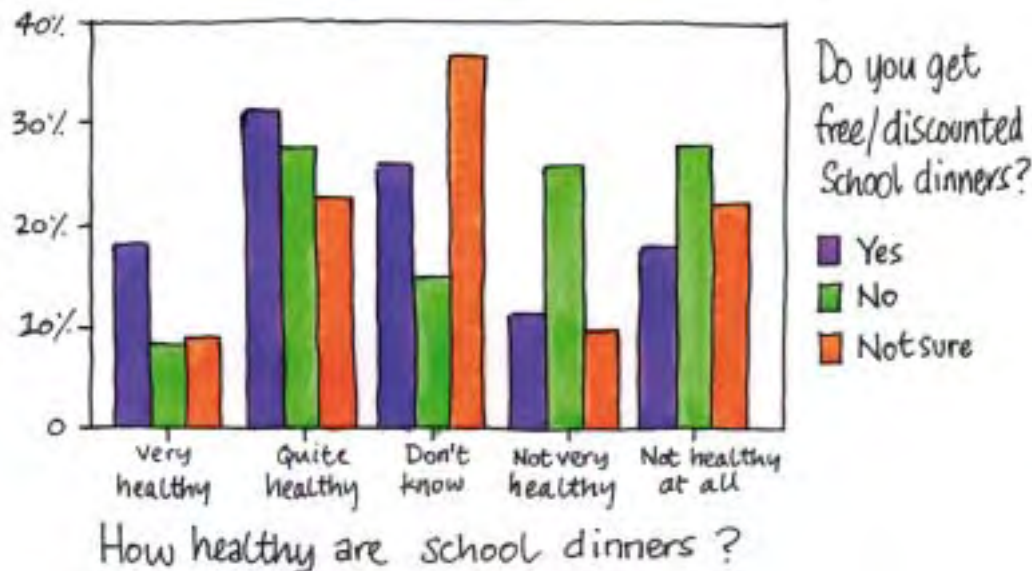


Figure 13

From figures 12 & 13 above, Funky Dragon was genuinely surprised that such a large percentage regarded school dinners as unhealthy. This was particularly the case, as much attention has been paid to improvements and the development of an action plan following WAG's 'Appetite for Life' report on quality and nutritional standards in schools.

Key to making this judgement however was young people's understanding of what constitutes healthy food. In the pie chart above (figure 12) we see that nearly 1 in 5 young people admitted that they 'don't know' if school dinners are healthy or not and as one young person explained to us: 'a lack of education on healthy eating, we are then forced to eat healthy food in school, without any knowledge of what's good about them'.

Considering young people's perception of how easy it was to access information on diet, we found that almost a third didn't know and almost half either didn't know, found it 'hard' or 'very hard' to find information. See figure 14 below:





Comments on school catering focused on how healthy options are more expensive than those less healthy and that "filling up" on the healthier options costs more than the value of the discounted school dinner ticket (crudely put – the equivalent energy value of salad versus chips for the same price, in cold wet weather means you need to buy something else – so this isn't an option). Other general comments were that some of the healthy options were of poorer quality and therefore not favourable. Frustration was expressed about how caterers took decisions to change what was available without any consultation with school governing bodies and school councils. This contravenes WAG's 2005 policy 'Think healthy vending: guidance on vending machines in schools' which encourages whole school planning on such issues.

Moving onto other public service's provision, we discovered when asking young people about what is good and bad about the health service, that opinions on hospital food were uncompromising. They referred to how 'Hospital food sucks' and more kindly 'hospital - they need some nice food'. They also suggested solutions, (both new and traditional) from their own experiences, to promote and encourage healthy eating, confirming the successful impact of such schemes carried out to date: Young people in Blaenau Gwent said that people use 'allotments - grow their own healthy food' as well as 'curry clubs - we make healthy curry and fruit kebabs' and asked for 'more healthy eating encouragement schemes'.

Beyond the scope of healthy eating, when asked about what they would like to change about living in Wales, young people suggested preventative measures to improve our health, including 'ban sun beds to stop skin cancer', 'cheaper gym prices so you can keep active'. They complained about 'too many fast food places', 'poverty, obesity', as well as many opinions about improving health services. They were concerned about the effects of industrial and coastal pollution on health.

Recommendations

- Funky Dragon recommends increasing education on healthy food and lifestyles to enable young peoples to gain a practical understanding of this life skill.
- Funky Dragon recommends that any changes made to school catering provision, is done so in conjunction with the school council.
- Funky Dragon recommends that the calculation of the cost of school meals is adjusted to enable young people in receipt of free/discounted meals to adequately afford healthy meal choices.
- Funky Dragon recommends that the quality of healthy meals by all public sector catering services is improved.
- Funky Dragon recommends that successfully evaluated healthy eating encouragement schemes are continued and extended across Wales.





Information

Information is a vital part of the lives of young people. Between the ages of 11 and 19 they are making decisions which will have a huge impact on the rest of their lives. From diet, general health, drugs, sex, employment or education they need to be able to access reliable information to base their decisions on. In some cases the information will need to be accompanied by face to face guidance. In others it will need to be available on a more anonymous basis. They will also be making more short term but equally important decisions.

The information needs to be accessible and tailored to their specific needs whenever possible. There are two articles within the UNCRC that relate to the way in which young people should be able to receive and give out information. As shown below they outline how information should be readily available, safe and for want of a better word "good" for young people.

In the survey there were a number of questions concerning where and how young people access information, whether they thought it was reliable and to what extent they found it useful. From their answers it was noted that they look to official sources such as school and the medical and careers services for specific advice but that in some areas there does not appear to be enough targeted information. This means that certain sections of the community are not receiving the information they need.

The relevant articles of the UNCRC are included in full here so that points made in this section of the report can be easily related to specific rights as precisely as possible.

Article 13

1. The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice.
2. The exercise of this right may be subject to certain restrictions, but these shall only be such as are provided by law and are necessary:
 - (a) For respect of the rights or reputations of others; or
 - (b) For the protection of national security or of public order, or of public health or morals.



Article 17

States Parties recognize the important function performed by the mass media and shall ensure that the child has access to information and material from a diversity of national and international sources, especially those aimed at the promotion of his or her social, spiritual and moral well-being and physical and mental health. To this end, States Parties shall:

- (a) Encourage the mass media to disseminate information and material of social and cultural benefit to the child and in accordance with the spirit of article 29;
- (b) Encourage international co-operation in the production, exchange and dissemination of such information and material from a diversity of cultural, national and international sources;
- (c) Encourage the production and dissemination of children's books;
- (d) Encourage the mass media to have particular regard to the linguistic needs of the child who belongs to a minority group or who is indigenous;
- (e) Encourage the development of appropriate guidelines for the protection of the child from information and material injurious to his or her well-being, bearing in mind the provisions of articles 13 and 18.

The following results have been edited by the Our Rights Our Story (OROS) steering group and the Funky Dragon Grand Council on the basis of what were thought to be the most significant findings of the survey. It might sound like a contradiction but the questions were put in the form of statements which the young people were asked to agree or disagree with. The first was to do with GCSE choices.

Information given to you by your school when making GCSE choices has been useful

Of the 14-19 year olds, that answered this question, most of them said that the information they received regarding their GCSE's was useful. However the graph below (see figure 1) also shows that a lot of young people appeared to have received the wrong amount of information at the wrong age. The fact that most 11-13 year olds did not know whether the information they received was useful is what you would expect. It is questionable whether they have or need to have received any information on GCSE choices at all as they are not required to make the choice until they are 14.

It is good that the majority of young people who should have received the information appeared to have done so and believed it had been useful. The worrying thing is that a significant proportion did not agree the information had been useful. More worrying still is that the number who strongly disagreed with the statement is larger than those who strongly agreed.



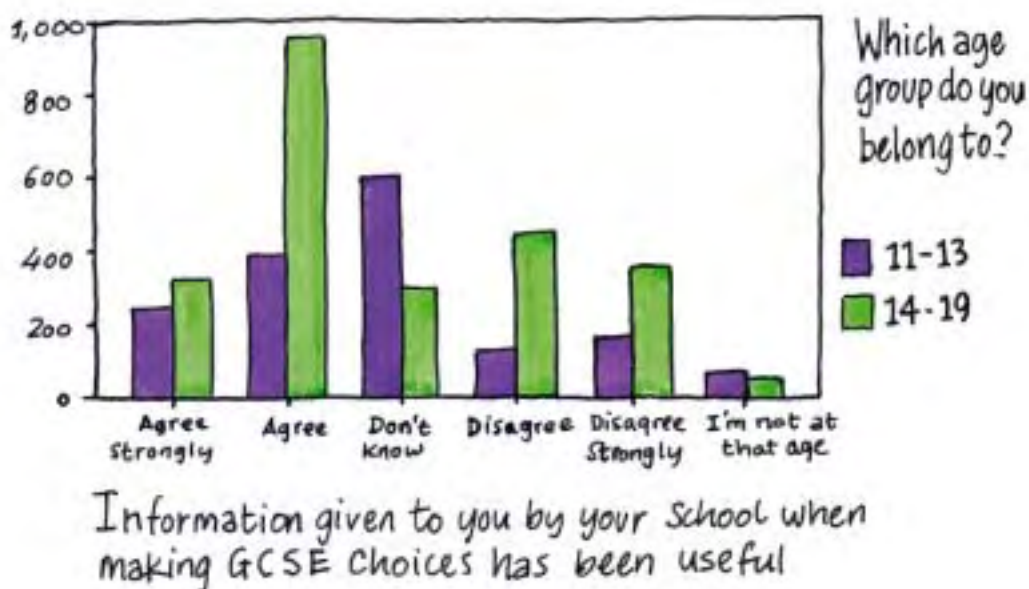


Figure 1

There was quite a bit of confusion. A lot of 14-19 year olds either did not know if the information was useful or believed that they were not at the right age yet. This was strange because they were, in theory, at exactly the right age. If you put together the numbers of people who either did not think the information had been useful or who did not know if it had been useful they are greater than the numbers of those who thought it had been useful. This means that there is an inability to demonstrate the relevance of the information.

Qualitative information which we gathered via workshops in schools indicated that most young people look to their schools or careers services as sources of information when deciding on their futures. Teachers, specifically form tutors and other pupils such as school councillors were singled out. If young people in Wales are looking to school for information to help them make their career or higher education choices then that is where it needs to be. Although the graph above shows that the majority of young people aged 14-19 believed they received useful information regarding their choices at GCSE level, a significant minority did not know whether the information was useful or not.

Recommendations:

- Funky Dragon recommends that all young people are given adequate and detailed information regarding GCSE choices and that these are linked to relevant career options.
- We recommend that the process is linked strongly with careers services and whatever systems of pastoral care the schools have in place.



Information given to me in school on different countries/cultures/religions has been useful

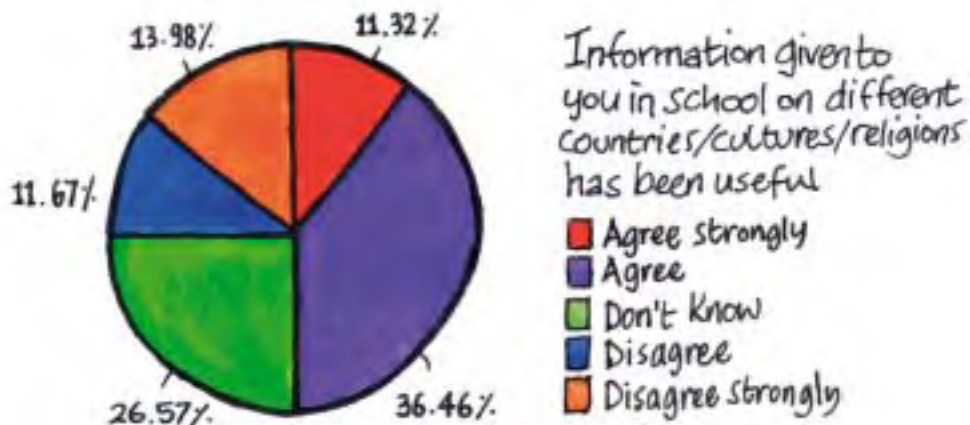


Figure 2

The chart reveals that a significant number of those who felt their religious needs were not considered in school disagreed strongly with the statement. This would seem to indicate that they found the information useful only to the extent that they could apply it directly to their own lives.

Most agreed with the statement that information given to them on different countries, cultures/religions had been useful. When we were compiling this report there was a considerable amount of discussion, amongst Funky Dragon Grand Council members, concerning the way in which the information might be useful and the reasons why people might not find it useful. Because of this the steering group decided to look into the statistics more closely. They specifically wanted to look at those relating to whether religious needs were considered in school crossed with access to information on different countries/ cultures/religions. (see figure 3)

The chart on the following page reveals that a significant number of those who felt their religious needs were not considered in school disagreed strongly with the statement. This would seem to indicate that they found the information useful only to the extent that they could apply it directly to their own lives.



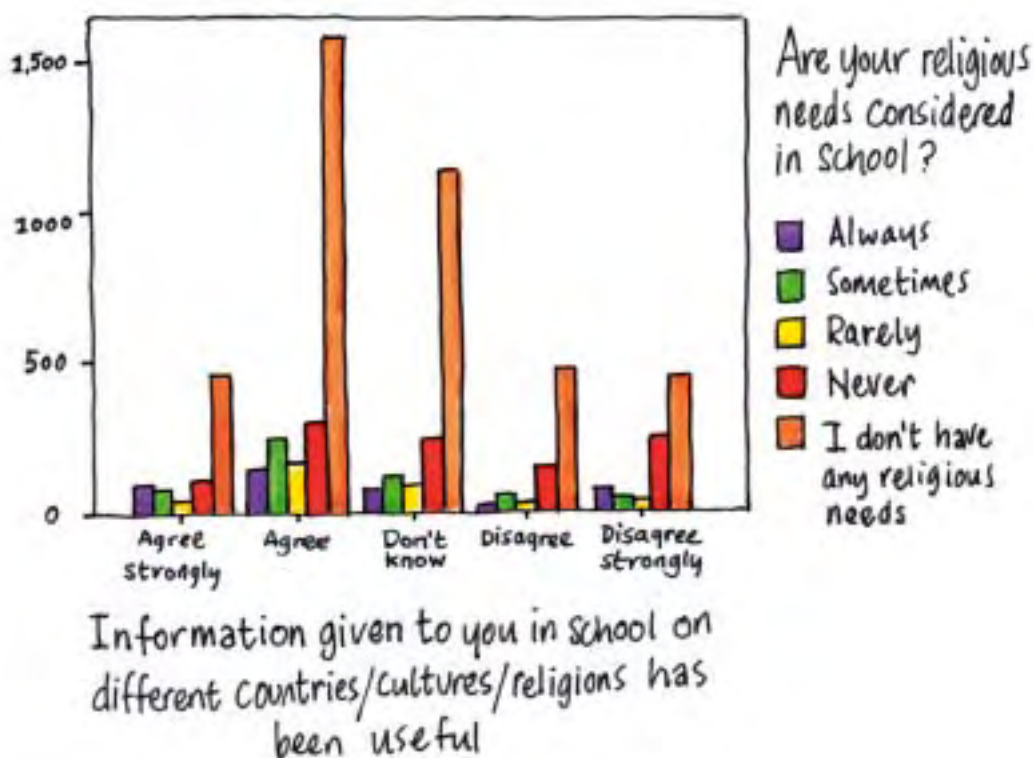


Figure 3

It is also significant that there was a difference in the responses depending on whether young people were from a rural or an urban area. A greater percentage of young people in urban areas felt that the information was useful than those in rural areas. In urban areas young people will come into contact with a wider variety of people from different cultures or religions. This again indicates that the direct usefulness of the information is a major factor in whether or not young people take it on board.

If the degree to which information is directly relevant is made clear to young people then they are much more likely to take it on board and use it. The statistics indicate that this approach needs to be a tailored to individual's lifestyles because young people will have many different reasons for believing or not believing that they need the information. Consulting young people before hand to see what their levels of awareness and backgrounds were would help to gauge the amount and type of information necessary. Consulting with them during the delivery would help to gauge the extent to which they were able to use the information. This needs to be a young person centred approach but the reasons why schools think young people should know this information must also be made clear to young people.

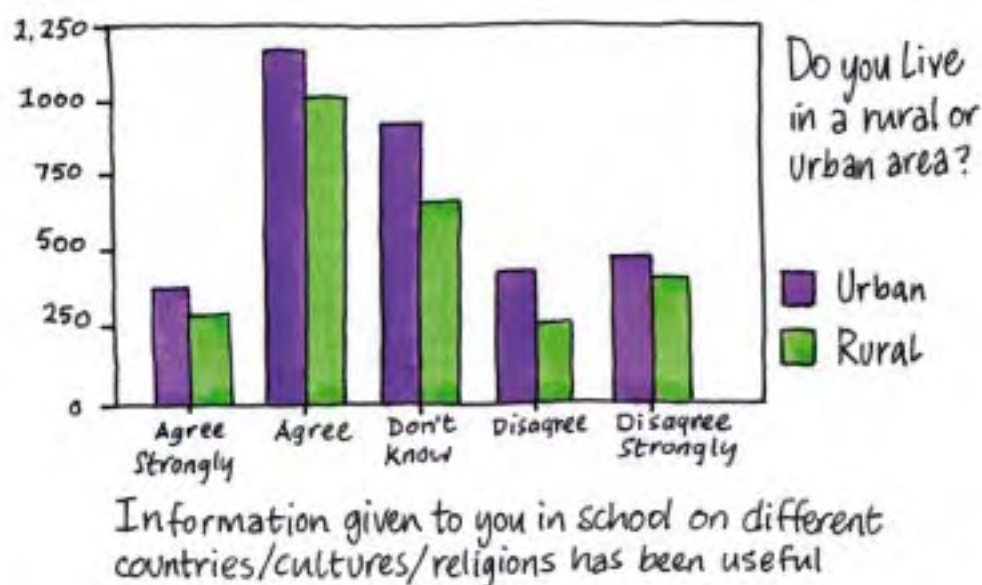


Figure 4

A point worth mentioning

As a result of their analysis of the data, the steering group decided it would be worth mentioning that, in general, those who thought it was easy to access information on sex, drugs and general health agreed with the statement "Information given to me in school on different countries/cultures/religions has been useful". Our qualitative information indicated that young people were very direct in their approach to getting information with most saying that they would look to medical services such as their doctor or the school nurse for advice on sex or drugs etc.

Recommendations:

- Funky Dragon recommends that useful information about culture, religion and countries is made more accessible to all young people in Wales, regardless of their location.
- We recommend that more research is carried out into what the needs of specific groups are in relation to such information. The specific groups need to be young people living in rural areas and those whose religious needs are not being met in school.
- We recommend that information is tailored to meet the needs of specific communities and, to an extent even individuals.





Information found on the internet in reliable

Just over 50% agreed with the statement "Information found on the internet in reliable". This shows that a significant proportion of those questioned felt that they were not able to get reliable information from the internet. The internet is now almost universally available and is therefore a major source of information for children and young people.

The Government has a responsibility to ensure that information young people receive from the internet, TV, radio and other mass media is safe and secure and our survey shows that almost half of young people do not feel that they are having this right fulfilled.

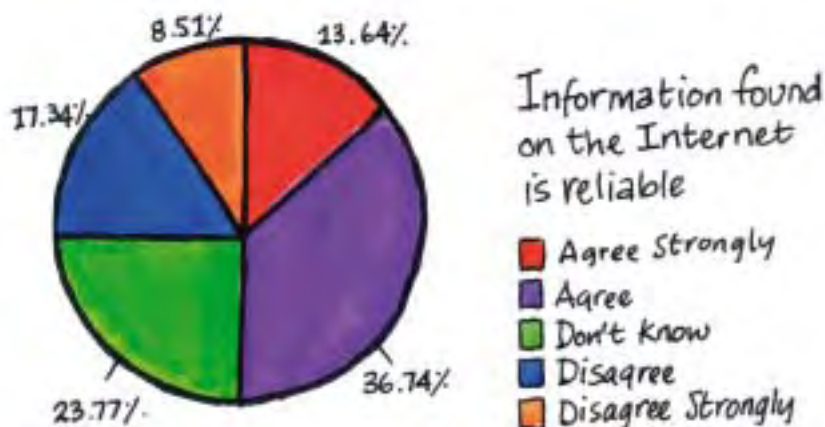


Figure 5

Recommendations:

- Funky Dragon recommends that all schools should provide details about websites which are safe and useful for all types of information. There are a number of sites which are either government funded specifically to supply information or which have a highly reputable news facility with a public service agenda.

www.cliconline.co.uk
www.schoolcouncilswales.org.uk
www.talktofrank.com
www.ceop.gov.uk
www.headsup.org.uk
www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk
www.bbc.co.uk

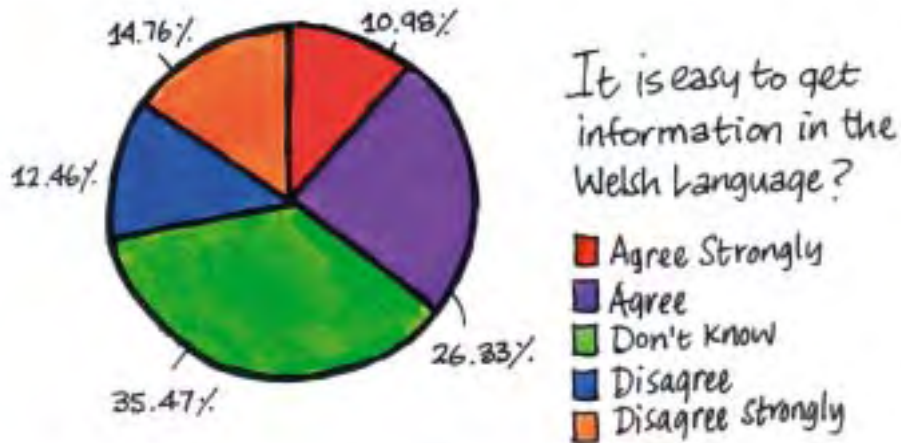


Figure 6

37.31% thought that it was easy to get information in the Welsh language. When crossed with the numbers of people living in Rural/Urban areas this shows that in urban areas it is more difficult to access information in the Welsh language. Welsh is not as widely spoken as in rural areas and is therefore in less demand.

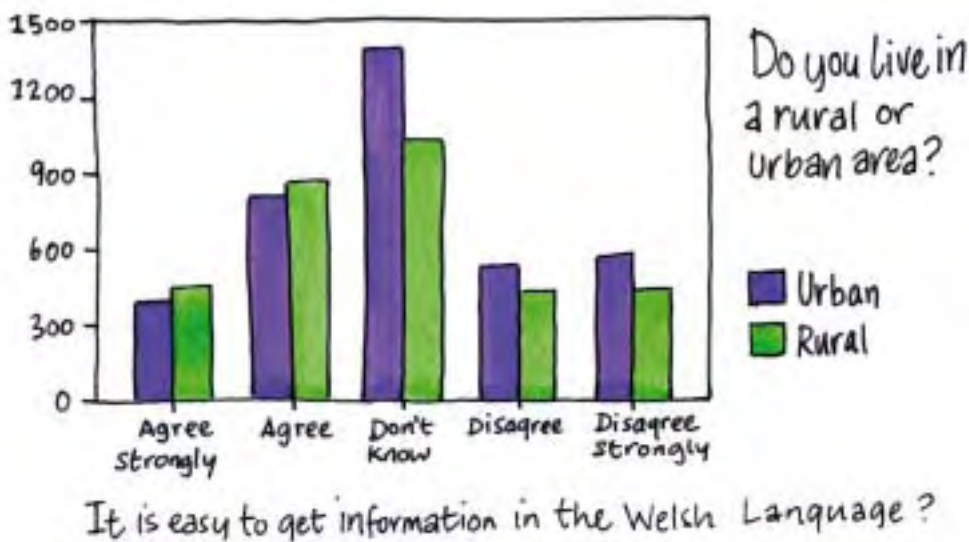


Figure 7

Another important point is that those in urban areas found it easier to gain access to information on sex than those in rural areas; this is very concerning as the same information should be made available to all young people in Wales. The qualitative data showed us that young people are most likely to think information should be available from medical sources. Does this mean that urban areas have more medical facilities? Does it mean that the needs of young people in rural areas need to be assessed differently to those in urban areas?



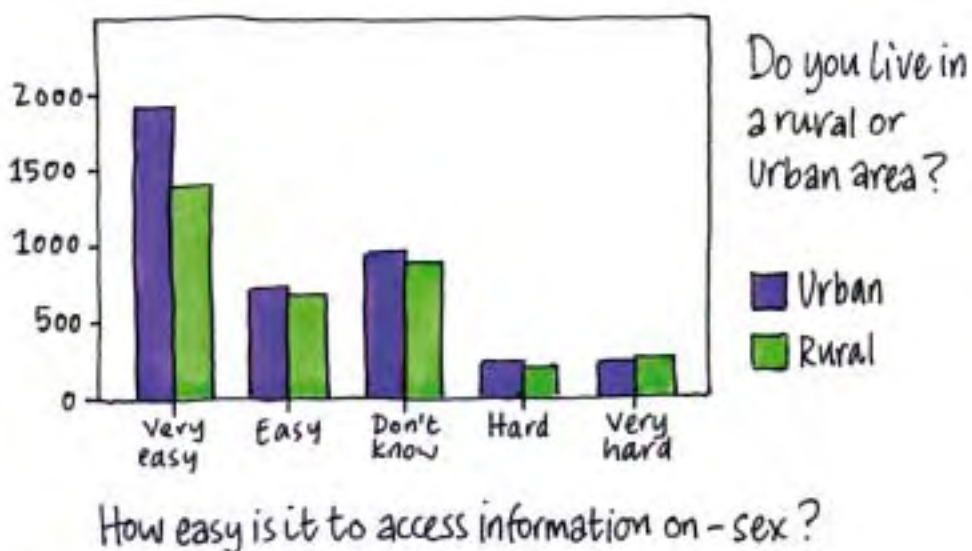


Figure 8

Access to information needs to be made more consistent across Wales to ensure that everyone is able to access their rights. Apart from some minor issues to do with geographical location and spoken language, efforts to educate young people on sex and drugs seem to have made a big impact with most participants feeling happy with their access to information. Language should not be a factor in the availability of information to any young person in Wales.

Recommendations:

- Funky Dragon recommends that available information should be equal to the readers level of welsh and on the topic that they want. E.G. A-level information in both Welsh and English.
- It is a fact that some young people cannot understand information in English as well as they can if it is in Welsh. All children and young people need age appropriate information in the language of their choice.



It is easy to get information on general health/sex/drugs/diet?

The specific question on information about drugs takes into account the UNCRC article 33 which, translated for young people by UNICEF, reads 'The government should provide ways of protecting you from dangerous drugs' The provision of information is key if this is to be achieved.

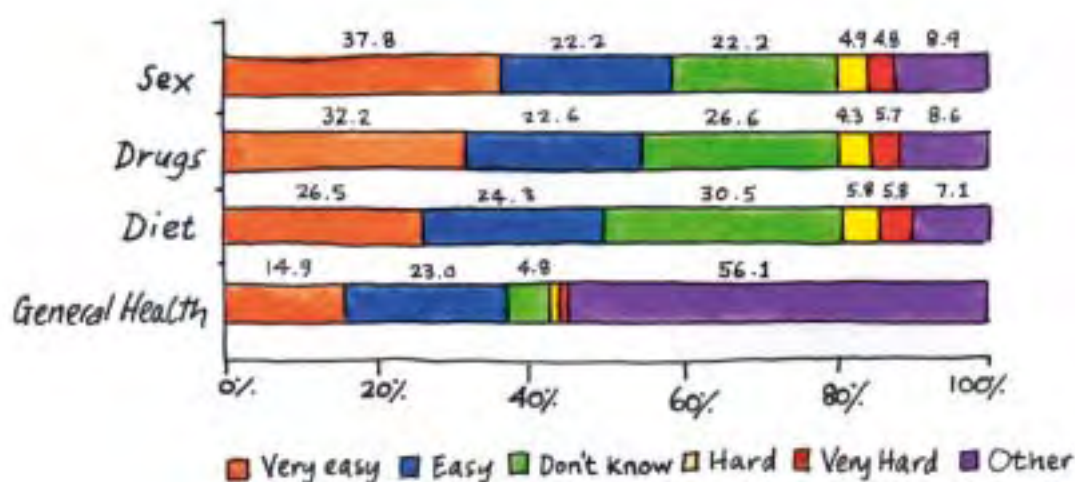


Figure 9

The diagram above (see figure 9) shows that general information on health was the most difficult for young people to respond to, resulting in over half, not answering the question. For sex and drugs, a third or more of the young people considered it 'very easy' to access information and for diet, a quarter. For each, over half considered all three to be 'easy' or 'very easy' to access. When we crossed access to information with the age groups we saw that the young people between 14 and 19 found it easier to access information for each issue and with information on sex; males reported that it was easier than females.





Figure 10

Funky Dragon thought that the relatively high proportion of young people who could access information was generally positive, noting that 1 in 3 people did not know how to access information on diet. This compounds concerns that young people's answers were varied about whether school dinners were healthy or not. (See Figure 12 in the Health Section.)

In Merthyr, one young person suggested that there was a 'Need to have more information around; not just at doctors, clinics etc.' and (specific to the closure of local provision) another young person noted that providers were 'Not big on giving out information about what services are available and what's closing'. With regard to health (and social service) professionals, many young people saw them as useful sources of information, identifying their advisory roles as: 'informative'; 'can give good advice'; 'doctor gave me good advice about counselling' and 'social worker – really helpful, talks to you and gives helpful advice'.

The effectiveness of information is crucial and needs to meet young people's levels of experience and curiosity. It was acknowledged that these subjects are taught in school as part of personal and social education. In seeking to improve the percentages of young people who have no problem in accessing information on these subjects, it would therefore be necessary to consider their needs when reviewing the PSE curriculum, considering not only the curriculum content but the effectiveness of teaching methods within these lessons.

Recommendations:

- Funky Dragon recommends that the content and teaching methods adopted as part of any review of the PSE curriculum reflect the needs of young people at their various development stages to ensure effective education.



Participation

The right for children and young people to participate is enshrined in Article 12 of the UNCRC.

1. States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.
2. For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.

This article is abbreviated by UNICEF to say:

You have the 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 Welsh Assembly Government has used this as the foundation for developing all of its policies relating to children and young people.

In order to get an easily understandable and widely accepted definition of participation, the Welsh Assembly Government held a national competition to develop a suitable sound bite. As a result it was decided that:

"Participation means that it is my right to be involved in making decisions or planning and reviewing an action that might affect me. Having a voice, having a choice."

The Our Rights, Our Story project asked several questions in the National Survey that directly relate to Participation. These have been organised into four main themes; The Family, Consultations, Active Citizenship and School Councils. In the qualitative workshops young people were asked to evaluate the decisions that; they are able to make, they would like to make and those decisions that they feel they should not make. This provides a useful insight into young people's wishes with regard to participation and the parameters they identify within the above themes. The questions aimed to explore young people's understanding of participation and the levels to which young people in Wales are able to engage in decision making. The information gathered from these activities reveals the extent to which young people in Wales are able to claim their right to participate and illustrates the level of involvement that young people wish to have in the democratic process.





Family

The research asked a small number of questions related to decisions within the family. The purpose of this is to see to what extent the young people questioned about their role in decision making are involved in decisions at home. Funky Dragon understands that this survey is not the right methodology to explore relationships between young people and those who have parental responsibility for them in depth. It does however give us an insight into the range and depth of decisions young people make.

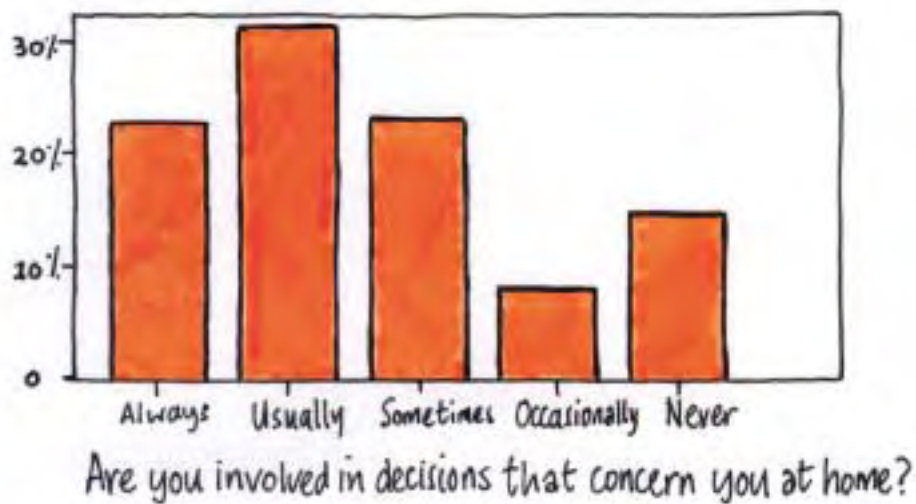


Figure 1

It is refreshing to see the high number of young people who are involved in decisions at home. However 16% stated that they were never involved in decisions, before we could draw out any conclusions from this we would have to undertake more research.



Choosing a comprehensive school

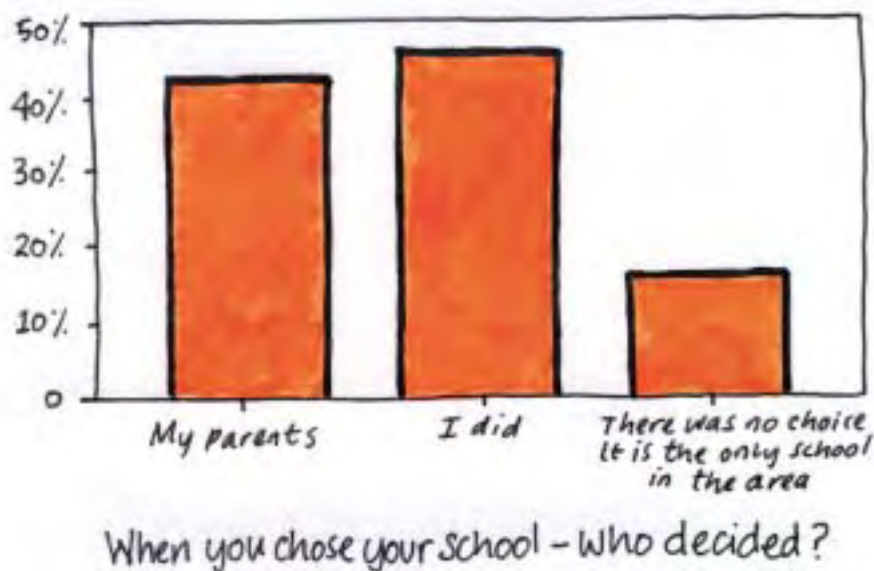


Figure 2

Figure 2 shows us that where a choice is available, most of the time it is the young people that decide. We accept that the results do not show us when parents decide whether or not the young people disagree with that choice. However, if we then compare this with those that have been victims of bullying (Table 1), the incidence of bullying appears to be significantly lower where young people have chosen their own school.

Table 1

	Students whose parents decided which school to attend	Students who decided themselves which school to attend
Has been a victim of bullying in school	49.1%	43.3%
Has not been a victim of bullying in school	50.0%	55.7%
Abstain	1.0%	1.0%

* Significantly different at 99% confidence interval.





To gain a greater understanding of the types of decisions young people were involved in within the home we ran a series of workshops across Wales (at least one in every authority). The young people we spoke to overwhelmingly agreed with our survey findings that on the whole they were content with their involvement in decisions within the family.

"all decisions that involve me" Billy, Conwy

From the workshops young people had very clear ideas as to what decisions they should and should not be involved in (table 2). What came out very strongly was that young people are very involved in the issues that affect them personally or individually, such as what to do or hair style.

In discussing what decisions they should not be involved in within the family, young people had a definite idea of what was not to do with them. These issues were predominantly around areas that do not directly affect them. All the young people we spoke to had a very clear line of divide for such issues, with the personal relationship between their parents very much on the other side of the line.

"Anything that could affect the young person" Chris, Denbighshire.

Table 2: Main issues arising from workshops on decisions in the family

What decisions young people are involved in within the family?	What decisions young people should not be involved in within the family?
Where to go on Holidays What we eat for dinner What to do on days off school Activities I do outside of school What I wear How I do my Hair How to decorate my bedroom What time to go to bed What time I have to come in	Young people should only be involved in decisions that affect them Financial Issues Divorces Arguments Relationship between Mum and Dad. Sex life of parents What clothes Dad wears

Recommendations

- That families are given more information around the UNCRC. Not just a list of the articles but what this means in Wales.
- That families are made aware of the positive outcomes for all in involving children in decisions. There appears to be a clear link between students whose parents pick their school and bullying. If parents were aware of this then this may effect how they make their decision.



Consultations

Funky Dragon recognises the Welsh Assembly Government's extensive efforts to listen to young people's ideas and opinions through consultations. Figure 3 shows that just over 20% of young people had taken part in a consultation. When you compare this to the national average of 1% of adults having taken part in a consultation this needs to be applauded.



Figure 3

Figures 4, 5 and 6 Show that of those that have taken part in a consultation, there is no significant difference as to what your age is, whether you are male or female or if you live in an urban rural area. From this we conclude that consultations have been extensive and wide ranging.





Figure 4

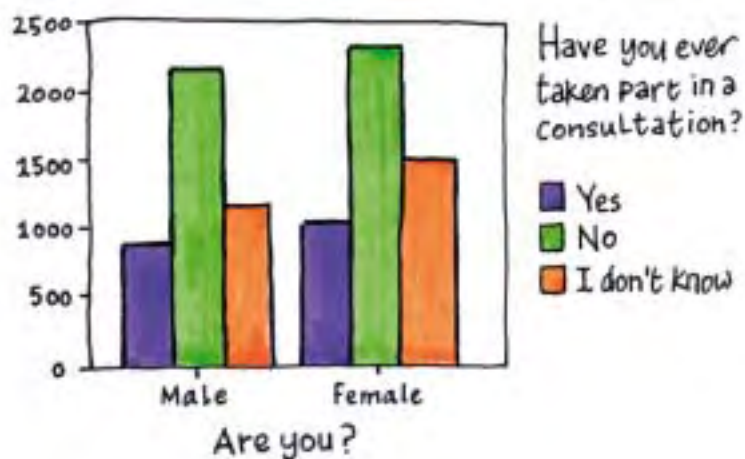


Figure 5

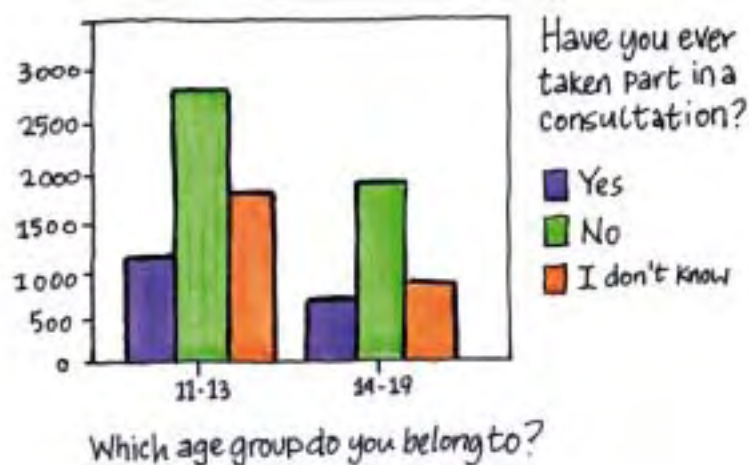


Figure 6





Issues with consultations

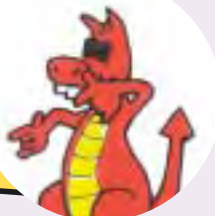
In workshops we discussed consultations with young people. All thought it was good that they were asked their opinions. The following are common issues of concern around consultations that came out of the workshops:

- Young people were almost never told the conclusion of the consultations.
- The impact or what change has been brought about as a result of the consultation is not told to young people.
- Many young people had been asked the same questions by different people.
- Sometimes young people feel that decision makers go in the opposite direction to what the consultation has recommended.
- With all the consultations that have happened in Wales it would be natural to assume that there is a wealth of data available. This is not the case.

Recommendations.

The Welsh Assembly Government should develop a code of practice for consultations with young people. This code of practice should include:

- Creative ways to ask young peoples opinions.
- Protocols for carrying out consultation.
- Responsibility of consulters to feedback information.
- Where possible explanations of what changes have been made as a result of the consultation.
- Data collected should be stored centrally so that it can be accessed by as many people as possible.





Young people as active citizens

In this part of the research we asked young people 3 questions. The questions are related to their participation in wider society.

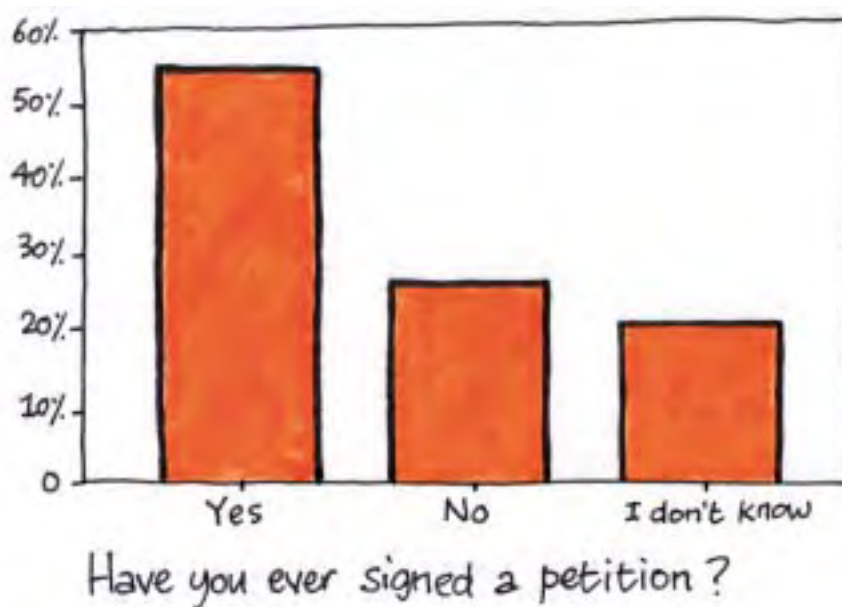


Figure 7

Figure 7 shows us that over half of young people had given up their own time to sign a petition. Petitions make up a small part in which democratic governments and local authorities listen to views of people. From our results we would conclude that they are a process in which half of young people in Wales are engaged.

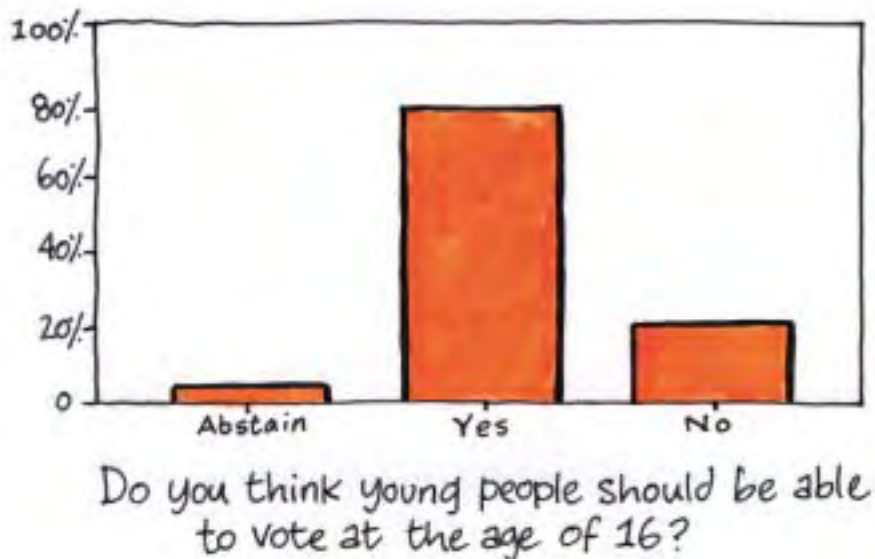


Figure 8

Figure 8 shows us that the vast majority of young people (80%) think that the voting age in Wales should be lowered from 18 to 16 years old.

During the 2007 Welsh Assembly Government election only 21.9% of 18 to 24 year olds exercised their right to vote. Our research shows 80% of young people would lower the voting age to allow them to vote at 16 but once reaching 18 years old only 22% actually do vote. Could it then be argued that we need to lower the voting age to 16 to engage young people in the democratic process before they lose interest?

When we asked young people if they thought that the Assembly listened to young people only 18% said yes, with the majority 55% saying no. It would be easy from this finding to recommend that the Assembly listens more to young people. However, we think that as well as listening more, the Assembly should do more to promote how it is listening to young people.



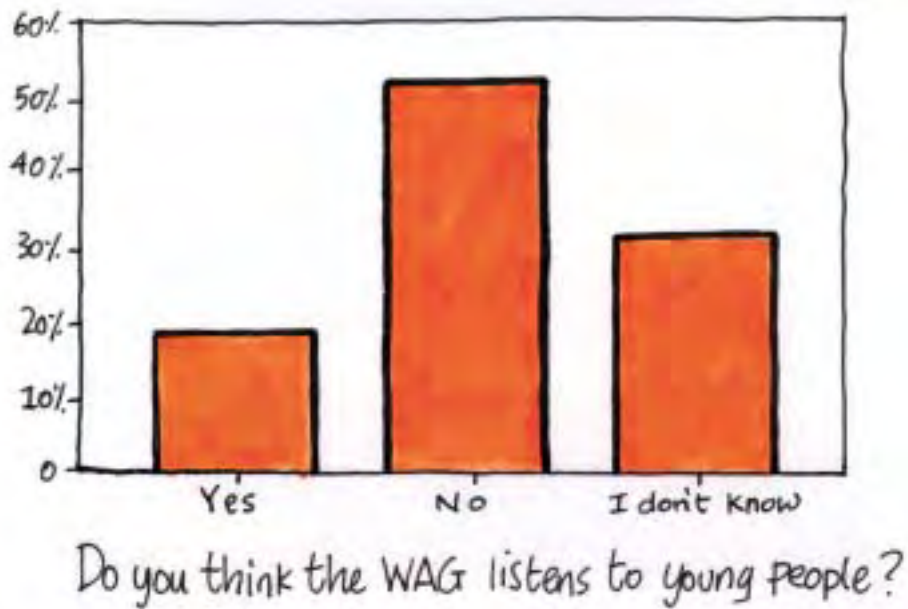


Figure 9

What maybe of interest to the Assembly is that the majority of young people, who would like the opportunity to vote, are also the ones that think the Assembly is not listening to them. This shows us that young people want to engage in the democratic process.

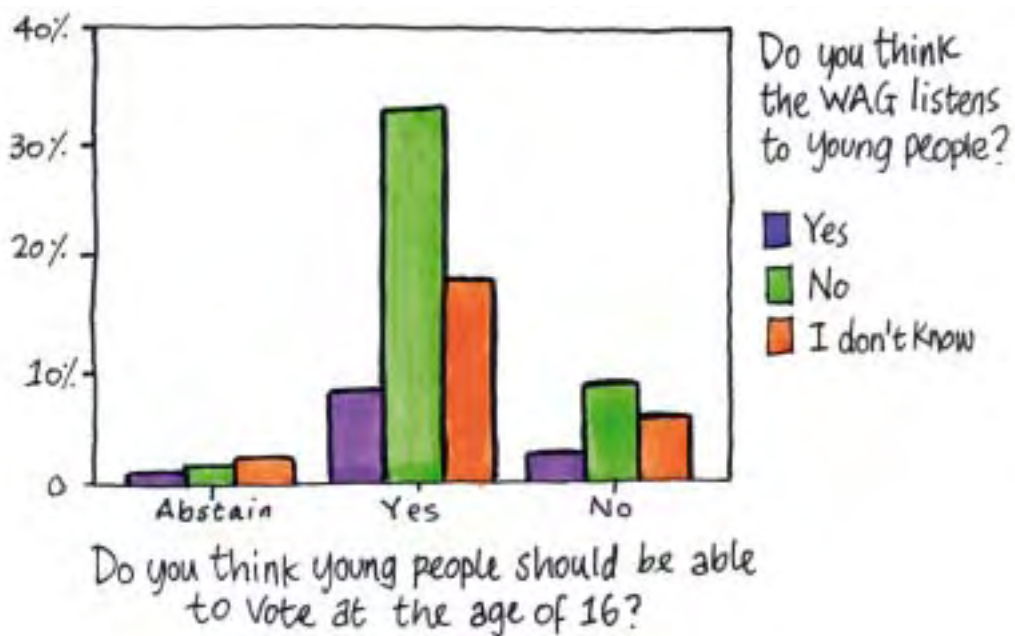


Figure 10



Recommendations.

- That the Welsh Assembly Government considers lowering the voting age to 16.
This change may well be outside of the current powers held by the Assembly but it could still have a clear line and commitment to pass on this message to Westminster.
- That the Welsh Assembly Government continues to listen to young people but accepts far more has to be done.
This is not just in areas of policy but also each Assembly Member takes an active role in listening to the young people they represent. This can be done by engaging in structures set up such as County Youth Fora or Schools Councils.

If consultations are young people's only way of engaging in the democratic process before the age of 18, then we must give extra thought to the consequences of involving young people. We must make sure that consultations are effective and demonstrate the value of young people's contribution.

School Councils

"The success of a school council will depend on how well it engages with the wider pupil population" - *Guidance for Governing Bodies on the Establishment and Operation of School Councils.*

On the 1st of November 2006 it became law in Wales that all schools have a school council. This unique-to-Wales law clearly demonstrates the Welsh Assembly Government's commitment to providing opportunities for young people to be active participants within their schools. To accompany this initiative the Welsh Assembly produced a guidance circular entitled "Guidance for Governing Bodies on the Establishment and Operation of School Councils" (hereafter known as the guidance)

The guidance opens with the Welsh Assembly Government's commitment to the UNCRC and the policy context in which it is delivering its responsibilities are Article 12. The guidance however is not explicit about school councils being developed within the context of the UNCRC. When we asked pupils if they had heard of the UNCRC only 8% said they had.

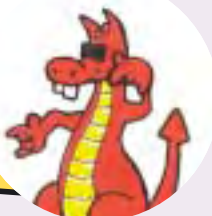




Figure 11

This research took place between January and June of 2007. By this time, all of the schools the research took place in had a school council.

Whilst we accept that these initiatives need time to grow and develop, we feel that it is worrying that nearly 1 in 4 young people either think that they don't have a school council or don't know if they have a school council (Figure 12).

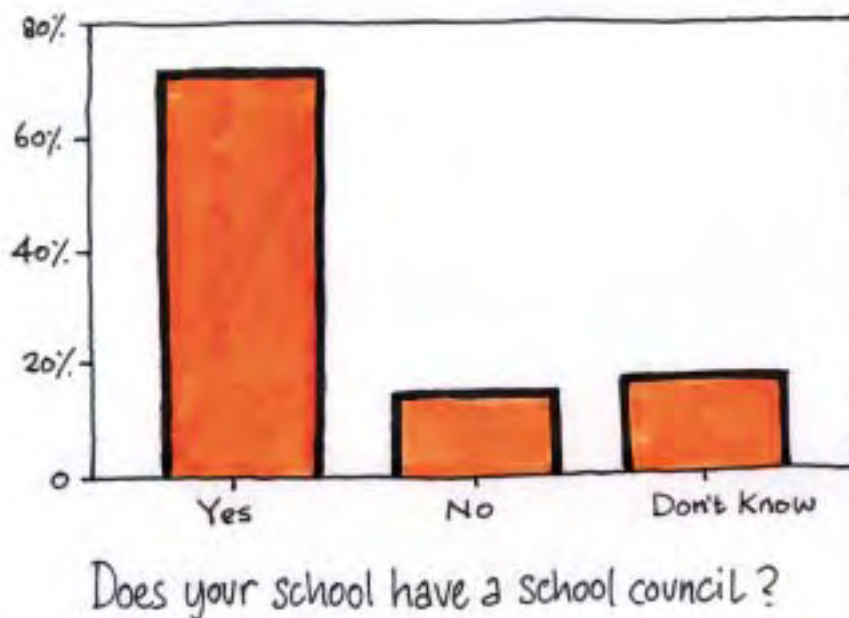


Figure 12



The guidance for schools in setting up school councils states that all pupils should be involved in electing their representatives by secret ballot. In our workshops with young people we found that a number of schools were using their head-boys/girls and prefects as the school council and thus ignoring the rights of pupils to have a democratically elected representative.

When asked, only 55% of young people knew who their representative on their school council was (Figure 13). The guidance clearly states "It is important that pupils know who their school council members are".

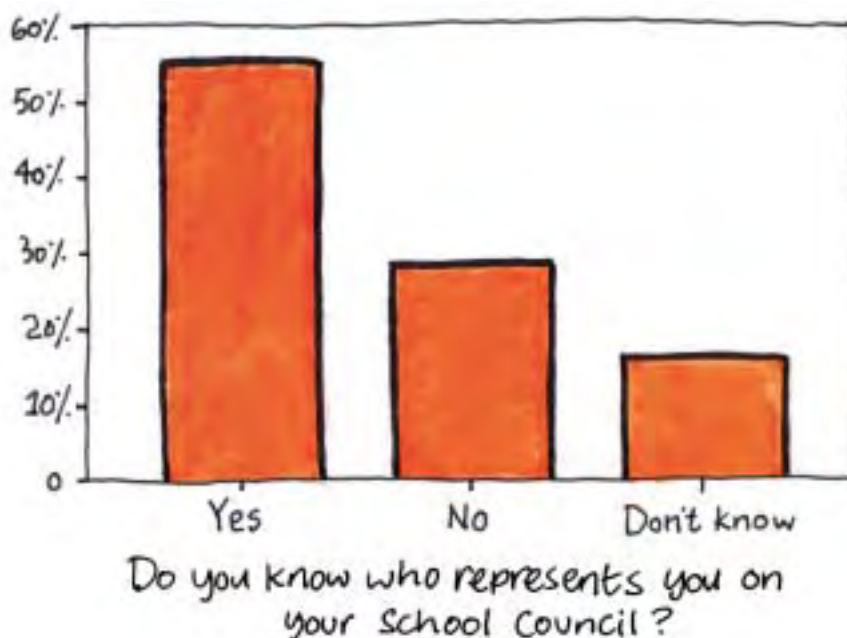


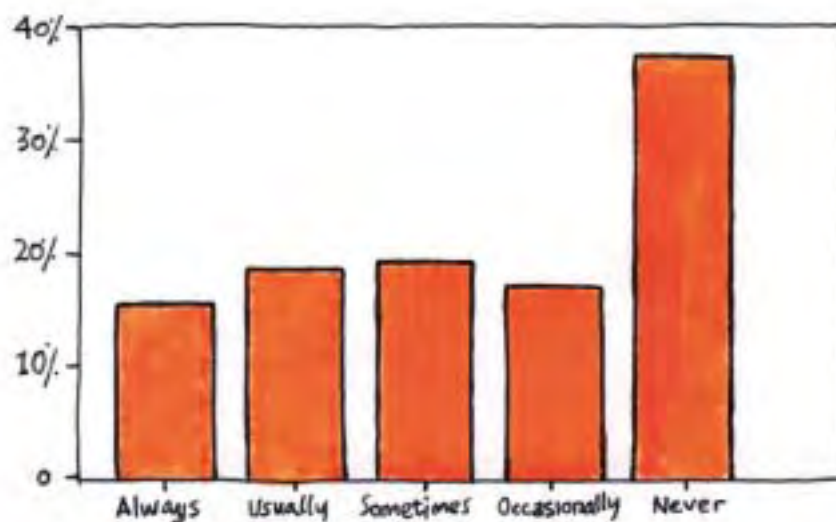
Figure 13

From this we would conclude that there are major flaws in the election processes within schools. Even where elections are taking place the outcomes of those elections are not being communicated effectively across the whole school.

The guidance goes on to state "Time should be allocated to the school council members to enable them to fully consult with the wider pupil population". From our evidence we can also conclude that the processes being undertaken by the school councils are not being done as a whole school initiative. The guidance states "the success of a school council will depend on how well it engages with the wider pupil population"

When asked "Does your school council listen to all pupils in the school?" a worrying 35% of pupils responded that their school council never listens to them.

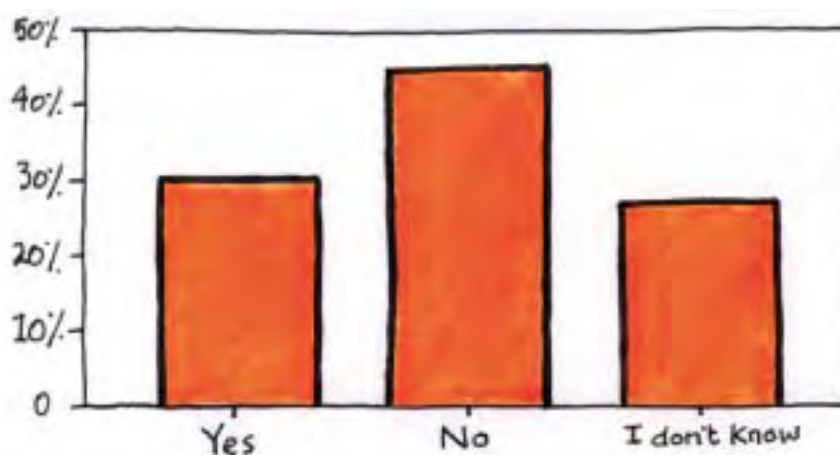




Does your school council listen to all pupils in the school?

Figure 14

Figure 15 shows us that only 30% of pupils are aware of any changes that had been made by the school council. Whilst this work and achievement needs to be commended, it also tells us that 2 out of 3 pupils have not seen any changes as a result of having a school council.



Has your school council made any changes in your school?

Figure 15

In Figure 16 the largest column by a substantial amount is that of those young people who think that the school council neither listens to them nor has it made any changes.

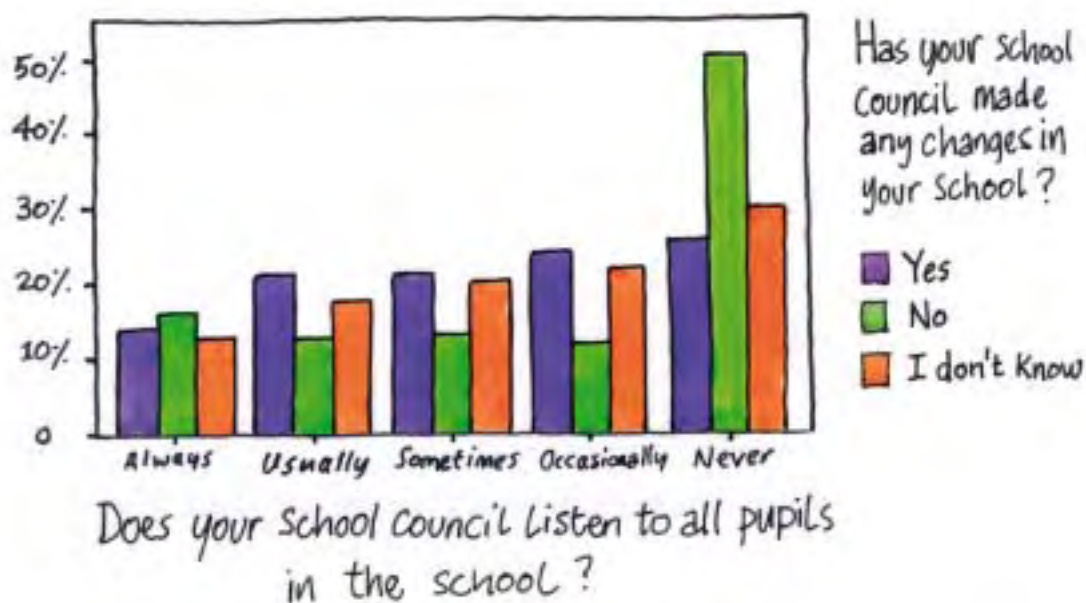


Figure 16

In workshop settings we asked pupils what kind of things their school councils were doing. The picture across the whole of Wales is almost the same.

What Decisions Pupils are involved in within Schools.

- Where to go on School trips
- Organising Charitable events
- Content of School Meals
- Choosing Colour for Toilets
- What to do in free time
- Choosing Colour for Uniform
- Fund raising
- School environment. e.g. providing more bins or benches.

A small number of school councils were involved in peer education work. This work was mainly around bullying, although some had tackled issues of sex and drugs education.

On the whole the issues covered by school councils seem to be superficial in terms of the running of the school, with much of the focus being on additional activities such as trips and charitable events. Pupils that had been involved in choices around school uniforms had done so in terms of what colour, rather than whether there should be a uniform or not or what it should be. In only one authority had school councils been given a budget to do any work.

The guidance lists a range of matters to be considered by the school council. These include school policies, codes of conduct and appointment of school staff. All these issues were reflected by young people in workshops.





What decisions should young people be involved in in school?

- School Transport
- Recruitment of teachers
- Writing of school policies
- Issues around School Uniforms
- The Range of subjects taught
- How school spends its budgets
- How lessons are taught
- The length of break times.

It would seem that young people wish to expand the range and depth of issues considered by the school council. This expansion is very much in line with the guidance. What young people want is to be more involved in the actual running of the school, rather than concentrating on additional activities. However, whilst wanting to expand their participation opportunities, young people are very clear as to the parameters of their role.

What issues should pupils not be involved in?

- Personal things. Such as people's problems or child protection
- What time school starts
- Arguments and fights
- Teachers wages
- Discipline and punishment of either pupils or staff.

Issues coming out of workshops concerning schools councils

During workshops with young people a range of issues came out around school councils. We have collated the most common issues, but have no idea to what extent they carry across Wales.

Meeting times

Many young people complained to us that their school council meetings were held during lunch-times or break-times. Whilst this is in direct contradiction of the guidelines which explicitly states meetings are not to be held during breaks, it also means that there is little time for the meeting.

"We never got to choose when school council met and had to wait for the teacher to tell us when the meeting was." John, Flintshire.

A large number of school councils were meeting only once a term. The WAG guidance states that the school council should meet a minimum of twice a term.



Role of Teacher

"There's a teacher in the room at all times, who interferes quite a lot." Sioned age 14

The role of the teacher raised many issues with young people. It would seem that for many this new style of working with pupils taking control is going to take time for all involved. Whilst we did not formally question teachers many have told us anecdotally that they have found it hard to remain in a facilitative role. This has mainly been because being asked your opinion is a new concept to pupils, and without guidance pupils have not known where to start, rather than pushed to take control.

However, if the agenda has been entirely set by teaching staff and pupils are unable to contribute to this, then it misses the point.

No sense of achievement

Many pupils complained of no sense of achievement from the school council and that the things they wanted to do, being stopped by the school management.

"school council doesn't do anything" Rhys, Powys

We appreciate that there will always be things the school council wants that the teaching staff don't want or can't allow. One head-teacher told us anecdotally of his frustrations "the first thing the school council wanted to do was re-install the drinks vending machines. I had to tell them this was not allowed due to Welsh Assembly Healthy Eating policies".

We would suggest that rather than school councils coming up with ideas that for whatever reason are declined by school management. Both sides should sit down and be clear as to what they are prepared to negotiate on. The guidance lists a range of issues that could be considered.

Further to this it will take time for trust to develop for all involved. We hope to see school councils starting with small issues and working up to more serious ideas that affect the whole school.

Conclusion.

The school council's initiative in Wales is a bold step for the Welsh Assembly Government. It appears that all schools have responded to the legal requirement of establishing a council within their school. However, if only 8% of pupils have heard of the UNCRC then it is obvious that school councils are not being developed from a rights base.





We accept that this is a new initiative in the U.K, which at the moment is exclusive to Wales. This is indicative of the Welsh Assembly Governments commitment to listening to young people. We appreciate that these types of cultural changes within schools will take time to grow and develop. The Welsh Assembly Government will need to monitor this carefully to see whether the findings of this research are just a snapshot of early stages of a growing movement, or a reflection on just how far the schools council initiative has been implemented.

It appears that in a number of schools requirements set out in the guidance are not being adhered to e.g. elections, meeting times and consultation of the wider pupil population. From this we can only conclude that at best teaching staff are unaware of the contents of the guidance or at worst they are choosing to ignore it.

If the initiative is to succeed then it needs to be given far more thought, by all of those involved. Too many young people are unaware of the structures in place, or feel that they are ineffective. Far too often the agenda is not in the hands of pupils. At best when school councils are achieving anything it tends to be superficial.

Young people tell us that the level of involvement they desire is far deeper than that which is available. However, these requests are only a reflection on what is already stated within the guidance.

A lot of thought needs to be given to what happens if this initiative doesn't work. What are the consequences for young people involved? If the whole purpose is to promote democracy, where does this leave us if this becomes a negative experience? Funky Dragon's concern is that young people, who are currently motivated and enthusiastic about participating in school councils, may become disengaged if the experiences they have are predominantly negative ones.

Recommendations:

- Far more be done around awareness and understanding of participation within the context of the UNCRC.
- The National Guidelines for school councils be revisited by all those involved in the process.
- The structures in place are given the resources, support and space to function.
- School councils are given a budget, as well as being able to raise their own funds.
- Teachers are provided with training to look at their responsibilities and roles set out in the guidance.
- Personal and Social Education lessons be used to increase knowledge about the school council, as well as being a place to discuss issues concerning pupils for the school council to act on.



In the guidance the only reference to the role of inspection and school councils states "to provide evidence of 'taking account of the views of pupils'". Whilst we are unsure as to what this actually means in practice, we still feel that with regard to what we have found out about how school council are being implemented, this falls short of ensuring that young peoples rights to participate in schools are protected. Therefore...

Funky Dragon Recommends:

School Councils should be inspected by ESTYN (the office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales) in accordance with the guidance. Particular attention should be given to:

- How the elections for school councils are carried out.
- Ensuring that school councils meetings are not in break or lunch times.
- Pupils are given the support, training and time to carry out their role as a representative of others within the school.
- Pupils are engaging in real matters concerning the running of the school.

The Participation Consortium facilitated by Save the Children has developed a set of Participation Standards. The development of these standards has involved a wide range of young people including members of Funky Dragon. These standards have been officially adopted by the Welsh Assembly Government.

It is Funky Dragons recommendation that these participation standards be adopted and used as a framework for both the implementation and inspection of School councils.





Specific Interest young people

Throughout the Our Rights, Our Story process Funky Dragon has sought to include the voices of young people from Specific Interest groups.

Young people from these groups have taken part in every stage of the research. Their views and opinions have therefore been incorporated into the main findings of the report.

These specific interest groups include:

- Young Disabled People.
- Young People From Black And Ethnic Minorities.
- Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual, Transgender & Questioning Young People (LGBTQ).
- Young Carers.
- Homeless Young People.
- Looked After Young People.
- Young People Who Have Been Involved In the Youth Justice System.
- Young People with Long-Term Illnesses.
- Young people seeking asylum in Wales.
- Young people from other European countries who have come to live in Wales.

The topics we asked about were education, health, information and participation.

As well as the main 'Our Rights, Our Story' work, Funky Dragon is carrying out a more detailed look at how young people from these specific interest groups are able to claim their rights.

Due to a variety of reasons including; young people's needs, time available, venue and appropriateness we are using a range of different methods. So far, these have included workshop activities, drama, art, games, stalls at events and giving young people cameras to take photos and then using those images as part of semi-structured interviews.

This section of the report will give a preview of some of the things we have found to date. As this work is due to be completed in March 2008, the findings we present in this report are only meant to be illustrative. It is for this reason that at this point we will not be making any recommendations, although it may be worth repeating that many of the views and opinions of young people from specific interest groups have been used to make recommendations in the main body of this report.

Whilst there are particular issues for certain specific interest groups (e.g coming out being an exclusive issue for LGBTQ), we seem to be finding that there are very similar predominant issues across a range of specific interest groups. In this section we will aim to bring you a preview of these issues.



Specific Interest & Education

As with the main body of the research, education proved to be of great importance to the young people we met within the specific interest groups.

There were a number of barriers which young people felt existed between them and their education. One of these was a lack of support and consideration for the other issues which young people may be facing whilst also trying to concentrate on school. One LGBTQ homeless young person highlights the fact that it may be difficult to see the worth of education when there are other (more immediate) problems, which need to be faced.

'My experiences in school did not help me ... because the teachers couldn't really support me ... I didn't want to learn when I was in school ... because of my mother and everything, I was that upset that I just felt like, why should I learn? What is the point?...'

Our research shows that this attitude towards school and education is fairly common amongst the specific interest groups we met. In its current form education seems not to make provisions for those people who may be finding it difficult to cope with the pressures of education and their life outside it.

The failure of current education provision to appeal to a range of young people is also echoed by those we met when they discuss different teaching methods and learning styles which they have experienced. This issue is not exclusive to those young people from specific interest groups (as we have seen in the earlier chapter on education); however, it seems that for those young people finding it difficult to focus on their education (for a variety of reasons), more engaging teaching methods would be of great benefit. It seems that in its current form, education caters for a certain 'type' of young person. This ultimately means not all young people are able to access their rights within education. As one young person put it,

'...I think the education system is fine as long as you start with the benefits ... then if you don't, it's much more difficult to benefit ... It doesn't always cater for you. It's great for some people but if it doesn't cater for you, then you're a bit on the outside.'

The young people we met during this more qualitative area of research also highlighted the importance of 'Personal Social Education' on the National Curriculum. However, they highlighted what they felt were 'shortcomings' within the teaching of this subject. It was felt by a number of participants that this school subject is an ideal opportunity to teach about diversity, and about the importance of accepting people, regardless of their 'differences'. However, it seems this opportunity is not exploited often enough. One LGBTQ young person told us of a time when, during sex and relationship education, a teacher described homosexual relationships as 'dirty', which only serves to perpetuate the ignorance and experiences of bullying which young people from minority groups seem to experience. One suggestion for alleviating problems such as this is to bring in outside agencies and organisations to teach elements of the curriculum.





'There were some days when people would come in to talk to us and that was much better ... she talks to you in appropriate age language and she doesn't have any hang ups at all so she's trained to not be embarrassed,... that was really cool because it made sense and it was fun as well ...and it wasn't preachy all the time cos people just tune out then, they don't listen.'

Ultimately it seems that education within schools is largely failing to identify and cater for young people with specific needs. Both in terms of its teaching and the levels of support and guidance it is able to offer when necessary. The young people we met suggested that unless issues such as their home life, self esteem, bullying etc. are addressed, it won't be possible for them to achieve to their highest potential – as is their right under Article 29a of the Convention, which states that:

'Education shall be directed to the development of a child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential.'
(Article 29,a. UNCRC, 1989)

Health and Wellbeing

Here we concentrate on the aspects of health and wellbeing which affect the young people who were interviewed. Issues of mental health arose across a number of the specific interest groups. These included young people's own mental health issues, as one homeless young person explained:

'Ever since I was little I've been seeing a psychiatrist and everything...'

And an LGBTQ young person said that before 'coming out':

'I experienced ridiculous amounts of depression and anxiety when I was younger..'

Young people further explained how the mental health of immediate family members impacted on them, particularly when they refused to take prescribed medication. One homeless young person told us:

'My father is schizophrenic...he's been in prison a lot....he tends to disappear and we don't know where he is..'

She went on to explain that depression ran through her immediate and close family, illustrating this with her aunt's tragic story:

'..she went into hospital , she was there for ages and they didn't have enough beds and she said "please don't let me go home, if I do I'm gonna kill myself" they sent her home and she hanged herself..'



When telling us of coping strategies, the same homeless young woman described herself as:

'..not a strong person but if I see other people are down, then I make sure I'm strong enough to deal with it cos I think " No (own name), there's no time to think about yourself, they need you, you need to focus on them" I'm quite protective of (younger sister's name)'

Some of the young people explained how creative activities had helped them. One, dealing with a nervous condition told us:

'when I started drama (at 7 years old) it was an idea to get my confidence up and it worked'

another, that:

'I've written lots and lots and lots of things...funnily enough, when I wrote the most was between the age of 14 and 17 which coincides with exactly the time when I was most confused about my sexuality..'

A homeless young person who describes herself as bipolar, manic depressive explained how creative activities in a supportive school environment gave her confidence:

'there were loads of talent shows and I entered 'em all ... people really loved me, they thought I was a great entertainer'

She went on to explain how she moved into behind the scenes work; playwriting, production and becoming active in the running of her school through the school council. This clearly provided her current direction:

'I write poetry in my spare time and I write plays... I'm working towards my OCN's'

She put this down to her supportive school environment, telling us:

'I really enjoyed school ... it was a really safe environment as well, because they were really protective of the little ones..educating you without preaching to you which was really cool'

Through its various articles, the UNCRC covers many aspects of young people's lives. The issues contributed by young people in this section are addressed by those articles on health, government support and education.

Professionals need to develop a full understanding of the UNCRC and its intention, to ensure young people's access to all of their rights. This is particularly so where young people's needs are complex.





Support

One of the recurring issues throughout interviews was that of personal support.

Family

Young people gave examples of family support and its importance to them, particularly when needing advice. One BME young person told us:

'I think I value my family a lot more than my friends. We've all experienced the same things. We give each other advice...society could learn from family values'

Professional

For many of the young people interviewed however, family support was not available and in some cases young people were in fact deemed in need of protection from their families. The support offered by professionals in these circumstances was crucial and not always described positively. A young person who had been through the youth justice system, when asked about whether social services listened, told us:

'you'll say where you wouldn't want to be but if a placement comes up there, that's where you'll be going'

In an example where support was positive, a homeless young person described his feelings:

'I love (hostel name) because you've got the staff there who are lovely, you've got some residents that I'm good friends with. It's kinda like a big, huge family in a way... I'll be sorry when I leave cos I've sort of, well, nested up there now'

By comparison of the different types of support required, a disabled young person who had recently, successfully completed her degree and started job hunting said:

'I applied for Access to Work ... government funding to help you...you have to apply within 3 months of getting the job...I had lots of help from job centre plus...'

Access

Despite the success stories where support is available, problems remain for young people in accessing the support they need. A BME young person told us:

'I know there is support there but youth have to go and find it..'



Young people went on to describe instances where support was needed but unavailable, resulting in those young people experiencing a sense of helplessness. A homeless young person, when describing the effects of his mother's schizophrenia on other family members, told us:

'All I really want is the doctors to force the medication on her, to make her see sense – but she won't. There's nothing you can do is there?'

Other young people gave examples, where they had taken the step of asking for support which was not given, again resulting in a sense of helplessness. Two BME young people, talking to us about school explained:

'Well the teachers don't know how to deal with racist problems, they take it as a bullying issue a lot of the time if somebody calls me a racist name I'll report it to the teacher but they just leave it'

Achievement

Where young people were offered support which met their needs, they expressed gratitude. Where that support gave them a sense of security, they went on to describe their goals, sense of direction and hope. A disabled young person told us:

'one of my teachers, she's really important because she started me going to Duke of Edinburgh and the school forum. From these I became more outgoing and my personality completely changed from badly behaved sometimes, to confident, outgoing and now I have my own style'

Young people recognised their achievements and the steps to realising those goals, whether life skills for independent living, career goals or interests. A young person in transition from leaving care told us:

'(Supported lodgings) help you to become independent after foster care...I pay my way and do my own cooking...I do get tips sometimes...I can use a frying pan...they said always keep an eye on it'

This wholly demonstrates the value of appropriate support for young people's needs and their abilities to motivate themselves towards their goals when feeling secure. The task is to recognise these needs, understand young people's rights to support and act on them.





Bullying

As mentioned previously in this report, over 46% of young people we asked said that they have been the victim of bullying. Our research with young people from specific interest groups shows that they are no exception. This work also allows us to begin to explore some of the reasons why young people are bullied, and some of the effects that this treatment may have on them.

A number of the young people we met felt that they were bullied simply for being 'different'. For many of them, this was to do with their specific interest; for example, some of the BME young people we met spoke about racist bullying, some of the LGBTQ young people spoke about homophobic bullying. However, as one young person points out, this may not always be the case, and sometimes any 'difference' between victim and bully is enough.

'I was bullied quite a lot but it wasn't for being gay, it was for being weird, cos people didn't quite understand me cos I was awful quiet and not part of the crowd'

Young people also pointed out the different forms that bullying can take. For example, one disabled young person told us about the upsetting experience of being called names throughout her time in comprehensive school; whilst another young person retold stories of the bullies visiting his house and banging on the windows.

They also highlighted the differing effects that this experience can have on a young person and their education. A number of the participants from across the different groups spoke about 'withdrawing' themselves from education in some way, as a result of the bullying they were experiencing. An example of this was one BME young person who had undertaken an electrical course at college, but decided to leave close to the end of the course because of the bullying he was being subjected to. Another LGBTQ young person spoke to us about the effects that bullying had throughout his primary school career:

'When I was younger (I was bullied), that's why I was unwell ... year 1 kinda through to year 5 ... that's why I was kind of a quiet and introverted person.'

This negative experience seemed to occur for most of the young people that we met, either in school or college; which suggests that it would be encroaching upon their ability to access their rights in education. It seems from our research that those young people who are already the most vulnerable, through circumstances beyond their control, are then made more so by the experiences of bullying which seem all too common.

As mentioned within the education section, if lessons such as PSE were used more effectively to teach about, and celebrate the differences which exist between people; maybe bullying would not be such a common occurrence in Welsh schools. Also, a greater emphasis on providing support and advice for young people, as well as effective anti-bullying systems would mean that less young people feel the ongoing effects of this negative experience throughout their lives.



Acceptance

When deciding what to call this section, one of Funky Dragon's Grand Council Members provided the solution. We wanted to include matters of bullying, being victimised, exclusion and racial discrimination and considered calling it 'intolerance'. Our Grand Council member pointed out that this implies that what minority groups need is to be 'put up with', and he felt that in our diverse society this wasn't good enough. He pointed out that the need of all individuals in our society is 'acceptance' and this is what we will use as our baseline.

"The Convention applies to everyone whatever their race, religion, abilities, whatever they think or say, no matter what type of family they come from."
(Article 2, UNCRC, 1989)

The following comments arose within an activity which asked 'What would you change about Living In Wales?'; and they reflect what a small proportion of Wales' young people think of the specific interest groups that have been discussed in this section of the report. Whether it be "less gays", "kick out paki's" or "less foreigners" the presence of prejudice amongst a minority of young people is evident. It is a reflection that several of these young people's rights are not being respected. Voicing opinions voluntarily that discriminate against "gypsies" and "lesbo's" for example, is indicative of these young people being misinformed but where is this prejudice stemming from? As a young person stated during the "If I was headteacher..." exercise:

"Have equal rights for whites in my school...because the coloured people get their own way and we have to suffer. I would personally send them somewhere else"

It seems quite shocking that opinions which express such racial intolerance still exist in today's society. Although these comments were heard from a minority of young people, the existence of such attitudes is important to note.

In contrast, one of the homeless young people interviewed, commented that acceptance of differences seems to be increasing:

"Now I don't get any (racism)...more mixed people now...less racists now...it's getting better..."

Likewise during an interview a young person with a disability stated that:

"You do get the odd horrible person who'll look at you and make some silly comment... the majority is nice though...it's generally something that's accepted"

In addition, some young people highlighted "diversity" as what is good about living in Wales, for example "multi-cultural", "get to know some new people from different countries" and "different kinds of people"; such statements are positive signs that Wales' diverse nature is seen as predominantly positive by the majority of young people; with a small minority voicing negative opinions.





Safety

The issue of personal safety in relation to bullying and the use of school transport have previously been discussed in the education chapter. When the issue of personal safety arose during the specific interest interviews however, the young people in addition, felt unsafe in terms of their community, due to being perceived as a minority, and as different from everybody else. For example, a young person describes coming out of a meeting for lesbian, gay and bi-sexual young people and how she feels unsafe partly because of the surrounding area and partly due to her sexuality:

"It's a mess... it's just scummy and dangerous... I don't like being there on my own... this is really stupid, if we come out of (LGBTQ youth group)... I used to hold hands with Gary, cos I'm straight! Honest, honest!... but I don't feel safe there... it's the people down there... to me that place represents deprivation and drugs and alcohol and stuff that people just kind of ignore".

Young people belonging to specific interest groups may have a tendency towards lack of self-confidence, and are more likely to be discriminated against. This leads to feelings of vulnerability, as was expressed in the majority of the interviews carried out.

Issues surrounding safety were evident not only in reference to young people's wider community but also within the environment they were living too, particularly amongst the homeless young people interviewed. There were separate incidents recalled, revealing cases of emotional, physical and sexual abuse. These would undoubtedly have a detrimental effect on a young person's self-confidence and well-being, leading to feelings of vulnerability in a variety of situations. Such findings demonstrate that several of these young people's rights are not being met, such as Article 19, which states that:

"Governments should ensure that children are properly cared for, and protect them from violence, abuse and neglect by their parents or anyone else who looks after them."
(Article 19, UNCRC, 1989)



Conclusion

This section has endeavoured to give merely a brief outline of cross-cutting issues that have been discovered so far whilst conducting research amongst young people from specific interest groups.

The most prominent finding at this stage is that specific interest groups are in no way unified, and it is only when they are viewed as human beings rather than the label they carry, that their particular needs can be identified. Even then it is not as simple as just identifying their issues as they are often complex and certainly not exclusive to specific interest "categories". Young people from hard to reach groups are vulnerable and often, but not always, these young people find themselves vulnerable in a number of ways meaning that several "labels" could apply. For example, a young person could "come out" to their family and if they react badly, they may be forced to leave the family home, and find themselves homeless too. The relationships between the difficult experiences that young people face, need to be explored further, so as to identify suitable support and coping mechanisms.

March 2008 will see the release of the specific interest report that will address these complexities and reveal in more depth how young people from minority groups access their rights. From these more detailed findings, Funky Dragon intend to make a number of recommendations, specific to young people in these groups.





Summary of Recommendations

Education

Bullying

- Funky Dragon recommends that anti-bullying policies within schools need to be promoted more, so that ALL members of the school (staff and pupils) are aware of the systems which are in place.
- The design of these policies should be worked on with pupils, so that they are as effective as they can be in meeting young people's needs.
- Funky Dragon also recommends that more is done to monitor and evaluate the implementation of these policies, to ensure their constant improvement and effectiveness.
- Funky Dragon recommends that anti-bullying policies are extending to cover both after school activities and school transport – ensuring young people's safety and well being in all aspects of their education.

Personal Social Education

- Funky Dragon feels the government needs to give clearer directives as to how PSE is taught. Currently schools have the freedom to deliver PSE as they see fit (whether this be as an individual subject or across the curriculum). Funky Dragon feels this is leading to inequalities in the experiences that young people are having in this area, despite the existence of a national curriculum for this subject.
- Funky Dragon also recommends that more 'value' be given to PSE in schools. We suggest the government looks towards offering a qualification in this subject, and that specialised teachers should deliver lessons.
- Funky Dragon recommends that the Government (possibly through its inspecting body ESTYN) look at the various ways in which PSE is taught across Wales, and highlight examples of good practice.

The Effects of Education on Young People's Futures

- Funky Dragon recommends that school curricula are amended to include more useful information for young people's future. We would suggest there should be some flexibility, so that young people may make positive suggestions as to what they feel they may need to learn about.



The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

- Funky Dragon recommends that clear directives are given to schools as to how they should teach young people about their rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Funky Dragon also recommends that Government takes action to ensure that teachers and other school staff have a good knowledge and understanding of the UNCRC. This will mean specialist training for teachers so that they can deliver the curriculum effectively.

Teaching Methods

- Funky Dragon recommends that the Government places greater emphasis upon the use of a variety of teaching methods in schools. The use of such methods should be closely monitored by schools and outside agencies (such as ESTYN).
- Funky Dragon also suggests that young people are involved in designing different methods of learning, and are consulted as to how they learn best – so as they are able to participate fully and achieve to their fullest potential.

School Transport

- Funky Dragon recommends that anti bullying and behaviour policies are extended to cover school transport.
- We also recommend that there is greater monitoring and evaluation of health and safety standards on school transport.

Religious Needs within Education

- Funky Dragon recommends that education reflects the increasingly diverse society and religions which exist in Wales. This may mean intervention from Government, training for staff and changes in school curricula. We also recommend that pupils are consulted more within schools about the experience of their education.

Careers Advice

- Funky Dragon recommends that young people in schools are offered better quality and greater levels of careers advice.
- We also recommend that young people are given more relevant and useful work experience placements. Young people should be involved in designing and locating suitable work experience placements.





GCSE Subject Choices

- Funky Dragon recommends that the Government seeks to ensure all young people across Wales have a wide variety of subjects to choose from, when shaping their own education.
- We also recommend that young people are taught the relevance and usefulness of academic subjects, so that they may make more informed choices.

Discipline

- Funky Dragon recommends that schools consult with pupils to determine methods of 'punishment' and 'reward' which will have the most impact.
- Funky Dragon also recommends that schools work with pupils in order to design and implement more successful and effective 'behaviour policies', and that these are monitored and evaluated regularly to ensure their effectiveness.

Personal Support and Guidance

- Funky Dragon recommends that Government looks to provide more personal support for young people in schools.
- We also recommend that schools work with pupils to design support systems, and therefore ensure they are able to deliver support as and when it is most suitable for young people; and in a way which is accessible and meets young people's needs.



Health

Active Participation

- Funky Dragon recommends that health service providers actively seek opportunities to involve young people in making decisions about the planning and reviewing of health services.

Accessing Healthcare

- Funky Dragon recommends that further research is carried out to explore the range and nature of barriers preventing many young people from accessing healthcare. Where gaps are identified, the training/employment of people to help young people overcome these barriers should follow.

Talking to Health Professionals

- Funky Dragon recommends that health professionals further develop their practices in working with young people based on their rights under Article 12 of the UNCRC, the GMC's recent policy '0-18 years: guidance for all doctors' 2007 and the evidence of this report.
- Funky Dragon recommends that as Wales is a multicultural country and that globalisation, will continue to influence people's mobility in the future, it is essential that health service providers in Wales support those employees who need to develop their language skills to ensure effective communication and reduce patient anxiety.

Healthy Eating – Healthy Lifestyles

- Funky Dragon recommends increasing education on healthy food and lifestyles to enable young peoples to gain a practical understanding of this life skill.
- Funky Dragon recommends that any changes made to school catering provision, is done so in conjunction with the school council.
- Funky Dragon recommends that the calculation of the cost of school meals is adjusted to enable young people in receipt of free/discounted meals to adequately afford healthy meal choices.
- Funky Dragon recommends that the quality of healthy meals by all public sector catering services is improved.
- Funky Dragon recommends that successfully evaluated healthy eating encouragement schemes are continued and extended across Wales.





Information

Information given to you by your school when making GCSE choices has been useful

- Funky Dragon recommends that all young people are given adequate and detailed information regarding GCSE choices and that these are linked to relevant career options.
- We recommend that the process is linked strongly with careers services and whatever systems of pastoral care the schools have in place.

Information given to me in school on different countries/cultures/religions has been useful

- Funky Dragon recommends that useful information about culture, religion and countries is made more accessible to all young people in Wales, regardless of their location.
- We recommend that more research is carried out into what the needs of specific groups are in relation to such information. The specific groups need to be young people living in rural areas and those whose religious needs are not being met in school.
- We recommend that information is tailored to meet the needs of specific communities and, to an extent even individuals.

Information found on the internet is reliable

- Funky Dragon recommends that all schools should provide details about websites which are safe and useful for all types of information. There are a number of sites which are either government funded specifically to supply information or which have a highly reputable news facility with a public service agenda.
www.cliconline.co.uk, www.schoolcouncilswales.org.uk, www.talktofrank.com,
www.ceop.gov.uk, www.headsup.org.uk, www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk, www.bbc.co.uk

It is easy to get information in the Welsh Language

- Funky Dragon recommends that available information should be equal to the readers level of Welsh and on the topic that they want. E.G. A-level information in both Welsh and English.
- It is a fact that some young people cannot understand information in English as well as they can if it is in Welsh. All children and young people need age appropriate information in the language of their choice.

It is easy to get information on general health/sex/drugs/diet?

- Funky Dragon recommends that the content and teaching methods adopted as part of any review of the PSE curriculum reflect the needs of young people at their various development stages to ensure effective education.



Participation

Family

- Funky Dragon recommends that families are given more information around the UNCRC. Not just a list of the articles but what this means in Wales.
- Funky Dragon recommends that families are made aware of the positive outcomes for all in involving children in decisions. There appears to be a clear link between students whose parents pick their school and bullying. If parents were aware of this then this may effect how they make their decision.

Consultations

- Funky Dragon recommends that the Welsh Assembly Government should develop a code of practice for consultations with young people. This code of practice should include:
 - Creative ways to ask young peoples opinions.
 - Protocols for carrying out consultation.
 - Responsibility of consulters to feedback information.
 - Where possible explanations of what changes have been made as a result of the consultation.
 - Data collected should be stored centrally so that it can be accessed by as many people as possible.

Young people as active citizens

- Funky Dragon recommends that the Welsh Assembly Government considers lowering the voting age to 16.

This change may well be outside of the current powers held by the Assembly but it could still have a clear line and commitment to pass on this message to Westminster.

- Funky Dragon recommends that the Welsh Assembly Government continues to listen to young people but accepts far more has to be done.

This is not just in areas of policy but also each Assembly Member takes an active role in listening to the young people they represent. This can be done by engaging in structures set up such as County Youth Fora or Schools Councils.





School Councils

- Funky Dragon recommends that far more should be done around awareness and understanding of participation within the context of the UNCRC.
- Funky Dragon recommends that The National Guidelines for school councils should be revisited by all those involved in the process.
- Funky Dragon recommends that the structures in place are given the resources, support and space to function.
- Funky Dragon recommends that School councils are given a budget, as well as being able to raise their own funds.
- Funky Dragon also recommends that Teachers are provided with training to look at their responsibilities and roles set out in the guidance.
- Funky Dragon recommends that Personal and Social Education lessons be used to increase knowledge about the school council, as well as being a place to discuss issues concerning pupils for the school council to act on.
- Funky Dragon recommends that School Councils should be inspected by ESTYN (the office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales) in accordance with the guidance. Particular attention should be given to:
 - How the elections for school councils are carried out.
 - Ensuring that school councils meetings are not in break or lunch times.
 - Pupils are given the support, training and time to carry out their role as a representative of others within the school.
 - Pupils are engaging in real matters concerning the running of the school
- It is Funky Dragons recommendation that the Participation Standards, developed by the Participation Consortium and officially adopted by the Welsh Assembly Government, should be adopted and used as a framework for both the implementation and inspection of School councils.



Conclusion

This has been without a doubt the largest piece of work that Funky Dragon has undertaken. Our challenge has been to take an idea initiated by young people and develop a project from this idea that is led by young people from Funky Dragon. It would have been unfeasible, for the amount of work that had to be done, that young people take on 100% of the design, delivery, analyses and reporting of the whole project. Instead a steering group of young people has led all of the work, with the Funky Dragon staff responding to and delivering their aims, objectives and plans. The steering group itself has continually consulted with other members from Funky Dragon throughout the process, as well as consulting a wider audience of young people at key stages.

How well we have achieved the aims of project for Funky Dragon:

Outputs

- To better represent the views of young people in Wales about their rights which stemmed from the experiences of those young people who attended the last round of reporting (see intro)
- To provide the UN with the views and opinions of Young people in Wales on how they are accessing their rights
- To produce a guide to the OROS project, which included an introduction to the UNCRC
- To use new media to inform young people about the OROS project and the UNCRC
- To gather the views and opinions of 8,000 young people

We are satisfied that we have achieved these and in some cases gone beyond what we set out to do. This report will be included in the reporting process to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child. We launched the OROS guide simultaneously in North Wales and South Wales, on time, in both English and Welsh. The DVD produced to support the project was a mix of "flash" animation and real film, available in English and Welsh. The DVD was available in hard copy, on our website and on *You Tube*.

We set out to work with 8,000 young people, the final figure was over 12,000.





One of the unforeseen outcomes of the project has been the production of the first official welsh language version of the UNCRC. When we embarked on this project we assumed that somebody in Wales would have already translated the UNCRC into Welsh. However, we were unable to find a copy. We have since sought permission from the United Nations (a requirement when translating UN documents) and have paid to have all of the full text of all articles translated into Welsh. This will be available in the form of a guide on the Funky Dragon website. Please feel free to use it and as we know it is the only official copy available in Welsh, please credit it us when using it! With our commitment to the Welsh Language we are very proud of this achievement. It has to be noted on the day of our launch an official from one authority did tell us that they had a welsh translation available, but as they had not sought permission we won't tell.

Outcomes

- To provide a benchmark for future measurement (of course in young people's hands, they may not want to measure like for like over time)
- To influence decision makers and practitioners to make improvements which will directly affect young people's lives in Wales (this will become apparent in the presence of the requirements specified in UN in their concluding observations)

These will take time to realise and are dependent on factors outside the control of Funky Dragon. These are things we will watch out for and which we will look forward to being able to celebrate the successes of, one by one.

Process

Funky Dragon, by its nature is a peer led young people's organisation. Any research project run by Funky Dragon would, in order to fit into the culture and purpose of the organisation, have to be participatory in nature.

The steering group of the OROS project has remained open to all members of Funky Dragon throughout the various stages of the project. The group set their own project milestones, with support from staff and academics at Swansea University.

Where at times there may have been dilemmas in the direction and quality of the research, young people have made the decisions. Some of these decisions have been straight forward and unanimous, whilst others such as the difference between an issue and a theme have been difficult and laborious. If decisions around imperfect methodology or content could be perceived as naïve, we would argue that this is a direct consequence of the truly participative nature of the project; which as previously stated could only be the case considering the ethos and mission of Funky Dragon itself.



The process has been a learning experience for the entire organisation. The steering group completed 4 OCN's to recognise and qualify the skills and knowledge they have developed. Staff have undergone various training activities in order to support and inform the steering group. Thanks to Dr Kevin Haines we all now know what "Stratification" means and thanks to Dr Antonella Invernizzi for introducing us to the quantification of qualitative methods!

Throughout this delicate process of young people leading and staff responding, the staff have not always got it right. However, they have been very appreciative and welcoming of the young people putting them back in their place.

With the gift of hindsight we may have done some things differently in the process. External factors have played a large part in the process, for example the reporting dates changing twice during the time of the project. However, any of these changes would have been tweaks rather than any major reassessment. By and large we are happy with both the process and the content. A full evaluation of the project will be carried out once the overall project finishes in March 2008.

Content

Since its beginning the Welsh Assembly Government has used the UNCRC as the foundation on which it has built its policies for children and young people. We have seen in this report and in other work that the Welsh Assembly Government has in many ways led the way in listening to children and young people in comparison to its other UK partners.

It therefore came as a surprise to us to discover how little young people knew about their rights. Whilst policies had largely been implemented, very little had been done around the philosophy of the UNCRC.

We feel that this research would have been very different if the young people involved had heard of the UNCRC and understood they have rights.

As you have seen we have made many recommendations based on the evidence we have found. We are not going to repeat all of those here. Instead we will highlight what we would consider three of the main cross cutting findings.

1. Awareness of Rights

We would hope in future that far more is done to raise awareness and understanding of children and young people's rights. We hope that this is not done as an empty gesture of just sending every young person in Wales a copy of the UNCRC. Time and resources need to be put in, so that young people not only know about the convention but also understand what these rights mean to them as individuals. To claim these rights young people must be aware of the structures and initiatives that are in place across Wales.





Furthermore they need to know how to complain and the structures in place to support them when they are unable to claim these rights.

2. The Ever Changing Role of Schools.

Young people very much see schools as not just a place you go to gain skills to enter the work place. They are looking to schools to provide them with support, guidance and life skills beyond the requirements of any employer or university. This change of culture has been beginning to grow over the last few years. However, it is important that policy makers are aware of what young people want from their school environment.

They are seeking a level of care beyond that of the traditional perception of schools. This comes in the form of advocates, counsellors and other supporting roles. We do not underestimate the demands these roles put on schools and their staff, but where we have seen such initiatives they are proving to be a great success for young people and their schools.

3. Listening to young people

Throughout all of our findings young people have demonstrated their desire to engage in the democratic process, be that in education, health, consultation or government.

Opportunities for talking and listening are called for throughout our findings as well as the subjects of choice and safety.

Young people want to be involved in running their school, as seen with the engagement of young people in school councils. Where schools provide these opportunities for engagement and development it benefits both the school and the pupils.

Young people want health care professionals to listen to them, take them seriously and have the right to make their own decisions around their personal health.

Young people want to be listened to by Government be this through consultations or more formal avenues of being able to vote at a younger age.

At no point in this report have we argued that there is none of this going on in Wales. Policies are in place and where they are being implemented fully people are beginning to see the fruits of their work. We would finish by arguing that whilst we in Wales have very much started the journey, we all still have a long way to go.



Funky Dragon's Last Word

When we wrote the first OROS project outline, we made it clear to people that we did not know whether the completion of this report would be the end, the middle or the beginning. Having completed 2 parts (this report and the children's report) we still have some way to go before this process is complete. The next stage of the OROS project will look at themes that lie outside of the UN's brief but are areas of interest for young people (Culture, Leisure, Environment and Transport) as well as a report around specific interest groups that will be ready in March 2008.

All relevant findings will be used to inform the Committee on the Rights of the Child at some point in the latter part of 2008.

We hope that this report will be debated and used by decision makers, practitioners and young people to inform their work. But mostly we hope that the work we have done will bring about change for young people in Wales. With that in mind we would like to thank everyone who has played a part in this process and welcome you all to the beginning...





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