

# Impact Update: Summer Edition



How much do children talk to their families about what they do online? Which apps were most cited by children as ones that made them feel unsafe and unhappy? In June, almost 1300 children and young people shared their experiences with us as part of our survey on online safety. Their responses helped us to respond to Ofcom's latest consultation on the draft codes that I hope will make the internet a safer place for children and young people. Over the past three months we've been busy listening to children in every corner of Wales, through face-to-face discussions, surveys, and through our Advice service. Keep reading to find out what children told us, and what we're doing to put their voices at the heart of our work.



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## Here for all children



Our engagement team puts children's voices at the heart of our work, hearing views and experiences from every corner of Wales.

Engagement team member Jordan Doherty reflects on the work she's led on over the past few months with a group of care experienced girls based in Neath Port Talbot:

# Supporting care experienced young people to present their views, experiences, and recommendations for change

by Jordan Doherty - Engagement team



**What about us? What about all the plans that ended in disaster?  
What about love? What about trust?  
What about us?"**

'This basically sums it up perfectly', said a young person after listening to the song "What About Us". And that's how a lot of the young people in the Hope Girls Rights Group, a group of care experienced young people in south Wales, feel about their experiences; annoyed, forgotten, and hurt.

**HOPE** is a group of care experienced girls in Neath Port Talbot. Over the past 12 weeks we've really enjoyed getting to know them, listening to their stories, laughing with them, crying with them, and of course, going through a ton of grapes and biscuits. They've trusted us with their stories and their feelings, and we're exceptionally grateful for that.

We've worked together to help the girls present their views, experiences, and recommendations as part of an annual conference of European nations. This year's focus was "Let's talk young, let's talk about the protection and promotion of the rights of children in alternative care."

We've covered topics such as **transitions in care, participation, belonging and belongings, mental health and support for care-experienced children and young people**. We used creative and therapeutic activities to engage with the girls and kept them and their needs at the centre of our work.

Our team made a package of therapeutic activities to use with the group, intended to encourage emotional expression and have fun. The group enjoyed art-based and talking activities the most, so we adapted a lot of our work to suit their preferred activities. Activities were varied and included group work and independent tasks like making dream catchers, collages and recording "podcast" clips.

The group are passionate about making changes for care-experienced children and young people not only in Neath Port Talbot but Wales too. **We were so proud of the 5 recommendations they presented at the conference.**



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● **Training for Foster carers.** We would like training to include therapeutic techniques and Mental Health First Aid training to better equipped Foster Carers to deal with the often complex emotions and ways that young people express themselves.

● **Being able to participate in packing our own belongings.** We would like there to be mechanisms in place to enable us to pack our own belongings. Whether this be helping a social worker/ foster carer or writing a list of the belongings we expect to see in our new home.

● **Belongings should be packed in bags and suitcases not black bags.** We would like there to be a commitment from government that all children and young people in care should have appropriate bags and suitcases to move their belongings.

● **Participation in our care.** We would like to be included in our own care meetings. We would like the guidance to be a little stronger on what should happen to include us in our own care.

● **Emotional Literacy and therapeutic support.** we would like to see more group therapeutic work happening in school and better emotional literacy sessions for all children and young people. We want Wales to be a country where all children have the words to describe how they are feeling and express themselves prior to anything traumatic happening to them. ”

**This isn't the end of our work with the group, the girls will be leading on creating an exhibition with us to share their recommendations and the reality of being care-experienced in Wales.**

**The exhibition will launch in Autumn 2024 and if you have a group of care-experienced children or young people that would like to submit an art piece then please contact [Jordan.doherty@childcomwales.org.uk](mailto:Jordan.doherty@childcomwales.org.uk)**



## Monthly Matters - our monthly discussion pack and survey for schools and clubs



In June, 1284 children and young people shared their experiences with us as part of our survey on online safety. Their responses helped us to respond to Ofcom's draft proposals , Protecting Children from Harms Online, which aims to make the internet a safer place for children and young people. Since April we've also heard children's views on journeys to school, and play and break time.

### Online safety

- Only 28% of children said they talk a lot to their family about what they do online.
- A quarter (25%) of children who listed apps that made them feel unsafe or unhappy mentioned Roblox, followed by YouTube (15%).
- When children had reported concerns directly with an online platform, only 32% felt their concerns had been taken seriously.
- If they saw something online that made them upset or worried, children and young people most commonly said they would tell their parents, report it to the platform, or tell another family member.
- 76% of children said they feel happy and safe online.
- Teachers expressed concerns about the impact children's screen time has on their education, with some seeing the impact of tiredness amongst pupils due to late-night gaming.

The answers informed our response to Ofcom's consultation on its widening powers relating to the Online Safety Act (2023).





## Play and break time

- 96% of children enjoyed their play/break time at school, and 95% said it was important to them.
- Most commonly children liked spending time with friends, playing sports, relaxing and having a break from schoolwork.
- When asked about what would make playtime better, children talked about having more time to play, more play equipment, and being able to do more sports and games.
- 46% said they sometimes have to miss their playtime. They felt sad, annoyed, and frustrated because of this. When asked about barriers in providing children with the playtime they need, teachers spoke about a lack of resources and time, and pressures related to delivering their curriculum.



## School journeys

- The vast majority (83%) of children completing our survey said they felt safe on their journey to school.
- 82% of children completing our survey walked to school or travelled by car.
- The most common reasons children didn't feel safe on their school journey was because of other members of the public, and fears of being hurt or taken.

School journeys frame the school day and the safety and accessibility of the school journey must be a key consideration in children's right to education.

Our Children's Rights and Assistance service has previously heard concerns about school journeys from children and their families, which is something the Commissioner has raised with the Welsh Government.





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## A challenger

**Our policy team challenges and scrutinises decision-makers on the key issues affecting children and young people.**

### Evidence to Senedd committee

On 10 July our Head of Policy, Rachel Thomas, gave evidence to the Senedd's Health and Social Care Committee as part of their work on the Health and Social Care (Wales) Bill stage 1 inquiry. The Bill aims to eliminate profit-making from children's care, which we really welcome. Our office has long called for the safe reduction of profit in children's care services as a direct result of representations made to us from care experienced young people themselves, and this Bill brings forward the necessary provisions to make this shift.

But the Bill, as currently drafted, misses an opportunity to include these important priorities from young people: statutory corporate parenting; continuing access to Personal Advisors for care leavers; and allowing young people in residential care to stay and access services after they turn 18.

You can [read our full written submission to the Committee in this document](#) or you can [watch the session on Senedd TV](#).

### Budget and children's rights briefing

We want to see Welsh Government take a children's rights-based approach to budgeting and that the process of reviewing budgetary decisions in relation to children's rights be made transparent, to enable us and others to hold Welsh Government accountable. Ahead of a Senedd debate earlier this month, [we published this briefing paper](#) for Senedd members on taking a children's rights approach to budgetary decision-making.



Welsh Government's 2025/26 budget and  
children's rights:  
A briefing ahead of the 17<sup>th</sup> July Senedd debate  
15 July 2024





## A truth teller

We work hard to shine a light on children and young people's real-life experiences and to use them to influence change.

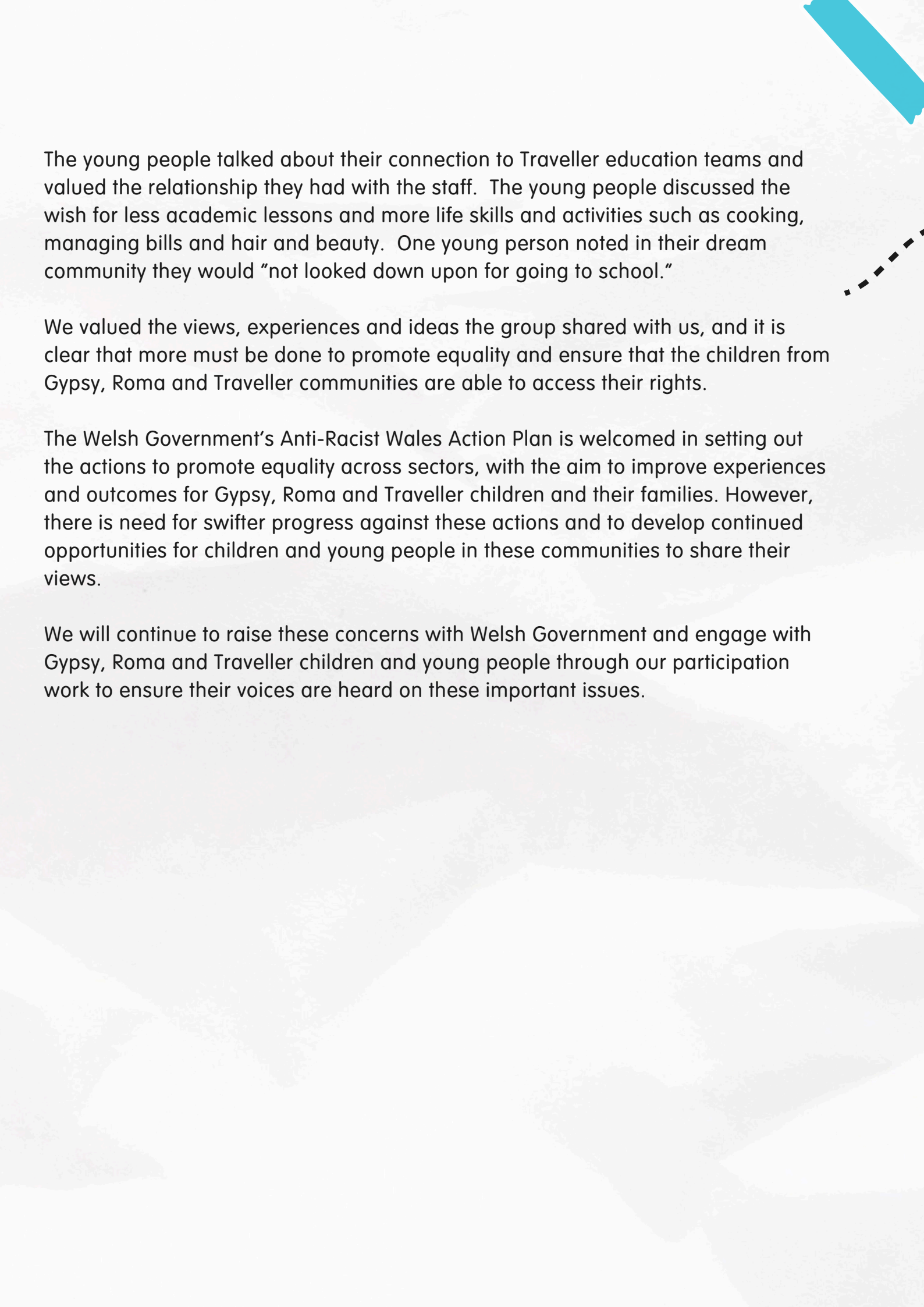
### Listening to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller young people

In July, we met with young people from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, who shared with us their thoughts and experiences of education, housing and discrimination. The group explored what their dream communities would look like, and how their cultural identities could be better understood and respected when accessing their rights.

The young people shared how regularly they experience racism and discrimination in their community. They spoke about their experiences within school, worries about employment discrimination and how they are regularly followed around shops and picked out of crowds. The young people were passionate about standing up against discrimination but had little hope that things would change.

Many of the group shared their housing aspirations, highlighting that their current sites have no areas to play or access to parks. Due to the location of sites, some of the group spoke about the lack of safe walkways and how this can be a barrier to them accessing education due to the lack of lighting and feeling unsafe.





The young people talked about their connection to Traveller education teams and valued the relationship they had with the staff. The young people discussed the wish for less academic lessons and more life skills and activities such as cooking, managing bills and hair and beauty. One young person noted in their dream community they would “not looked down upon for going to school.”

We valued the views, experiences and ideas the group shared with us, and it is clear that more must be done to promote equality and ensure that the children from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities are able to access their rights.

The Welsh Government’s Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan is welcomed in setting out the actions to promote equality across sectors, with the aim to improve experiences and outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and their families. However, there is need for swifter progress against these actions and to develop continued opportunities for children and young people in these communities to share their views.

We will continue to raise these concerns with Welsh Government and engage with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and young people through our participation work to ensure their voices are heard on these important issues.





## A rights realiser



Our Advice team helps children and young people in Wales to access their human rights.

Over the last quarter, we've been contacted by children, parents, professionals, and elected members on a range of issues, including health, education, and housing.

Here is a flavour of the wide variety of cases our team has worked on over the past three months:

- influencing a package of support for a vulnerable young person who was not engaging with their education
- helping a family to navigate local neurodevelopmental support services, resulting in an appointment with a medical professional that the family had been seeking to no avail
- working with a school and a family to help find a positive outcome for a child following an incident that had negatively affected them

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I would highly recommend the service to any parent or caregiver. We received professional advice at every stage of our journey. This made a considerable positive impact, just knowing we had someone who was there for us as a family to support us through our journey. Our case worker was always eager to know any updates relating to our case, and always at hand if we required further advice. Again, this makes a considerable difference when facing issues that you have no previous experience within. Overall, as a family we felt very supported and given the best advice.

- parent using our Advice service

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**Over the past quarter, our Advice team has:**

**Supported children in 21 out of  
the 22 local authorities in  
Wales**

**Dealt with 182 individual cases**

**Worked on 37 cases related to Additional  
Learning Needs support**

**We continue to build positive working  
relationships with local authorities to  
ensure we achieve positive outcomes  
for children, wherever they live**



**Diolch/thanks  
for reading!**

**We'll publish our next  
quarterly impact  
paper in the autumn.**

**In the meantime, sign up to our monthly newsletter.**



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