

# The Human Rights of Children in Wales: An Evidence Review

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## Executive Summary

This section summarises the key findings in the report in relation to different aspects of children's lives.

### Differential outcomes (non-discrimination)

The report finds numerous examples of differential outcomes for children in areas such as health and wellbeing and educational attainment, particularly for those from a lower socio-economic background. Children from areas of higher socio-economic deprivation have higher rates of infant mortality, air pollution in their local areas, exclusion from school, tooth decay and obesity. They also have lower levels of educational attainment at each Key Stage, as do looked-after children and children from Gypsy and Gypsy Roma backgrounds.

More data are needed in some areas to assess whether further inequalities exist. In particular, there are gaps on data relating to asylum-seeking and refugee children, and disabled children and children from ethnic minorities living in poverty. There is also an absence of disaggregated data in respect of instances of bullying in schools.

### Direct discrimination and bullying

Both children and professionals report high levels of racist, sexist, homophobic and transphobic language and bullying in schools. However, there are no official monitoring data on this issue. There is also a major evidence gap in respect of disabled children's experiences of bullying.

### Participation

Survey findings suggest that many children do not believe that their views are listened to or make a difference to policy in Wales at a national, school or community level. There is some evidence that the Welsh Assembly is involving young people in decisions regarding their participation in democratic structures, through consultations on the voting age and Youth Parliament. However, a major concern identified by children and young people regarding democratic participation is the result of the Brexit referendum. Qualitative research suggests there is a palpable sense of frustration amongst young people aged between 16-17 who were unable to vote in the EU referendum and feel they have been denied the opportunity to participate in a decision that will affect their futures.

### Health and Wellbeing

There has been an improvement across a number of health indicators in Wales over the last decade, although those from the highest areas of socio-economic deprivation continue to have the worst outcomes. While rates of infant and child mortality have declined in recent years, infant mortality remains high in areas of socio-economic deprivation, and for babies from ethnic minority backgrounds. There is a lack of disaggregated data on child mortality.

Survey data suggest that unhealthy behaviours amongst teenagers have reduced, with rates of smoking, drinking and teenage conceptions declining substantially over the last two decades. However, those from the most deprived regions of Wales were least likely to report eating fruit and vegetables. They were also more likely to be overweight



or obese. Rates of smoking and alcohol consumption were comparable in England and Wales. The proportion of year 11 pupils who reported having had sex is higher in Wales than in England. Levels of fruit and vegetable consumption were lower in Wales than in England. Girls in Wales were less likely to be physically active than girls in England, but physical activity amongst boys was comparable in the two countries.

Data on the mental health of children and young people are collected infrequently, although estimates of the prevalence of mental ill-health amongst children in Wales based on survey data is 11.6 per cent. There is some evidence that children's use of social media is impacting on their sleep, concentration at school and general levels of wellbeing. Figures on the number of school-based counselling sessions undertaken in Wales show there is a high uptake, with 11,558 secondary school students receiving counselling through their schools in 2016/17.

### Poverty and homelessness

Official figures show that 28 per cent of children in Wales live in relative income poverty. While this is a slight drop from previous years, the proportion of children living in relative income poverty in Wales is forecast to increase by around 8 per cent by 2022. Relative income poverty for families where at least one child is disabled is projected to increase to around 18.5 per cent by 2021.

The proportion of homeless households including children has dropped between 2005/6 and 2014/15. However, there remain a considerable number in Wales and in 2017/18 there were 882 such households.

### Education

There are key attainment gaps across the Key Stages for children receiving care and support, children in areas of socio-economic deprivation and children from a Gypsy or Gypsy Roma background. Surveys have found that despite girls having higher levels of attainment than boys, they are less happy at school.

The data suggest that a number of groups face barriers to learning and participating in school life, including looked-after children, who report numerous school and placement changes and children from Gypsy, Gypsy Roma and Traveller backgrounds, who sometimes feel that the values of statutory education conflict with those in their community. Disabled children have also noted that their educational experiences can be restricted by accessibility issues.

Pupils entitled to Free School Meals (FSM) are five times more likely to be excluded from school. Survey data suggest that opportunities to participate in their educational choices and in school life more generally are limited.

### Play, arts and leisure activities

There are differences in participation in play and leisure activities by a number of characteristics. Survey results show that boys tend to be physically active while girls participate more in arts and cultural activities. Those who were eligible for FSM were less likely to play instruments, take part in non-competitive sport and exercise outside of school, and attend arts events. Disabled children reported that accessibility was a barrier to play and leisure activities.



Over 44 per cent of the children surveyed at age 14 reported watching TV or videos on the computer for over three hours per weekday. Just under one in ten reported doing so for over seven hours. The majority of the participants also reported using the internet at home for over three hours a day, with just over one in five using it for over seven hours.

### Family environment and alternative care

In March 2017 15,930 children were in receipt of care and support, 2,135 children of which were on the Child Protection Register and 5,780 were looked-after. There are a number of negative health and wellbeing outcomes associated with children who are looked-after, including low life satisfaction and poorer relationships with teachers and friends. Part of this is related to the frequency of changing placements. Ten per cent of looked-after children had three or more placements in 2016/17.

Wales has much higher rates of looked-after children per 10,000 children than England. Wales is currently the only UK nation that does not publish data on the proportion of children on child protection registers or plans for over two years. The likelihood of being a 'looked-after child' between the most and least deprived communities is greatest in Wales than the rest of the UK.

### Violence, abuse and neglect

There have been large increases in recorded cases of abuse and neglect over the last decade, but this is believed to be caused by better reporting and policing procedures and public awareness. In terms of fatal crimes against children, the five-year average child homicide rate for the period ending 2016/17 has risen slightly to 4.8 per million children. There were 2,845 recorded sexual offences against children under 16 years old in 2016/17. This is a rate of 51.1 sexual offences per 10,000 children aged under 16, which is the highest rate across all four UK nations this year.<sup>1</sup> There were 426 recorded cruelty and neglect offences in Wales in 2016/17 - a rate of 7.6 offences per 10,000 children aged under 16.

### Asylum-seeking and refugee children

Estimates suggest there are around 27 unaccompanied, asylum-seeking children in Wales. There is a major gap in data on asylum-seeking and refugee children in Wales.

### Children in the youth justice system

There has been a major reduction in the number of children serving custodial sentences in Wales over the last decade. However, concerns have been raised due to a lack of facilities in Wales for young offenders: 45 per cent of Welsh children in custody are currently incarcerated in institutions in England, with some reporting increased loneliness and isolation as a result. In addition, inspection reports raise serious concerns about the safety and wellbeing of children held in custodial institutions. While a disproportionate number of child prisoners sentenced in England are black, Asian, and minority ethnic (BAME), in Wales, the proportion of BAME child prisoners is only slightly higher than the proportion in the general population.



## Data availability and quality

The Welsh Government has made important commitments to monitor the progress it has made on its obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. It has established the Children and Young People's Wellbeing Monitor for Wales and publishes this tri-annually.<sup>2</sup> It has also included indicators relating to children's lives in its National Indicators to assess its progress on goals set under the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.<sup>3</sup> However, key evidence gaps remain in some areas, particularly for those areas that are not devolved such as youth justice and immigration. Most notably, there is a lack of Wales-only data on:

- child mortality by socio-economic deprivation and ethnicity<sup>4</sup>
- the lives of children with disabilities, the exception to which is statistics related to education and attainment
- instances of bullying in schools, disaggregated by gender, gender identity, ethnicity, socio-economic background and sexual orientation.
- the prevalence of mental illness amongst children and young people
- the wellbeing of children in custodial institutions
- the proportion of children receiving care and support who are on child protection registers or plans for over two years
- the prevalence of abuse and neglect of children and young people
- asylum-seeking and refugee children in Wales, to include disaggregated outcome data and reliable statistics on the numbers of accompanied and non-accompanied children.

## Methodological strengths and weaknesses

National statistics generally meet high standards for reliability and validity in Wales. Many of the health statistics are produced by governmental organisations such as Public Health Wales and are based on rigorous research involving assessment by health professionals, such as:

- The Child Measurement Programme for Wales
- Children's Dental Health Survey
- The National Diet and Nutrition Survey Rolling Programme (includes blood analysis of nutrients).

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<sup>2</sup> Welsh Government. 2015. *Children and Young People's Wellbeing Measure*. Available at: <https://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/children-young-peoples-wellbeing-monitor-wales/?lang=en>

<sup>3</sup> Welsh Government. 2017. *Health and Well-being National Indicators for Children*. Available at : <https://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/health-well-being-measures-children/?lang=en>

<sup>4</sup> Disaggregated infant mortality data are available, but no such data exists for older children.



One topic for which national statistics are currently problematic in Wales is homelessness, as local councils currently return aggregate level data to the Welsh Government, which could mean that some individuals are counted across two counties. However, the Welsh Government has funded ADRC-W and WISERD to conduct a feasibility study to explore introducing individual level data collection, reporting and analysis.

There is also a recognition in the Welsh Government that not all of the National Wellbeing Indicators cover children aged 16 and under as they are based on the National Survey of Wales, which only surveys over 16s.<sup>5</sup> While some of the data have been supplemented by other sources, such as the Health Behaviours of School-Aged Children survey, more work is being done at the moment to develop new methods of collecting data relevant to the indicators from children in Wales and to collaborate further with other organisations that are already collecting relevant data.

Several organisations collect self-report data from children and young people on a regular basis, with varying sample sizes. These are provided below:

Study	Key Measures	Sample and age	Frequency
Arts Council of Wales Children's Omnibus Survey <sup>6</sup>	Access to arts	c. 500 children and young people aged 7-18	Annual since 2011.
Health behaviour in school-aged children: World Health Organization collaborative cross-national survey <sup>7</sup>	Self-reported health Health conditions Health behaviours Oral health Life satisfaction Attitudes towards school Experience of bullying Relationships	9,055 children and young people aged 11-16	Most recent was 2014. Every four years since 2010.

<sup>5</sup> Welsh Government. 2017. *Well-being of Wales 2016-17*. Available at: <https://gov.wales/docs/statistics/2017/170925-well-being-wales-2016-17-en.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Arts Council of Wales. 2017. *Children's Omnibus Survey*. Available at: <http://www.arts.wales/research/annual-surveys/childrens-omnibus-survey>

<sup>7</sup> Welsh Government. 2015. *2013/14 Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) Wales: key findings*. Available at: <https://gov.wales/docs/caecd/research/2015/151022-health-behaviour-school-children-2013-14-key-findings-en.pdf>





Millennium Cohort Study <sup>8</sup>	Experiences of school Feeling safe at school Behaviour	2,761 longitudinal . Last assessed age 14.	Study started in 2000 — first child self- completed questionnaire 2012, then 2015. Next planned for 2018 (age 17).
School Sport Survey 2015 <sup>9</sup>	Participation in sport Attitudes towards exercise	110,000 children and young people aged 7-16	Every 2-3 years since 2013 (next in 2018).
WISERDEducation Multi-Cohort Study <sup>10</sup>	Relationships with teachers School councils Behaviour Experiences of school Bullying Sleep Happiness and self- perception Discrimination at school and in community Access to academic support and resources outside school	c. 1,000 Longitudinal	Annual since 2012.

<sup>8</sup> Centre for Longitudinal Studies. 2018. *Millennium Cohort Study*. Available at: <https://www.cls.ioe.ac.uk/page.aspx?sitesectionid=851>

<sup>9</sup> Sport Wales. 2015. *School Sport Survey 2015: State of the nation*. Available at: <http://sport.wales/research--policy/surveys-and-statistics/school-sport-survey/school-sport-survey-2015-results.aspx>

<sup>10</sup> WISERDEducation. 2018. *WISERDEducation Multi-Cohort Study*. Available at: <https://wiserd.ac.uk/research/research-projects/wiserdeducation-multi-cohort-study-0>



	Aspirations and future plans		
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Two of these studies are longitudinal. Longitudinal data are particularly valuable as they allow us to establish whether there are changes in individuals' views and experiences over time. The main sources of longitudinal data on children in Wales are the Millennium Cohort Study (MCMS) and the WISERDEducation Multi-Cohort Study. The MCMS is a birth cohort study, which collects a range of health and cognitive assessment data, as well as conducting surveys and interviews with participants and their families.<sup>11</sup> The WISERDEducation multi-cohort study focuses on educational issues and has followed five cohorts of children from primary to secondary school, administering self-completion surveys on an annual basis.

The scope of this evidence review is from 2015 onwards which reflects the term of the current Children's Commissioner for Wales.

### *Local level data*

It should be acknowledged that on a local level many organisations in Wales including Local Authorities, Local Health Boards, schools and voluntary organisations are making strides to seek the views of children and young people in respect of different aspects of their lives. There are also indications that where undertaken effectively, these have been used to help inform local decision-making. *Lleisiau Bach - Little Voices*<sup>12</sup> continues to train children as peer researchers and carry out innovative local research projects, often leading to change. They also submitted a research report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child to inform the scrutiny of the UK Government in 2016.

It is important that self-reported data are collected from children, but that there can be limitations to these data, particularly when they rely on participants' memories of their behaviours and past experiences. However, there are strengths to this form of data collection, as children may be more likely to share their real-life experiences, particularly in respect of risky behaviours (as asked by the HBSC survey, for example) in an anonymous self-completion survey than in an interview with a researcher. Moreover, often their experiences of issues such as poor mental health cannot be captured by national administrative data, as these only show how many have sought treatment.

<sup>11</sup> Millennium Cohort Study. 2015. *Age 14 Survey of MCS*. Available at: [http://www.cls.ioe.ac.uk/page.aspx?&sitesectionid=1109&sitesectiontitle=The+age+14+survey+of+MCS+\(2015\)](http://www.cls.ioe.ac.uk/page.aspx?&sitesectionid=1109&sitesectiontitle=The+age+14+survey+of+MCS+(2015))

<sup>12</sup> *Lleisiau Bach - Little Voices*. 2018. Available at: <https://www.lleisiaubach.org/home>



## 1. Introduction

This report presents the results of an evidence review on the human rights of children in Wales and covers the period 2015 to the present day. The legal structures and processes in place to realise children's rights in Wales are well known: for example, the Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011, which requires that Ministers give due regard to the UNCRC in all decisions that may affect children. However, the effectiveness of these measures is less well-understood. This report not only seeks to determine the current picture in terms of the realisation of children's rights in Wales, but also seeks to establish what data are currently being collected in Wales to enable the monitoring of children's rights. Effectively monitoring a country's progress towards implementing human rights conventions requires the collection of a range of high-quality qualitative and quantitative data.<sup>13</sup> Thus, identifying gaps in evidence is as important as establishing what data are currently available. It is also important to ascertain whether the data are collected by the government, via government-funded institutions, or whether they are collated on an ad hoc basis by other organisations. It is the government's obligation to fulfil children's rights, and it must ensure that its policy-making is informed by reliable and valid sources of information on children's views and experiences. Furthermore, as emphasised by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, children themselves can indicate whether their rights are being fulfilled, and so it is important that self-reported data, and research projects which involve children as researchers, are also included.<sup>14</sup>

The UK submitted its State Report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2015. NGOs such as the Wales UNCRC Monitoring Group also submitted alternative reports to the Committee in that year. Thus, this report will include evidence published from 2015 onwards. Due to the time lag between data collection and publication, some of these documents include data published prior to 2015, but these are still considered relevant as they will not have been available during the last CRC reporting round. The review only includes data which conform to high ethical and scientific standards, ensuring that we can use them to make valid and reliable inferences about children's rights in Wales.

The Concluding Observations to the UK's State Report made a number of recommendations to the UK for further data collection and monitoring, such as the need to systematically collect and publish data on the sexual exploitation and abuse of children, and mental health of children. The report considers the extent to which Wales has fulfilled its duty in these areas.

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<sup>13</sup> Committee on the Rights of the Child. 2003. *Thirty-fourth session 19 September - 3 October 2003 General Comment No. 5 (2003) General measures of implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (arts. 4, 42 and 44, para. 6)* Available at: [http://docstore.ohchr.org/SelfServices/FilesHandler.ashx?enc=6QkG1d\\_per cent2FPPrICAqhKb7yhsiQql8gX5Zxh0cQqSRzx6Zd2\\_per cent2FQRsDnCTcaruSeZhPr2vUevjbn6t6GSI1fheVp\\_per cent2Bj5HTLU2Ub\\_per cent2FPZZtQWn0jExFVnWuhiBbqgAj0dWBoFGbK0c](http://docstore.ohchr.org/SelfServices/FilesHandler.ashx?enc=6QkG1d_per cent2FPPrICAqhKb7yhsiQql8gX5Zxh0cQqSRzx6Zd2_per cent2FQRsDnCTcaruSeZhPr2vUevjbn6t6GSI1fheVp_per cent2Bj5HTLU2Ub_per cent2FPZZtQWn0jExFVnWuhiBbqgAj0dWBoFGbK0c)

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.



## Structure of the report

This report focuses on the evidence for children's rights according to:

1. The General Principles
2. Disability, basic health and welfare
3. Education, leisure and cultural activities
4. Violence against children
5. Family environment and alternative care
6. Special protection measures

### 1. General Principles

This section will consider the evidence available on the realisation of children's rights in relation to two of the General Principles:

- Article 2: Non-discrimination
- Article 12: Participation

However, the discussion of these rights will not be restricted to this section, since the general principles are cross-cutting rights, and they must be applied to all rights to ensure their full realisation. These rights, and the remaining two General Principles, best interests (Article 3) and life survival and development (Article 6), will be used throughout the report to assess the extent to which the government is fulfilling the rights in the Convention in ways that:

- make them available to all children without discrimination (Article 2)
- are based on the best interests of the child (Article 3)
- allow children opportunities to participate in decision-making (Article 12)
- support children's right to life, survival and development (Article 6)

### 1.7 Non-discrimination

#### Key findings

- The report as a whole finds numerous examples of differential outcomes for children in areas such as health and wellbeing and educational attainment, particularly for those from a lower socio-economic background.
- Children and professionals report high levels of racist, sexist, homophobic and transphobic language and bullying in schools.



As emphasised by the Wales UNCRC Monitoring Group in their 2015 Alternative Report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 3 years on there is still a lack of official data in Wales on non-discrimination, and a lack of disaggregated data in general that makes it difficult to identify discrimination against particular groups of children. This section will discuss general trends in differential outcomes. It will then consider research data relating to the direct discrimination and bullying of children from protected characteristics groups in Wales.

#### 1.1.1 Differential outcomes

As will be discussed later in this report in the relevant sections<sup>15</sup>, data on educational attainment and health and wellbeing show differential outcomes for some groups of children and young people. In particular, children residing in areas of higher socio-economic deprivation have higher levels of:

- Infant mortality
- Air pollution in their local areas
- Exclusion from school
- Tooth decay
- Obesity

They also have lower levels of:

- Arts attendance
- Educational attainment
- Participation in some extra-curricular activities
- Levels of sport participation
- Levels of vegetable consumption

Children who are looked-after, and who are from Gypsy or Roma Gypsy backgrounds also have lower levels of educational attainment than their peers. Children who are looked-after also have lower scores for wellbeing than their peers across a number of different indicators,<sup>16</sup> including:

- Low life satisfaction
- Experiencing dating violence

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<sup>15</sup> See Section 2 for further information on health inequalities, Section 3 on educational inequalities and Section 3 on differential participation in education leisure and cultural activities.

<sup>16</sup> See Section 4 for more information.



- Low-quality relationships with teachers and friends
- Being bullied
- Smoking weekly

### 1.1.2 Bullying and discrimination against religious and ethnic groups

A key source for this area is the research of Show Racism the Red Card, which conducted focus groups with 52 KS2 pupils and surveyed 535 KS2-3 students in 2016. In addition, they surveyed 125 trainee teachers and 435 teachers.<sup>17</sup> The research found that the majority upper KS2 pupils in the qualitative study, which was conducted in schools in Cardiff and Newport, believed that racism was present in their school, and around two in five of these pupils reported being victims of racism themselves. The most prevalent forms of racism were against pupils from Muslim backgrounds, and those from Eastern Europe or the Middle East. Research from WISERDEducation conducted in 2017 also indicates that the use of racist language is common in schools in Wales. This research showed that children in the study were more likely to hear racist language at school (55 per cent) than in their local area (43 per cent).<sup>18</sup>

### 1.1.3 Gender based bullying and discrimination

There are few sources of data on gender-based bullying and discrimination in Wales. One exception is a small survey conducted in 2016 by Full Circle, a social enterprise focused on the wellbeing of children and young people in Wales. Their research found that 58.6 per cent of the 614 girls aged 11-21 surveyed do not believe that girls and young women have the same rights and opportunities as boys and young men in Wales. Furthermore, 51.7 per cent of girls indicated that there is not enough support for girls and young women in Wales to cope with the issues they face. Of the respondents, 65 per cent of girls responded to say that they had experience of sexual harassment and 70 per cent had experienced sexism.<sup>19</sup>

WISERDEducation research also suggests that sexist language is common in schools and communities in Wales. In 2017, 60 per cent of students in the WISERDEducation annual survey reported hearing sexist language at school, with 43 per cent indicating that they heard it in their local area.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Show Racism the Red Card. 2016. *Racism and anti-racism in the Welsh education system*. Available at: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/574451fe37013bd0515647ac/t/5a537d66419202e324613f6f/1515421045424/Show+Racism+the+Red+Card+Report+September+2016+.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> WISERDEducation. 2018. *WISERDEducation Multi-Cohort Study*. Available at: <https://wiserd.ac.uk/research/research-projects/wiserdeducation-multi-cohort-study-0>

<sup>19</sup> Full Circle Wales. 2016. *Fundamental Rights. From feminism to fashion, sex to stereotypes. The voices of girls in Wales*. Available at: <http://fullcircleeeducation.dropmark.com/150934/8572989>

<sup>20</sup> WISERDEducation. 2017



### 1.1.3 Homophobic and transphobic bullying and discrimination

Research from Stonewall suggests that homophobic and transphobic bullying remains common in schools in Wales. Data from 267 Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) young people, aged between 11 and 19, also supported these findings, with 54 per cent of respondents reporting bullying for being LGBT<sup>21</sup>, compared to 45 per cent in Britain overall.<sup>22</sup> This was even higher in relation to transgender pupils, of whom 73 per cent indicated that they had been bullied as a result of their gender identity<sup>23</sup>, compared to 64 per cent in Britain as a whole.<sup>24</sup> The response of schools to this bullying was considered inadequate by respondents, with only a quarter of those reporting being bullied for being LGBT stating that their teachers intervene when they witness this bullying.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, students indicated that the curriculum did not cover LGBT issues, with only one in six noting that they had been taught about safe sex for those in same-sex relationships in school.

### 1.1.5 Disability based bullying and discrimination

There is a dearth of recent data on the rates of disabled children and young people in Wales who have been victims of bullying. However, recent research by the Children's Commissioner for Wales on children's perceptions of bullying included young disabled people.<sup>26</sup> The research found that children believe that forms of 'difference', including disability, can lead to bullying. This suggests that disabled children may be particularly at risk of being bullied, but further research around this area would be needed.

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<sup>21</sup> Stonewall Cymru. 2017. *School Report Cymru. The experiences of lesbian, gay, bi and trans young people in Wales' schools in 2017*. Available at: [https://www.stonewallcymru.org.uk/sites/default/files/stonewall\\_cymru\\_school\\_report\\_2017.pdf](https://www.stonewallcymru.org.uk/sites/default/files/stonewall_cymru_school_report_2017.pdf) It is important to note that the sample in Wales was relatively low for the survey and is not representative of the population of school students. In Wales, only 267 students took part, out of 3,700 across Britain.

<sup>22</sup> Stonewall. 2017. *School Report. The experiences of lesbian, gay, bi and trans young people in Britain's schools in 2017*. Available at: [https://www.stonewall.org.uk/sites/default/files/the\\_school\\_report\\_2017.pdf](https://www.stonewall.org.uk/sites/default/files/the_school_report_2017.pdf)

<sup>23</sup> Stonewall Cymru. 2017. *School Report Cymru. The experiences of lesbian, gay, bi and trans young people in Wales' schools in 2017*. Available at: [https://www.stonewallcymru.org.uk/sites/default/files/stonewall\\_cymru\\_school\\_report\\_2017.pdf](https://www.stonewallcymru.org.uk/sites/default/files/stonewall_cymru_school_report_2017.pdf)

<sup>24</sup> Stonewall. 2017. *School Report. The experiences of lesbian, gay, bi and trans young people in Britain's schools in 2017*. Available at: [https://www.stonewall.org.uk/sites/default/files/the\\_school\\_report\\_2017.pdf](https://www.stonewall.org.uk/sites/default/files/the_school_report_2017.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> Stonewall Cymru. 2017. *School Report Cymru. The experiences of lesbian, gay, bi and trans young people in Wales' schools in 2017*. Available at: [https://www.stonewallcymru.org.uk/sites/default/files/stonewall\\_cymru\\_school\\_report\\_2017.pdf](https://www.stonewallcymru.org.uk/sites/default/files/stonewall_cymru_school_report_2017.pdf)

<sup>26</sup> Children's Commissioner for Wales. 2017. *Sam's Story: Listening to children and young people's experiences of bullying in Wales*. Available at: <https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Sams-Story.pdf>



## 1.2 Participation and Respect for the Views of the Child

### Key findings

- Survey findings suggest that many children do not believe that their views are listened to and make a difference to policies in Wales.
- The Welsh Assembly has undertaken major consultations with young people around lowering the voting age and establishing a Youth Parliament and their views appear to have had an impact on subsequent policies.
- In two studies, children have indicated that they are concerned about the impact of Brexit upon their futures, and believe that young people should have been involved in this decision.

Participation is a key right for children and young people, and children should be supported and empowered to participate in decisions in all areas of their lives. This section will consider the data on children's participation at a national and community level. School-level participation, including school councils and choices in teaching and learning will be discussed in Section 3: Education, Leisure and Cultural Activities.

#### 1.2.1 National level

There are three key sources of data on the participation of children on a national level in Wales:

- self-reported data on children's perspectives of the adequacy of participation opportunities in Wales
- evidence from national consultations on the democratic participation of children and young people conducted by the National Assembly for Wales
- Academic research on children's views on the decision to exit the European Union

The main source of self-reported data in respect of participation is the 2015 Beth Nesa survey conducted by the Children's Commissioner for Wales. Almost 6,000 children and young people aged 3 to 18+ (including Care Leavers up to the age of 25) were asked a number of questions about the extent to which adults listen to, respect and act upon children's views.<sup>27</sup> The survey found that:

- 31 per cent of young people aged 11-18+ agreed or strongly agreed that young people's views make a difference to what happens in Wales

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<sup>27</sup> Children's Commissioner for Wales. 2016. *Beth Nesa? What Next? The findings*. Available at: <https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Overview-English-FINAL.compressed.pdf>





- 45 per cent agreed or strongly agreed that adults in general respect children's rights
- 31 per cent agreed or strongly agreed that adults listen to young people's views

### *National Assembly consultations*

Two key consultations have been undertaken by the National Assembly for Wales on young people's democratic participation. These include the consultation on votes for 16 in 2016, which asked 10,000 students whether they approved of lowering the current voting age, following a recommendation by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child that children should be consulted on the voting age.<sup>28</sup> The results show that 53 per cent of those surveyed agreed that the voting age should be lowered to 16, and the Assembly has since introduced votes at 16 for local council elections.<sup>29</sup> Similarly, the Youth Parliament for Wales Survey consulted with over 5,000 young people on several aspects of the institution.<sup>30</sup> Many of these suggestions have been incorporated into the plans for the Parliament, such as the age of members (11-18) and how regularly they should be elected (every two years). The first parliament will be elected in November 2018.

### *The decision to leave the EU*

The Welsh Government has announced that it will launch a consultation with children and young people to ensure that they 'have a say' in the Brexit process<sup>31</sup>. However, the extent of children's influence is unclear at this point.<sup>32</sup>

Two projects from WISERD have shown that children have major concerns about the decision to leave the European Union. A project led by WISERD researchers at Aberystwyth University involved interviews with 35 young people around Brexit.<sup>33</sup> It found that half of these young people had no interest in the topic, but amongst the others, there was a keen sense of frustration that they had not been given the opportunity to vote. This was an opinion held mostly by those who indicated that they would have voted to remain in the EU, although some of those who would have voted leave also believed that they should have an opportunity to have their views taken into account.

<sup>28</sup> Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. 2012. *Human Rights Indicators. A guide to measurement and implementation*. Available at: [http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/Human\\_rights\\_indicators\\_en.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/Human_rights_indicators_en.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> National Assembly for Wales. 2015. *Should the voting age be lowered to 16? Summary of responses to the Presiding Officer's 'Vote@16?' consultation for 11-25 year olds in Wales*. Available at: <http://www.yourassembly.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Vote%4016-REPORT-E-small.pdf>

<sup>30</sup> National Assembly for Wales. 2018. *Youth Parliament for Wales Update*. Available at: <http://www.yourassembly.org/youth-parliament-wales-update/>

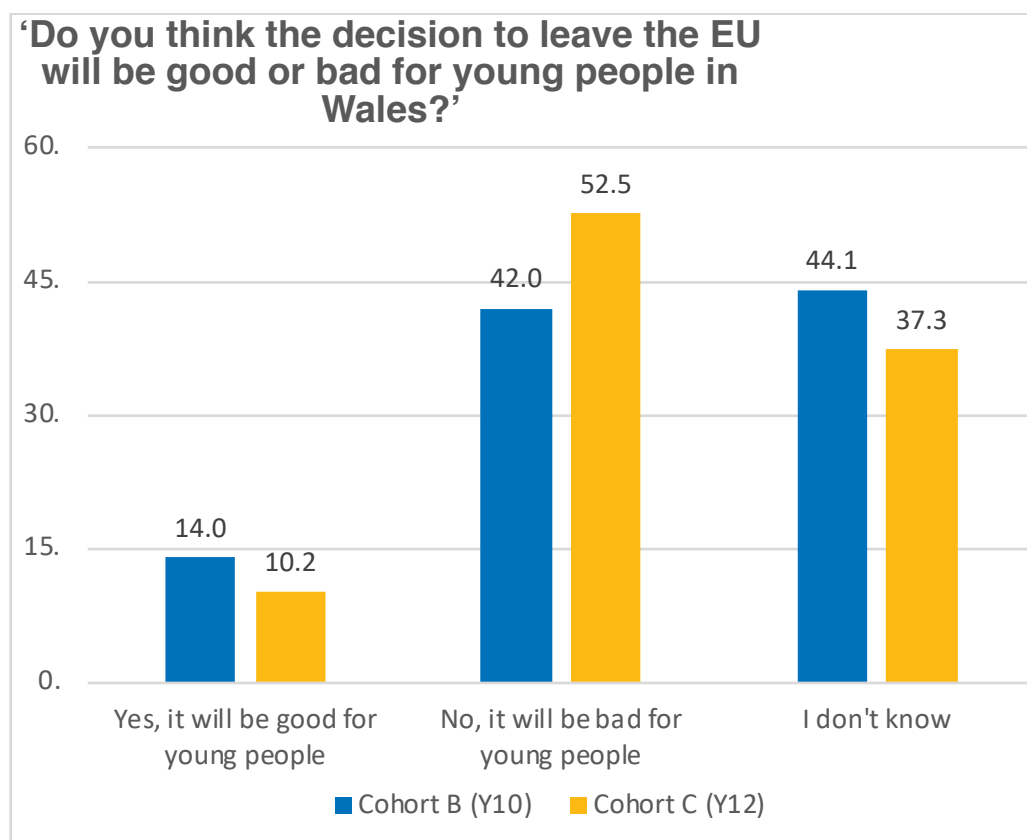
<sup>31</sup> Welsh Government. 2018. *"Our children are our future – they must have a say on Brexit" – Huw Irranca-Davies*. Available online at: <https://gov.wales/newsroom/people-and-communities/2018/Our-children-are-our-future/?lang=en>

<sup>32</sup> Children in Wales. 2017. *Brexit and Children's Rights in Wales*. Available at: [http://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?f=0010StlgDk8iA6X\\_Z2av0lbwV6wQ4IVubtnGeRxchtNV6-5YySV1hHF2Hj4MFeBFXilcOEjKC5P-Y4ds\\_oYdh\\_Xax3w26A6vGyALyUSzLSsu8kTD7\\_RiCgTaNgL-mh3OMgDhMzrRwQlxkzWUBRH7sA2kEft\\_kFYBmzGCmUuUzBQCuT8aSb\\_bQpg6s7pZraf1Ya4uq4uTQagIPZCut0QozO0bVA2FCYC PFY1KqTArH5GVOzdxwtyo9rKSQStpRzLNWBakFCAEEdS7gicGPIsZK0tp9u29fUM9PTuN01GpPyfFrTO1dSJ5FPW4BCa68134&c=kSvDjPFzXWvGj1Nd0h-o0E2\\_YNqF9EDBznNHKSLp9LGBvu192Wl3iQ==&ch=D\\_iVBWWWhStf1F8bwWGilO7x57-ukONleTpyO-n0aO10nf6E28jiYw==](http://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?f=0010StlgDk8iA6X_Z2av0lbwV6wQ4IVubtnGeRxchtNV6-5YySV1hHF2Hj4MFeBFXilcOEjKC5P-Y4ds_oYdh_Xax3w26A6vGyALyUSzLSsu8kTD7_RiCgTaNgL-mh3OMgDhMzrRwQlxkzWUBRH7sA2kEft_kFYBmzGCmUuUzBQCuT8aSb_bQpg6s7pZraf1Ya4uq4uTQagIPZCut0QozO0bVA2FCYC PFY1KqTArH5GVOzdxwtyo9rKSQStpRzLNWBakFCAEEdS7gicGPIsZK0tp9u29fUM9PTuN01GpPyfFrTO1dSJ5FPW4BCa68134&c=kSvDjPFzXWvGj1Nd0h-o0E2_YNqF9EDBznNHKSLp9LGBvu192Wl3iQ==&ch=D_iVBWWWhStf1F8bwWGilO7x57-ukONleTpyO-n0aO10nf6E28jiYw==)

<sup>33</sup> Powell, D. 2017. *"They should've let us vote"*. Available at: <http://blogs.cardiff.ac.uk/wiserd/2017/04/21/they-shouldve-let-us-vote/>



Data from the WISERDEducation survey shows that the majority of young people asked in years 10 and 12 would have voted to stay in the EU had they had the opportunity to vote.<sup>34</sup> The majority of these young people believe that leaving the EU will be bad for young people in Wales, or are unsure:



Qualitative responses to open-ended questions suggest that young people who would have voted remain are frustrated due to the lack of input they had into the decision:

‘Young people couldn’t vote but their future was decided for them’

Analysis of quantitative survey data from the study suggests that the referendum may have changed young people’s views on lowering the voting age, leading more to support it. Participants were asked questions about the voting age across two data sweeps so that it was possible to see whether young people’s support for the voting age grew over time. In 2015, the younger the students were, the more likely they were to support lowering the voting age. However, in 2017 this trend reversed so that older children, who would have been able to vote had the voting age been 16 in the referendum, were more supportive of votes at 16 than their younger counterparts. This might indicate that young people are unhappy with the opportunities for political participation currently afforded to them, and strengthens the case for their greater involvement in democratic structures.

<sup>34</sup>Barrance, R & Hampton, J. 2017. *Young people’s views on Brexit and the voting age*. Paper presented at Young People & Brexit: 1 Year On WISERD Conference, June 2017.



## 1.2.2 Community participation

The Beth Nesa' survey commissioned by the Children's Commissioner's for Wales in 2015 asked children aged 7 to 11 and 11 to 18+ about their participation in decision-making in their local area<sup>35</sup>:

- 15 per cent of 7-11 year olds and 8 per cent of 11 to 18+ year olds reported that they were often asked their views in their local area
- 31 per cent of 7-11 year olds and 21 per cent of 11 to 18+ year olds indicated that they usually hear the outcome when they are asked
- 21 per cent of 7-11 year olds and 13 per cent of 11 to 18+ year olds believe that children's views make a big difference in their local area.

The results show that the younger children are more positive about their opportunities for participation. The reason for this is unclear from this data: one possibility is that older children have higher expectations of participation, which are not fulfilled. Despite the requirements on Local Authorities and other public bodies to offer relevant and meaningful participation opportunities for children and young people it is not possible to present a national picture of the extent and quality of children and young people's involvement.

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<sup>35</sup> Children's Commissioner for Wales. 2016. *Beth Nesa? What Next? The findings*. Available at: <https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Overview-English-FINAL.compressed.pdf>



## 2. Basic health, welfare and disability

### 2.1 General Health

#### Key findings

- Infant and child mortality rates have dropped in recent years. Infant mortality rates are highest in the areas of high socio-economic deprivation and amongst babies from ethnic minority backgrounds. There is a lack of disaggregated data on child mortality.
- The proportion of four-year olds up-to-date with routine immunisations has slightly declined since 2014.
- Air pollution is highest in areas of socio-economic deprivation.
- Rates of dental cavities amongst young people have declined over the last 30 years, although the association between socio-economic deprivation and poor dental health remains.

#### 2.1.1 Infant and child mortality

Office for National Statistics (ONS) data shows that across England and Wales the infant mortality rate for those under one years of age rose from 3.7 deaths per 1000 live births to 3.8 in 2016.<sup>36</sup> In Wales however, there was a 16.7 per cent decrease between 2015 and 2016, with the overall rate of 3 deaths per 1000 live births. There was a relationship between socio-economic deprivation and number of infant deaths. Areas are grouped from one to 10 according to the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation, with one being the area with the highest level of deprivation, and ten being the least. The area with the highest level of deprivation according to this classification in Wales was also the one with the highest ratio of deaths (4.7 per 1,000 births), more than twice as high as the least deprived area. This relationship is not straightforward however, with the area ranked third highest for deprivation was the one with the lowest ratio of deaths (1.4 per 1,000 births).<sup>37</sup>

ONS also produces data on infant mortality by ethnicity, but only on a combined England and Wales basis.<sup>38</sup> Babies in the 'white other' or 'white British' categories have the lowest ratios of infant mortality per 1,000 births, at 2.2 and 2.9 respectively in 2015. The infant mortality rate amongst babies born to Pakistani (5.9), African (5.3) and Caribbean (4.5) mothers is much higher, indicating that babies from ethnic minority backgrounds are less likely to survive their first year.

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<sup>36</sup>Office for National Statistics. 2018. *Child mortality in England and Wales: 2016*. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/bulletins/childhoodinfantandperinatalmortalityinenglandandwales/2016>

<sup>37</sup> As stated by the ONS, infant mortality rates in Wales are less robust than England due to the low number of infant deaths in Wales overall.

<sup>38</sup>Office for National Statistics. 2018. *Child mortality in England and Wales: 2016*. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/bulletins/childhoodinfantandperinatalmortalityinenglandandwales/2016>



Public Health Wales also releases data on basic child health indicators on an annual basis through its *Pregnancy and Childhood Surveillance Tool*, which includes data on child mortality for children aged between 0 and 17. It shows that child mortality has also fallen substantially since 2005-07 from 0.4 per 1,000 to 0.3 per 1,000 between 2013-15.<sup>39</sup> However, there are no data on the relationship between child (as opposed to infant) mortality and socio-economic deprivation or ethnicity.

### *Thematic reviews of child deaths*

Thematic reviews on child deaths are published annually. Since 2015, there have been reviews on deaths through fire (2017)<sup>40</sup>, deaths through drowning (2016)<sup>41</sup> and Sudden Infant Death in Infancy (2015)<sup>42</sup>. The review of fire safety showed there were five fire incidents resulting in nine deaths among children under 18 years of age between 1<sup>st</sup> January 2010 and 31<sup>st</sup> December 2014 in Wales.<sup>43</sup> Two of these were deliberately started and three were accidental. The review highlighted that children in some households had a higher risk of dying from fire. It cited evidence from an international literature review which found that children from low income households and those who have social services involvement are most at risk. Evidence from the cases in Wales suggest that involvement of social services and alcohol use were risk factors.

The review of drowning found that such deaths are relatively rare in Wales, with fewer than three children under 18 dying from drowning on average each year.<sup>44</sup> It suggests that closer adult supervision may have prevented some of these drownings and noted that alcohol was 'a contributory factor in some drownings'.

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<sup>39</sup> Public Health Wales. 2017. *Pregnancy and childhood surveillance tool*. Available at:

<http://www.publichealthwalesobservatory.wales.nhs.uk/pregnancychildhood>

<sup>40</sup> Public Health Wales. 2017. *Thematic review of deaths of children through fire*. Child death review programme. Available at:

[http://www2.nphs.wales.nhs.uk:8080/ChildDeathReviewDocs.nsf/b4472ecab22fa0d580256f10003199e7/1d4704df8fe53bf3802581f6003fface/\\$FILE/Technical%20document%20-%20Thematic%20review%20of%20deaths%20of%20children%20though%20fire.pdf](http://www2.nphs.wales.nhs.uk:8080/ChildDeathReviewDocs.nsf/b4472ecab22fa0d580256f10003199e7/1d4704df8fe53bf3802581f6003fface/$FILE/Technical%20document%20-%20Thematic%20review%20of%20deaths%20of%20children%20though%20fire.pdf)

<sup>41</sup> Public Health Wales. 2016. *Thematic review of deaths of children and young people through drowning*. Child Death Review Programme. Available at:

[http://www2.nphs.wales.nhs.uk:8080/ChildDeathReviewDocs.nsf/3653c00e7bb6259d80256f27004900db/55d3aec28e5450e680257f620037f335/\\$FILE/CDR%20report\\_English.pdf](http://www2.nphs.wales.nhs.uk:8080/ChildDeathReviewDocs.nsf/3653c00e7bb6259d80256f27004900db/55d3aec28e5450e680257f620037f335/$FILE/CDR%20report_English.pdf)

<sup>42</sup> Child Death Review Programme & All Wales Perinatal Survey. 2015. *Sudden Unexpected Death in Infancy - a Collaborative Thematic Review 2010-2012*. Available at:

<http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/documents/888/Sudden%20Unexpected%20Deaths%20in%20Infancy%20-%20English.pdf>

<sup>43</sup> Public Health Wales. 2017. *Thematic review of deaths of children through fire*. Child death review programme. Available at:

[http://www2.nphs.wales.nhs.uk:8080/ChildDeathReviewDocs.nsf/b4472ecab22fa0d580256f10003199e7/1d4704df8fe53bf3802581f6003fface/\\$FILE/Technical%20document%20-%20Thematic%20review%20of%20deaths%20of%20children%20though%20fire.pdf](http://www2.nphs.wales.nhs.uk:8080/ChildDeathReviewDocs.nsf/b4472ecab22fa0d580256f10003199e7/1d4704df8fe53bf3802581f6003fface/$FILE/Technical%20document%20-%20Thematic%20review%20of%20deaths%20of%20children%20though%20fire.pdf)

<sup>44</sup> Public Health Wales. 2016. *Thematic review of deaths of children and young people through drowning*. Child Death Review Programme. Available at:

[http://www2.nphs.wales.nhs.uk:8080/ChildDeathReviewDocs.nsf/3653c00e7bb6259d80256f27004900db/55d3aec28e5450e680257f620037f335/\\$FILE/CDR%20report\\_English.pdf](http://www2.nphs.wales.nhs.uk:8080/ChildDeathReviewDocs.nsf/3653c00e7bb6259d80256f27004900db/55d3aec28e5450e680257f620037f335/$FILE/CDR%20report_English.pdf)



The review of Sudden Infant Deaths in Wales found that there were 45 such deaths between 2010 and 2012.<sup>45</sup> It identified a greater number of deaths among children in the most deprived areas of Wales, as measured by the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation. Other risk factors identified were:

- Sofa sleeping
- Smoking
- Alcohol at time of death or past history of concern
- Any history of drug use in either parent
- Illness of child in week prior to death

### 2.1.2 Child injuries

Data from Public Health Wales's Pregnancy and Childhood Surveillance tool show that the rate of emergency hospital treatment for child injury has fallen, from 18.1 to 17.2 per 1,000 between 2006/7 and 2015/16.<sup>46</sup>

### 2.1.3 Immunisation

Public Health Wales's Pregnancy and Childhood Surveillance tool also publishes statistics on immunisation. In terms of the changes in proportions of four-year olds with up-to-date routine immunisations, whilst there has been an increase between 2010/11 and 2015/16 from 78.5 per cent to 85.3 percent, this latest figure is lower than 2013/14 (88 per cent) and 2014/15 (86.2 per cent), indicating a decline in immunisation practices in recent years.<sup>47</sup>

Data taken from COVER (Coverage of Vaccination Evaluation Rapidly) and published annually by Public Health Wales show that between 2017 and 2018, the percentage of children living in Flying Start areas who were up-to-date with immunisations was 82 per cent.<sup>48</sup> This represents a small increase of 0.7 per cent since 2016-17. The rate was slightly higher amongst those living in non-Flying start areas, where 86 per cent of children were immunised.

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<sup>45</sup> Child Death Review Programme & All Wales Perinatal Survey. 2015. *Sudden Unexpected Death in Infancy - a Collaborative Thematic Review 2010-2012*. Available at:

<http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/documents/888/Sudden%20Unexpected%20Deaths%20in%20Infancy%20-%20English.pdf>

<sup>46</sup> Public Health Wales. 2017. *Pregnancy and childhood surveillance tool*. Available at:

<http://www.publichealthwalesobservatory.wales.nhs.uk/pregnancychildhood>

<sup>47</sup> Public Health Wales. 2017. *Pregnancy and childhood surveillance tool*. Available at:

<http://www.publichealthwalesobservatory.wales.nhs.uk/pregnancychildhood>

<sup>48</sup> Statistics for Wales. July 2018. *Flying Start, summary statistics 2017-18*. Available at:

<https://gov.wales/docs/statistics/2018/180718-flying-start-summary-statistics-2017-18-en.pdf>



## 2.1.4 Dental health

Good quality data on oral health are available from the Children's Dental Health Survey, which collects data based on dental examinations with a large random sample of 5, 8, 12 and 15 year olds in Wales, England and Northern Ireland. Good oral health, measured using a composite indicator (including an absence of obvious decay, no calculus and no severe tooth surface loss) was more prevalent in England (39 per cent), compared to Wales (33 per cent) and Northern Ireland (31 per cent).<sup>49</sup> In Wales, the proportion of children assessed as having severe or extensive decay was high in comparison to England, with 22 per cent of 5 and 15 year old children sampled identified as being affected in Wales, compared to 19 per cent of 5 year olds and 36 per cent of 15 year olds in Northern Ireland, and just 13 per cent of five year olds and 14 per cent of 15 year olds in England.<sup>50</sup> There was a strong association between socio-economic deprivation and severe or extensive decay across the UK<sup>51</sup>, with 30 per cent of Welsh 5 year olds in the most deprived quintile experiencing decay compared to 9 per cent in the least deprived quintile.<sup>52</sup>

Furthermore, a dental epidemiology survey of 12 year olds was conducted by Cardiff University and Public Health Wales during the 2016/17 school year.<sup>53</sup> It found that there was a marked decline in the proportion of children who had at least one decayed tooth, part of a wider trend that has reduced from 63 per cent in 1988 to 30 per cent in 2017.

## 2.1.5 Air quality

The Welsh Government produces an annual report on air quality enabling us to understand the prevalence and distribution of air pollution in Wales.<sup>54</sup> Data on air pollution show that those living in the most deprived areas of Wales are exposed to the highest concentrations of air pollution, although the report does highlight that the second highest concentration is in the least deprived area, and so the relationship is not straightforward.

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<sup>49</sup> Health and Social Care Information Centre. 2015. *Children's Dental Health Survey 2013.*

*Report 3: Good Oral Health in Children. England, Wales and Northern Ireland.* Available at:

<https://files.digital.nhs.uk/publicationimport/pub17xxx/pub17137/cdhs2013-report3-good-oral-health.pdf>

<sup>50</sup> Health and Social Care Information Centre. 2015. *Children's Dental Health Survey 2013. Report 5: Contemporary Challenges in Children's Dental Health. England, Wales and Northern Ireland.* Available at:

<https://files.digital.nhs.uk/publicationimport/pub17xxx/pub17137/cdhs2013-report5-contemporary-challenges.pdf>

<sup>51</sup> Health and Social Care Information Centre. 2015. *Children's Dental Health Survey 2013. Report 5: Contemporary Challenges in Children's Dental Health. England, Wales and Northern Ireland.* Available at:

<https://files.digital.nhs.uk/publicationimport/pub17xxx/pub17137/cdhs2013-report5-contemporary-challenges.pdf>

<sup>52</sup> Health and Social Care Information Centre. 2015. *Children's Dental Health Survey 2013. Country specific report: Wales.*

Available at: <https://files.digital.nhs.uk/publicationimport/pub17xxx/pub17137/cdhs2013-wales-report.pdf>

<sup>53</sup> Morgan, M. & Monaghan, N. 2017. *Picture of oral health 2018. Dental epidemiological survey of 12 year olds 2016-17.* Available at:

[https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0019/1201465/Full-Report-Oral-Health-2018.pdf](https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0019/1201465/Full-Report-Oral-Health-2018.pdf)

<sup>54</sup> Welsh Government. 2016. *Air Pollution in Wales 2016.* Available at:

[https://airquality.gov.wales/sites/default/files/documents/2017-11/AQ\\_wales\\_2016\\_v5.pdf](https://airquality.gov.wales/sites/default/files/documents/2017-11/AQ_wales_2016_v5.pdf)





## 2.2 Health behaviours

### Key findings

- Smoking, drinking and teenage conceptions have declined considerably over the last two decades.
- Those from the most deprived areas were least likely to report eating fruit and vegetables.
- Boys, and those from higher socio-economic backgrounds, are most likely to be physical active.
- Over a quarter of 4-5 year olds in Wales are overweight or obese and overall, those from the most deprived areas are most likely be overweight or obese.
- Just over a tenth of children in Great Britain responding to the Gambling Commission's survey report having gambled in the last week.
- In a study of children's sleeping patterns, over a fifth of children reported waking to check social media most nights.

The Welsh Government has established a set of health and well-being measures for Wales as part of its commitment under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. Of these measures, two are aimed at children and young people.<sup>55</sup> They annually collect data from the Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children (HBSC) survey on the percentage of children who have fewer than two healthy lifestyle behaviours. These include:

- Eating five fruit/vegetables a day
- Never/rarely drinking
- Meeting national physical activity guidelines
- Not smoking

The latest data relates to the 2013/14 period, in which it was found that 12 per cent of pupils in school years 7 to 11 reported having fewer than two healthy lifestyle behaviours. Data are available by socio-economic background, gender and age. This is a composite measure and so no comparable data are available for other areas of the UK.

#### 2.2.1 Smoking

Rates of smoking have declined over time amongst young people in Wales, with 13 per cent of children in years 7, 9 and 11 smoking at least once a week in 1998, and only 3 per cent doing so now<sup>56</sup>, the same proportion as in

<sup>55</sup> Welsh Government. 2017. *Health and Well-being National Indicators for Children*. Available at: <https://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/health-well-being-measures-children/?lang=en>

<sup>56</sup> Welsh Government. 2015. *2013/14 Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) Wales: key findings*. Available at: <https://gov.wales/docs/caecd/research/2015/151022-health-behaviour-school-children-2013-14-key-findings-en.pdf>





England.<sup>57</sup> While there was not a significant difference between rates of smoking according to family affluence, the respondents in the lowest group for family affluence tended to begin smoking earlier in Wales. 61 per cent of year 11 smokers from the lowest family affluence group beginning before the age of 13, and only 38 per cent of those in the highest family affluence group doing so.<sup>58</sup> Moreover, 13 per cent of pupils surveyed noted that someone was smoking the last time they were in a car, with 23 per cent of those in the lowest family affluence group reporting this, compared to 10 per cent of those in the highest family affluence group.

### 2.2.2 Alcohol consumption

In contrast to smoking, weekly alcohol consumption was higher in more affluent families with 7 per cent of children in the highest two affluence groups consuming alcohol at least once a week, compared to only 3 per cent of those in the lowest group.<sup>59</sup> Overall, rates of weekly drinking were comparable in England and Wales, with 5 per cent of 11-16 pupils surveyed in England indicating that they drank alcohol on a weekly basis, compared to 6 per cent in Wales.<sup>60</sup> This is a considerable reduction from 31 per cent of 11-16 year olds in Wales in 1986.

### 2.2.3 Fruit and vegetable consumption

Data collected from young people aged 11-16 who were consulted through the 2015 Health Behaviour of School Aged Children (HBSC) survey indicate that 31 per cent ate fruit daily, compared to 38 per cent in England.<sup>61</sup> Only 33 per cent of the young people sampled reported eating vegetables every day, compared to 43 per cent of those in England. In terms of consumption of fruit and vegetables, those from the least affluent families were least likely to report eating vegetables on a daily basis in Wales.<sup>62</sup>

More recently, data collected from parents completing the National Survey for Wales 2016/2017 indicate that 86 per cent of children aged 3-7 ate fruit every day, and 67 per cent ate vegetables each day.<sup>63</sup> The proportions decrease with age: only 57 per cent of 13 to 17 year olds ate fruit every day and 56 per cent ate vegetables every day.<sup>64</sup> There also appears to be a relationship between socio-economic deprivation and fruit and vegetable consumption. This was clearer for vegetable consumption, where those in the most deprived area were least likely to eat vegetables

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<sup>57</sup> Brooks, F, Magnusson, J, Klemra, E, Spencer, N & Morgan, A. 2011. *HBSC England National Report: Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC): World Health Organization Collaborative Cross National Study*. University of Hertfordshire. Available at: <http://www.hbscengland.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/National-Report-2015.pdf>

<sup>58</sup> Welsh Government. 2015. *2013/14 Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) Wales: key findings*. Available at: <https://gov.wales/docs/caecd/research/2015/151022-health-behaviour-school-children-2013-14-key-findings-en.pdf>

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Brooks, F, Magnusson, J, Klemra, E, Spencer, N & Morgan, A. 2011. *HBSC England National Report: Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC): World Health Organization Collaborative Cross National Study*. University of Hertfordshire. Available at: <http://www.hbscengland.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/National-Report-2015.pdf>

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Welsh Government. 2015. *2013/14 Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) Wales: key findings*. Available at: <https://gov.wales/docs/caecd/research/2015/151022-health-behaviour-school-children-2013-14-key-findings-en.pdf>

<sup>63</sup> Statistics for Wales. 2017. *2016/2017 National Survey for Wales 2016-17: Child Health – Lifestyle*. Available at: <https://gov.wales/docs/statistics/2017/170920-national-survey-2016-17-child-health-lifestyle-en.pdf>



and those in the least deprived area were most likely to. A similar relationship could be seen for fruit consumption, although there was some fluctuation by area of deprivation.

#### 2.2.4 Substance abuse

Statistics collated by Public Health Wales on substance abuse for the period 2016/17 shows that the rates of alcohol-related hospital admissions for young people under 25 fell by 11.6 per cent between 2015/16 and 2016/17. In addition, there was a small reduction (1.4 per cent) of hospital admissions related to the use of illicit drugs during this period for this age group.

#### 2.2.5 Sexual activity and teenage conception

The HSBC data indicates that the proportion of year 11 pupils who report that they have had sex has fallen over time, from 36 per cent in 2006 to 26 per cent in 2014,<sup>65</sup> although this figure remains higher than England<sup>66</sup>, where 21 per cent of 15 year olds reported having had sex in 2014. However, girls remain more likely than boys to have had sex by this time. Of respondents in year 11, 4 per cent had sex for the first time at 13 years old or younger. This is a slight reduction from 6 per cent in 2010. The rate of under 18 teenage conceptions has fallen substantially, from 44 per 1000 in 2005 to 25.5 in 2014. Live births to females under 20 have also decreased, from 31.8 per 1000 in 2006 to 16.9 in 2015.<sup>67</sup>

#### 2.2.6 Sport and exercise participation

Data from the HBSC show that girls in Wales (15 per cent) reported lower levels of physical activity for at least 60 minutes a day than girls in England (20 per cent). Boys in Wales had comparable levels of physical activity (26 per cent) to their counterparts in England (25 per cent). Boys were more likely to be physically active for at least an hour a day across Britain.<sup>68</sup> This finding is supported by the Sport Wales national School Sport Survey, which indicates that weekly sport participation is lower for girls than boys, but has grown for both groups between 2013 and 2015.<sup>69</sup> The

<sup>65</sup> Welsh Government. 2015. *2013/14 Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) Wales: key findings*. Available at: <https://gov.wales/docs/caecd/research/2015/151022-health-behaviour-school-children-2013-14-key-findings-en.pdf> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Brooks, F, Magnusson, J, Klemra, E, Spencer, N & Morgan, A. 2011. *HBSC England National Report: Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC): World Health Organization Collaborative Cross National Study*. University of Hertfordshire. Available at: <http://www.hbscengland.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/National-Report-2015.pdf>

<sup>67</sup> Public Health Wales. 2017. *Pregnancy and childhood surveillance tool*. Available at: <http://www.publichealthwalesobservatory.wales.nhs.uk/pregnancychildhood>

<sup>68</sup> World Health Organization. Regional Office for Europe. 2016. *Growing up unequal: gender and socioeconomic differences in young people's health and well-being*. HEALTH BEHAVIOUR IN SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN (HBSC) STUDY: INTERNATIONAL REPORT FROM THE 2013/2014 SURVEY. Available at: [http://www.euro.who.int/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0003/303438/HSBC-No.7-Growing-up-unequal-Full-Report.pdf?ua=1](http://www.euro.who.int/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/303438/HSBC-No.7-Growing-up-unequal-Full-Report.pdf?ua=1)

<sup>69</sup> Sport Wales. 2015. *School Sport Survey 2015: State of the nation*. Available at: <http://sport.wales/research--policy/surveys-and-statistics/school-sport-survey/school-sport-survey-2015-results.aspx>



survey looked at the interaction between gender and ethnicity, and found that in 2015 Black/Black British (57 per cent) and mixed race (56 per cent) boys were most likely to describe themselves as being “hooked on sport”<sup>70</sup>, whilst girls who defined themselves as Arab/Other were least likely (38 per cent). The Sport Wales survey also found that there was a difference between the sport participation rates by relative level of deprivation, with an approximate 10 per cent difference between those in the highest and lowest categories of deprivation. In 2015, 54 per cent of children in the least deprived category describing themselves as hooked on sport, compared to 43 per cent in the most deprived category. There was also a difference between pupils who considered themselves to have a disability, of whom 40 per cent said they were ‘hooked on sport’ compared to 49 per cent who did not.

Conversely, 29 per cent of all children surveyed reported that they did not take part in any form of frequent activity. Within this subset there was a difference of ten per cent between children who identified as having a disability or impairment and those who did not (27.5 per cent versus 37.5 per cent). There was also a 9.8 per cent difference between the most and least deprived.<sup>71</sup>

The NHS recommends 60 minutes of physical activity a day for children between the ages of 5 and 18. As part of the 2016/2017 National Survey for Wales, the proportion of children reported by parents as being active for at least one hour every day decreased with age. 62 per cent of children aged 3-7 were reported as being active seven days a week compared to 38 per cent of those aged 13-17.<sup>72</sup>

### 2.2.7 Weight and obesity

The Child Measurement Programme for Wales provides data on weight based on measurements by healthcare professionals. According to this, 27.1 per cent of children in Wales in 2016/17 were classified as overweight or obese at the ages of 4-5, compared to only 22.6 per cent in England.<sup>73</sup> 12.4 per cent of 4-5 year olds in Wales were obese, compared to 9.6 per cent in England, a statistically significant difference. Socio-economic deprivation is a predictor of obesity in both England and Wales.<sup>74</sup> There has been a slight growth in the difference in the prevalence of obesity between the most and least deprived quintiles of children in Wales between 2012/13, when there was a 5.1 per cent difference, and 2016/17, when there was a statistically significant difference of 6.2 per cent between the most deprived (14.9 per cent) and the least deprived (8.7 per cent).<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Sports Wales. 2015. *School Sport Survey 2015: national data tables*. Available at:

[http://www.sport.wales/media/1670282/table\\_c-national\\_v2.xlsx](http://www.sport.wales/media/1670282/table_c-national_v2.xlsx)

<sup>72</sup> Statistics for Wales. 2017. *2016/2017 National Survey for Wales 2016-17: Child Health – Lifestyle*. Available at:

<https://gov.wales/docs/statistics/2017/170920-national-survey-2016-17-child-health-lifestyle-en.pdf>

<sup>73</sup> Public Health Wales NHS Trust. 2018. *Child Measurement Programme for Wales 2016/17*. Available at:

<http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/documents/888/12743%20PHW%20CMP%20Report%20%28Eng%29.pdf>

<sup>74</sup> Baker, C. 2018. *Obesity Statistics*. House of Commons Briefing Paper. No. 3336. Available at:

<http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN03336/SN03336.pdf>

<sup>75</sup> Public Health Wales NHS Trust. 2018. *Child Measurement Programme for Wales 2016/17*. Available at:

<http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/documents/888/12743%20PHW%20CMP%20Report%20%28Eng%29.pdf>



### 2.2.8 Gambling

Wales-only data on the gambling behavior of children under the age of 16 is not available. However, the Gambling Commission publishes an annual report on the gambling behaviour of children in Great Britain. It presents data from the Young People Omnibus, a survey conducted annually by Ipsos MORI for the National Lottery Commission.<sup>76</sup> It surveyed 2,881 children aged 11-16 years old in 2017. The 2017 results show that just over a tenth (12 per cent) of children in the sample report had gambled their own money during the previous week. Comparisons with previous years are difficult due to the addition of Scotland for the first time in this year's survey sweep. However, broadly speaking there does appear to be some decline over time, as in 2011 23 per cent of children reported gambling within the last week. The 2017 gambling report shows that boys were twice as likely to have gambled during the week as girls. Whereas 15 per cent of boys had gambled during the week during 2017, only 7 per cent of girls reported doing so.

Those who had gambled were asked how much of their own money they had spent during the last week. Of those who answered this question:

- 64 per cent had spent less than £5
- 17 per cent had spent £5 - 10
- 7 per cent had spent £10 - £20,
- 5 per cent had spent £20 - £40
- 8 per cent had spent more than £40.

Of the children who had gambled, 0.9 per cent were identified as problem gamblers based on responses to questions regarding their gambling behaviour, such as how often they gambled to escape problems, returned to try and win back lost money, told lies to friends or family about gambling, spent time thinking about gambling. Only 0.2 per cent of girls were identified problem gamblers, compared to 1.6 per cent of boys. In addition, 1.7 per cent of boys were classified as at-risk gamblers, compared to 0.7 per cent of girls.

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<sup>76</sup> Gambling Commission. 2017. *Young people and gambling 2017. A research study among 11-16 year olds in Great Britain.* Available at: <http://live-gamblecom.cloud.contensis.com/PDF/survey-data/Young-People-and-Gambling-2017-Report.pdf>



### 2.2.9 Sleep

During 2012/13 the WISERDEducation Multi-Cohort Study asked pupils in years 8 and 10 about their sleeping patterns and practices.<sup>77</sup> The study found that most young people have 'reasonable' amounts of sleep, with most reporting spending between eight and nine hours in bed. The research suggests that routine is important and that those with regular bedtimes and wake-times tended to spend more time in bed and report lower levels of tiredness in school the next day.

The research suggests that children's social media use is impacting on their sleep:

- Over a third of young people in the study woke in the night to check social media at least once a week
- 21.6 per cent of 12-13 year olds and 22.5 per cent of 14-15 year olds reported that they almost always wake up during the night to check social media.
- Girls were more likely to do this than boys. Amongst the 12-13 year olds surveyed, (26.4 per cent of girls and 16.5 per cent boys reported 'always' waking during the night to look at social media).

Unsurprisingly, those who woke up to check social media during the night were far more likely to report being tired.

Overall, a third of the participants reported that they always go to school tired. There was an association between levels of tiredness and wellbeing — with those who reported always being tired were more likely to report being unhappy with different aspects of their lives, such as their schoolwork, appearance and life overall.

## 2.3 Mental health

### *Key findings*

- Survey data from 2011-12 found that 11.6 per cent of 10-15 year olds reported symptoms of mental ill-health.
- In 2016/17 11,558 secondary school students received counselling through their schools.
- Loneliness is a key issue for young people aged 16-24.

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<sup>77</sup> Power, S., Taylor, C. & Horton, K. (2017) Sleepless in school? The social dimensions of young people's bedtime rest and routines, *Journal of Youth Studies*, 20:8, 945-958, DOI: [10.1080/13676261.2016.1273522](https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2016.1273522)



- Deaths from suicide amongst children and young people have begun to rise since 2010, following a previous decline. The current rate is 61.7 per million 15-19 year olds.
- Data on mental health of children and young people in Wales are published infrequently.

### 2.3.1 Prevalence of mental illness

In its 2016 Concluding Observations, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child called for UK governments to systematically collect disaggregated data on the prevalence of mental health conditions amongst children.<sup>78</sup> An Inquiry was launched by the National Assembly's Children, Young People and Education Committee in 2017, which aimed to investigate CAHMS provision and consider what support is available to young people in terms of their emotional wellbeing. Notably, the Royal College of Psychiatrist's evidence to the Committee highlighted a lack of data on the prevalence of emotional and mental health issues in children and young people.<sup>79</sup> In fact, the last major survey of on the mental health of children and young people in Great Britain was published in 2004.<sup>80</sup>

The HSBC does not ask children about experiences of poor mental health. However, it does ask more generally about whether they consider themselves to have high life satisfaction<sup>81</sup>:

- For 11 year olds 87 per cent of girls and 90 per cent of boys report high life satisfaction, compared to 88 per cent of girls and 90 per cent of boys in England.
- For 13 year olds 75 per cent of girls and 86 per cent of boys reported this in Wales, and in England 81 per cent of girls and 90 per cent of boys.
- For 15 year olds 72 per cent of girls and 84 per cent of boys reported high life satisfaction, compared to 71 per cent of girls and 84 per cent of boys in England.

<sup>78</sup> Committee on the Rights of the Child. 2016. *Concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland*. Available at: [https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRC%252fC%252fGBR%252fCO%252f5&Lang=en](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRC%252fC%252fGBR%252fCO%252f5&Lang=en)

<sup>79</sup> National Assembly for Wales. 2018. Mind over matter. A report on the step change needed in emotional and mental health support for children and young people in Wales. Available at: <http://www.assembly.wales/laid%20documents/cr-ld11522/cr-ld11522-e.pdf>

<sup>80</sup> Green, H., McGinnity, A, Meltzer, H., Ford, T., Goodman, R. 2005. *Mental health of children and young people in Great Britain, 2004*. Available at: <https://files.digital.nhs.uk/publicationimport/pub06xxx/pub06116/ment-heal-chil-youn-peop-gb-2004-rep1.pdf>

<sup>81</sup> World Health Organization. Regional Office for Europe. 2016. *Growing up unequal: gender and socioeconomic differences in young people's health and well-being*. HEALTH BEHAVIOUR IN SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN (HBSC) STUDY: INTERNATIONAL REPORT FROM THE 2013/2014 SURVEY. Available at: [http://www.euro.who.int/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0003/303438/HSBC-No.7-Growing-up-unequal-Full-Report.pdf?ua=1](http://www.euro.who.int/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/303438/HSBC-No.7-Growing-up-unequal-Full-Report.pdf?ua=1)





The most recent estimates of the prevalence of mental ill-health amongst children and young people derive from the 2015 release of the Understanding Society survey, for which data were collected between 2011-12.<sup>82</sup> It used questions from the Strengths and Difficulties questionnaire, which is commonly used to assess the prevalence of mental illness in populations.<sup>83</sup> Through this measure, they collected data on children's emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity or inattention, peer relationship problems and pro-social behaviour. Data from this survey indicated that 11.6 per cent of children aged 10 to 15 years of age in Wales had high or very high symptoms of mental ill-health, similar to Scotland's score of 11.5 per cent. Both countries were slightly lower than that of England, which was 12.7 per cent. Children in Northern Ireland had the lowest scores in the UK, with a score of 7.5 per cent of participants.<sup>84</sup>

Further information from this survey shows that 80.1 per cent of children surveyed in Wales had high or very high levels of satisfaction with their lives overall:

- 74.3 per cent had high or very high levels of happiness
- 75.5 per cent were relatively happy with their appearance
- 9.3 per cent of children were bullied at school

Bullying was also a major issue for young people surveyed as part of the Children's Commissioner for Wales's Beth Nesa survey in 2015<sup>85</sup>, with over half (53 per cent) of primary school children stating that they sometimes experienced bullying, with 12 per cent of children indicating that this happened on most days.

### 2.3.2 CAMHS provision

In terms of access to specialist Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), between March 2017 and March 2018 the target for patients waiting no longer than 28 days (4 weeks) from the date the referral is received by the hospital to a first outpatient appointment was 80 per cent.<sup>86</sup> However, the target of 80 per cent was not met this year, which was the first year of the target's implementation. The results show that there was a relatively substantial

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<sup>82</sup> Office for National Statistics. 2015. *Measuring National Well-being: Insights into children's mental health and well-being*. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/articles/measuringnationalwellbeing/2015-10-20#happiness-with-school>

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/articles/measuringnationalwellbeing/2015-10-20>

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Office for National Statistics. 2016. *Selected children's well-being measures by country*. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/adhocs/005283selectedchildrenswellbeingmeasuresbycountry>

<sup>85</sup> Children's Commissioner for Wales. 2017. *Sam's Story: Listening to children and young people's experiences of bullying in Wales*. Available at: <https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Sams-Story.pdf>

<sup>86</sup> Statistics for Wales. 2018. *NHS Wales Referral to Treatment Times: 2017-18*. Available at: <https://gov.wales/docs/statistics/2018/180726-nhs-referral-treatment-times-2017-18-en.pdf>



range in performance against these targets across the year. In August 2017 only 39.4 per cent of patients were seen within four weeks, while in March 2018 68.5 per cent of patients were seen within the four-week period.

### 2.3.3 Suicide of children and young people

In 2016, 14 young people aged 15 to 19 years of age in Wales died from suicide, and undetermined intent was the recorded cause of death for a further two young people.<sup>87</sup> Deaths of children due to intentional self-harm in England and Wales have begun to rise in recent years following a downward trend. The highest five year combined annual average rate for Wales was 85.5 per million 15 to 19 year olds between 1997 to 2001, declining to 43.7 per million between 2006 and 2010. However, there was a 41.2 per cent increase between 2012 and 2016, when the rate rose to 61.7 per million. Suicide amongst 10 - 14 year olds is very rare in the UK and the five year average rate of deaths from suicide in Wales is the lowest among all the UK nations, at 1.2 children per million.

### 2.3.4 Support for mental health in schools

In 2017, the Children, Young People and Education Committee commissioned a survey on the support children receive with their emotional well-being and mental health within school, receiving responses from 1,611 secondary school students.<sup>88</sup> It found that:

- Only 54.1 per cent of children in the sample knew how to get information about emotional wellbeing and mental health at their school or college
- On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is poor and 5 is very good, the average response to a question asking how good their school or college is at helping them to cope with things like exam pressure, bullying and peer pressure, the average response was 3.3

Data show that take-up of counselling is relatively high.<sup>89</sup> All local authorities are required to report on the use of secondary school counselling services in Wales, providing data on take-up according to ethnicity, gender, area and issues raised. The figures show that 7,251 girls received counselling in Wales in 2016/17, with the take-up amongst boys lower at 4,307. As a proportion, 3.7 per cent of 10 - 18 year olds in Wales received counselling during the 2016/17 academic year. The most prevalent reason for seeking counselling services was family issues, with 35.6 per cent of those attending counselling reporting this issue, followed by anxiety (23 per cent) and anger (15.9 per cent). 49.8 per cent of those who indicated they had received counselling to the Senedd survey responded that they found these services helpful.

<sup>87</sup> National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. 2018. *How safe are our children? 2018*. Available at: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/research-reports/how-safe-children-2018-report.pdf>

<sup>88</sup> National Assembly for Wales. 2017. *Emotional well-being and mental health of children and young people*. Available at: <http://senedd.assembly.wales/documents/s69006/CYPE5-33-17%20-%20Paper%201a%20-%20Summary%20of%20survey%20results%20-%20young%20people%20in%20secondary%20schools%20and%20college.pdf>

<sup>89</sup> Statistics for Wales. 2018. *Counselling for Children and Young People, 2016/17*. Available at: <https://gov.wales/docs/statistics/2018/180328-counselling-children-and-young-people-2016-17-en.pdf>





## 2.4 Child Poverty and Homelessness

### Key findings

- 28 per cent of children in Wales live in relative income poverty. While there has been a recent drop in poverty, it is forecast to increase by around 8 per cent by 2022.
- The proportion of homeless households including children has dropped between 2005/6 and 2014/15. However, there remain a considerable number in Wales — in 2017/2018 there were 882 such households.

#### 2.4.1 Poverty

In its last periodic report, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child criticised the UK for its high rates of child poverty and the austerity policies, which it suggests disproportionately affect children, such as cuts to tax credits and benefit caps. There are various measures of poverty and child poverty in Wales and the UK.

Currently, children are the age group most likely to be in relative income poverty in Wales.<sup>90</sup> The data from the Poverty Statistics (formally known as the Households Below Average Income statistics) collated by National Statistics show that between 2014/15 and 2016/17, 28 per cent of children in Wales were living in relative income poverty (after housing costs).<sup>91</sup> This represents a decrease from 30 per cent last year and the 29 per cent the previous year. In contrast, the figures for England have increased from 29 per cent last year to 30 per cent this year. Northern Ireland and Scotland have lower proportions of children living in relative income poverty, with 24 per cent in Scotland and 26 per cent in Northern Ireland.<sup>92</sup> Currently, children in lone parent families are more likely to be in relative income poverty than those living in households with a couple.<sup>93</sup> However, data for 2014-15 to 2016-17 shows that there is not a straightforward relationship between the number of children in a household and the risk of being in relative income poverty. Over the last decade the risk of being in relative income poverty for households with three or more children has declined, and the most recent statistics show that one child families have a slightly higher risk of being in this type of poverty than those with two children or three or more children.<sup>94</sup>

Some progress has been made against other child poverty indicators used in Wales - the proportion of live babies with a low birth weight in the most deprived fifth areas has reduced slightly from 7.7 per cent in 2002-04 to 6.5 per

<sup>90</sup> StatsWales. 2018. Poverty Statistics Headline Figures. Available at: <https://www.slideshare.net/StatisticsWales/poverty-statistics-headline-figures>

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Statistics for Wales. 2018. *Poverty Statistics Headline Figures*. Available at: <https://www.slideshare.net/StatisticsWales/poverty-statistics-headline-figures>

<sup>93</sup> StatsWales. 2018. Relative income poverty. Family characteristics. Available at: <https://www.slideshare.net/StatisticsWales/relative-income-poverty-family-characteristics-103098003>

<sup>94</sup> StatsWales. 2018. *Children in relative income poverty by number of children in the household*. Available at: <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Community-Safety-and-Social-Inclusion/Poverty/childreninrelativeincomepoverty-by-numberofchildreninthehousehold>



cent in 2012-14.<sup>95</sup> However, in 2017 this has increased slightly to 6.9 per cent.<sup>96</sup> The proportion of 5 year olds with a missing, decayed or filled milk tooth has also reduced from 57.6 per cent to 45.4 per cent between 2007/8 and 2014/15.<sup>97</sup> Another key indicator, was the percentage of children participating in the Flying Start programme who reached or exceeded their developmental milestones at age 3 by 2016.55 per cent did so in 2012/13, while only 52 per cent did in 2015/16, showing a small decrease.<sup>98</sup>

Projections of child poverty up until 2021 have been produced by the Equality and Human Rights Commission and the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS). The Equality and Human Rights Commission has commissioned research that considers the cumulative impact of tax and welfare reforms for the period between the election of the coalition government in 2010 and the end of the 2021-22 tax year.<sup>99</sup> According to this analysis, by 2021/22, child poverty will have increased by 10.4 per cent across Great Britain. This is far higher than the 1.4 per cent increase projected for adults. The largest increase in the proportion of children living in relative income poverty is expected in England (10.7), and the smallest in Wales (7.7 per cent). The IFS also projects a rise in relative child poverty across the UK. It has modelled child poverty by UK regions.<sup>100</sup> According to its analysis, the Northern regions of the UK, the Midlands, Northern Ireland and Wales are projected to see the largest increases of around 8 per cent for the period between 2013-2015 and 2019-2021.<sup>101</sup>

There are also some data available from the Trussell Trust on the use of food banks by families with children, giving an indicator of the impact of poverty on children. In 2017/2018, the Trust report issuing 35,403 three-day emergency food supplies to children in Wales compared to 34,803 in the previous period.<sup>102</sup> As these only include those who used Trussell Trust food banks, this is likely to be an underestimate of the number of children who are in receipt of food from all food banks in Wales.

#### 2.4.2 Homelessness

Homelessness amongst young people in Wales remains a key issue. Data from the Public Health Observatory Wales, which publishes annual reports on a number of child health indicators, shows that the proportion of homeless households which include dependent children has dropped between 2005/6 and 2014/15, from 48.3 per cent in the former to 41 per cent in the latter.<sup>103</sup> However, after 2014/15 data on homelessness are not directly

<sup>95</sup> Welsh Government. 2016. *Child Poverty Strategy: Assessment of Progress 2016. Summary report*. Available at: <https://gov.wales/docs/dsjlg/publications/cyp/161212-child-poverty-strategy-progress-report-2016-en.pdf>

<sup>96</sup> National Community Child Health Database (NCCHD). 2018. *Births in Wales, 2017: Data from the National Community Child Health Database*. Available at: <https://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/births-national-community-child-health-database/?lang=en>

<sup>97</sup> Welsh Government. 2016. *Child Poverty Strategy: Assessment of Progress 2016. Summary report*. Available at: <https://gov.wales/docs/dsjlg/publications/cyp/161212-child-poverty-strategy-progress-report-2016-en.pdf>

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Institute for Fiscal Studies. 2017. *Living standards, poverty and inequality in the UK: 2017-18 to 2021-22*. Available at: <https://www.ifs.org.uk/uploads/publications/comms/R136.pdf>

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> The IFS uses three-year averages of poverty rates for regional analyses, to ensure sufficient sample sizes.

<sup>102</sup> Trussell Trust. 2018. *End of year stats*. Available at: <https://www.trusselltrust.org/news-and-blog/latest-stats/end-year-stats/>

<sup>103</sup> Public Health Wales. 2017. *Pregnancy and childhood surveillance tool*. Available at: <http://www.publichealthwalesobservatory.wales.nhs.uk/pregnancychildhood>



comparable to previous years, due to changes in data collection following the introduction of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014.<sup>104</sup> The Act now requires local authorities to take measures to prevent homelessness, in addition to relieving it. The latest Welsh Government statistics for households assisted in 2017/18 shows the number of families:

- Threatened with homelessness (those provided assistance to prevent homelessness): 4,164<sup>105</sup>
- Homeless (those who were either found to be homeless at application stage, or where prevention work was unsuccessful): 2,622<sup>106</sup>
- Owed a duty to secure accommodation (after having applied for assistance and either become or remained homeless after relief work): 981<sup>107</sup>

It is this last group that represents the final stage within the current legislative framework. At this stage, local authorities have a legal duty to secure accommodation, only for those households which fall under a priority need group, much like the old system. Of the total number of households owed a duty to secure accommodation in 2017/18 (2,229), the following priority need groups were recorded:<sup>108</sup>

- 882 households with dependent children
- 126 pregnant women in households with no other dependent children
- 81 care leavers or persons at particular risk of sexual or financial exploitation, aged 18 - 21
- 66 young people aged 16 - 17

There are very little data sources on homeless children's views and experiences of homelessness, or evidence of their participation or consultation around homelessness. From the non-governmental sector, Cardiff University and

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<sup>104</sup> It is important to note that homelessness data are collected through aggregate returns to Welsh Government and so it is possible that some individuals are currently double-counted. However, the Welsh Government is currently working to revise these procedures so that disaggregated data will be available in future.

<sup>105</sup> StatsWales. 2018. *Households found to be threatened with homelessness during the year. Main reason for being threatened with homelessness by type of household (Section 66) 2017/18*. Available at: <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Housing/Homelessness/Statutory-Homelessness-Prevention-and-Relief/main-reason-for-being-threatened-with-homelessness-by-type-of-household-section-66->

<sup>106</sup> StatsWales. 2018. *Households found to be eligible, homeless subject to duty to help to secure during the year. Main reason for loss of last settled home by type of household (Section 73) 2017/2018*. Available at: <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Housing/Homelessness/Statutory-Homelessness-Prevention-and-Relief/households-found-to-be-eligible-homeless-subject-to-duty-to-help-to-secure-during-the-year-main-reason-for-loss-of-last-settled-home-by-type-of-household>

<sup>107</sup> StatsWales. 2018. *Households found to be eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and in priority need during the year: Categories of priority need by type of household (section 75) 201/2018*. Available at: <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Housing/Homelessness/Statutory-Homelessness-Prevention-and-Relief/households-found-to-be-eligible-for-assistance-unintentionally-homeless-and-in-priority-need-during-the-year-categories-of-priority-need-by-type-of-household-section-75->

<sup>108</sup> StatsWales. 2018. *Homelessness in Wales, 2017-18, Revised*. Available at: <https://gov.wales/docs/statistics/2018/180801-homelessness-2017-18-revised-en.pdf>



Llamau, the homelessness charity for women and young people, have undertaken a large-scale qualitative study of the experiences of homeless young people residing in temporary accommodation provided by Llamau, conducting in-depth two hour long interviews with 121 participants and follow-up interviews over two years with a number of the original participants.<sup>109</sup> Of the participants, 50 per cent stated that they had been subjected to some form of abuse during their lifetimes. The data on schooling showed that 32 per cent had been expelled from school at least once, and over half (55 per cent) had been suspended from school on at least one occasion. The average school leaving age for this group was 14 years of age. Substance abuse and smoking were also prevalent amongst these young people, with 80 per cent smoking and 70 per cent indicating that they used non-prescription drugs.

## 2.5 Disabled children

### Key findings

- There is a lack of disaggregated national data in respect of children with disabilities. The exception to which is statistics related to education and attainment (see Section 3).
- Research shows that disabled children's views are not being systematically collected.
- The rate of poverty for households in the UK with at least one disabled child is forecast to increase to 18.5 per cent by 2021.

There are limited data on the lives of disabled children in Wales, or in the UK as a whole, despite the fact that the rights of disabled children are protected under both the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Disabled People, and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. UK wide data have shown that austerity measures imposed since 2010 disproportionately affect disabled children in the UK,<sup>110</sup> mainly due to changes to benefits entitlements. Research commissioned by the Equality and Human Rights Commission has modelled the impact of tax and benefit policies introduced since the election of the coalition Government in 2010, which are expected to be implemented by the end of the financial year 2020-21. It predicts that poverty in families where at least one child is disabled will rise by 18.5 per cent during this period.<sup>111</sup> Statistics on a Wales-only basis are not currently available, which means that it is difficult to assess the impact of tax and benefits changes on disabled children in Wales.

Research suggests that disabled children face a number of challenges to accessing education.

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<sup>109</sup> Llamau and Cardiff University. 2015. *Study of the experiences of young homeless people*. Available at: <https://www.llamau.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=3a84ee00-b19e-4007-b0a4-a2629ea344de>

<sup>110</sup> Equality Human Rights Commission. 2018. *The cumulative impact of tax and benefit reforms*. Available at: <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/cumulative-impact-assessment-report.pdf>

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.



The Children's Commissioner for Wales has produced a report which highlights numerous problems with regard to the accessibility of schools for disabled children, and a follow-up report found that there remained concern that local authorities are not systematically consulting children on their plans to make schools more accessible.<sup>112</sup>

A further report from the Commissioner also looked at transitions to adulthood for young people with learning disabilities.<sup>113</sup> It was based on the views and experiences of 99 young people aged 14 - 26, 187 parents and carers, and 43 professionals. The young disabled people they spoke to indicated that there are very few opportunities for them in terms of participating in planning and decision-making, so that services were often not tailored to their needs and priorities. This reflects the view of The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, which expressed concern in its last periodic report that disabled children in the UK 'do not see that their views are given due weight in making personal decisions in their life'. There are also few suitable supported employment opportunities for young people, limiting their access to the workplace. Participants in the study also suggested that there was less support for those moving to post-18 services.

Disabled children and young people that contributed to the Children's Commissioner's Article 31 project spoke about a number of challenges they faced in terms of accessing play, sport and leisure. Further information can be found in Section 5.

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<sup>112</sup> Children's Commissioner for Wales. 2018. *Full Lives: Equal Access. A follow up report on wheelchair accessibility in schools in Wales*. Available at: <https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Full-Lives-Equal-Access.pdf>

<sup>113</sup> Children's Commissioner for Wales. 2018. *Don't Hold Back: Transitions to adulthood for young people with learning disabilities*. Available at: <https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Dont-Hold-Back.pdf>



### 3. Education, Leisure and Cultural Activities

#### 3.1 Education

##### Key findings

- There are key attainment gaps across the Key Stages for children receiving care and support, children in areas of socio-economic deprivation and children from a Gypsy or Gypsy Roma background.
- Surveys have found that girls have higher levels of attainment than boys, but are less happy at school.
- Pupils eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) are five times more likely to be excluded from school.
- Looked-after children face numerous barriers to learning and participating in school life.
- Pupils face considerable levels of stress at Key Stage 4.
- Pupils want greater involvement in decisions regarding their course choices at Key Stage 4.

There is a generally a good level of data available on the fulfilment of the right to education in Wales, with a mixture of national statistics and survey data on children's lives. As will be emphasised, further information is needed on the experiences of some groups of children, such as disabled children.

##### 3.1.1. Academic achievement by pupil characteristics

In the 2016 Concluding Observations, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child criticised the UK for inequalities in educational attainment.<sup>114</sup> Statistical data published annually by the Welsh Government<sup>115</sup> shows that a number of key differences remain for some groups.

##### *Socio-economic background*

The Welsh Government publishes data on the relationship between academic achievement and eligibility for free school meals (FSM), which is widely used as an indicator of socio-economic disadvantage.<sup>116</sup> The data show that there is a strong relationship between these indicators at all Key Stages, with the performance gap between those eligible and ineligible increasing at each Key Stage. At Foundation Phase, the government has set a national target in 2015 with the aim that 80 per cent of children eligible for FSM at age seven achieve the expected level by 2017.<sup>117</sup>

<sup>114</sup> Committee on the Rights of the Child. 2016. Concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Available at: [https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRC%252fC%252fGBR%252fCO%252f5&Lang=en](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRC%252fC%252fGBR%252fCO%252f5&Lang=en)

<sup>115</sup> Welsh Government. 2018. *Academic achievement by pupil characteristics*. Available at: <https://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/academic-achievement-pupil-characteristics/?lang=en>

<sup>116</sup> Welsh Government. 2017. *Achievement and entitlement to free school meals*. Available at: <https://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/academic-achievement-free-school-meals/?lang=en>

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.





The level achieved in 2017 was 75.9 per cent, representing a 0.6 per cent reduction in the gap between 2015 and 2017 and a 14.3 per cent gap overall between those eligible for FSM and those who were not (90.1 per cent). The gap has narrowed by 10.2 per cent since 2012 at Key Stage 3. However, at Key Stage 4, the gap has remained relatively stable since 2010, with the Level 2 inclusive measures, including English, Welsh and Mathematics, fluctuating only slightly between 34 and 32 per cent, which shows that little progress has been made in relation to the performance of children from less advantaged backgrounds.<sup>118</sup>

While Key Stage attainment data cannot be directly compared across the UK because of differences in the assessment systems of Wales, England, Northern Ireland and Scotland, the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), provides comparable data based on testing a representative sample of 15 year olds in Wales on Science, Mathematics, reading and collaborative problem-solving.<sup>119</sup> The results put Wales considerably lower than the other UK nations in Science, Mathematics and Reading.<sup>120</sup> However, there are important limitations to the PISA data, particularly in terms of sampling.<sup>121</sup> Moreover, while Wales's performance is lower in general than the other UK nations, the relationship between socio-economic deprivation and science test scores is lower in Wales than in the rest of the UK, and compares favourably with other industrialised nations. As an example — the average gap between the performance of the most and least deprived students is 88 points for industrialised nations, and it is only 50 in Wales. However, this may be because pupils from the most advantaged backgrounds attained lower scores overall than pupils in other industrialised countries, which raises questions about whether there is an appropriate level of challenge for all pupils in the Welsh education system.<sup>122</sup>

Data from the WISERDEducation Multi-Cohort study have shown that there was a relationship between eligibility for free school meals and having access to resources to help with schoolwork in the home amongst participants in their sample. Ten per cent of children eligible for free school meals reported not having the internet at home, compared to 6 per cent of children ineligible. Moreover, 66 per cent of those eligible had a computer or laptop at home, which they could use for homework, compared to 89 per cent of children ineligible for free school meals.

### *Ethnicity*

There are also differences according to ethnicity, with children from a Chinese or Chinese British background (80.8 per cent) most likely to achieve the Level 2 inclusive threshold<sup>123</sup> at GCSE level, well over the average for all pupils at

<sup>118</sup> However, it should be noted that since 2016 the indicators used has changed and so the statistics provided from this point onwards are not directly comparable with previous years.

<sup>119</sup> Jerrim, J. & Shure, N. 2016. *Achievement of 15-Year-Olds in Wales: PISA 2015 National Report*. Available at: <http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/27969/1/161206-pisa-2015-en.pdf>

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Rees, G. and Taylor, C. 2013. Is there a 'crisis' in Welsh education?

*Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion*. Available at: <https://www.cymmrodorion.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Is-There-a-%E2%80%98Crisis%E2%80%99-in-Welsh-Education.pdf>

<sup>122</sup> Jerrim, J. & Shure, N. 2016. *Achievement of 15-Year-Olds in Wales: PISA 2105 National Report*. Available at: <http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/27969/1/161206-pisa-2015-en.pdf>

<sup>123</sup> Includes a GCSE grade A\*- C in English or Welsh First Language and Mathematics



59 per cent, according to aggregated data from 2015-2017.<sup>124</sup> Those from a White (58.7 per cent) and a Black or Black British background (57.8 per cent) performed slightly below the national average during this period. Within the White ethnicity category, only 21.5 per cent of students from a Gypsy or Gypsy Roma background achieved the threshold, although it is important to note that this is based on a population of only 79 pupils, and so is liable to fluctuate year on year.

### *Gender*

Statistics show that girls tend to outperform boys at all Key Stages.<sup>125</sup> In 2017, there was an 8.1 per cent difference between the proportion of girls and boys who achieved the Level 2 Inclusive measure.<sup>126</sup> The achievement gap between girls and boys is well evidenced worldwide, and is commonly attributed to girls' generally more positive attitudes towards education and learning.<sup>127</sup>

### *Children who have Special Educational Needs/Additional Learning Needs*

The proportion of pupils on the SEN register who achieve the expected outcomes on the Foundation Phase Indicator has increased between 2013 and 2017, from 50 per cent in 2013 to 57.8 per cent in 2017.<sup>128</sup> This is a slightly faster rate of increase than amongst the general school Foundation Phase population, of whom 83.1 per cent achieved the Indicator in 2013, compared to 87.4 in 2017.

In 2017, 20.6 per cent of children on the SEN register in year 11 attained the Level 2 Inclusive threshold, compared to 56 per cent of all year 11 pupils.<sup>129</sup> This represents a decrease of 5.5 per cent between 2016 and 2017, although there was a larger decline of 6 per cent in attainment across the whole year group during this period. Moreover, as previously noted, the results from 2017 onwards are not directly comparable with previous years.

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<sup>124</sup> Welsh Government. 2018. *Academic achievement by pupil characteristics*. Available at: <https://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/academic-achievement-pupil-characteristics/?lang=en>

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>127</sup> Smith, K. 2016. *Girls may perform better at school than boys - but their experience is much less happy*. Available at: <https://wiserd.ac.uk/news/girls-may-perform-better-school-boys-their-experience-much-less-happy-0>

<sup>128</sup> Welsh Government. 2018. *Academic achievement by pupil characteristics*. Available at: <https://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/academic-achievement-pupil-characteristics/?lang=en>

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*





### *Children with English as an Additional Language*

Of children with English as an Additional Language in the Foundation Phase, 61.8 per cent of those new to English, and 94.1 per cent who were fluent, achieved the expected level on the Foundation Phase Indicator.<sup>130</sup> The gap between those new to the language and those who were fluent widened across Key Stages, with just 11.5 per cent of those new to English in year 11 in 2017 achieving the Level 2 Inclusive threshold, compared to 84.3 per cent who were fluent.

### *Children in Welsh-medium, bilingual and English-medium schools*

As schools in Wales can use qualifications from English examination boards or WJEC, it is not possible to make direct comparisons between attainment within Welsh-medium, bilingual and English-medium schools in Wales. The average PISA results of the pupils sampled for tests in mathematics, reading and science were similar in Welsh and English medium schools.<sup>131</sup> Pupils in English-medium schools scored slightly higher for science and reading than those in Welsh-medium schools, although the differences were not statistically significant. Moreover, the results showed that pupils who study Welsh as a first language, and who took the tests in reading and science in English, did significantly better than those who study Welsh as a first language and took the test in Welsh, and so the relationship between language of instruction and attainment is not straightforward.

**Average PISA scores of pupils by whether they study English or Welsh in school and the language in which they completed the 2015 science PISA test<sup>132</sup>**

	Test in English	Test in Welsh
Study in English	485	N/A*
Study in Welsh	495	466

\*insufficient sample size for inclusion.

### *Children receiving care and support*

There is a substantial attainment gap between children who are receiving care and support from their local authority and all pupils in Wales. This gap widens as children progress through the Key Stages. In 2017, the gap between those achieving the expected outcomes at Foundation Phase was 32 per cent. This increased to 38 per cent at Key Stage 3 and to 43 per cent at Key Stage 4.<sup>133</sup> Between 2013 and 2016, children receiving care and support who were not looked-after consistently performed lower than those who were across Key Stages. While the difference between these groups appears to have narrowed in 2017 to only a one per cent gap at Key Stage 4, changes were made to the indicator in this year and so it is not possible to make direct comparisons to prior years.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Jerrim, J. & Shure, N. 2016. *Achievement of 15-Year-Olds in Wales: PISA 2015 National Report*. Available at: <http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/27969/1/161206-pisa-2015-en.pdf>

<sup>132</sup> Table replicated from Jerrim, J. & Shure, N. 2016. *Achievement of 15-Year-Olds in Wales: PISA 2015 National Report*. Available at: <http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/27969/1/161206-pisa-2015-en.pdf>

<sup>133</sup> Welsh Government. 2018. *Wales Children Receiving Care and Support Census, 2017* (Experimental Statistics). Available at: <https://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/wales-children-receiving-care-support-census/?lang=en>



### 3.1.2 School exclusions

Welsh Government releases annual data on the rates of permanent exclusions from schools and pupil referral units in Wales. The latest data, which refers to 2015/16, shows that the rate of permanent exclusions from schools in Wales has remained consistent at 0.2 exclusions per 1,000 pupils since 2011/12.<sup>134</sup> This is lower than England, which has a rate of 0.8 exclusions per 1,000 pupils in 2015/16.<sup>135</sup> However, the number of fixed term exclusions of five days or less has increased slightly in Wales, from 29.9 per 1,000 pupils in 2014/15, to 30.9 in 2015/16. The number of fixed term exclusions in Wales over five days has declined, from 1.7 per 1,000 pupils to 1.3. The Welsh Government also provides statistics on the number of exclusions according to pupil characteristics, including entitlement to FSM, special educational needs/additional learning needs, and ethnic background.<sup>136</sup> The data show that the rate of permanent exclusions per 1,000 pupils is five times higher for pupils entitled to FSM (0.5) than those who are not (0.1). Those entitled to FSM are also more likely to be excluded on a fixed term basis (81.9 per 1,000 for five days or less and 3.9 for more than five days) compared to those who are not (19.9 per 1,000 for five days or less and 0.8 for over five days). Rates of exclusion are also substantially higher for pupils who have a statement of Special Educational Needs, compared to those who do not.<sup>137</sup>

Of those with a statement, 0.6 per 1,000 were permanently excluded in 2015/16, compared to 0.1 without a statement. The rate of fixed-term exclusions of five days or less per 1,000 pupils with a statement was particularly high at 112.9 pupils, compared to 11 without.

The data by ethnicity show that pupils from a white ethnic background had the highest rates of each type of exclusion.

New research from WISERDEducation has also shown that while the proportion of students being formally excluded from school is relatively low in comparison with England, informal, and often hidden forms of exclusion prevail in schools, which can also have negative consequences for pupils.<sup>138</sup> It is not known whether comparable practices exist in England, but it is unlikely to be a Wales-only issue. Findings from qualitative research based on head teacher interviews conducted by WISERDEducation suggest that these internal exclusions can vary in duration, from a few minutes, to being permanently educated in off-site facilities while remaining on the school register.

<sup>134</sup> Welsh Government. 2017. *Permanent and fixed-term exclusions from schools in Wales, 2015/16*. Available at: <https://gov.wales/docs/statistics/2017/170928-permanent-fixed-term-exclusions-from-schools-2015-16-en.pdf>

<sup>135</sup> Department for Education. 2017. *Permanent and Fixed Period Exclusions in England: 2015 to 2016*. Available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/645075/SFR35\\_2017\\_text.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/645075/SFR35_2017_text.pdf)

<sup>136</sup> Welsh Government. 2017. *Permanent and fixed-term exclusions from schools in Wales, 2015/16*. *Tables: 2015/16*. Available at: <https://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/permanent-fixed-term-exclusions-from-schools/?lang=en>

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>138</sup> Power, S & Taylor, C. 2018. Not in the classroom, but still on the register: Hidden forms of school exclusion. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*. Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13603116.2018.1492644>



### 3.1.3 Learner experiences of school

Data from the HBSC shows that year 7 students are more likely to feel positive at school, with 45 per cent of pupils in this year group responding that they like school 'a lot' in comparison to only 16 per cent of year 10 and 11 students.<sup>139</sup> This may be partly explained by their answers to questions about how pressured they feel by schoolwork — with 39 per cent overall responding that they feel pressured, ranging from 22 per cent in year 7 to 59 per cent in year 11. There was also a statistically significant relationship between stress and gender, with 34 per cent of boys and 44 per cent of girls reporting that they felt pressure.

In 2018, the Children's Commissioner for Wales offered individual schools the opportunity to take part in The Right Way to Education Survey<sup>140</sup> to assist schools in auditing the extent to which pupils experience a children's rights approach in their school. 108 settings took part and over 6000 children and young people completed the survey. Of these just under 5500 were of primary school age and just over 500 of secondary school age.

Collectively 68% selected that all children and young people felt welcome in their school. There was however a difference highlighted between primary and secondary aged pupils, with 73% of primary aged respondents compared with 46% of secondary aged respondents stating that all children and young people feel welcome in their school.

#### *Experiences by gender*

The WISERDEducation survey has been collecting data on children's views and experiences of school over the last six years. The survey regularly asks pupils questions about how happy they are at school and their attitudes towards their teachers and learning. Clear gender differences have emerged from an analysis of data: the results show that girls in the sample tend to be more positive about the school itself, in terms of believing that teachers have high expectations of them and care about how well they perform. However, girls' experiences of school appear to be far less happy than those of boys,<sup>141</sup> with almost 25 per cent indicating that they felt worried at school, compared to only 16.5 per cent of boys. This is also reflected in 2015 doctoral research conducted with 901 final year GCSE students across Wales.<sup>142</sup> This research found that 16.3 per cent of girls indicated that they spent a lot of time worrying about their GCSEs, compared to just 6.7 per cent of boys. Moreover, while only 4.7 per cent of boys indicated that they found the workload for the qualification overwhelming at times, 10 per cent of girls did so. Thus, while the data show that girls tend to perform better than boys at school and have more positive attitudes towards

<sup>139</sup> Welsh Government. 2015. *2013/14 Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) Wales: key findings*. Available at: <https://gov.wales/docs/caecd/research/2015/151022-health-behaviour-school-children-2013-14-key-findings-en.pdf>

<sup>140</sup> Children's Commissioner for Wales. 2018. *Publications*. Available at: <https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/publications/>

<sup>141</sup> Smith, K. 2016. *Girls may perform better at school than boys - but their experience is much less happy*. Available at: <https://wiserd.ac.uk/news/girls-may-perform-better-school-boys-their-experience-much-less-happy-0>

<sup>142</sup> Barrance, R. 2016. *The views and experiences of students on the assessment and reform of GCSEs*. Unpublished doctoral thesis.



learning, it is important that girls' experiences of school are not overlooked in the push towards closing the performance gap.<sup>143</sup>

### *Experiences of Gypsy and Traveller children*

Two small-scale qualitative research projects were identified on the education of Gypsy and Traveller children. In 2015, a manager of a Traveller Education Service in North Wales undertook research with Gypsy and Traveller children on their experiences of education. This involved one to one interviews with eight 11 - 16 year old Gypsy/Traveller girls and one boy, as well as seven mothers and three teachers.<sup>144</sup> The key finding from this research was children and mothers felt that there was a clash between the goals of mainstream education, and what was expected of Traveller and Gypsy children in their communities. Some reported experiencing ridicule from other Travellers or Gypsies for engaging with education, while others voiced the opinion that the mainstream education is not appropriate for them and that schools are not responsive to their needs. A further project from Travelling Ahead, a Save the Children project, involving children and young people from Gypsy, Roma and Travelling communities in Wales, conducted research around their views and experiences of school between 2014/2015.<sup>145</sup> It involved survey research with 59 young people and a focus group with 12 more. The findings were mixed, with some indicating that they had good support and understanding from other pupils and teachers, and others suggesting that teachers (and supply teachers in particular) should have further training on how to work with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children.

### *Experiences of looked-after children*

In 2015, the Welsh Government published a report produced by the Children's Social Care Research and Development Centre (CASCADE) at Cardiff University about the educational experiences, opinions, attainment, achievement and aspirations of looked-after children in Wales.<sup>146</sup> As part of this, in-depth qualitative research was undertaken with looked-after children and young people (LACYF). The research found that LACYF face numerous barriers in learning and participating in school life. These include:

- Placement and school moves, which disrupt their routines and make it difficult to form and maintain supportive relationships with professionals, carers and their peers.

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<sup>143</sup> Smith, K. 2016. *Girls may perform better at school than boys - but their experience is much less happy*. Available at: <https://wiserd.ac.uk/news/girls-may-perform-better-school-boys-their-experience-much-less-happy-0>

<sup>144</sup> Hamilton, P. 2018. Engaging Gypsy and Traveller pupils in secondary education in Wales: tensions and dilemmas of addressing difference. *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, 27:1, 4-22, DOI: 10.1080/09620214.2017.1377100

<sup>145</sup> Travelling Ahead. 2015. *Good Practice in Education Peer Research Project: Young People's Report*. Available at: <http://www.travellingahead.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Travelling-Ahead-Young-Peoples-Education-Research-report-Eng.pdf>

<sup>146</sup> Welsh Government and CASCADE. 2015. *Understanding the educational experiences and opinions, attainment, achievement and aspirations of looked after children in Wales*. Available at: <https://gov.wales/docs/caecd/research/2015/151111-understanding-educational-experiences-opinions-looked-after-children-en.pdf>



- Having to attend numerous meetings during school time, which they felt singled them out as being different and could lead to falling behind with classwork.
- A lack of educational support from foster carers, sometimes due to limitations in their knowledge and skills.
- A lack of educational resources, such as books and IT equipment.

Participants emphasised that a personalised approach for each child was required. Moreover, they were critical of approaches that identified them as being different. Numerous suggestions were made by participants, such as providing universal programmes such as Head Start and mentoring schemes, as these would not single looked-after children out and would provide support for all children who required it.

### *Experiences of disabled children*

There is very few data sources on the educational experiences of disabled children. A recent report from the Children's Commissioner for Wales highlighted that local authorities were not doing enough to ensure that all schools were accessible to disabled children, and were not consulting disabled children and their families to enable them to participate in the planning process for transitioning to secondary education, with the result that some children were being forced to attend different schools to their friends.<sup>147</sup> Further research commissioned by the Children's Commissioner for the evaluation its Super Ambassadors scheme found that children in Special Schools sometimes found it difficult to interact with pupils from other schools because of other children's perceptions of them, which limited their desire to attend extra-curricular events outside of their schools.<sup>148</sup> Related information can also be found in the bullying section of this report.

#### 3.1.4 Participation in educational decision-making

One source of evidence is research conducted by the Children's Commissioner for Wales. In 2015, the Commissioner asked just under 6,000 young people how often they were asked their views about what happens at school or nursery (in the case of the youngest children).<sup>149</sup> The results show that 78 per cent of 3 - 7 year olds believe that adults listen to them in their contexts. The older age groups, those aged 7 - 11 and 11 - 18, were asked how often they were asked their views at school, whether they heard the outcome and whether they felt their views made a difference. The results show that the younger age group tend to be more positive overall:

- 30 per cent of 7 - 11 year olds and 25 per cent of 11 - 18+ year olds said they were often asked their views at school.

<sup>147</sup> Children's Commissioner for Wales. 2018. *Full Lives: Equal Access. A follow up report on wheelchair accessibility in schools in Wales*. Available at: <https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Full-Lives-Equal-Access.pdf>

<sup>148</sup> Children's Commissioner for Wales. 2017. *Super Ambassadors Evaluation*. Available at: <https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/our-schemes/primary/ambassadors-evaluation/>

<sup>149</sup> Children's Commissioner for Wales. 2016. *Beth Nesa? What Next? The findings*. Available at: <https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Overview-English-FINAL.compressed.pdf>



- 39 per cent of 7 - 11 year olds and 28 per cent of 11 - 18+ year olds usually hear the outcome when asked.
- 28 per cent of 7 - 11 year olds and 21 per cent of 11 - 18+ year olds felt that children's views make a big difference at school.

Older pupils who completed the Health Behaviours in School Aged Children Survey were also less positive about participation opportunities in their schools.<sup>150</sup> It found that 50 per cent of children agree that pupils' ideas are treated seriously at their school. This decreases with age however, with 70 per cent of year 7 students agreeing with this statement compared to only 40 per cent of year 10 and 11 students. While there is no clear explanation for this trend, it may be that older pupils have higher expectations for participation than their younger counterparts, which they do not feel are fulfilled. This may also be a consequence of the intensive qualification-driven curriculum at Key Stage 4, which does not provide young people with much space for making decisions, particularly over teaching and learning.

68% of all pupils that responded to the Children's Commissioner's The Right Way to Education Survey 2018<sup>151</sup> said that they have a chance to take part in decisions in their school. There was a difference however in primary and secondary aged pupils, with 72% of primary aged respondents compared with 42% of secondary aged respondents selecting that they can take part in decisions.

### *School councils*

Wales is the only part of the UK where there is a statutory duty on schools to have a school council.<sup>152</sup> Despite this, there is very little research on school councils in Wales. The only source of data~~on~~ found on school councils is the WISERDEducation Multi-Cohort Study, which asked 809 secondary school pupils about their experience with school councils in 2018. Of those who responded:

- 28 per cent had been a member of their school council
- 20 per cent had raised an issue with a council
- 22 per cent were aware of any issue that had been raised by their council

When asked to specify the issues raised by their council, the most popular choice was uniform, followed by facilities and food. However, overall, there appeared to be a high level of ambivalence regarding the council. 39 per cent of pupils chose three on a scale of one to five where one indicates that the council makes no difference to what happens at school, and the five indicating that it makes a lot of difference.

<sup>150</sup> Welsh Government. 2015. *2013/14 Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) Wales: key findings*. Available at: <https://gov.wales/docs/caecd/research/2015/151022-health-behaviour-school-children-2013-14-key-findings-en.pdf>

<sup>151</sup> Children's Commissioner for Wales. 2018. *Publications*. Available at: <https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/publications>

<sup>152</sup> National Assembly for Wales. 2005. *The School Councils (Wales) Regulations 2005*. Available at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2005/3200/contents/made>





### *Choice in learning, teaching and assessment*

While the Children's Commissioner for Wales emphasises that children should have a choice about learning<sup>153</sup>, there is there are limited data sources which provide evidence whether this is happening in Wales.

The Children's Commissioner's Right Way to Education Survey 2018<sup>154</sup> asked how children are involved in the design, monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning. The results highlight differences in experience between primary and secondary aged children.

- Collectively 72% of children and young people said that they have a chance to share what they think about their lessons. 77% of primary aged children selected this option compared with 48% of secondary.
- Collectively 78% said that their teachers are interested in how they feel in school. 83% of primary aged children selected this option compared with 51% of secondary.
- Collectively 54% said they sometimes have choices about what they learn. 58% of primary aged children selected this option compared with 32% of secondary.
- Collectively 71% said that they can share their opinions about learning. 76% of primary aged children selected this option compared with 43% of secondary.

There is some evidence from older children that suggests that Key Stage 4 students are frustrated by a lack of opportunities for engagement over GCSE choices and courses. In the 2018 sweep of the WISERDEducation survey, pupils were asked how much say they would like to have in decisions about various issues around school on a scale of one to five, with one indicating they don't want a say, and five indicating they want a lot of say. The results show that the issue they would like to have most say over is subject choice, with 62 per cent of participants selecting either four or five for this.

Subject choice has also been raised as an important issue for GCSE students in previous research conducted in 2015.<sup>155</sup> This mixed methods project included ten focus groups and surveys with over 1,600 students. The findings of the qualitative strand of the research suggest that although the Welsh Government has introduced measures to improve the range of subjects available to student at KS4<sup>156</sup>, student still have concerns about their choices and the impact restrictions had on their future life trajectories. This was particularly due to the arranging of subjects into 'choice columns', so that only particular combinations of subjects can be selected. The pupils who participated in the research suggested that schools could consult pupils about the subjects they wanted to study before drawing up the columns, to ensure that they were able to accommodate the choices of the majority of pupils. Students also

<sup>153</sup> Children's Commissioner for Wales. 2017. *The Right Way: A children's rights approach for education in Wales*. Available at: <https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/The-Right-Way-Education.pdf>

<sup>154</sup> Children's Commissioner for Wales. 2018. *Publications*. Available at: <https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/publications>

<sup>155</sup> Barrance, R. & Elwood, J. (2018) Young people's views on choice and fairness through their experiences of curriculum as examination specifications at GCSE, *Oxford Review of Education*, 44:1, 19-36, DOI: 10.1080/03054985.2018.1409964

<sup>156</sup> Under the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure (2009) each pupil must have a choice of at least 25 courses, including three vocational ones at KS4.



reported that they wanted more choice in the tiers they were entered into, which raised concerns about the restricted opportunities for pupils entered into foundation tier, who could not attain over a C in GCSE subjects. They also felt that they should be consulted on the type of course they undertook, e.g. modular or linear,<sup>157</sup> as they felt that different courses enabled different students to fulfil their potential.

On a national level, students argued that the pace of assessment reform was happening too rapidly in the UK and that students should be consulted to ensure that decisions regarding qualifications are made in their best interests.<sup>158</sup> There were concerns that changes to qualifications were being made for political reasons, and a perception amongst some participants that students undertaking new qualifications were being experimented upon, with repercussions for their future life opportunities if the changes affected their attainment.<sup>159</sup>

### 3.1.5 Knowledge and understanding of rights

Children cannot claim their rights if they do not know that they have rights, and so it is important that children are aware of what rights they have. In 2016, a Welsh Government survey asked children about their knowledge of children's rights, and found that 41 per cent of the young people in the sample did not know about children's rights and a further 77 per cent had not heard of the UNCRC.<sup>160</sup>

In 2018, the Children's Commissioner's for Wales Right Way to Education Survey<sup>161</sup> asked if pupils had heard of children's rights: 77% answering the primary survey and 67% answering the secondary survey had heard of children's rights.

The same survey asked children and young people who was responsible for making sure they get their rights: 60% chose that adults are responsible, 35% chose that they as individuals are responsible and 5% of respondents chose that other children were responsible. Secondary respondents were less likely to think that adults are responsible for upholding children's rights, with 51% of secondary aged young people selecting that adults were responsible compared to 61% of primary aged children.

### 3.1.6 Young people age 16 - 18 Not in Education, Employment or Training

The proportion of 16 - 18 year olds not in education, employment or training (NEET) has shown a gradual decline since 2011, where end of year statistics showed it stood at 12.2 per cent, compared to 9.5 per cent at the end of

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<sup>157</sup> Modular courses enable students to spread exams and controlled assessments across the two year course, whereas for linear ones all the assessment must be undertaken by exam at the end of the two years.

<sup>158</sup> Barrance, R. & Elwood, J. (2018) National assessment policy reform 14–16 and its consequences for young people: student views and experiences of GCSE reform in Northern Ireland and Wales, *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice*, 25:3, 252-271, DOI: 10.1080/0969594X.2017.1410465

<sup>159</sup> It should be noted that examination regulators in the UK are using a strategy termed 'comparable outcomes' to minimise dips following the introduction of new qualifications.

<sup>160</sup> Children's Commissioner for Wales. 2017. *The Right Way: A children's rights approach for education in Wales*. Available at: <https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/The-Right-Way-Education.pdf>

<sup>161</sup> Children's Commissioner for Wales. 2018. *Publications*. Available at: <https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/publications>





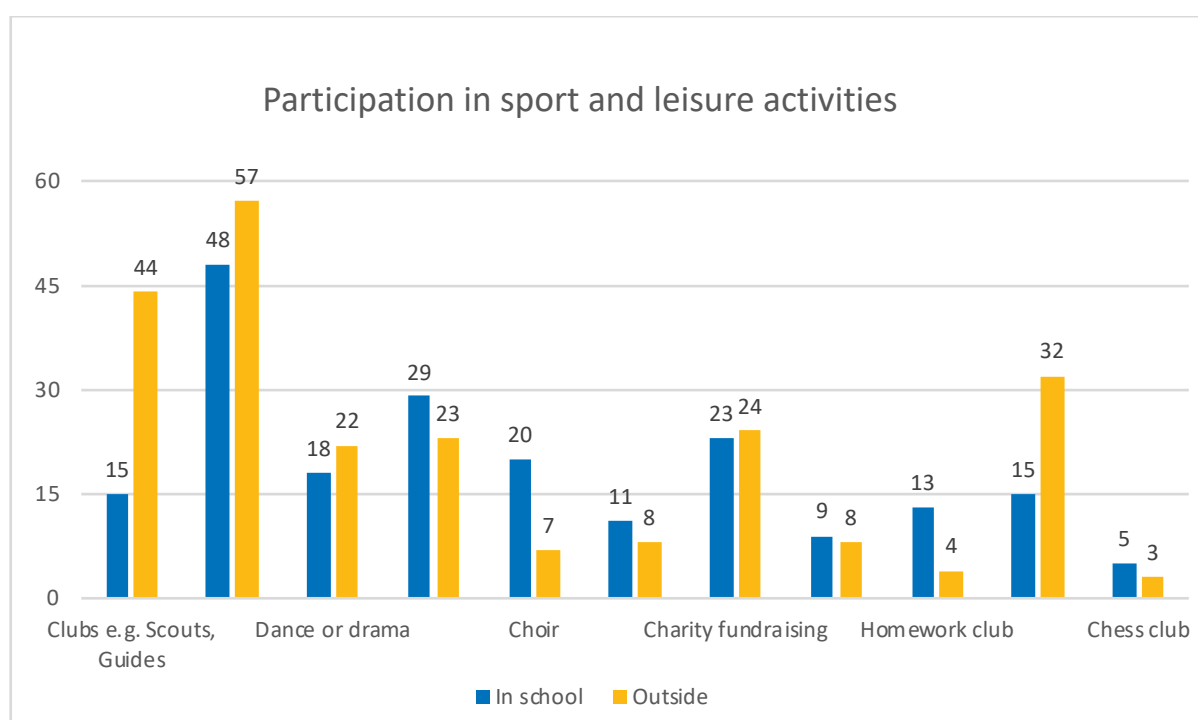
2017.<sup>162</sup> Comparable data are not available for England due to the introduction in 2013/14 of legislation that raised the mandatory age of participation in education or training to 18 in England.

### 3.2. Leisure, arts and play

- Responses of pupils to the WISERDEducation survey show that boys in the sample were more likely to be physically active while girls participated more in arts and cultural activities.
- Children eligible for FSM in the study were less likely to play instruments and participate in non-competitive exercise outside school.
- The Arts Council for Wales identified a relationship between arts attendance and FSM within their sample.
- Research with disabled children suggests that accessibility was a barrier to play and leisure activities.

#### 3.2.1 Extra-curricular activities

In the 2017 WISERDEducation survey, children were asked which extra-curricular activities they had participated in within and outside school. The results are presented in the chart below:



<sup>162</sup>Statistics for Wales. 2018. *Young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) Year to 31 March 2018*. Available at: <https://gov.wales/docs/statistics/2018/180726-young-people-not-education-employment-training-year-to-31-march-2018-en.pdf>



The data shows that some activities are more popular within schools, such as choirs, whereas non-competitive sport and exercise such as going to the gym or yoga are more popular outside of school. There are some gender differences between the responses of children by gender and eligibility for FSM.

Boys were **more** likely to:

- Take part in sports both within and outside school.

Girls were **more** likely to:

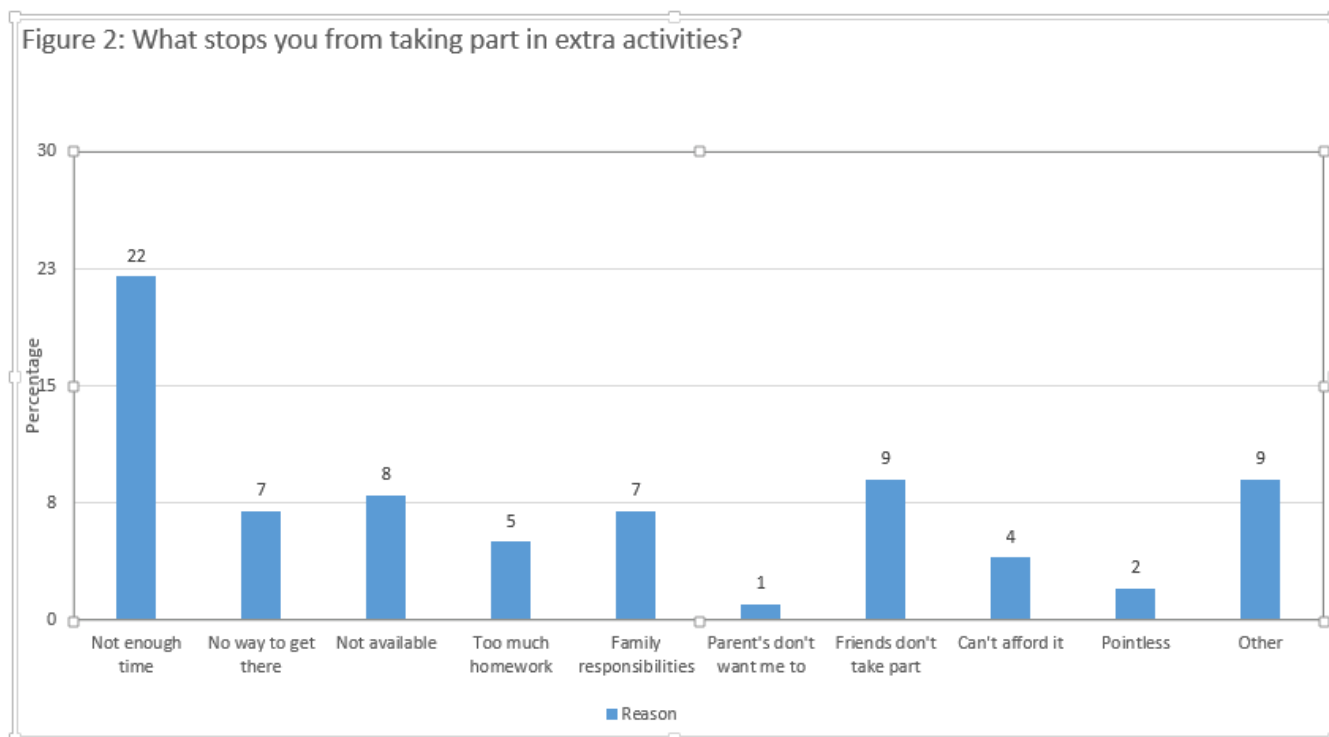
- Participate in dance or drama, particularly outside school.
- Play a musical instrument or be in a choir, both inside and outside school.
- To take part in charity fundraising, inside and outside school.
- Take part in non-competitive exercise such as yoga or attending a gym.

Children who were eligible for FSM were **less** likely to:

- Play sports, particularly inside school.
- Play a musical instrument, particularly outside of school.
- Take part in non-competitive exercise, e.g. yoga or gym, particularly outside of school.

Participants were also asked whether there were any further activities they would like to take part in and why they did. The responses can be seen in Figure 2 below:





Time was the most substantial barrier to participation for children, which may be a result of taking enough other activities already, or, at Key Stage 4 in particular, schoolwork.

### 3.2.2 Access to the arts

The Arts Council of Wales has interviewed 1,000 children and young people aged 7 - 18 on an annual basis since 2011.<sup>163</sup> The results show that in 2017 the proportion of respondents who reported attending events, centred around the nine following art forms, has increased by 3.6 per cent to 86.5 per cent:

- plays
- musicals
- opera
- classical music
- other live music
- dance performances
- art or craft galleries or exhibitions

<sup>163</sup> Arts Council of Wales. 2017. *Children's Omnibus Survey*. Available at: <http://www.arts.wales/research/annual-surveys/childrens-omnibus-survey>



- readings, storytellings and other literature events
- carnivals and street arts

Younger children attend more events than their older counterparts, and girls are also more likely to attend. There remains a relationship between socio-economic background and arts attendance, with those from a less deprived background more likely to attend, although the gap has almost halved since 2016, from 9.4 per cent to 5.2. Moreover, the gap between those participating in the arts has decreased since 2016, and now stands at only 2 per cent. Overall, participation in the arts is high, with the majority of pupils (87.4 per cent) reporting that they had participated that year.

The Children's Commissioner for Wales produced a report in 2018 following on from the responses relevant to Article 31 from the Beth Nesa survey of just under 6,000 children and young people they conducted in 2015.<sup>164</sup> The report found that children and young people engage in a variety of different play, sports, arts and cultural activities. 96 per cent of the children surveyed had visited a museum, castle or other historical site, experiences that were often provided through school.<sup>165</sup>

### 3.2.3 Play

Wales has been at the forefront of promoting children's right to play and is the first region in the UK to place a statutory duty upon Local Authorities to meet duties around provision of play facilities. The Children's Commissioner for Wales has published two reports with data on the views and experiences of children on play. The first is based on the results of the Beth Nesa consultation.<sup>166</sup> This found that for children aged between three and seven, areas for play was one of their top priorities. A follow up report based on the views and experiences of 450 young people on their access to play, arts, heritage and leisure facilities explored this further in 2018 through a series of workshops with different groups.<sup>167</sup> The research found that children reported that while some outdoor play spaces were valued, they felt that they had limited places to play and spend their leisure time that were safe and suitable to their needs. In particular, disabled children noted that there were few accessible places outside of school where they could play and spend leisure time.

<sup>164</sup> Children's Commissioner for Wales. 2016. *Beth Nesa? What Next? The findings*. Available at: <https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Overview-English-FINAL.compressed.pdf>

<sup>165</sup> Children's Commissioner for Wales. 2018. *Spotlight report: Article 31*. Available at: <https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Play-FINAL.pdf>

<sup>166</sup> Children's Commissioner for Wales. 2016. *Beth Nesa? What Next? The findings*. Available at: <https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Overview-English-FINAL.compressed.pdf>

<sup>167</sup> Children's Commissioner for Wales. 2018. *Spotlight report: Article 31*. Available at: <https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Play-FINAL.pdf>



### 3.2.4 Screen time

The Millennium Cohort Study (MCMS) is another source of data on how children use their leisure time. The MCMS is a cohort study has been tracking children across the UK since they were born in the year 2000. At age 14, they collected data on children's time use. This includes data on the amount of time spent using computers or watching television. The data shows that cohort members spent a substantial amount of their leisure time using screens. Over 44 per cent of the cohort members reported watching TV or videos on the computer for over three hours per weekday. Just under one in ten reported doing so for over seven hours. The majority of the participants also reported using the internet at home for over three hours a day, with just over one in five using it for over seven hours. As noted earlier in section 2.2.9, the use of social media appears to be having an effect on children's sleeping patterns, with over a fifth noting that they almost always woke during the night to check social media and those pupils noting increased levels of tiredness the next day.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> Power, S., Taylor, C. & Horton, K. (2017) Sleepless in school? The social dimensions of young people's bedtime rest and routines, *Journal of Youth Studies*, 20:8, 945-958, DOI: [10.1080/13676261.2016.1273522](https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2016.1273522)



## 4. Family environment and alternative care

### Key findings

- In March 2017 there were 15,930 children who needed care and support.
- 2,135 children were on the Child Protection Register and approximately 5,780 were looked-after in March 2017.
- Ten per cent of looked-after children had three or more placements in 2016/17.
- Wales is the only UK nation which does not provide data on the proportion of children on child protection registers or plans for over 2 years. There are a number of negative health and wellbeing outcomes associated with children who are looked-after, including low life satisfaction and relationships with teachers and friends.

### *Children in Need of Care and Support*

Between 2010 and 2016, Stats Wales published results of their Children in Need census, which gave details on the numbers of looked-after children and on the child protection register by a number of different variables including educational attainment, school attendance and health. Since 2017, they have instead published the Children Receiving Care and Support Census (CRCS).<sup>169</sup> Those classified as needing care and support include children with an illness or disability, children on the child protection register and children who are looked-after by their local authority.

In March 2017, there were 15,930 children who needed care and support.<sup>170</sup> Of these:

- 2,135 were on the Child Protection Register (13.4 per cent).
- 5,780 were looked-after (36.3 per cent).<sup>171</sup>
- Over half (53 per cent) received care because of risk of, or actual abuse or neglect.
- Seven per cent were recorded as having mental health problems.
- Four per cent had substance abuse problems.

<sup>169</sup> Welsh Government. 2018. *Wales Children Receiving Care and Support Census, 2017 (Experimental Statistics)*. Available at: <https://gov.wales/docs/statistics/2018/180319-wales-children-receiving-care-support-census-2017-en.pdf>

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

<sup>171</sup> The estimate from the Looked after children census puts the number slightly higher, at 5,954. See: Welsh Government. 2017. *Experimental Statistics: Children looked after by local authorities, 2016-17*. Available at: <https://gov.wales/docs/statistics/2017/171214-children-looked-after-local-authorities-2016-17-en.pdf>



The CRCS also provides data on whether children receiving care and support are up-to-date with general and dental health checks as well as immunisations. Of these:

- 80 per cent of children five or younger were up-to-date with health checks.
- 77 per cent of children five or older were up-to-date with dental checks.
- 84 per cent of children were up-to-date with immunisations.

Statistics for Wales also publishes more detailed statistics on look-after children.<sup>172</sup> The data for 2016/17 show that there was a 5 per cent increase in the proportion of children who were looked-after in the year ending 31 March 2017.<sup>173</sup> Of those who became looked-after in 2016-17, 62 per cent did so due to abuse or neglect. This has increased since 2003, when the proportion starting to be looked-after for one of these reasons was 48 per cent.

The proportion of children adopted from care decreased by 8 per cent.<sup>174</sup> Ten per cent of children had three or more placements in the 2016-17 year. 6.3 per cent of children who were added to the Child Protection Register for this year were re-registrations.<sup>175</sup> As noted by the NSPCC. Unlike the rest of the UK, there is no data in Wales on the proportion of children on child protection plans or registers for longer than two years.

There are around 1.5 times as many children in care in Wales as in England.<sup>176</sup> In Wales, as in other UK nations, these children are much more likely to come from deprived communities. Children are sixteen times more likely to be in care if they come from the most deprived 10 per cent of lower super output areas in Wales than if they come from the least deprived 10 per cent.<sup>177</sup> In all UK nations there is a social gradient, with the rate of children in care increasing steadily with every level of increasing deprivation. In Wales the social gradient is steepest all the UK nations.<sup>178</sup> In other words, the difference in likelihood of being a 'looked after' child between the most deprived and least deprived communities is greater in Wales than the rest of the UK.

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<sup>172</sup> Welsh Government. 2017. *Experimental Statistics: Children looked after by local authorities, 2016-17*. Available at: <https://gov.wales/docs/statistics/2017/171214-children-looked-after-local-authorities-2016-17-en.pdf>

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> There is data on this for all four nations, but the data for Wales for 2016/17 is not comparable because of the different ways it has been reported. For more information see: National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. 2018. *How safe are our children? 2018*. Available at: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/research-reports/how-safe-children-2018-report.pdf>

<sup>176</sup> Elliott, M. 2017. *Looked-after children in Wales: An analysis of the backgrounds of children entering public care*. PhD Thesis, Cardiff University. Available at: [https://orca.cf.ac.uk/110473/2/Thesis\\_FINAL\\_Martin%20Elliott\\_MASTER.pdf](https://orca.cf.ac.uk/110473/2/Thesis_FINAL_Martin%20Elliott_MASTER.pdf)

<sup>177</sup> Elliott, M. and Scourfield, J. 2017. *Identifying and understanding inequalities in child welfare intervention rates*. Project Report. Coventry University, Child Welfare Inequalities Project. Available at: <http://www.coventry.ac.uk/research/research-directories/current-projects/2014/child-welfare-inequality-uk/cwip-project-outputs/>

<sup>178</sup> Bywaters, P., Scourfield, J., Jones, C., Elliott, E., Hooper, J., McCartan, C., Shapira, M., Bunting, L., Daniel, B. (forthcoming, 2018) Child welfare inequalities in the four nations of the UK, *Journal of Social Work*.





## Private Fostering

A private fostering arrangement occurs when a child under 16 (under 18 if disabled) is cared for by an adult to whom they are not related, under a private arrangement between a parent and carer that lasts for 28 days or more.

However, Local Authorities have responsibility for assessing the suitability of the placement and visiting the child at specified intervals. There were 44 new private fostering arrangements reported for the period for 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017, compared to 41 in the previous period.<sup>179</sup> It is likely that these figures are under representative due to underreporting by parents, carers and other relevant parties.<sup>180</sup>

## Young persons aged 16 or over leaving care

677 young persons aged 16 and over left care between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2017 of which<sup>181</sup>:

- 509 (75 per cent) of those leaving care were 18 or over.
- 29 per cent of young people leaving care moved into independent living arrangements and were no longer looked after.
- 21 per cent returned home to live with parents, relatives or other person with parental responsibility.
- Four per cent were sentenced to custody.
- Just under 10 per cent were recorded as being in unsuitable accommodation.

## Experiences of care experienced children and young people

A pilot of the 'Your Life, Your Care' survey<sup>182</sup>, was conducted with children and young people in six Local Authorities in Wales during 2017 and 2018. An overview report in respect of the pilot is due to be published by the Welsh Government. The Welsh Government has also reported on the educational experiences and aspirations of children, as discussed in section 3.1.3. However, previously there has been little qualitative-research on the experiences of children in care.

A number small-scale national projects have also been completed by the Children's Commissioner for Wales, which sought the views and experiences of children in need of care and support (including looked after children) and care leavers.

In 2015, the Children's Commissioner published *The Right Care: Children's Rights in Residential Care*, a report on the experiences of young people in care, which was informed by 20 semi structured interviews and a focus group involving 14 young people.<sup>183</sup> Many young people expressed positive views about living in residential care, when

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<sup>179</sup> Statistics Wales, 2017. *Experimental Statistics: Private Fostering in Wales, 2016-17*. Available at: <https://gov.wales/docs/statistics/2017/171128-private-fostering-2016-17-en.pdf>

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

<sup>181</sup> Welsh Government. 2017. *Experimental Statistics: Children looked after by local authorities, 2016-17*. Available at: <https://gov.wales/docs/statistics/2017/171214-children-looked-after-local-authorities-2016-17-en.pdf>

<sup>182</sup> The survey is part of the Bright Spots programme. Further information is available at: <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/sps/research/projects/current/brightspots/>

<sup>183</sup> Children's Commissioner for Wales. 2015. *The Right Care: Children's Rights in Residential Care in Wales*. Available at: <https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/The-right-care.pdf>



they were asked what it was like and how it compared to previous places they had lived. They discussed their lack of choice in terms of going to live in residential care but stated that on the whole young people had a fair amount of involvement in decisions about their everyday environment.

Young people in this report expressed satisfaction about living conditions and opportunities for activities. Their experiences of education were mixed, with some young people engaging well with education for the first time in years. In terms of safety, young people reported feeling safe, although some had concerns about others in the home as well as consistent practice in respect of which incidents triggered a police response. Meanwhile relationships were seen a key, particularly their relationship with the care staff at their homes.

The *It's My Life* report was also published in 2015 by the Children's Commissioner, following on from the 2011 *Lost After Care* report.<sup>184</sup> This highlighted the concerns of young people about the prospect of leaving care and made recommendations about how local councils could improve the transition process for children. The 2015 research asked 43 young people who were in foster care, residential care, or had left care, about their experiences, and the issues they faced in their lives.<sup>185</sup> Many of these young people expressed frustrations about feeling as if they were not listened to by professionals or given sufficient opportunities to participate in decisions about their futures. A lack of appropriate housing was also identified by young people as an obstacle when planning their transition to leaving care.

In 2016 the Commissioner then undertook a further project with care leavers, this time speaking to over 100 young people from across Wales — *Hidden Ambitions*. Some of the experiences and issues that were raised in the 2015 report remained pertinent, including housing and not feeling listened to.<sup>186</sup> Young people also talked about needing help after the age of 21, mental health issues and needing financial support.<sup>187</sup>

Another source of information on the experiences of looked-after children is the 2015/16 Student Health and Wellbeing Survey, which included a representative sample of 28,838 students across Wales. It shows that looked-after children face a number of challenges to their health and wellbeing. The findings of this survey show that looked-after children aged 11 - 16 were more likely to report<sup>188</sup>:

- Low life satisfaction
- Experiencing dating violence
- Low-quality relationships with teachers

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<sup>184</sup> Children's Commissioner for Wales. 2011. *Lost after Care*. Available at: [https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/lost-after-care-2013\\_eng.pdf](https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/lost-after-care-2013_eng.pdf)

<sup>185</sup> Children's Commissioner for Wales. 2015. *It's My Life*. Available at: <https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Its-my-life-web.pdf>

<sup>186</sup> Children's Commissioner for Wales. 2016. *Hidden Ambitions*. Available at: <https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Hidden-Ambitions.pdf>

<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

<sup>188</sup> School Health Research Network. 2017. *Wellbeing in young people in foster care in Wales*. Available at: [http://www.shrn.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Long\\_LAC\\_English.pdf](http://www.shrn.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Long_LAC_English.pdf)



- Not being able to depend on friends
- Being bullied
- Smoking weekly
- Using cannabis recently
- Having ever used Mephedrone



## 5. Violence, abuse and neglect

### Key findings

- There have been large increases in recorded cases of abuse and neglect over the last decade, but this is thought to be caused by better reporting procedures and public awareness.
- The five-year average child homicide rate for the period ending 2016/17 has risen slightly to 4.8 per million children.
- There were 2,845 recorded sexual offences against children under 16 years old in 2016/17. This is a rate of 51.1 sexual offences per 10,000 children aged under 16, which is the highest rate across all four UK nations this year.<sup>189</sup>
- There were 426 recorded cruelty and neglect offences in Wales in 2016/2017, a rate of 7.6 offences per 10,000 children aged under 16.
- 18.6 per cent of Welsh survey respondents aged 11 to 17 reported being subject to some form of severe maltreatment

As criminal justice is not a devolved area there are limited data on a Wales-only basis relating to the numbers of children who are victims of crime. However, the Crime Survey of England and Wales provides estimates of children who have been victims of crime on a two-country basis. According to these estimates, there were around 660,000 crimes against children in 2017, resulting in approximately 11 in every 100 children aged between 10 and 15 years of age being victims of crime during this period.<sup>190</sup> Just under half of these offences were violent crimes (46 per cent), with most of these classified as low-level violence, with the remainder thefts of personal property (39 per cent), criminal damage to personal property (8 per cent) and robbery (7 per cent).

The NSPCC has developed a series of indicators in order to measure the extent of abuse and neglect of children in the UK (see Appendix 1 for the full list).<sup>191</sup> These measures are based upon official national statistics, survey data and recording data from ChildLine and NSPCC. In 2018, it published a comprehensive report based on these indicators, comparing the performance of each region of the UK on these indicators for 2016/2017.

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<sup>189</sup> National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. 2018. *How safe are our children? 2018*. Available at: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/research-reports/how-safe-children-2018-report.pdf>

<sup>190</sup> Office for National Statistics. 2018. *Crime Survey of England and Wales*. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/crimeinenglandandwales/yearendingdecember2017>

<sup>191</sup> National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. 2018. *How safe are our children? 2018*. Available at: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/research-reports/how-safe-children-2018-report.pdf>



The report shows that the five-year average rate for child homicides in Wales is 4.8 per million children. There were ~~no~~ three recorded homicides of children in Wales in the latest year recorded, 2016/17. The five-year annual average child homicide rate for 2012/13 to 2016/17 was:

- 5.9 per million children under 18 in England
- 4.8 per million in Wales
- 1.8 per million in Northern Ireland
- 4.1 per million in Scotland

The last major survey conducted by the NSPCC directly with children under 16 was in 2009, and published in 2011.<sup>192</sup> It involved interviews with over 4,000 young people about experiences of abuse and neglect, and suggested that 18.6 per cent of children aged 11 to 17 in UK had been subjected to a form of severe maltreatment. Further evidence can be found in the Crime Survey for England and Wales, which asked adults aged 16 to 59 in 2016 if they had been psychologically, physically or sexually abused or assaulted by an adult before the age of 16, or whether they had witnessed domestic abuse.<sup>193</sup> Data provided for 16 - 24 year olds suggests that 13.8 per cent have been subject to some form of abuse, including 3.8 per cent who reported suffering physical abuse, and 3 per cent who reported sexual assault.<sup>194</sup>

There were 2,845 recorded sexual offences against children under 16 years old in 2016/17.<sup>195</sup> This is a rate of 51.1 sexual offences per 10,000 children aged under 16, which is the highest rate across all four UK nations this year.

In 2016/17 there were:

- 446 cases of a rape of a child under 13
- 340 cases of a rape of a child under 16
- 648 cases of sexual assaults on a child under 13
- 566 cases of sexual activity involving a child under 13

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<sup>192</sup> National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. 2018. *How safe are our children? 2018*. Available at: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/research-reports/how-safe-children-2018-report.pdf>

<sup>193</sup> Office for National Statistics. 2016. *Abuse during childhood: findings from the crime survey for England and Wales, year ending March 2016*. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/releases/abuseduringchildhoodfindingsfromtheyearendingmarch2016crimesurveyforenglandandwales>

<sup>194</sup> Office for National Statistics. 2016. *Abuse during childhood – Appendix tables*. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/file?uri=/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/datasets/abuseduringchildhoodappendixtables/yearendingmarch2016/appendixtablesabuseduringchildhoodyearendingmarch2016.xls>

<sup>195</sup> National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. 2018. *How safe are our children? 2018*. Available at: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/research-reports/how-safe-children-2018-report.pdf>



- 791 cases of sexual activity involving a child under 16
- 54 cases of sexual grooming
- 5 cases of abuse of position of trust of a sexual nature (under 18s)
- 24 cases of abuse of children through sexual exploitation (under 18s)

The majority of these are higher than in the 2015/16 academic year.

Since 2015/16:

- There was a 50.9 per cent increase in cases of sexual activity with a child aged under 13.
- The number of cases of a sexual nature involving an abuse of a position of trust has decreased.
- There has been a 22.7 per cent increase in the number of recorded offences of sexual grooming.<sup>196</sup>

However, as stated earlier, it is difficult to discern how much of this increase is due to greater willingness to report abuse, and the disclosure of historic crime by adults, rather than an actual increase of sexual crimes against children.

There were 426 recorded cruelty and neglect offences against children under 16 in Wales in 2016/2017, at a rate of 7.6 offences per 10,000 children aged under 16. The total number of offences in Wales increased by 54.8 per cent between 2013/14 and 2014/15, but there have been few changes since. Scotland is the only UK nation to experience a decreasing trend between 2009/10 and 2016/17.<sup>197</sup> England currently has the highest rate of 12.9 offences per 10,000 children. It is also important to recognise that while criminal conviction statistics are important, they are not the only reflection of the violence, abuse and neglect that children in Wales may be experiencing. Where a child is at risk or may have been subject to harm or any type of abuse this may not result in conviction but intervention, particularly from Social Services.

Related to this issue of indicators, there is an absence of consistent national data in Wales in respect of child sexual exploitation.<sup>198</sup> A national reporting mechanism is currently being developed by the Welsh Government. Figures are available on the number of specifically appointed organisations in Wales who have made referral to the National

<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

<sup>197</sup> National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. 2018. *How safe are our children? 2018*. Available at: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/research-reports/how-safe-children-2018-report.pdf>

<sup>198</sup> Children's Commissioner for Wales. 2017. *A year of change 2016/2017: The Children's Commissioner for Wales Annual Report and Accounts*. Available at: <https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/A-Year-of-Change-CCFW-Annual-Report.pdf>



Referral Mechanism due to concerns that a child they are in contact with may have been the victim of child trafficking. Data reported for 2017 show the number of these referrals to be 84.<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>199</sup> National Crime Agency. 2018. *National Referral Mechanism Statistics – End of Year Summary 2018*. Available at: <http://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/publications/national-referral-mechanism-statistics/2017-nrm-statistics/884-nrm-annual-report-2017/file>





## 6. Special Protection Measures

### 6.1 Asylum seekers and refugees

- Most recent official estimates suggest there are around 27 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in Wales.
- There is a major gap in data on asylum-seeking and refugee children in Wales.

In its 2016 Concluding Observations to the UK, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child criticised the UK on a number of areas regarding the rights of asylum-seeking, refugee and migrant children.<sup>200</sup> One key issue was the lack of reliable data on children seeking asylum in the UK. Since then, the National Assembly has launched an inquiry into asylum-seekers and refugees in Wales.<sup>201</sup> At the inquiry, the Cabinet Secretary estimated that there were approximately 27 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in Wales, and assured the committee that the Government was in the process of developing a data collection and reporting system to provide more accurate monitoring. While this is a welcome announcement, it is important to emphasise that this statement was only in reference to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, and numbers of children in asylum-seeking families should also be recorded.

There is a paucity of evidence relating to the lives of asylum-seeking and refugee children. When the numbers resident in Wales cannot be identified, it is virtually impossible for further research on differential outcomes and the views and experiences of these children, which could help ensure that these children's rights are fulfilled.

### 6.2 Children in the youth justice system

#### Key findings

- There has been a major reduction in the number of children serving custodial sentences in Wales over the last decade.
- Due to a lack of facilities, 45 per cent of Welsh children in custody are currently incarcerated in institutions in England, with some reporting increased loneliness and isolation as a result.
- Inspection reports raise serious concerns about the safety of children held in custodial institutions.
- The latest figures show a drop in the proportion of young people within the youth justice system who have access to suitable accommodation.

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<sup>200</sup> Committee on the Rights of the Child. 2016. *Concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland*. Available at: [https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRC%252fC%252fGBR%252fCO%252f5&Lang=en](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRC%252fC%252fGBR%252fCO%252f5&Lang=en)

<sup>201</sup> National Assembly for Wales. 2017. *"I used to be someone". Refugees and asylum seekers in Wales*. Available at: <http://www.assembly.wales/laid%20documents/cr-l>



- A new Welsh Youth Justice Indicator introduced in 2017 showed that over 90 per cent of young people within the youth justice system referred for a mental health assessment received this within 28 days.

Criminal justice is not devolved to Wales, and so the Welsh Government does not have responsibility for youth justice. Thus, there is generally a lack of Wales-only data on young people involved in the justice system, for example on incidences of stop and search checks on young people. However, regional level tables on some aspects of youth justice are published on an annual basis by the UK Government.<sup>202</sup> These provide some data on a Wales-only basis, as well as data on English regions. They do not present data on an England-only basis, and so the only direct comparisons that can be made are between the Wales and overall Wales and England percentages.

In 2014, as part of the 'Children and Young People First' strategy to improve services for young people from Wales at risk of becoming involved in, or already in, the youth justice system, additional indicators were introduced for Wales.<sup>203</sup> These place a duty on the Welsh Government to monitor:

- Engagement in education, training and employment
- Access to suitable accommodation
- Access to substance misuse services

From 2017, access to mental health services is also monitored.<sup>204</sup>

<sup>202</sup> National Statistics. 2018. *Youth Justice annual statistics: 2016 to 2017. Regional level tables*. Available at: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/679143/regional-level-tables.xls](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/679143/regional-level-tables.xls)

<sup>203</sup> Youth Justice Board. 2014. *Welsh Government/Youth Justice Board joint strategy to improve services for young people from Wales at risk of becoming involved in, or in, the youth justice system*. Available at: <https://gov.wales/docs/ds/jlg/publications/commsafety/140710-youth-justice-strategyv2-en.pdf>

<sup>204</sup> National Statistics. 2018. *Annex D. Performance outcomes in the Youth Justice System*. Available at: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/676052/youth\\_justice\\_statistics\\_2016\\_to\\_2017\\_additional\\_annexes.zip](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/676052/youth_justice_statistics_2016_to_2017_additional_annexes.zip)



**Table D.6: Proportion of young people that had suitable accommodation to go to upon starting and/or completing a community intervention or released from custody in Wales, years ending March 2016 and March 2017(1)<sup>205</sup>**

	Year ending March 2016		Year ending March 2017	
	All disposals	Custodial disposals	All disposals	Custodial disposals
Suitable accommodation before the start of disposal	95.7%	90.9%	94.0%	86.9%
Suitable accommodation at the end of disposal	94.5%	93.3%	92.1%	81.4%
Percentage point change	-1.2	2.4	-1.9	-5.5

The data show that the proportion of young people within the youth justice system in Wales with suitable accommodation before and after their disposals dropped between March 2016 and March 2017. The change was larger for those serving custodial sentences.

The average number of hours of education, training and employment (ETE) attended by school age young people within the youth justice system for the year ending March 2017 was 13.7 hours at the start of disposal and 14.7 at the end of their disposal, representing a 7.5 per cent increase.<sup>206</sup> This was a smaller increase compared to the 10 per cent increase the previous year, when young people in the justice system completed an average of 14.4 hours previous to their disposal, and 15.9 afterwards.

The proportion of young people involved in the youth justice system who were referred for a substance misuse assessment, and whose assessment was carried out within five days of referral, was 82.8 per cent in 2017.<sup>207</sup> This figure has dropped year on year since 2014, when 90.4 per cent of referrals were carried out within the targeted period. However, the proportion who were assessed as requiring an intervention who received this within 10 days rose during this period (despite a small dip in 2015), from 96.6 per cent in 2014 to 97.4 per cent in 2017.

The proportion of mental health assessments carried out within 28 days of referral for young people involved in the youth justice system in 2017 was 91 per cent.<sup>208</sup> Of those assessed as requiring an intervention, 91.1 per cent received an intervention within 28 days. As 2017 was the first year this indicator was reported, it is not possible to make comparisons with previous years.

<sup>205</sup> Table from National Statistics. 2018. *Annex D. Performance outcomes in the Youth Justice System*. Available at: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/676052/youth\\_justice\\_statistics\\_2016\\_to\\_2017\\_additional\\_annexes.zip](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/676052/youth_justice_statistics_2016_to_2017_additional_annexes.zip)

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid.



A report published in 2018 by the Welsh Centre for Crime and Social Justice looked at ‘prolific’ offending by young people in Wales between 2009 and 2015.<sup>209</sup> It is the only identified source of evidence that involved in-depth qualitative research with young people who had been involved in the criminal justice system and their youth justice workers. It shows that there are a variety of practices amongst those working with young people in these situations, but that a number of those interviewed highlight the importance of involving young people in decisions about the support they receive. A 2015 research project found that the reported practices and philosophies of youth justice workers interviewed in Wales were not markedly different to those in England.<sup>210</sup> This qualitative study identified a commitment to the best interests of children amongst the majority of practitioners, but highlighted that this did not necessarily come from a rights perspective.

### *Children in custodial institutions*

The number of Welsh children serving custodial sentences was 32 in 2017.<sup>211</sup> In 2016, the UK was criticised by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child for the disproportionate number of BAME children in its prisons.<sup>212</sup> Across England and Wales, of those serving a custodial sentence in 2016/17, 37.8 per cent were BAME.<sup>213</sup> However, this proportion was far lower in Wales, where only 5.5 per cent of child prisoners were BAME.<sup>214</sup> While statistics on the proportion of children from BAME backgrounds are not available, the proportion of adults in Wales identifying as non-White the 2017 Annual Population Survey was 4.7 per cent.<sup>215</sup>—there is only a slightly raised proportion of BAME children incarcerated in Wales.

Overall, the number of children serving custodial sentences had reduced considerably over the last eight years, from 116 in 2010 to just 32 in 2017.<sup>216</sup> However, one negative consequence of this drop is that the number of custodial institutions for young people is decreasing, which is leading to children residing further from home. In 2017, 45 per cent of Welsh children were held in institutions in England. An inquiry into the impact of the increase in the distances from home was established, and found that children who resided in institutions further from their

<sup>209</sup> Johns, D., Williams, K. and Haines, K. 2018. *A study of ‘prolific’ offending by young people in Wales 2009-2015*. Available at: [https://wccsj.ac.uk/images/docs/publications/2018/Prolific Offending by Young People in Wales 2009-2015-FINAL-REPORT-2018F.pdf](https://wccsj.ac.uk/images/docs/publications/2018/Prolific%20Offending%20by%20Young%20People%20in%20Wales%202009-2015-FINAL-REPORT-2018F.pdf)

<sup>210</sup> Ibid.

<sup>211</sup> Jones, R. 2018. *Imprisonment in Wales. A Factfile*. Available at: [https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0008/1195577/Imprisonment-in-Wales-A-Factfile.pdf](https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/1195577/Imprisonment-in-Wales-A-Factfile.pdf)

<sup>212</sup> Committee on the Rights of the Child. 2016. *Concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland*. Available at: [https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRC%252fC%252fGBR%252fCO%252f5&Lang=en](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRC%252fC%252fGBR%252fCO%252f5&Lang=en)

<sup>213</sup> These proportions are calculated from statistics on children given a Detention and Training Order, Section 90-91 Detention, or Section 226b order (all custodial sentences). See National Statistics. 2018. *Youth Justice annual statistics: 2016 to 2017. Regional level tables*. Available at: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/679143/regional-level-tables.xls](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/679143/regional-level-tables.xls)

<sup>214</sup> Ibid.

<sup>215</sup> StatsWales. 2018. *Ethnicity by year and ethnic group*. Available at: <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Equality-and-Diversity/Ethnicity/ethnicity-by-year-ethnicgroup>

<sup>216</sup> Jones, R. 2018. *Imprisonment in Wales. A Factfile*. Available at: [https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0008/1195577/Imprisonment-in-Wales-A-Factfile.pdf](https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/1195577/Imprisonment-in-Wales-A-Factfile.pdf)



homes were visited less often than those who lived closer, leading to greater feelings of loneliness and isolation.<sup>217</sup> While the Youth Justice Board Cymru asserts that they have a policy of attempting to ensure that Welsh offenders remain in Wales, they highlight the lack of provision for girls between 15 and 18 in Young Offenders Institutes in Wales, and that Wales lacks facilities for specialist provision to address the welfare needs of some children.<sup>218</sup>

Inspection reports consistently raise concerns about the safety of children held in custodial institutions.<sup>219</sup> At HMYOI Parc in 2016, it was found that a third of children held felt unsafe. There were also significant concerns about the prevalence of self-harm amongst the boys at this institution. In fact, the annual report for HMIP which covered young people's custodial instructions in England and Wales asserted that not one of the institutions visited was safe for children.<sup>220</sup>

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<sup>217</sup> HM Inspectorate of Prisons. 2016. *The impact of distance from home on children in custody*. Available at: <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprisons/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2016/09/The-impact-of-distance-from-home-on-children-in-custody-Web-2016.pdf>

<sup>218</sup> House of Commons Welsh Affairs Committee. 2015. *Prisons in Wales and the treatment of Welsh offenders*. Fourth report of session 2014-15. Available at: <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmselect/cmwelaf/113/113.pdf>

<sup>219</sup> Jones, R. 2018. *Imprisonment in Wales. A Factfile*. Available at: [https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0008/1195577/Imprisonment-in-Wales-A-Factfile.pdf](https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/1195577/Imprisonment-in-Wales-A-Factfile.pdf)

<sup>220</sup> Ibid.



## 6. Conclusion

The Welsh Government is making a concerted effort to record data on children's rights and wellbeing, primarily through the Children and Young People's Wellbeing Monitor for Wales, which has been published triennially since 2008.<sup>221</sup> This is one of the measures taken by the Government to fulfil its obligations under the UNCRC.<sup>222</sup> However, much data on non-devolved areas, such as criminal justice, are not available on a Wales-only basis. Moreover, gaps remain in key areas, particularly in relation to research on the views and opinions of children, which is mainly conducted by third sector organisations, academic institutions and the Children's Commissioner for Wales.

Currently, more data are required on:

- Child mortality by socio-economic deprivation and ethnicity.
- There is a lack of disaggregated national data in respect of children with disabilities. The exception to which is information statistics related to education and attainment
- Instances of bullying in schools, disaggregated by gender, ethnicity, socio-economic background, LGBT status.
- The prevalence of mental illness amongst children and young people.
- The wellbeing of children in custodial institutions.
- The proportion of children receiving care and support who are on child protection registers or plans for over two years.
- The prevalence of abuse and neglect of children and young people.
- Asylum-seeking and refugee children in Wales, to include disaggregated outcome data and reliable statistics on the numbers of accompanied and non-accompanied children.

Many of these were highlighted as areas for which further data was needed in the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child's Concluding Observations in 2016. The Welsh Government has highlighted plans to collect data on some of these areas, such as the number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children, and the prevalence of mental illness.

In addition, this research has identified gaps in respect of self-reported data on the views and experiences of particular groups of children. These include:

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<sup>221</sup> Welsh Government. 2015. *Children and Young People's Wellbeing Measure*. Available at: <https://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/children-young-peoples-wellbeing-monitor-wales/?lang=en>

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*



- Disabled children
- Refugee and asylum-seeking children
- Looked-after children
- Children held in custodial institutions

At present, the limited information we have on these children's lives means that it is not possible to determine the extent to which their rights are being fulfilled and respected in Wales.





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- 16 How long children are the subject of child protection plans or on child protection registers
- 17 Children looked after due to abuse or neglect
- 18 Proportion of looked after children who have three or more placements during the year
- 19 Child trafficking
- 20 Public attitudes to child abuse and neglect

## Appendix 1

NSPCC child abuse and neglect indicators<sup>223</sup>

- 1 Child homicides recorded by the police
- 2 Child deaths by assault and undetermined intent
- 3 Child suicides
- 4 Number of recorded sexual offences against children
- 5 Number of recorded cruelty and neglect offences against children
- 6 Self-reported prevalence of abuse and neglect
- 7 Childline counselling sessions
- 8 Contacts with the NSPCC helpline
- 9 Online harm
- 10 Violent incidents experienced by 10 to 15 year olds (crime survey)
- 11 Referrals to social services
- 12 Children in need/children receiving care and support
- 13 Children in the child protection system
- 14 Composition of child protection plans/child protection register
- 15 Re-registration — child protection plans or registers

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/research-reports/how-safe-children-2018-report.pdf>

<sup>223</sup>National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. 2018. *How Safe are our children 2018*. Available at