

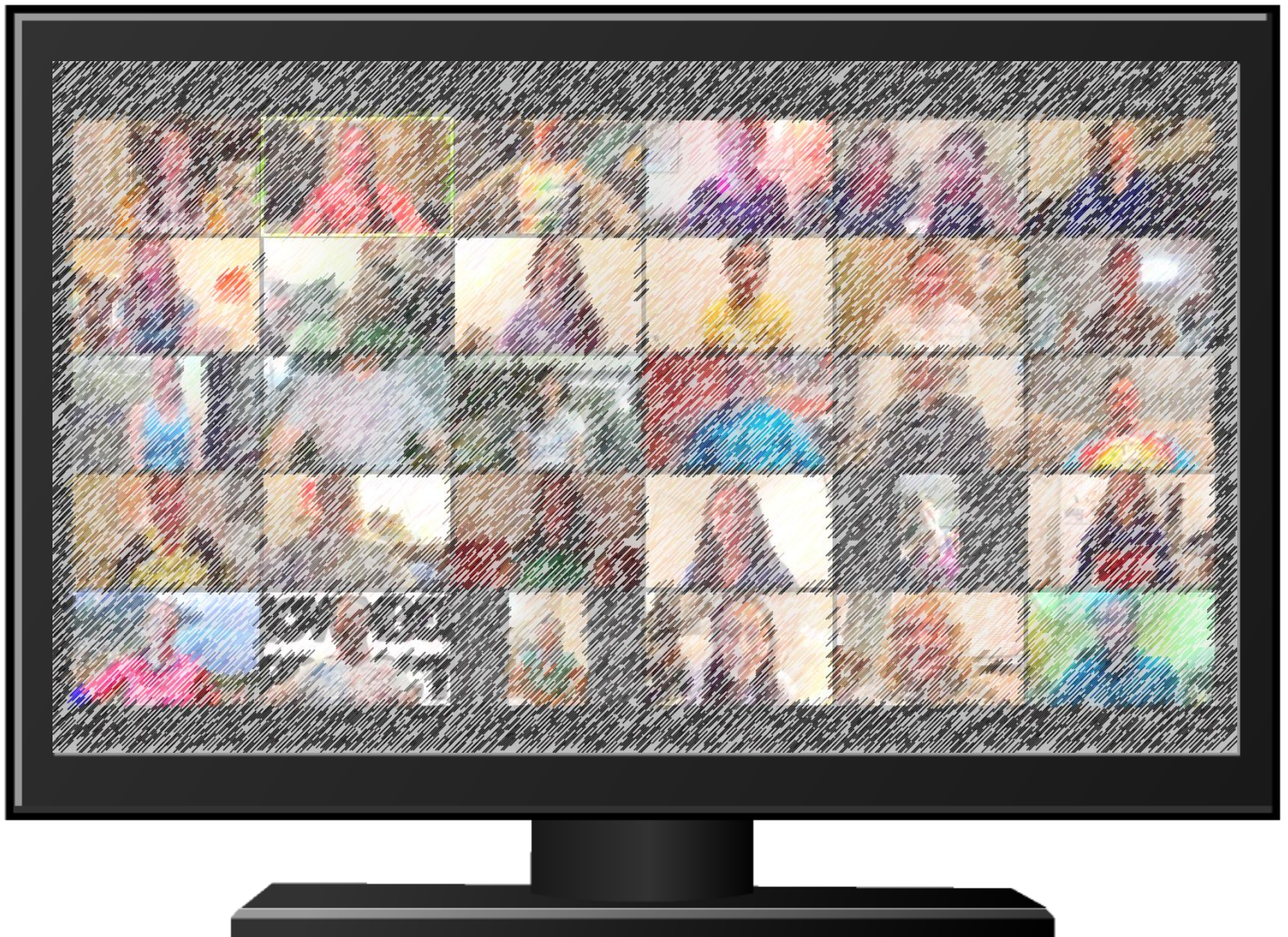
Children's Rights Scheme 2021



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Results of the pan-Wales video conference-based consultation with children and young people.

January – March 2021.



Conducted by:



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1. Acknowledgements

Recognition would like to acknowledge the innovative and enthusiastic commitments of the children and young people who made this consultation exercise possible. We would also like to thank and acknowledge the help of the organisations that facilitated access to their young people. These included: Torfaen Youth Service, Race Council Cymru, Gwent Youth Councils and forums, Wrexham Youth Service, Children's Rights Carmarthenshire, disabled young people's group, young carers from across a number of local authority areas, LGBTQ+ youth groups and Gwent young apprentices for helping organise these events. We would also like to thank the many people from around 23 organisations who came together to offer their opinions and insights at these events.

In total, we engaged with 84 children and young people.

2. Introduction

The Welsh Government has led the way in promoting children's rights. Its approach is based on a commitment to the principles enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

The UNCRC is an international agreement that protects the human rights of children and young people. The Welsh Government was the first of the four nations in the UK to adopt the UNCRC as a duty placing it at the heart of all of its work. To help achieve the implementation of the Convention, it passed the 'Children and Young Persons (Wales) Rights Measure' 2011.

This measure placed a duty on Welsh Ministers to pay 'due regard' to the rights and obligations set within the UNCRC and its optional protocols; when developing or reviewing legislation and policy. Due regard means that Ministers must give the appropriate weight to the requirements of the UNCRC, balancing them against all the other factors that are relevant to the decision in question.

Welsh Government recognised that ‘due regard’ should not start and end with Ministerial functions, so within the Social Services and Well-being Wales Act 2014, the duty of due regard to the UNCRC was extended to all persons exercising functions under guiding legislation.

The measure required that Welsh Government create a Children’s Scheme which sets out the arrangements by which the Government will comply with their duty. This scheme must also be regularly reviewed and developed.

The measure also makes Ministers responsible for ensuring that people in Wales know about, understand and respect the rights children and young people as outlined in Article 42 of the UNCRC.

In line with the UNCRC, the Measure specifically states that children and young people across Wales must help shape the scheme. As a result of this condition, Recognition were commissioned to carry out a pan-Wales consultation exercise, with the aim to organise and facilitate a series of workshops where children and young people could:

- Review and feedback on the WG’s draft Children’s Scheme consultation document.
- Express their views on the scheme.
- Express their opinion regarding what else should be in the Children’s Scheme.
- Suggest how Welsh Ministers can make sure everyone knows about and supports children’s rights.
- Suggest how they would like to provide feedback to Welsh Government.
- Suggest how we can make sure that the Welsh and English languages are treated equally?

3. Methodology

General Workshop methodology

Recognition’s purpose throughout this consultation was to gather meaningful and useful opinions from children and young people. Our methodology was geared towards ensuring that the participants felt comfortable and secure, whilst understanding the importance of the issues under consideration in order that they were thoroughly willing and able to give truthful, well considered opinions.

Whilst the workshops were often tailored to suit the needs of each group, they generally followed a similar structure, containing three sections:

1. Welcome
2. Giving information and exploring issues
3. Gathering opinions

1. Welcome

This stage of the workshop normally uses a range of introductory games and exercises to create an energised, relaxed environment. However, all of these workshops were online making it extremely difficult to work in the normal manner. In one group, one of the young people had put together a UNCRC quiz in which all the participants took part. This was a great idea and unintendedly mirrored opening discussions about the UNCRC that we had with other groups. While we were unable to work in our usual active way, objectives remained the same:

- To introduce the Recognition team and demonstrate that we are friendly and approachable people who listen respectfully to what children say and enjoy joining in with the group - i.e. - begin building rapport.
- To model the interactive, respectful nature of the whole session, in which children were encouraged to share their ideas and opinions and asked to do so within a clear, structured framework.

2. Giving information and exploring issues.

When delivering consultations to children and young people in face-to-face settings, we do not simply use the published version of the children's consultation document, but rather we create one that incorporates the published version while also supporting our drama based active learning techniques. However, because of the unique circumstance of this work, we designed the published version of the children's consultation to work as a PowerPoint document. This document was provided to the workshop partners who used some of its information in advance of the workshop to help encourage people to attend.

In order to gather meaningful opinions, it was essential that we communicated the details and background of The Children's Scheme in a clear and engaging manner. The ways in which we did this was similar for each group although adapted for accessibility. For one group, the presentation was heavily altered so that it was cognitively accessible for all participants. Another group produced a very good bilingual video in which they were encouraging children to complete the on-line consultation. Normally we centre our information giving around simple drama techniques; such as personification, character creation and fictional scenarios. These drama-based approaches create immediate intellectual and emotional engagement in which the children are not being asked to consider some abstract concept; they are looking at their classmate and thinking directly about them, the person in front of them, however this approach would have been very hard to put in place in these circumstances.

Almost all workshops started with an explanation and discussion regarding the UN and it's 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The discussion was then moved onto the need for a more targeted set of rights - the UNCRC. Building on this knowledge, the UNCRC timeline was outlined with Wales being the front and centre of the discussions that followed.



Some of the terminologies used in the UNCRC and the children's scheme are complex and not used in the common vernacular. Before we could move on to the Children's scheme itself, we worked through some of the basic concepts such as laws, duty and due regard.

Once these terms were understood (at times this was a hard thing to gauge), we moved onto the next stage

What are Laws?

Laws must be followed.



What does duty mean?

This is something Ministers must do as part of their job.

What is due regard?

To give balanced consideration of issues, including children's rights, when making decisions.

What is the Children's Rights Scheme?

The Children's Rights Scheme is a Welsh Government document that shows how they give due regard to the UNCRC.

In the next section, we directly looked at the UNCRC Articles.

UNCRC Articles

Having created a shared understanding of the concepts, we examined in some detail the actual UNCRC articles:



Below is a list of some of the rights discussed, however, this list is not exclusive:

- **Article 2** - All children have these rights no matter what.
- **Article 12** - Your right to say what you think should happen and be listened to.
- **Article 13** - Your right to have information.
- **Article 31** - Your right to relax and play.
- **Article 24** - Your right to good food and water and to see a doctor if you are ill.

We discovered that around 75% of participants had low/no knowledge of the UNCRC. In order to allow participants to connect with the UNCRC, we asked them to choose their favourite Article resulting in mixed results. When working within school classes, because of familiarity, we already have the benefit of high levels of peer-to-peer confidence when discussing issues within a workshop, leaving our main task to create confidence in ourselves. However, when working with mixed groups, it is hard to achieve peer to peer confidence in the time available.

Five sections of the Children's Rights Scheme.

The Children's Rights Scheme

The Children's Rights Scheme has 5 sections:

1. Putting children's rights at the core of planning;
2. Ensuring that every child has an equal opportunity to be the best they can be;
3. Helping children to be their best and use their rights;
4. Listening to children and thinking about their views;
5. Children should be able to hold the Welsh Government to account for decisions and actions that affect their lives.

You can find more information about Children's rights in Wales by going to: <https://gov.wales/childrens-rights>

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Through the use of PowerPoint and discussions, we next worked through the five sections of the Children's Rights Scheme.

Each section was broken down and discussed in itself. Once we were satisfied with the

learning, we showed how these five parts, created and reflected the tasks required to assist Welsh Government to pay due regard to children's rights in all the work it plans and delivers.

Working through online video added extra challenges as there was a lot to take in through an inferior communications method. We were aware that this learning needed an iterative approach which was facilitated by the rest of the slides and even more so in the discussions associated with each of the six questions.

Explaining roles and training

It was essential to make concrete what the Welsh Government is, what it does, and what the roles of different cohorts are.

To help ensure the Welsh Government considers children's rights, we have the following key government roles:

- **Government Ministers.** Ministers sit in the Senedd and make decisions that affect all the people in Wales, including children.
- **Welsh Government officials.** Officials provide information and advice to Ministers.
- **Directors.** Directors provide ongoing advice and support to Ministers and Welsh Government officials.



To aid this, we highlighted the numbers of people in each of the three groups and their tasks. We moved onto discussions around how these people can be equipped to know how they can work towards achieving rights for children and young people. Training was the obvious answer as not all Ministers, officials and directors are already experts. In some groups we discussed what that training would look like and how it may need to be different for people carrying out different roles.

Evidenced based decision making

This section connected and built on previous discussions resulting in some good discourse.

Most participants readily understood the need for strong evidence when making decisions and reflected this in their contributions. Article 12 was again discussed and we explored how the views of young people should be part of the evidence-based building process and that this was a legal duty.

To help Ministers make good decisions that consider children's rights, Welsh Government staff will:

- Consider the UNCRC in their work including legislation and policies.
- Use the latest research evidence from Wales, UK and across the world to understand what helps improve children's rights.
- Seek out the opinions of experts.
- Listen to feedback from children and young people.
- Use the Children's Rights Impact Assessment.

Informing and involving children and young people.

The participants on many occasions highlighted how they would be able to find out whether Welsh Government was carrying out their UNCRC duties. This was discussed and solutions sought but not exhaustively as this topic was to be developed when answering the questions.

Discussions centred around the Welsh Government's decision to publish a report every 2.5 years setting out how they have supported children's rights.

To help children and adults show how the Welsh Government is considering children's rights when making decisions, Ministers will publish a report every 2.5 years setting out how they have supported children's rights.

In addition, we discussed Welsh Government's commitment to produce child friendly versions of their policies that will affect children and young people.

When policies affect children and young people, Welsh Government staff will be encouraged to produce child friendly versions.

Holding Welsh Government to account

Section five of the scheme, recognises that for this scheme to work, accountability to children and young people is key. Discussions started away from the scheme and centred around the general need to complain and how this can help service providers improve their work. With the principle established, we brought the discussion into relationship with the scheme. We explained that if participants, or any of their friends felt that Welsh Government Ministers have not considered children's rights when making decisions that affect their lives, individually or as part of a group, they could take at least three routes:

1. Direct contact with Welsh Government Minister or through their Welsh Parliament representative.



2. Contact the Children's Commissioner for Wales as they can assist you to challenge Ministers.



3. Get in touch with MEIC, the Advocacy and Advice helpline for children and young people in Wales, as they are available to advise and provide information to children and young people wishing to challenge Ministers.



A number of the adult organisers were surprised to discover that this support was within MEIC's remit.

We also discussed additional ways of getting support such as from trusted youth organisers like the people helping today. The youth support workers confirmed that they would be happy to assist with any complaints or put you in touch with those who can.

3. Gathering Opinions

When it came to the formal consultation questions, because of the way we structured the learning, children were not just responding with the first ideas that popped into their heads, but rather through a background of knowledge.

Each question was asked to the whole group (and projected via PowerPoint), discussion allowed any clarifications to be made and responses were noted. The sessions were also audio recorded to allow verbatim reporting of the comments.

Consultation Questions

The consultation questions went through many iterations when developing the Children's Scheme consultation document. Working with Welsh Government, we were clear that no question should be asked that the participants could not fully engage with. All questions had to be accessible for the wide range of children and young people we were consulting. As with all consultation with children and young people, the questions were never simply responded to in a linear manner because one thought leads to another which they wanted to express. This means that the answers to some of the questions listed later in this document, may have been in response to another so for the sake of clarity, we have re-ordered.

4. Feedback from consultations

All questions were asked to all groups but not all were answered equally. Most groups had more difficulty with engaging with questions one and two. This was not a surprise as these questions were outside their immediate knowledge or experience – young people are experts in their own lives.

Question three and five had a very large overlap and it was clear that most participants were more interested in two-way communication, dialog, rather than transferring information in one direction or another.

Question four was enjoyed by the participants as it allowed them to employ their already strong understanding regarding how to provide information to others.

Question six received little attention and appeared somewhat left field in comparison to the content that had gone before.

What follows are detailed accounts of each consultation session. However, to comply with GDPR, we have grouped them by question rather than event.

Question 1

The Children's Rights Scheme outlines the plans of Welsh Ministers to support Children's Rights. Do you have any views on the scheme?

It needs to be more descriptive:

'It needs to say how they will get into classrooms, get more involved, because I know our schools talks about getting us involved and stuff, but don't actually do anything.'

'It does not go far enough.'

'Nothing in here to directly helps us get our voice heard.'

'Ministers know nothing about our opinions.'

'Say someone's writing a script. Either they give it to the people who have to, they give it to the actors, because they want to get the actors opinion on it that script already been written, and if something is in their eyes, terrible. There's very little, they can do to change it. Because if you're not there in the beginning, learning what people need and want, then asking them later after you've done it means you'll be missing out on excellent opportunities for children to give input and possibly make stuff like this better now.'

Young disabled women's group

A young disabled women's group said they liked the scheme and understood their rights. They were able to recognise their rights to a good education, a healthy life and to be kept safe. They explained they would feel confident, to seek support, if their rights were not being listened to (which supported the scheme's 5 sections: helping children to be the best they can be and to use their rights). They said they were not aware of this scheme before the presentation but would like to find out more information that could support their views on young females with learning needs. They would like to see more specific information on how the scheme supports children and young people with disabilities and learning needs in Wales. The girls could also recognise that children and young people in Wales could be seen as more fortunate compared to other children and young people, in third world countries that don't always have the same rights.

When considering the scheme

'I feel like sometimes in the past organisations have done children's rights as tokenism. Yeah, sometime people talk to us, but we haven't really done anything meaningful in consultation with young people or children. Not

sure this will make a difference as I can see nothing to say how they will be involving us. Maybe just more tokenism'

Speaking in support of Welsh Governments compliance to Article 12:

'I was a member of the youth Parliament and I had really good meetings during the pandemic with the First Minister and other ministers, and I think it's good that the government has an open dialogue with young people.'

Roll out across the world:

'I was thinking of, like, putting this type of scheme across the world, because other countries may not have this type of scheme, and they might have a bigger population than our country and more people who are at risk. So, I think we need to make everybody as a world to back this scheme.'

When considering the Scheme

'I think for the core of this children's rights scheme is the right framework. But having rights does not mean you have equal opportunity. There are barriers that need to change and this scheme does not show you how to do this.'

Question 2

What else should go into the Scheme?

Time line

‘It needs a clear timeline so we can know when to expect change. Knowing when it's coming, what difference is it going to make and when's it going to happen’

Widening the schemes scope

‘Yeah, I think really there should be an emphasis on smaller organisations following children’s rights properly. Because you know it's all good that ministers have to do it, but when it comes to the actual services who work directly with young people, well it’s not ministers is it. All organisations who support young people should be made to do it properly.’

Embedding diversity into engagement:

‘They should have to listen to children like us who have disabilities, Yes, and people who have different background and the scheme should say that.’

‘I 100% agree, if you don’t talk to people from more niche of parts of societies and only look at one specific part of young people, then you're only gonna get one specific views of the few yeah. They must include wide variety of people.’

Knowledge of Children’s rights for those most in need:

‘Until today, I did not know anything about children’s rights, I did not know it was a thing and it seems like it’s a whole movement. How we can find out should be in the scheme.’

‘Young people living in difficult circumstances have the least rights. All those articles we looked at, loads of kids are not provided with what they should be, their rights are broken. And these kids may not know anything about their rights.’

Schools need to be obliged to teach children’s rights:

‘We can’t comment if we know little about our rights. It should be embedded in the curriculum from day one in school. Schools need to be told to do it.’

Engagement mechanisms

‘The scheme should state how they will engage with young people in detail. There are lots of already formalised networks, why not use them and say how.’

‘It’s good to have this really nice plan. But if young people don’t know about it, it’s kind of a bit pointless really.’

Schools and health services must enable children’s rights.

‘Schools don’t help people enough with their rights, you have a right not to be bullied but schools do nothing about it.’

‘Having a right to healthcare also means nothing if you can’t get it, like mental health, not much support, or support for people with learning needs.’

‘Schools should be made to have a children’s rights charter where they have to prove the work they are doing in school to get fully behind children’s rights by actual supporting people.’

‘Doctors don’t take teenagers seriously and don’t tend to stick to children’s rights, so maybe more education for health professionals but certainly doctors.’

Young disabled women’s group

Similar to other groups, they would like to see more specific information on how the scheme supports children and young people with disabilities and learning needs in Wales. The girls would like to know more about how their rights may change as they transition into adulthood with learning needs.

Voting support

In several groups’ participants expressed a wish for politics lessons signifying the need to vote in an informed way.

‘People are unaware of what they are voting for.’

‘Political education should be mandatory in schools. This should be a right – it’s needed.’

‘I think there should be more awareness about these things. I know about voting in elections and things like that, because I’m very involved in politics, but I knew a lot of other people, my friends, they don’t understand, they have no idea how to get involved and what information is available to them, and how it can affect them directly as a child.’

Being clear about age:

‘The scheme should be clearer about the ages it supports. Young people are supported in Wales up to the age of 24.’

Not enough detail:

'I would say there needs to be more detail, I know training would give more detail, but I would personally prefer more detail in this scheme, because often, especially if you're a young carer, you see the words they know the words, they understand the words but they can just nod along agree - and then it becomes a tick box. But if there's more detail and strict criteria for each point its harder to sit there nodding

Co-production is not mentioned

'Does Welsh Government understand co-production? If they do, they should use it with young people.'

Information about the Youth Parliament

'I did not know about the Youth Parliament until today.

Question 3

How can you be more involved in influencing the decisions of Welsh Government?

Key message:

‘Government should talk to us like you're their friend rather than being an adult that has power over us, talk to us like you're there to actually listen, not like you're there to just collect data, because I think people are going to be a lot more honest if they think you actually want to listen and you actually care about their opinions.’

‘I think we could be more involved if we had more knowledge about what's going on.’

‘Voices need to be heard and they need to have a way to know that how they're contributing is making the difference.’

‘When we get involved with say a consultation, what happened with it does not come back to us to say what decisions were made. It makes you think why bother.’

Meeting politicians directly

‘We had a good meeting with Eluned Morgan where she asked us what we thought of how they've dealt with mental health problems. We felt listened to. This was much better than a survey, you can get a conversation’

‘People are more affected when they hear it directly from young people rather than statistics.’

‘I think it made a difference hearing it from actual kids from that experience rather than just hearing it from someone who works with her.’

‘Maybe video conferencing with ministers in schools if that would work. Yeah, they could do say 15 or 20 minutes per school and get round a few. That would be a lot of schools in a month.’

‘Zoom, yeah, it offers ways forward because I think it's easier for people across Wales to contribute to these discussions online, because people live in different areas, rural areas and getting to meetings can be hard.,

‘The most important thing is face to face time, in real life or on video conference.’

‘Politicians and government workers should reach out to young people and small groups, it's up to them as they have the power.’

‘Meeting ministers needs to be made more accessible. Right now, it's all about knowing the right people at the right time in the right place and that's how you meet with ministers. It's important to emphasise that accessibility to minister should not be just for the same types of people who are already in organisations that get these opportunities.’

Diversity - when considering representation of those involved:

‘Through networks we can find talented young people. I'm not saying that the representatives need to be members of the group because we know quite often the best engaged are the white middle class. Unfortunately, it's just a fact. Peer to peer communication that engages with wider young people is needed or only the middle class will be involved’

‘We must make sure that young people who engage with Ministers are not just the middle-class academic kids. They must include economically disadvantaged young people.’

When considering engagement through schools:

‘Directly through schools is the best way forward.’

‘Contact should be organised by the school that way everyone's gonna hear about it.’

‘Welsh Government should come to the school and talk to us.’

‘I think people who know about right should come into schools and like talk to their classes about it, yeah, people like you.’

‘We could rely less on technology and more on like our teachers, and people that we communicate with daily, instead of just petitions.’

When considering the role of school councils:

‘If a school counsellor to be used fully they really need an overhaul. In high schools they are tokenistic. They are they're to say that the school has taken input from young people rather than to actually take on board what we're saying.’

‘What happens in in a school council tends to stay within a school council.’

‘We have a meeting about once a month, which isn't much.’

‘They could useful as long as like the children who were in the school council are willing to actually work. I'm in a school counsellor at my school and I knew there were quite a few people, just aren't really bothered about getting involved. They can be part of the solution, but they are also part of the problem.’

'To get school councils to be more than a useless popularity contest, they need to be open so that anybody who wishes to attend can attend. Just having representatives is too narrow and when I was on the School Council, only four of us would attend. Because it's a popularity contest, it largely includes people who really don't care that much.'

'If it was an open thing, people could go and have their say. Having it open to people means anyone can enter and sit in on these meetings and give their opinions, that would remove the popularity contest and instead have people who are highly engaged and interested, be able to speak in important terms like children's rights.'

'I think every school should have some kind of children's rights group attached to it, this could be through the school council, yeah that makes sense.'

'We should have a children's rights group within the school council'.

'Youth councils should have a direct line to Government.'

'Think the most effective way to get communication going would probably be through schools, like a day or something, like we did for the new curriculum, we all got sent a survey that I completed so I think that would be a really effective way.'

'Representatives is mainly those students who are highly engaged very smart quite academic and are usually going places. This excludes the people who need changes the most.'

'School counsellors, largely a popularity contest.'

When considering Welsh Government's consultations and engagement:

'I think any consultations the Welsh Government brings out needs to be in an accessible format for young people, because these consultations are usually like massive and detailed and young people don't have the time to fill out these consultations.'

'Documents from government need more creative designs for young people. I mean your layout could be a bit different so you know like you have mind maps, or blue boxes something like that because just like bullet point after bullet point, there's no way you can remember all that way, but if it was categories and mind mapped, it would be better.'

'I know where we live, we've got some rights ambassadors and then there's also student ambassadors in schools. That's not a thing everywhere in Wales, trying to get more people to join up maybe making that more of like an across Wales thing to provide more of a link for the

government to be able to talk to young people who are designated within their school to represent people's views.'

When considering getting involved through youth councils.

All groups which included some form of youth council thought engagement with government could and should take place through these forums.

Creating youth forums for young people who are learning disabled.

One group of young people felt that for their needs to be properly and not tokenistic address, there was a need for a 'forum' style group for young people with learning needs. This could help raise more awareness in government for issues that young disabled people face.

Learning from engagement methods used in different sectors:

'National Institute of Health and Care Excellence send out an application form to young people, exactly the same way they do for adults.'

'If we use forms, despite how much pressure is on the government to listen, there isn't going to be the voices of the minorities because, I know among people with similar issues to me, writing and spelling issues, the moment a form comes in we lose all interest. There has to be a less intrusive, less formal way of doing it that's still professional.'

Create training sessions to assist young people to advocate for themselves and others:

'We need peer to peer engagement sessions to help show young people how to engage with Government and NGOs.'

'I think it would be a case of learning how to ask the right question.'

Question 4

How can Welsh Ministers make sure everyone knows about and supports children's rights?

Key messages:

'Whatever is done, it must be kept up and not just dropped.'

'Ministers don't know what they are doing, they are the ones who need to be taught about children's rights.'

'We have not done a thing at school about children's rights. We need to know this'

When considering Educating young people to know their rights:

'It's, well and good, integrating rights into other subjects. It needs to be its own thing, there needs to be a subject that is taught, that is just children's rights. Integrating it into other stuff like English wouldn't get the point across in the same way.'

'At key stages 3 and 4, in English we have to write essays and things like that, I suppose, they could ask people to write essays on politics and research the UNCHC on that rather than Treasure Planet.'

'Have school books that are based on children's rights.'

'When we were in primary school, we did a lot on children's rights, we had a few weeks and we learned about children's rights. I'm not sure if the other primary school did. We should encourage the younger level to ease children in to learning about children's rights.'

'Rights should not be taught in Primary schools as they are too young. Maybe in years five and six.'

'Young people should perhaps have more education in schools in a secondary school environment, discuss politics and how it affects us.'

'A year ago, I had no idea about children's rights and the right to have your say, so how could I have rights if I did not know about them? We need really strong advertising saying you have these rights, maybe use posters, social media and adverts. Going back to the tick box thing, schools can show you a video or PowerPoint and think yeah, we've done it – tick boxing. It only works if it is done frequently and helps achieve real things.'

'I think there should be more workshops for young people, maybe in like schools or maybe like, like in forum type sessions. There should be like, workshops, just to explain it, what we need to know.'

‘We could have something like a YouTube news channel for young people. There needs to be news targeted to different ages, teenagers need different stuff to young kids.’

‘When children grow up and don't actually know about children's rights or human rights in general, it can be a problem. They need to know beforehand and when they younger.’

‘We need to have easily accessible information for people to use you know. I don't know how you do it, but just make sure that people think of it the same time as they're thinking about all the other things that are important.’

‘Rights should be in the Welsh curriculum.’

‘School should not just teach rights once - it needs to be drilled in.’

‘In a kind of viral way, use young people to inform young people.’

Educate young people in registration:

‘In registration in the morning, we have 10 minutes where we could be taught children's rights.’

‘I think it'll be good because you can also talk though it with your classmates.’

Educating parents regarding children's rights:

‘What to start with... because even though like it's important to teach young people their rights, those people who help put rights in place are our parents and caregivers.’

‘Working with us, there could be an information pack made to help educate adults. This could be updated every year.’

‘Because children don't always pass on stuff from schools to their parents, they need to be contacted directly with rights information.’

‘We could have like press conferences for parents where they could ask ministers about children's rights and what they are doing about it.’

Educating teachers

‘I think children's rights needs to be educated to teachers, they could be involved in like, teacher training days, insets days, and things like that that.’

Educate the Criminal Justice Services

‘What about Criminal Justice Services? They really need to know about rights.’

Educate through Social media:

There were discussions on Social Media in all of the workshops with all understanding its value as a means to help all people to get information and to learn about children's rights. They recognised that Facebook would be a good way to engage with parents, but it's not the best for children and young people who are increasingly abandoning the platform in favour on Instagram, TikTok, Twitter and Snapchat.

One young person summed it up when talking about Facebook:

'who wants to be on social media with you mum, nobody wants that!'

'You could advertise on TikTok and Instagram by making images and short videos.'

'Tik-Tok could work well, but it must not feel like they are learning something because nobody goes on TikTok to learn stuff, make it fun first with learning in the background.'

'The government could set up TikTok and Instagram account just about children's right where they could tell us about the ideas and find out what we think. The good thing with social media is that every single platform has an option to direct message someone so it's not like you have to complain in front of many people you can literally just send a message directly to them.'

Educate through advertising:

Welsh Government already uses this approach in a number of policy areas. When considering how to get knowledge of Children's Rights to all relevant people and organisations and not just schools:

'Advertising would work. There are loads of adds on at the moment like registering to vote so why not about children's rights?'

'I was thinking about, social media and technology, maybe, things like Spotify SoundCloud, Apple Music anything really, YouTube as well. Yeah, if there could be adverts because normally when watching a video or listen to music, such as Spotify, add come up on about different things, there could be a 30 second audio on Spotify or video on YouTube that just talks about, human rights and children's rights, everything that is involved with the government, just to educate, and help young people to get involved.'

'Advertise using billboards and posters at bus stops.'

'They could also advertise in local papers.'

‘Advertise it properly on the right channels, adjust to the changing generation.’

‘If you can't rely on the schools to teach us, and if there is funding to do so, could you do information adverts on social media or on TV, because obviously at the moment, everyone's online, so all the kids are available.’

‘Online adverts that teach would help young people all over Wales because as I said before, we can't rely on schools.’

‘Advertising people's children's rights, I think it should just be plastered everywhere, all over social media to a lot of people using Instagram, TikTok, and if things are showing up from there. If we can't get this information in schools, then I think advertising it the next best thing.’

‘Use child friendly posters. Not just where you think children go, but everywhere as we go everywhere.’

‘Teaching through social media and adverts should become the norm.’

Using sport to educate people about children's rights.

‘Coaches and clubs could help people understand about children's rights.’

Supporting learners in school:

‘Schools should have a named person who you can talk to confidentially if you don't understand or think your rights are being broken.’

A rights department in every local authority

‘Well, we could have in councils an office dedicated to just children's rights or other rights as well, that you can directly go to and knock on the door. They should have walk in appointment, and have a chat in person with somebody, maybe that could be something that could be, I don't now, good?’

Impact of Covid

‘Because of lockdown, most of us have become more interested in politics.’

Use the third sector:

‘Utilising those third sector networks, they are pre made and have goals supporting children's rights.’

Question 5

How would you like to provide feedback to Welsh Government?

Individual accessibility is key

The participants were clear that feedback methods should be in line with individual accessibility issues.

Live streamed direct feedback with Welsh Government:

‘Maybe having an online zoom session or something as simple as a Facebook Live Stream, where a minister would be on screen, I mean, people could comment, and they would answer in live time and then that could be put onto social media platforms.’

‘We should have live Q and As with government.’

‘Ministers could say choose so many schools a month, and like have direct connection with so many young people who could talk directly to them through video conferencing.’

‘In each form class, we could decide what we want to say to the minister. The form reps could get together and look at all forms together using mind mapping to decide what needs saying. The form reps could then be the confident people speaking in a good 20 minute session with the minister.’

‘I did a VC q&a with Kirsty Williams and Sally Holland the other day, I think everyone was really keen to talk to people, and to know young opinions are being listened to.’

‘I don’t think surveys will work, we need direct contact with the Government.’

‘We have over this last year, all seen people like Boris Johnson answering questions using video conferencing. Directly answering questions from other people on VC. This could work... direct connection is best.’

When considering direct feedback through school assemblies:

‘I know at least in high school, there’s one large assembly of the pupils. So maybe in that questions could be asked here.’

‘I mean with how we're doing video links these days that could work well in assemblies.’

‘You know every few weeks or something, maybe like half an hour in a morning assembly session, government minister or official could come and explain what they want to do. That could be the start of a communication, but not the end of it.’

‘That would be an incredible way to move forward, especially with people like me, who spelling and writing is a massive issue Yeah, so if someone

was to ask me questions, say they bring up the topic around school holidays and how they should be handled, if I was asked to write an essay on it, I wouldn't. But if I was sat down in a room with a bunch of my peers and people from Welsh Government, I could ask questions and give input, then that would be a superior way of doing it... I agree, yeah I agree'.

'I think it's a good thing to have video conferencing with minister and officials through assemblies, with a projector, on a big screen, everybody facing the screen, listening, and that way they could get direct answers from government officials, by asking questions, that way the whole school is attending the event that would hit a wider audience and probably get more out of it, more productive that way as opposed to a smaller sort of meetings.'

'I think it's a good thing to do it with a big audience but it's better to do it in a form class instead of an assembly because in assemblies' people can be disturbing, and it can be distracting, instead of in a form class where less people to make distractions and the teacher can see who it is.'

Feedback through surveys

'As much as I don't like them, surveys are useful tools.'

'we get them in registration where you are tired and only have 10 mins. We can't be bothered so don't try that hard.'

'The surveys could allow pictures or recordings to be uploaded so people don't have to write.'

'With surveys you can reach like a big like a wide range of people, but instead of just the government getting back the results, maybe having a group of young people who could talk back the results to other young people about the ideas and feedback, maybe it could make more of an impact and be more personal in depth.'

'When consulting, I think, a good thing maybe is doing it through surveys. Maybe surveys for young people on maybe what they want or what is their opinion on a new issue.'

'We could have monthly check-in type surveys to get young peoples latest views on things.'

'Maybe they could be like more surveys out to young people and children all across Wales to just get their opinions and hopefully government will take those opinions into account.'

'Surveys to say what we think needs to be done to meet the challenges and children's rights. Children may want government to be, let's say a little bit more focused on climate change or becoming maybe more a little bit more eco-friendly.'

‘We could create our own surveys to get our point across.’

Feedback through school reps.

‘I'd say an actual appointed pupil within a school who is there to gather political input from young people. This person could be part of the student council who could then get these opinions out to the right people.’

Feedback through existing Welsh Government staff:

‘Welsh Government do have youth workers that come into all schools across Wales, they could promote Welsh Government’s work and discover young people's opinions as well as.’

Use suggestion boxes:

So maybe just a sort of a suggestions box, but there's a question at that. And then you can put your answer in.

Use direct democracy

‘Direct democracy needs to be used.’

‘Some young people would like to give feedback directly through video.’

Complaint / petition website for young people.

‘I think there should be a direct line for complains.’

‘There should be a young people’s petition page.’

‘I think it might be a good idea if there is something that you don't agree with in the Welsh Parliament, that people could set up online petitions.’

Feedback box.

‘I would like a feedback box where you could directly give feedback to the Welsh Government’

Inform Welsh Government, directly, through videos or using letters and emails.

A number of participants felt that informing Welsh Government in writing or email was a good technique because people could be considered in their views and there was a paper trail.

Youth MS Surgeries.

A well-informed participant said:

‘Why don’t politicians do youth surgeries? They could even do these at schools.’

‘We should go directly to their office. They all have a local office.’

Question 6

How can we make sure that the Welsh and English languages are treated equally?

General comments:

'I think that the English should learn Welsh.'

'Everything should be bilingual.'

'There should also be closed captions as well.'

'Welsh should be taught better and include heritage.'

'Kind of just the normal standard of making sure that everything's available in both languages, easily, and held on the same level.'

'Think they are treated equally in school.'

'People don't like learning the language and don't understand why it's important, we should teach people why they should learn it and not just because they have to.'

'By my age, I should know more about Welsh culture, but I don't.'

'I think it's really good already.'

When considering language in the widest sense:

'The question is about English and Welsh but it's important to think about the other languages as well. A lot of other nationalities that live in Wales. That may be what struggle with English as well and we need to think about that BSL yes, as well as a language.'

A participant who attends a Welsh Medium school:

'I think it's treated equally, it's just that not many people in Cardiff speak it... I agree with that.'

A group of young learning-disabled people:

'More Welsh Schools and more options to learn Welsh after school. Being greeted in Welsh at youth club – Bora Da!!'

5. Conclusions

As in previous consultations on this issue, it was clear that participants were very keen to be involved in the scheme as they wanted to hold government to account and be agents of change. Throughout the workshops, they demonstrated a firm commitment to be active citizens and to improve young people's worlds.

Their view of their own importance rests on an understanding that they are experts in aspects of their lives, having knowledge and a perspective that no one in the Government could have.

While asserting their value in government decision-making, they were generally less sceptical of the scheme than in consultation carried out around a decade ago.

However, they did see young people's voice within government as generally weak in nature and lacking in diversity in all its forms.

UNCRC

There was very little detailed knowledge of the UNCRC with most saying that they had no knowledge of it before the event. This level of knowledge appeared significantly less than on previous consultations. The vast majority of participants want the UNCRC to be an official part of the school curriculum as they believed that was the only way schools would take it seriously.

Question four asked how people in our society could be more informed about children's rights. This question generated much discussion. Most participants felt ill equipped and wanted direct education on this subject. How this education could take place generated many solutions, including direct education, through social media and through advertising. They on numerous occasions expressed how could they be part of ensuring children's rights, when they did not understand them themselves?

Advertising and social media was seen as key to educating adults with the participants identifying many cohorts and many methods. Their knowledge here was extensive with much learned in lockdown where social media became front and centre in the lives of many young people.

The scheme

In previous consultation events the concept of "Due Regard" was seen as a problem as participants perceived it as giving the Government "wriggle room", to avoid doing the difficult and expensive things. This cynicism was not voiced in these events.

The five sections of the scheme were generally well understood with many participants being able to see how they linked together to form a whole.

As with previous events, participants expressed concern regarding what they perceived as the weakness of children and young people's voices within the scheme.

Many thought that the scheme was too general, not enough detail about how it would work in practice, leading to voice the term tokenism, however, this did not develop into a major theme.

Many participants felt that the scheme needed to be more directive, more challenging of practice in areas such as education, health and other services that have an impact on children and their rights. They wanted the scheme to set out in bold terms - identifying what needed to change and how that change could take pace. This widening of the scope was seen as key by some participants, as they saw that all services around children and young people can either facilitate rights, or be a barrier to them.

Communication

When examining communication, young participants normally displayed a technical knowledge and sophistication beyond most adults, and this consultation proved no exception.

While the participants identified many ways to feedback to government, this one-way direction was seen as limiting and not preferred. It was clear that most participants were more interested in two-way communication, dialog, rather than transferring information in one direction or another. They wanted this dialog to be face-to-face, whether in person, but more likely through video conferencing.

Exactly how video conferencing could take place was extensively discussed with the preferred methods being school based. School based suggestions included via school assemblies, school councils, and identified representatives. However, there was a level of cynicism regarding school councils that we have not experienced before.

Other feedback methods included surveys, feedback boxes, the use of direct democracy, dedicated Welsh Government web pages, MS Youth Surgeries and dedicated complaint mechanisms.

Diversity

Unlike on our previous consultations, the diversity of those young people communicating with government and services was seen as key. On numerous occasions, the participants voiced concerns that those young people involved in organisations such as forums and the Youth Parliament, all came from a similar background, i.e. – white, academic, non-disabled and the economically advantaged middle classes. They wanted this changed.