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# Children's Commissioner for Wales

## Beth Nesa? What Next? – Conversations

Findings from the first phase of our largest ever consultation with children and young people



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**beth nesa'  
what next**

dweud eich dweud  
have your say

## **Introduction**

**This document summarises responses received from children and adults during the first phase of the ‘Beth Nesa?’ consultation, undertaken by the Children’s Commissioner for Wales during the Summer of 2015, in order to help to inform the development of the Commissioner’s future priorities.**

### The consultation material gathered

The material from children was gathered in a range of contexts and through a variety of methods and media including group discussions and activities, questionnaires, art work, videos, presentations and written submissions. In view of this diversity a consistent framework was used throughout the children's consultation focusing on issues of protection, provision and participation in different spheres of children's lives – particularly school, the neighbourhood/community and home. In addition, many children were asked what they thought should be the priorities of the Children's Commissioner. The consultation was designed to speak with a wide range of children from different parts of Wales, and to be inclusive of children in particular sub-groups or circumstances (including looked-after children and care leavers, young carers, children with disabilities and additional needs and LGBT young people). So far material has been analysed from 20 different events and it is estimated that the first phase of the consultation included over 700 children.

The material from adults was primarily gathered from professionals working with, or concerned with children and young people, but there was also some material from parents of younger children and from groups of adults in general. Exact numbers of participants were not available for all the events but it is certain that more than 200 professionals and other adults contributed to the consultation. In many cases responses were gathered from adults through postcards, which asked them to identify what they felt should be the priorities of the Children's Commissioner over the next few years.

Notes from a number of meetings with individuals and groups were also included in the material.

A complete inventory of the material analysed for this document is provided in an appendix.

### How the data was analysed and is presented

In the initial analysis stage, the framework described above was used as a starting point – focusing on protection, provision, participation (3Ps) in relation to home, school and community, plus views on future priorities for the Commissioner. However, initial attempts to categorise the material under these headings suggested that some modifications were necessary.

First, within the categories of protection, provision and participation there tended to be common themes across the home, school and community contexts (e.g. bullying) and so we decided to reorganise the material thematically rather than by context.

Second, children's and adults' answers to questions about the Commissioner's priorities overlapped with issues discussed in relation to the three Ps and it would therefore have been repetitive to present a summary of these answers separately. So we divided the material on priorities according to the 3P categorisation.

Once we had developed and refined the framework as above, we went back through all of the material to check the revised framework, identify any additional modifications that were needed and extract illustrative quotes.

## **Structure of report**

As will become apparent, there were some differences between children's and adults' perspectives and priorities. It would have been difficult to create a structure for the report that entirely reconciled these differences. So we decided it was most appropriate to present the material from the two groups separately and then make some observations about similarities and differences later. On this basis, following this brief introductory section, the structure of the remainder of the report is as follows.

Section 2 discusses the material gathered from children and young people. It is divided into four sections: general cross-cutting themes; and then sections on protection, provision and participation.

Section 3 discusses the material gathered from adults and uses the same structure as Section 2

In these two sections we have tried to be as descriptive as possible and to avoid making evaluative assessments. We have aimed to present as many different views as possible, utilising quotes and letting these speak for themselves as much as possible.

In the final section of the document we make some general observations and comments about the material in Sections 2 and 3.

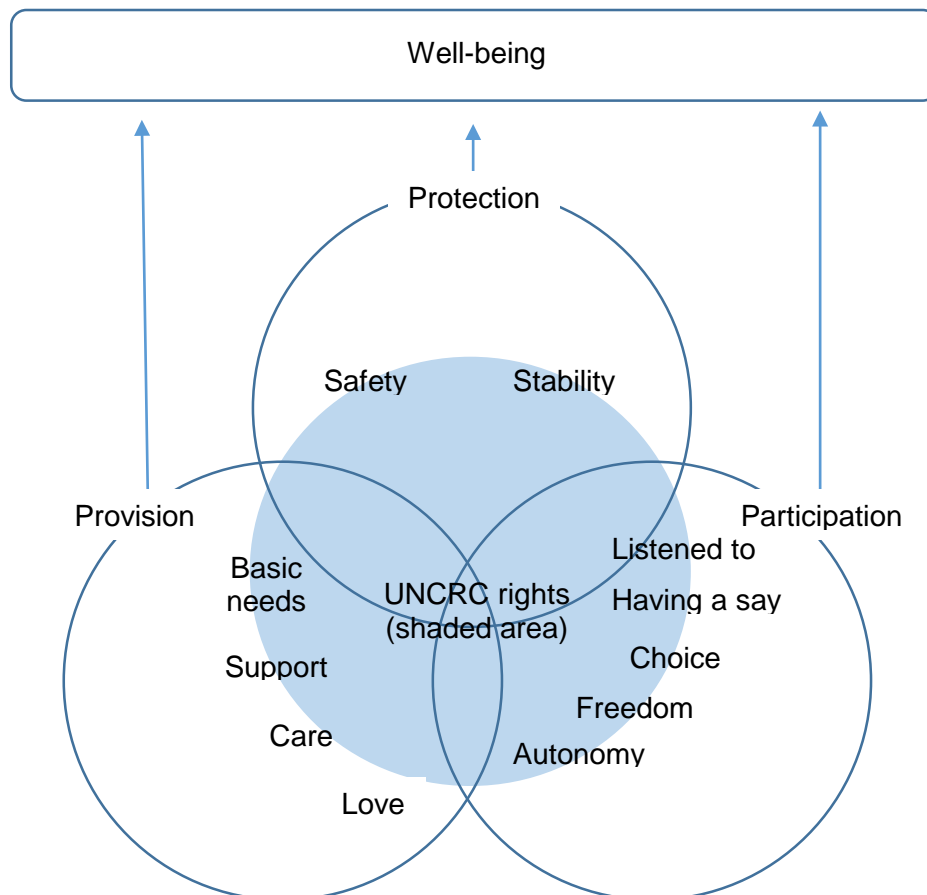
### Framework: Rights and welfare

The principal aim of the Children’s Commissioner for Wales is to ‘safeguard and promote the rights and welfare of children (in Wales)’.

For the purposes of this document, the issue we needed to address was that many of the comments (particularly from children) did not fit neatly into the 3P framework of the UNCRC. However, in order to work with this framework we felt that it was possible to broaden the idea of each of the ideas of ‘protection’, ‘provision’ and ‘participation’ so that we could retain a single coherent framework. For example, under provision we consider how all the needs identified by children might be provided for, both within and outside the

UNCRC rights-based approach. The idea of ‘support’ could partly lie within the UNCRC rights – e.g. professional support for children living away from home – but children generally also emphasise the importance of support they receive from informal sources – for example friends or grandparents.

The basic idea depicted in the diagram is that children have a range of needs that promote their well-being. These can be categorised under the broad headings of protection, provision and participation. Some of these needs are entirely or mostly covered within the rights included in the UNCRC but others are only partly or not at all covered. The intention of the diagram is to clarify the connections between rights, needs and well-being.



## **Children's and young people's feedback**

### **General / cross-cutting issues**

In general, children and young people discussed that as Children's Commissioner, Sally, should work on promoting children's rights:

**Q: If you were Sally, the Children's Commissioner, what would you do?**

**A: Make sure children know their rights**

—— Rights Respecting Awards Conference

At the same time many of children's general comments about priorities related to children 'being happy'. It is interesting that in some cases, children drew attention to the link between rights and welfare discussed above:

**Q: If you were Sally Holland, The Children's Commissioner, what would you do to make children's lives better in Wales?**

**A: To make sure children are heard and can be happy**

—— Junior Youth Forum

Although most of children's responses related to children's lives in general, some were more specifically focused on certain sub-groups. As far as possible we have integrated these comments into the thematic sections. But it should be noted that in some cases, children and young people in the different events felt that Sally should focus on particular groups such as:

—— "looked after children" (;

—— "children living in deprived areas"; and

—— children with "special needs" and "Additional Learning Needs".

## **Protection**

Under the broad category of protection some of children's responses (particularly those to the question about priorities for the Commissioner) referred very generally to the importance for children of feeling safe and of the links with overall well-being:

**Make sure that children feel safe, otherwise they can't be happy**

—— Youth Forum

Within the more specific comments, a number of key themes were apparent which were applicable across the different contexts of home, school and the neighbourhood.

## **Bullying**

Many of the protection issues raised by children related to safety and risks regarding their relationships with people they knew.

Bullying was a very prominent issue for children and this included issues about bullying by siblings at home, by other children at school and cyber-bullying:

**I have been at the school 5 years and never knew we had an anti-bullying charter.**

—— Communities First Group of Children and Yung People

**To work with social media to stop cyberbullying**

—— Junior Youth Forum

Tackling bullying was a priority for a number of children:

**To let the world know about rights and stop bullying**

—— Looked After Young Person

A second issue was other forms of fighting and conflict:

**When mum and dad argue**

—— Super Ambassador

A third topic was abuse:

**They should focus on Article 39 – 'Children should get special help if they have been abused', because it's very important**

—— Looked After Young Person

And there were other comments that may be interpreted as relating to the discussion about parents physically punishing children:

**That children are not to be hit for any reason.**

—— Secondary School Pupil



**Risks from other people**

Another issue that affected children's sense of safety and security was perceived threats from 'others' beyond their network of close relationships. Some of these issues were quite specific and were rooted in children's everyday experiences:

**I live on a rough street in Swansea where there are fights, drug dealing and stabbings. This is because of a lack of housing available.**

—— Young Person

**'Kill the gays' graffiti**

—— Young Person

**One of the YP stated that she was followed**

—— Young Person

**Drugs in the area – certain areas**

—— Young Carer

In other cases the comments were more abstract, referring to 'strangers', 'gangs', 'criminals', 'creepy people', 'alcoholics and unusual people loitering' and so on. These concerns were reflected in comments about the need for security at home, at school, in the community and on the internet (beyond the issue of cyberbullying which was discussed above):

**Unfenced gardens**

—— Primary School Pupil

**At school] :**

**The gate is always open**

**The doors are never locked**

—— Super Ambassador

**If they live in a big city because there are a lot of strangers**

—— Super Ambassador

**I think we should have right to have safety on the internet and social media. Stopping paedophiles and feel safe**

—— Secondary School Pupil

**Being alone**

Related to this theme of potential risk, some children mentioned being alone as something which made them feel unsafe:

**When I'm on my own in the street**

—— Child attending the Urdd Eisteddfod

There were a number of other comments of a similar nature referring to particular contexts – for example, being alone at a bus stop.

## **Environments**

A separate theme related to children's experience of their environments. One aspect of this was the quality of local environments:

### **They do not feel safe when walking along unlit paths**

—— Youth Forum Member

### **We need Street lights**

—— School Council Member

Traffic and road safety was a recurring issue :

### **More police officers, Slower Traffic, .. Speed Cameras, More traffic signs, Less dodgy parking, More traffic signs.**

—— Super Ambassador

### **Lots of traffic**

—— Super Ambassador

There were also a number of comments about environmental hazards in general:

Water, cliffs, noises, and animals:

### **Crazy + loco dogs**

—— Primary School Pupil

## **Broader issues**

Finally there were also a few comments about much broader issues that affect children's feelings of safety:

### **Wars**

### **Bad news on the News**

—— Child attending the Urdd Eisteddfod

## Provision

One general comment made about provision was that there were differences in terms of the amount and access to services between rural and urban areas due to factors such as to poor public transport. Furthermore, Young Carers also discussed how there were no leisure facilities which catered for those between the ages of 16 to 25, such as meals or comedy nights. There were also concerns, particularly among young people in a housing forum meeting that the proposed “merging of councils in Wales” as well as “funding cuts” would have a negative impact on provision.

The other comments made by children and young people in the events related to the type of provision that they felt children and young people needed. It has been possible to group the type of provision into eight categories, which are Basic/Survival, Emotional, Educational, Health, Financial, Leisure, Technological and Welsh Language Provision. With regards to the providers of these provisions, children and young people referred to a range of people within their informal social network such as “Parents, teachers, Brother/sister, Friends, Grandparents” as well as members of their extended family. Children and young people across the different events also referred to professionals within their formal social network such as “Police, doctors and teachers”; organisations such as “Childline and Barnardo’s” as well as “Sally Holland”. The next section will discuss the eight types of provision that children and young people referred to.

## Basic / survival provision

When asked what things children and young people in Wales needed to make their lives better, children and young people across different events referred to provision which ensures that children are able to live, survive and develop healthily

– the main principles of Article 6 in the United Nations’ Conventions on the Rights of the Child. Provision which ensured that children and young people were warm was commonly discussed by participants across different events. For instance, some of the Commissioner’s Super Ambassadors listed the following as being things that children need, or need more of:

**Clothes, pillows, bed sheets, home, warmth**

—— Super Ambassador

Food and clean water were other things that a number of children and young people reported when asked what would improve children’s lives in Wales.

**Q: What do you need?**

**A: The response: Clean water**

—— Child attending the Urdd Eisteddfod

**Q: What do you think would make things better for children's lives in Wales?**

**A: Water, shelter, food...**

—— Child attending the Urdd Eisteddfod

## Conversations

Although one participant in the Urdd made the point that “Only children in Africa don’t get what they need”, other participants across the different events felt that certain children and young people did not get any or enough basic and survival provision. Certain Super Ambassadors noted that “Some children [in Wales] do not have a home”. Furthermore, some of the Super Ambassadors were aware of the increase use of food banks in Wales and across the UK:

**Q: Do you think children in Wales have everything they need to grow up healthy and happy?**

**A: Parents cannot afford food and are using food banks**

—— Super Ambassador

Consequently, a number of the participants in different events discussed that ensuring that children and young people have the adequate amount of Basic/ Survival provision to be able to live should be one of Sally’s priorities:

**Q: If you were Sally Holland, The Children’s Commissioner, what would you do to make children’s lives better in Wales?**

**A: Make sure that all children are well fed**

—— Junior Youth Forum

**Emotional provision**

Emotional Provision, which refers to provision which ensures that children and young people are happy, is not included in the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child. Despite this, children and young people who participated in the events referred to a number of things which would ensure that children's well-being is met. These included the following:

**Q: What could make children's lives better in Wales?**

**A: More love, More people to turn to, More inspiration, More happiness & freedom.**

—— Super Ambassador

When asked what makes them happy, children in the Urdd referred to people who form a part of their informal social networks such as parents, family and friends.

Improving children's wellbeing was commonly discussed as something which Sally should do as Children's Commissioner to improve children's lives:

**Q: If I was Sally Holland I would....**

**A: Make sure children have a nice loving family**

—— School Council – Member

**If I was Sally, I would make sure that everyone was happy.**

—— Super Ambassador

**Educational provision**

Educational Provision relates to Article 28 of the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child which states that "all children have the right to a primary education". When asked 'what children needed', certain participants in the different events discussed that children needed "school" or "access to education" (. Most commonly, children and young people across the different events noted

that a "good education" and a "better education" would make children's lives better in Wales. Aspects of school which participants felt could be improved were the curriculum, facilities, equipment, teachers and the dinners provided in school:

**Q: If you were Sally Holland, The Children's Commissioner, what would you do to make children's lives better in Wales?**

**A: Wood work in my primary school**

**A: Make sure teachers are up to standards**

—— Junior Youth Forum Member

**Q: Do you think children have everything they need to grow up happy and healthy? Write down what you think children need more of.**

**A: new pencils, Books, Cheaper school dinners, a better spare PE kit, Longer playtime**

—— Super Ambassador

**Q: If I was Sally Holland I would....**

**A: More of an eco-friendly school environment e.g. water fountain, trees and benches etc.**

**Have after school clubs to help people who have any problems**

**Get more play things for schools**

—— School Council Member

**Q: Services we lack or could do better**

**A: School – no drama club, nothing but sports club**

—— Young Carer

## Conversations

**Q: Imagine if you were Sally, what would you do to make things better for children and young people in Wales?**

**A: The way sexual health is taught in schools is always negative e.g. talking about the cost of teenage pregnancy. We hear negative stuff too much. PSE turns into a lesson on teenage pregnancy.**

—— Youth Forum Member

**Q: Pa bethau sydd angen gwella? [What things need to be improved?]**

**A: Addysg LGBT [LGBT Education]**

—— LGBT Young Person

Children from different backgrounds reported different educational needs. For instance, children in a Special School reported that their physical access to their school could be improved in a number of ways:

**Q: Don't have – Bad**

**A: Need to fill up potholes in playground**

**Try to make space for parking**

—— Special School Pupil

Young people from a housing forum meeting felt that that teachers need to be “trained about needs of young people in contact with social services”. Furthermore, young people from this event discussed how life skills lessons as well as work experience would help them:

**Q: What would you do to make young people's lives better in Wales?**

**A: Life skills education e.g. cooking, housing, budgeting**

—— Young Person at housing forum meeting

**Young people don't always know what they want to do in life so they felt work experience was really important. Not all had had access to work experience in school. There was a suggestion that work experience could be used to create the focus for the rest of their learning, targeted towards their chosen career path.**

—— Young Person at housing forum meeting

### Health provision

In the different events, children and young people also discussed access to “medical care” would improve the lives of children in Wales— the main principle of Article 24, which states that “*children have the right to good*” were considered as things that would make children’s lives better in Wales. Children and young people also regarded that healthy living was promoted by a number of different organisations:

**Q: What services do you have to keep healthy and safe?**

**A: Compulsory PE, Youth Clubs, Lunchtime Clubs, 5x60 – More school activities and After School, Afterschool Clubs, Local Sports Facilities**

—— School Council Member

**Q: Do young people have everything they need to grow up healthy and safe? E.g. Services (School, Leisure, Transport)**

**A: School provides Healthy Options – Food – Fitness, Health Advisors**

—— Secondary School Pupil

Certain participants felt that health services and the promotion of children’s health could be improved. For example, some of the Super Ambassadors felt that children needed “*cheaper fruit*” and “*healthy drinks and food*”. Furthermore, participants from a secondary school believed that “Health Groups” and “Support Groups” particularly related to “Mental Health Bullying” were missing to help children to grow up healthy and safe (Flipchart Write Ups.docx).

In terms of Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services, young people from a Mental Health Ward for young people felt there were positive aspects to

the unit, such as the fact that it “doesn’t feel like you’re on a hospital ward” and the “colours and cleanliness [are] at a good standard”. However, these young people also discussed that certain aspects of the unit could be improved such as “more structured activities downstairs (e.g. evening music and art groups)” and there should be an “opportunity to enhance skills of staff in contact with YP to work within a Cognitive Behaviour Therapy framework”. Certain participants from the housing forum events discussed that Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services did not sufficiently meet their needs:

**Q: What would you do to make young people’s lives better in Wales?**

**A: I feel like CAHMS are pointless, I feel they don’t care about my progress**

—— Housing Forum Member

**Q: Do you have the services/ activities you need in school/ where you live?**

**A: No – mental health services, takes a long time if there even is anything, they don’t listen to what the problem is and think tablets can be the answer to everything. They should listen first before just giving you tablets. Some didn’t like taking tablets because of severe side effects and impact on level of functioning.**

—— Housing Forum Member

With regards to what should Sally do as Children's Commissioner, certain participants felt that she should work on improving children's health in Wales:

**If I was Children's Commissioner, I would make sure that people with terminal illnesses would get the care that they need, so they can live normal lives like us**

—— School Pupil

**If I was Sally I would have more sports in school and teach children how to cook so that they eat more healthy.**

—— Super Ambassador

### Leisure provision

Leisure provision relates to Article 31 of the United Nations' Convention of the Rights of the Child, which notes that "*children have the right to relax and play, and to join in a wide range of cultural, artistic and other recreational activities*". A number of the participants across different events discussed how leisure facilities and activities made them happy:

**Q: What makes you feel happy?  
A: Sports, My bike, My football.**

—— Child attending the urdd Eisteddfod

**Q: Do young people have everything they need to grow up healthy and safe? E.g. Services (School, Leisure, Transport)**

**A: Clubs for all ages so we can make friends, public library, leisure places, shops**

—— Secondary School Pupil

Yet, most of the children and young people in the events felt that more leisure facilities were needed, which would improve children's lives in Wales.

**Q: Things that children need, or need more of:**

**A: Pavements, skate parks, sport equipment, play areas, freedom to play in fields**

—— Super Ambassador

**Q: What could make children's lives better in Wales?**

**A: More facilities for their community.**

—— Super Ambassador

Participants across the different events felt that it was important for Sally to ensure that children had the opportunity to play. This was not only considered to improve children's wellbeing, but also as a means of preventing anti-social behaviour.

**[If I was Children's Commissioner, I would] Make sure that children have the time to play.**

—— Super Ambassador

**Q: If I was Sally Holland I would....**

**A: More facilities for young people to use outside of school, Make more youth groups and advertise them in order to make friends, I would create and improve more free youth clubs for teens who always wander the streets**

—— School Council Member



### Financial provision

Participants across different events also noted that children and young people needed money. Participants were aware that other children and young people were in less favourable financial position. Certain children and young people suggested that Sally should focus on raising money or ensuring more funding for young people's activities, particularly in the current climate of cuts to public service provision:

**Q: What would you do to make young people's lives better in Wales?**

**A: More funding for young people's activities, Sustain and increase funding**

—— Housing Forum Meeting

**Q: If I was Sally Holland I would....**

**A: More fundraising for more money, Have more charity days to raise money**

—— NPT School Council Member

### Technological provision

A number of participants referred to the fact that children and young people today need technological devices such as "New computers, ICT (Information and Communications Technology)" (. A participant from a secondary school mentioned that they "don't have internet so cannot do homework". As such, a

number of respondents commented that Sally should work on providing "More technology in different schools" and "improve technology systems."

### Welsh language provision

Some of the participants also felt that Welsh language provision in schools could be improved. This was felt by children and young people from different parts of Wales, including those from the heartlands of the Welsh language and those living in Anglicised areas of Wales:

**Q: If you were Sally Holland, The Children's Commissioner, what would you do to make children's lives better in Wales?**

**A: Make sure that every English school has Welsh lessons**

—— Junior Youth Forum Member

**Q: Things children need, or need more of:**

**A: More support for schools in Welsh**

—— Super Ambassador

Other participants also discussed that Sally should work on providing opportunities for children and young people to use Welsh outside of school:

**Q: If I was Sally Holland I would....**

**A: Have more activities outside of school through the language of Welsh, Spread the Welsh language**

—— School Council Member

## Participation

A set of articles in the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child relate to Participation rights such as Article 12 (Respect for the views of the child), Article 13 (Freedom of Expression), Article 14 (Freedom of thought, conscience and religion) and Article 15 (Freedom of Association). Ensuring that children and young people were listened to by others, and had a say about different aspects of their lives, was considered by a number of children and young people as something which Sally should work on:

**If I was the Children's Commissioner, I would make sure all children have their right to have a say in things that affect them.**

—— Super Ambassador

Across the different events, children and young people referred to methods of participation either examples of when they were listened to by others and had a say or suggestions on how to improve participation. Children and young people also discussed either issues which they had a say and were listened to or issues that they wanted to have more of a say on or listened to. The issues discussed by children and young people may relate to protection and provision rights. Children and young people commented on their experience of participation among different people such as their family/carers, school staff and within their local community and wider society. Children and young people were also asked whether they wanted to have a say in the Children's Commissioner's Work and in what way would they have a say in Sally's work. It is also interesting to note that Young Carers made the point of "is being listened to the right question?" and should we ask "Does something happen as a result?" as well (.

## Family / carers

While a number of the children and young people referred to the home as a good

example where they were listened to, there were other participants who felt that their parents did not take their views seriously, with respondents from a Junior Forum indicating that "*try[ing] to get our parents to listen to us*" was something which the Children Commissioner could do to make children's lives better in Wales. Such things that children felt that they could have more of a say about ranged from having the freedom to go out to the behaviour of their parents/carers:

**Q: Things I need - Bad**

**A: Spend more time with boyfriend, Would like to go out and about more**

—— Special School Pupil

**Q: What things could children have more of a say about where you live?**

**A: If you smoke, do it in a different room, Be able to go biking with my brothers, Be able to have my friend over more often, No bad language and no bad driving because kids hear you.**

—— Super Ambassador

**School**

“School council”, “during lessons” and “in assemblies” were commonly given as examples of how children were listened to or had a say at school. Certain children and young people also discussed that they had a say on issues related to school such as providing “help [to] interview teachers”, “when someone gets upset/hurt in school lessons” and “school uniform.”

Despite this, a number of children and young people felt that school staff did not take their views seriously. For instance, one comment from the Young Carers’ workshop in Llandrindod Wells was:

**I feel listened to at home but not at school. In school they listen to you but don’t take you seriously and don’t really do anything about it.**

—— Young Carer

Participants from the housing forum event also pointed out that they were “not being allowed to stand in the school council”. Participants in the Super Ambassador Event suggested that “every class should have a member of the school council.” Children and young people across the different events also reported that they could have more of a say in school on certain issues such as “school dinners”, “what subjects they would like to learn”, “playtime” (, “homework”, “exams” (and protection issues such as “lock[ing] the gates”. Moreover, children and young people in the different events suggested ways in which to improve youth voice in school. Examples included “suggestion boxes”, “trwy gadael fwy o blant siarad i “govenours” lleiol ac i pennaeth yr ysgol am sut i wneud yr ysgol yn well [by allowing more children to talk to local “governors” and the Head of the School on how to make the school better]” and having “lessons or form time based on how students can voice their opinion”.

Several children and young people across the different events felt that as Children’s

Commissioner, Sally should work on improving children’s participation in school.

**Q: If I was Sally Holland I would....**

**A: School app to see what’s going on in school because people use apps more than websites, Have other pupils involved, Help children have a voice so if they’re being bullied they can stand up for themselves**

—— School Council Member

**Q: If I was Sally Holland I would....**

**A: Make sure that children know how to be heard and feel confident in school**

—— Secondary School Pupil

### Local community

Children and young people across the different events provided examples of how they were listened to or had a say in the community such as in clubs such as the “youth club” and “Cadets/ Scouts” (; “yn yr eglwys [in the church]” and the “coffee shop”. Overall, children and young people across the different events such as the young people in Ysgol John Bright in Llandudno felt that children should have more of a “say in the community”.

Participant felt that they should have more of a say on issues relating to their community such as local facilities like “shops” and “parks”, services such as bin collections (e.g. “collecting bins more regularly” and protection issues like ensuring that “no dogs [are] in the park and having “more traffic lights”. Some suggestions on how children’s participation in the community could be improved were “by having consultations with people in the community” (and “vote for children to represent their community”).

### Wider society

In the different events, children and young people provided different examples of how they were listened to by wider society, which included “youth forums” , by completing “holiaduron [questionnaires]” and by different individuals such as “doctors” and a “health councillor”. Young people in the housing forum event also noted that they had positive experiences of being listened to by a certain “support worker” and “organisations”. Young carers also noted that they were listened to by “young carers services”.

At the same time, children and young people also provided example of when their views were not taken seriously by wider society. Young people in housing forum Event and the Young Carers Workshop noted that they had experiences of not being listened to by the “social services” (a comment from one of

the participants was “phone me back when you say you’re going to”) and organisations such as the “Job Centre”.

Children and young people across the different events suggested a number of ways of how to increase youth voice in wider society. Although certain young people were concerned about providing 16 years olds with a vote believing that “at that age you are young and vulnerable and unsure about voting”, other children and young people across the different events felt they should have “a vote to see if they want to vote at 16”. Other suggestion on improving youth participation included “add more interesting surveys for us to complete”, “sefydlu cyfarfodydd rhwng grwpiau o bobl ifanc [establish meetings between groups of young people” and “Government Workers/Local Authorities coming to school to get views from students”.

Children in the School Council Event also felt that as Children’s Commissioner, Sally, should ensure that children in Wales get a say on issues affecting wider society such as “the UK’s suggestion to leave the European Union.”

### Have a say on the Children's Commissioner's Work

All of the children and young people who were asked felt that they should have a say on the Children's Commissioner's Work. Children and young people across the different events suggested a number of different ways in which they could have a say on Sally's work. A number of children and young people provided suggestions such as "Sally should visit schools more", through "holiaduron [surveys]" (as well as through having "a forum to talk to Sally and staff". Other children and young people suggested that they could have a say on Sally's work through the use of new information

technologies such as "Website to post comments and opinions", "a webinar" and also "Gallu anfon neges ar ap i'r comisiynydd [being able to send a message on an app to the commissioner]".

There was a discussion among students of the possibility of establishing the Super Ambassador scheme in Secondary schools. Students noted that the Super Ambassador scheme needs to be branded and "tailored for Secondary school. They also noted that the Secondary School Ambassador scheme would need to be promoted in a number of ways via "presentation in assemblies", "leaflets and posters around the school" as well as getting "a Celebrity to be involved".

## Adults' feedback

We now turn to the material gathered from professionals and other adults - discussing this under the same broad categories as for the children's feedback.

### General cross-cutting issues

First of all there were several very broad cross-cutting themes in the material gathered from professionals and other adults.

### UNCRC

The first related to the rights under the UNCRC in general. Respondents expressed the importance of promoting children's knowledge of their rights:

**Proper citizenship education in schools so kids understand rights, etc.**

—— National Social Services Conference

**All children need to know and understand their rights – in that way they would understand and when they/their friends are not experiencing those rights**

—— National Social Services Conference

There was also some interesting discussion about the endorsement of these rights by particular agencies:

**'Rights need a context – shouldn't be just a soft thing'**

—— Meeting with Police and Crime Commissioner

### Ensure all schools embrace UNCRC

—— Teacher

### Budgets / funding

The impact of public spending cuts were mentioned by a number of respondents, sometimes in a very general sense and sometimes in relation to very specific contexts, especially schools:

**Impact of further austerity on children's well-being services**

—— National Social Services Conference

**Schools are expected to cover more but without the budget / resources to fund them**

—— Teacher

**More time and money to reach the school councils requirements. (Time to operate is a major problem)**

—— Teacher

**Lack of budget LSAs support disappearing from schools**

**Lack of budget for classroom equipment. Even paper is limited – no money for books**

**Government cuts are constant – how are we supposed to maintain or improve standards with less money and services?**

—— Teachers

**Lack of staffing in social services endangering pupils – referrals taking ages**

—— Teacher

There were also some comments about equity of funding between Wales and England:

**Ensure parity of resources and facilities for all school in Wales.**

**Matching the opportunities provided to English and inner city schools.**

—— Teacher

**Funding in Education in Wales to match England**

—— Local authority conference

### **Inequities within Wales**

Several people from different professional groups raised the issue of inequities in services within Wales, for example:

**Flying Start excellent but professional judgement of health visitors not considered regarding postcode lottery**

—— Health Visitor or School Nurse

### **Social Services and Well-being Act**

Finally, concerns were expressed regarding the formulation of the Social Services and Well-being Act 2014

**Delivering major changes with diminishing resources ... the Act and codes are too adult dominated ... the partnership element of the Act is weak for children's services**

—— Meeting with Directors and Heads of Services

In connection with this, a query was also raised by the Director of an NGO regarding how the Act will be monitored

### **Particular groups of children**

As with the material from children, we have integrated comments about the needs of particular groups of children into the material discussed below. The groups most commonly identified by adults as priorities for the Commissioner were looked-after children and disabled children. Other groups less frequently mentioned were those not in mainstream schooling, young carers and children in asylum-seeking families.

## **Protection**

In general, issues which could be categorised under the heading of 'protection' were not as commonly mentioned by adults as those relating to 'provision' or 'participation'. However there were a small number of recurring themes as follows.

## **Internet safety**

Probably the most common single 'protection' theme in the material from adults related to safety on the internet and the use of social media. Concerns were expressed about general risks to children and also more specifically to the issue of cyberbullying:

**Helping young people to be safe and responsible digital citizens**

—— National Social Services Conference

**Social Media, e-safety- big problem, keeping children safe x 4**

**Free access to internet can be damaging (no control within school)**

—— Teacher

**The exponential rise in child abuse in the UK – much internet-based. This should be high on the agenda for action by the Children's Commissioner**

—— School Governor

**Internet safety – monitoring, parents training/information, cyber bullying, social media**

—— Teacher

It is interesting to note that, in comparison with the recurring theme of cyberbullying, very few adults identified other forms of bullying as a key priority.

## **Hitting or smacking children**

The issue of parents hitting their children was raised by a number of professionals:

**When will you make a decision on the Children Are Unbeatable campaign?**

—— National Social Services Conference

## **Other safeguarding issues**

There were also a small number of other comments about safeguarding issues, including domestic violence and child sexual exploitation and the issue of social services responses to safeguarding referrals:

**Domestic abuse is huge with the young parents we support. Is there going to be an emphasis on schools to promote healthy relationships?**

—— Voluntary sector worker

**Child Sexual Exploitation responses need to be local, but linked to regional, Wales and UK strategies. Need to work with third sector who have the skills to listen to young people at risk or who have been missing**

—— Meeting with Police and Crime Commissioner

**Social services not responding to or acting on concerns raised by professionals**

—— Teacher



### **Risks in the community**

Several respondents mentioned traffic and road safety issues under the broad heading of 'protection' and a range of other risks in the community were also identified. For example:

**Safety on the streets = council cuts mean that clubs, swimming pools and libraries are being closed down, leaving NOTHING for children to do after school or on weekends .**

**Many children regularly experience problems in streets, parks not feeling safe  
Community – drug issues and influence from older siblings x 2**

—— Teachers

### **Extremism**

Finally the importance of counter-extremism measures were mentioned in one forum.

**Provision**

A much larger proportion of adults' comments could be categorised under the broad theme of 'provision' and we discuss these here using similar categories to those used for the discussion of children's comments under this heading.

**Poverty/inequality**

First there was a broad concern about poverty

**Services have been cut in school and outside. I am especially worried about the impact on children when they live in poverty**

—— Teacher

A number of professionals viewed this as an important priority for the Commissioner:

**To promote services, policies and legislation to reduce / eradicate child poverty**

—— National Social Services Conference

There were also some more specific issues for particular groups of children:

**Support with opposition to the Disabled Students Allowance changes.**

—— Voluntary sector workers

**Education**

There were a wide range of comments about educational needs and provision. Many of these related to children in general:

**Dim profion yn y CS (No testing in the Foundation Stage)**

—— Teacher

**More classroom support for all abilities**

**Improve pre-school and after school provisions**

—— Teacher

Other general educational topics mentioned by adults but not captured in the above quotes were the need to reform the school curriculum, the importance of Flying Start and other early year's initiatives, breakfast clubs and the need for better access to libraries

In addition to these general topics, a number of educational issues were raised in relation to specific groups including children excluded from school, looked-after children and disabled children:

**Poor home education for excluded pupils**

—— School Governor

**LAC attainment in schools – gap in LAC and non LAC**

—— National Social Services Conference

**Funding for support for pupils with ALN**

—— School Governor

## Conversations

**Ensure that personal care is provided in Colleges for disabled young people.**

—— Voluntary sector workers

**Lack of out of school specialist provision for children and young people with Autism Spectrum Condition**

—— National Social Services Conference

### **Physical health and health behaviours**

There was no single prominent theme in adults' comments about priorities for the Commissioner under the broad heading of 'physical health' issues. Different individuals and groups mentioned different issues including lifestyle, diet, tackling child obesity, teenage pregnancy and drugs.

Neither was there a very coherent picture regarding services under this heading. Groups of health professionals argued for different priorities including: children's community nursing, school nursing and the creation of more child development centres:

**There are not enough Child Development Centres and they are understaffed – too few OTs, Physios, Speech & Language Therapists**

—— National Social Services Conference

There were a number of other issues raised about provision for disabled children in particular:

**Disabled babies are surviving birth and living longer. A college in South Wales for YP with complex needs is needed.**

—— Voluntary sector workers

And access to health care was also raised for children in private / independent schools (who may not have access to school nurse provision) and children of asylum-seeking families:

**School-aged children in asylum-seeker accommodation often not in school for many months, therefore poor access to health care (GP only)**

—— School nurse

### **Mental health / Well-being**

The issue of mental health was raised much more frequently than physical health. Although some professionals focused specifically on mental ill-health there was also a wider recognition of the importance of positive mental health:

**Preventative work around wellbeing, particularly in 'low level' mental health issues that don't meet the threshold for health intervention.**

**Life coaching that addresses underlying issues that have not been explored. Unresolved, they impact on young people's ability and motivation to move forward.**

—— Voluntary sector worker

**Not enough early concentration on wellbeing. Waiting lists. [Lack of ] Availability of tier 4 places. .. can be difficult to secure a place around thresholds and some children ending up inappropriately in secure care or residential care.**

—— Notes from meeting with Directors and Heads of Service

## Conversations

Linked to this the view was expressed that the emphasis on attainment in schools had detracted from the focus on well-being.

The most common theme regarding services for children in the consultation with adults was the role of CAMHS. For example:

#### CAMHS services from preventative through to specialist

- National Social Services Conference

#### Lack of primary mental health service for children and young people

- National Social Services Conference

#### LAC and other children's Access to CAMHS services – Children's needs are not met or are met in a timely way.

- National Social Services Conference

#### More available therapeutic support for children (CAMHS) – support for children in need and their families (preventative work)

- Social worker

Discussions with CAMHS professionals identified a range of issues:

- Limited capacity in primary mental health services
- Community Teams (tier 2/3) are small and vulnerable to staff shortages if sickness of maternity hits;
- General staffing and recruitment issues – all LHBs fishing from the same pond and risk of destabilising services as staff move posts;
- Heavy medically led community teams which may not be sustainable or even fit-for-purpose;
- Not a secure service available;

- Moderate – severe Learning Disability service missing;
- Substance misuse/ Detox service missing;
- Service for young people who have a mental health issue as a result of a physical injury missing;
- Crisis provision – geographically unhelpful so looking at other models of care (e.g. a crisis liaison post);
- Transition issues from CAMHS to Adult Mental Health Service – funding issues here too.
- **Notes from meeting with group of CAMHS professionals**

and equally a range of priorities for improving services including:

- CBT training
- Therapy and counselling
- Better community services to prevent inpatient admission and so that young people are not kept in hospital for longer than is necessary
- Improved training for nurses
- Creative therapies
- Psychotherapy
- Better communication between services
- **Notes from meeting with group of CAMHS professionals**

**Social work**

In contrast to education and health issues there was very little mention of generic social work provision (apart from a few comments regarding safeguarding which are dealt with under 'Protection'). One professional argued that social work should be seen as 'a fundamental service'.

However there were a substantial number of comments raised more specifically about provision for looked-after children. One factor that a number of professionals were concerned about was the location of placements

**LAC – too many out-of-county placements. Difficult to monitor quality / consistency in terms of care**

—— School Nurse or Health Visitor

**Ensuring that Looked After Children remain close to their families, friends and within their community, unless there is a very good reason for them to be placed away from their home town / village. Not to be placed in other Authorities**

—— National Social Services Conference

**Create enhanced fostering / specialist placements to keep more LAC in the area they live**

—— Social worker

**Advocacy for children in care and those in care in England who are from Welsh authorities**

—— National Social Services Conference

There were also concerns about:

**Out of county placements mainly from England but also from Northern Ireland.**

**Children not being visited.**

**Very high needs with little pre-planning regarding the suitability of local services and also local culture (culture shock of going from London to rural Gwynedd for example).**

**When they go missing - which they do, their home authorities not always responsive.**

**Wrong assumptions that places like Wrexham provide safe environments for children who been victims of crime etc.**

—— Meeting with Directors and Heads of Service

A range of other comments related to review processes and the role of IROs, and a set of issues relating to fostering were raised in one particular meeting:

**Placement moves taking place due to financial constraints on local authorities and not in the best interests of the child**

**Independent Reviewing Officers not effectively challenging the decision making of local authorities**

**Misconception that there is a significant cost differential between local authority "in house" foster placements and independently provided placements.**

**Children's views on not wishing to be moved not being upheld.**

—— Notes from meeting with foster provider

Professionals were also concerned about broader misconceptions and misrepresentations of what was happening with looked-after children:

**the LAC figures are inflated by an over formalisation of kinship care which is driven by the courts and by funding concerns**

—— Notes from meeting with Directors and Heads of Service

**Concern that the discourse about too many children being in care does not reflect that care can be a positive intervention.**

—— File note from meeting

### **Leisure (including play)**

Another relatively frequent theme in adults' comments related to leisure and play.

**Play, especially for children and young people with additional needs**

—— Voluntary sector workers

One professional was concerned about:

**Diluted commitment to play. It should be driven by the UNCRC general comment 17 on play.**

**Tension between regulation of children's workforce and grass-roots nature of the work (Play and youth work)**

**Children's lives (especially middle-class) over timetabled and supervised.**

**Outdoor play a big priority for their organisation: children need space, time and permission for free play**

—— Head of Play, third sector

It was also argued by a CAMHS specialist that promoting sports and outdoor activities could have benefits for mental health.

In general, the need for improved community and leisure facilities for children and young people were mentioned by a number of groups and individuals. For example:

**Facilities, events, places to go in the community after school / weekend. Not just for very young children. Events like play scheme**

—— Teacher

**More availability and provision for activities for teenagers.**

—— Teacher

**More holiday clubs for kids. More youth clubs, Brownies, Guides, Scouts clubs**

—— Parent

**More after school activities which don't cost a lot of money as some can cost a lot especially if you have more than one child**

—— Parent

Conversations

**More activities available in the evenings for young people**

—— Teacher

**Lack of local amenities – childrens activities in the community**

**Provision of youth clubs – leisure services**

**Not enough sports/exercise provision for teenagers**

**Safe places to play within the community ensuring it is age appropriate**

**Not enough free local services available- lots of clubs but all need to be paid for**

—— Teachers

**More cycle lanes etc. to allow children to bike, scoter, walk to school – more cycle parking areas**

—— Teacher

**For health and fitness plus wellbeing of young Muslim women to have more women only swimming but more keep-fit classes for Muslim girls to attend.**

—— Voluntary sector

It seems that there was a commonly-held view that the current level of leisure provision is inadequate and that this should be a priority issue for the Commissioner.

**Language provision**

Welsh-language provision was raised by one group of professionals in relation to children with additional learning needs:

**Inclusivity and ALN. (some parents of disabled children being discouraged from choosing welsh medium providers – this was also brought up in recent meeting with welsh language commissioner)**

—— Notes from meeting with nursery providers

One group also raised the issue of greater support for the use of British Sign Language identifying four priorities: improve access for families to learn British Sign Language (BSL); BSL to be added to the national curriculum; improve children's access to education in BSL; better access to services (e.g. education, health, social care, public transport) in BSL

## **Transitions**

A priority issue raised in several forums and events was support during the transition between youth and adulthood.

### **Transition from child services into adult services**

—— National Social Services Conference

**More partnership working between Children and Adult's Services. 18 is just a number in the young people's life, their needs remain the same**

—— Senior Transition Worker

### **Homelessness – 'culture of B+B'**

—— National Social Services Conference

Some specific issues were mentioned here for for disabled children and looked-after children

**Known problem [for disabled young people] transition support is fragmented and patchy due to fault lines between service areas and budgets.**

### **More support for disabled people**

**When attending Job Centre meetings, making sure they understand what is expected of them and make it a more realistic for them.**

—— Voluntary sector workers

**Care leavers should have same opportunities and outcomes as children who are not looked after by LAs**

—— National Social Services Conference

## **Parents**

Finally in this section on provision, several groups and individuals discussed issues relating to parents and parenting that may impact on children's welfare. There were general comments about parenting:

**The importance of good parenting and support available – needs to promote this**

—— National Social Services Conference

And a few comments about the needs of parents in particular contexts:

**Parents being SEN – how to help parents language and numeracy skills**

—— Teacher

**Support for mums if they have MH issues rather than taking child away – parental support and no judgement**

—— Parent



**Conversations**

One national organisation called for attention to perinatal mental health in Wales with the following priorities: early intervention, training, building capacity in primary care; building capacity in specialist perinatal mental health services.

There was also some discussion about the importance of parents having continued access to work and educational opportunities:

**Childcare for work or returning to education**

**Huge need for meaningful support to return to work**

**Free childcare facilities for young parents to further train and educate we do so well as we offer a free crèche facility but this is needed in more organisations. FE Colleges have only limited spaces as do other statutory organisations**

—— Voluntary sector workers

### **Participation**

The UNCRC contains a number of articles which are grouped under the heading of 'participation'. Article 12 is probably the closest to many people's understanding of participation:

**When adults are making decisions that affect children, children have the right to say what they think should happen and have their opinions taken into account**

—— UNCRC, Article 12

### **Taking children's views into account**

It was the above idea that was the focus of most of the comments we categorised under this heading.

There were many comment about the importance of children's views to be taken into account in school:

**All children need to be listened to, not just elected groups e.g. through circle time**

**Find a way for ALL children to have a voice not just School Council and**

**Ambassadors e.g. circle time used by School council to raise issues**

—— Teachers

**Why don't the government ask pupils their views on tests?**

—— Teacher

**Encourage Head teachers to be more accountable for the views of pupils**

—— Teacher

**School councils that deal with real rather than trivial issues**

—— Teacher

There were also comments about participation in decision-making in wider contexts:

**How can our children have a say on issues if provisions are being taken away from them (closure of pools, libraries, youth clubs etc)**

—— Teacher

**Children's voices in the evaluation of major health service change**

—— Health Visitor or School Nurse

Conversations

**They need a national platform to replace Funky D. But YP from their communities need to build up confidence in local forums (schools and locality based) before being able to take part in local authority forums and then national.**

—— Youth Worker

**Reinstate Funky Dragon**

—— Teacher

**Keen to work on political education and citizenship – makes a big difference when peer led initiatives re voter registration and campaigns**

—— Youth Worker

Some professionals specifically commented on the importance of ensuring that disabled children have rights to participation:

**Children's advocacy for those with complex needs whose voice is only heard through their parents**

—— Health Visitor or School Nurse

**For the voice of children and young people with disabilities to be heard in all things relevant to them and acted upon.**

—— Voluntary sector workers

### **Other aspects of participation**

However the UNCRC also contains a number of other articles that are typically categorised under the heading of participation. These are: Article 13 (Freedom of expression); Article 14 (Freedom of thought, conscience and religion); Article 15 (Freedom of association); Article 16 (Right to privacy) and Article 17 (Access to information; mass media).

There was very little discussion of these aspects of children's rights in adults' comments. Isolated examples are

**To have freedom to do, I take risks e.g. climb trees etc.**

—— Teacher

**Much better internet/mobile connection across the whole of Wales**

—— Teacher

## Conclusion

This report has provided a summary of the feedback provided by children, young people and adults during the Beth Nesa? / What Next? events, focusing on what they had to say on the three Ps – Protection, Provision and Participation rights - which are thematic areas of the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In this final section we will attempt to draw together some overarching themes from the material presented descriptively in the section on children's and adults' views.

First, it is important to make a few comments on the nature of the material gathered. Through the consultation exercise, the Commissioner's office were successful in gathering an impressive amount of material in a short time period. The consultation has been wide-ranging and inclusive – covering all geographical areas of Wales and paying attention to the diversity that exists within the child population, including particular disadvantaged groups of children. At the same time, inevitably in an exercise of this type the material cannot be regarded as 'representative'. For example, the sample of children included in the consultation was somewhat concentrated in the 9 to 11 year old age group. Similarly, in terms of adults, some professional groups were more fully represented than others. For this reason we have deliberately avoided too much emphasis on quantifying the themes that have been raised, and it is important that these issues are also borne in mind in drawing conclusions from the material.

In terms of thinking about how the material can inform the development of the Commissioner's priorities, the views expressed by children and adults suggest at least three key issues of balance.

A first issue of balance is between a focus on rights and on welfare (the two aspects

of the Commissioner's remit). A focus on welfare (or well-being) expands the range of topics to be considered beyond those which can necessarily be addressed through a rights-based approach. There may be questions to resolve about the scope of the Commissioner to address some of these topics, such as participation or emotional support within the family.

A second tension is between the general and the specific. While children did recognise the specific needs of particular sub-groups, most of their comments were of quite a general nature. There was some difference in emphasis here in adults' comments which much more commonly focused on specific groups that were seen as having particular needs. There were many recommendations from professionals for the Commissioner to prioritise the needs of these specific groups.

Third, there are some key points of difference between children's and adults' priorities. Children tended to talk quite broadly about their needs and paid much greater attention to issues such as love and emotional support than adults. Perhaps inevitably adults tended to focus much more on issues related to service provision, often those particularly related to their professional roles. There were also some differences of emphasis on key issues. For example, adults in general seemed much more concerned about cyberbullying than bullying in other contexts, whereas for children the emphasis was reversed.

## Conversations

However, despite these tensions and differences there does seem to be a great deal of common ground between children's and adults's views. Hopefully the way the material is presented will enable people reading this document to identify a set of priority issues of this kind.