Children's Commissioner for Wales
Beth Nesa? What Next?
Professionals and other adults' survey

Detailed findings

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Introduction

This is a report on the survey of professionals and adults conducted in the Autumn of 2015 as part of the Beth Nesa project. The survey was one of a set of four which were conducted with different age groups of children and adults, seeking to gather their views and experiences in order to inform the future priorities of the Children's Commissioner for Wales.

About the survey

Questionnaire content

The survey consisted of a self-completion questionnaire which was completed online via a computer, tablet or mobile. A paper version was available on request. The questionnaire was available in Welsh,English, and British Sign Language.

Means of distributing

Information about the survey, including the links to the online questionnaires, were circulated as widely as possible within Wales through social media, a radio campaign, web advertisements, and through email.

The sample

The survey was targeted mainly at professionals involved in work with or relating to children and young people in Wales. However it was also open to any parents, carers and other adults who wished to contribute their views to the project.

A total of 874 completed questionnaires were received and are included in this report[1]. Forty responses were completed in Welsh and the remaining 834 in English.

Respondents were asked to specify in what capacity they were completing the questionnaire and a summary of responses is shown in Table 1. Around 64% of respondents were completing the survey as professionals, and around 31% as parents/carers. Breakdowns of results are provided separately for these two main types of respondent in the report. Summaries for other respondents are not provided as the numbers involved were small, but these respondents are included where the results relate to the whole sample.

Table 1: Types of respondent

Type of respondent	Number
Professionals	533
Parents/carers	263
Other adults	44
Missing/not specified	33

[1] In total, the online survey was also started an additional 343 times but either these entries were blank or the cases contained very little data due to the respondent exiting the survey within the first few questions.

The professionals were asked to provide information about which type of agency they worked for and the results are shown in Table 2. Over a third (35%) of professional respondents worked in the education sector; around 20% in the health sector; 16% in the voluntary sector and 11% in social work.

Table 2: Professionals by agency or sector

Type of agency or sector	% of professionals
Education	35%
Voluntary sector	16%
Health (excluding mental health)	15%
Social work	11%
Mental health	5%
Youth justice	4%
Policy or campaigning	1.5%
Police	0.8%
Academic	0.8%
Other	10%

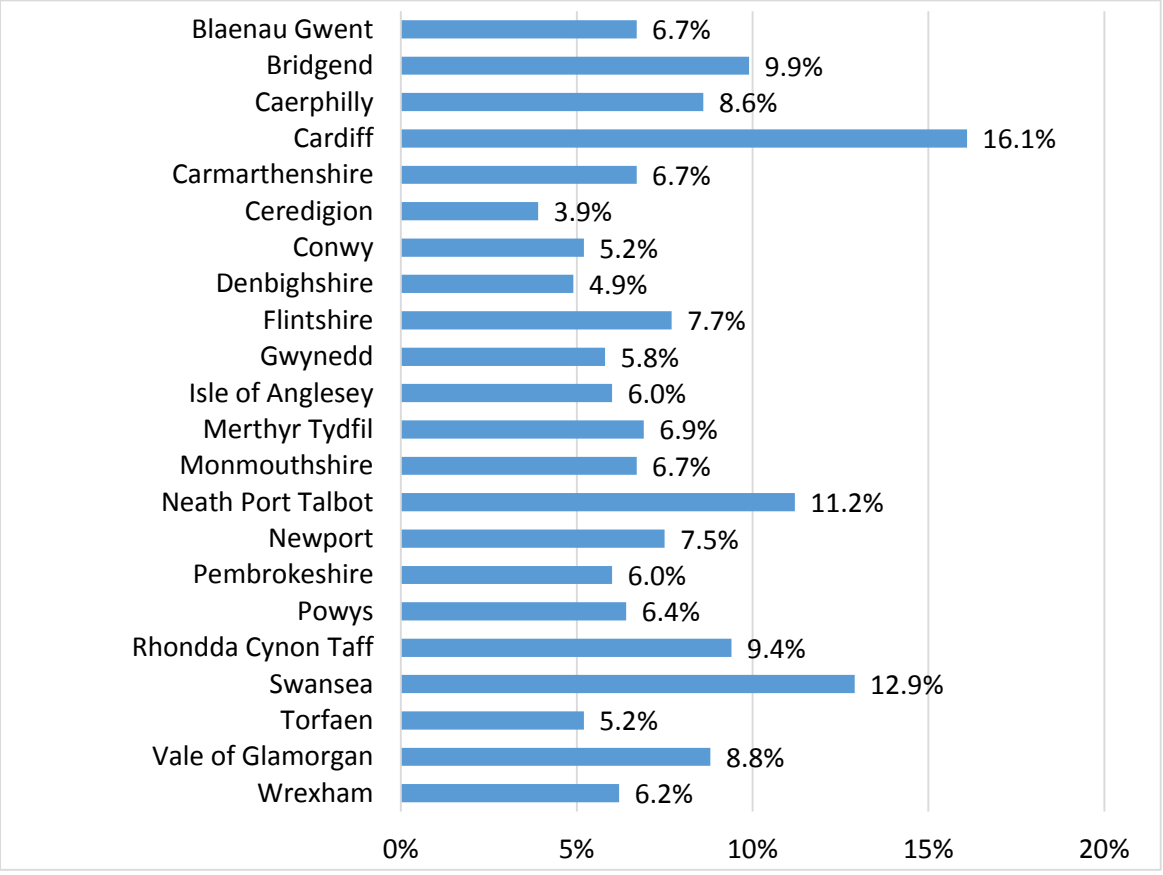
Professionals were asked the lower and upper age limit of the children and young people they worked with. These have been categorised into approximate age groupings as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Professionals by age group

Type of agency or sector	% of professionals
Pre-school only	3%
Pre-school and primary	13%
Primary only	4%
Pre-school to secondary up to 16	4%
Pre-school to secondary up to 18	18%
Primary and secondary up to 16	2%
Primary and secondary up to 18	13%
Primary to over 18	7%
Secondary up to 16	2%
Secondary up to 18	9%
Secondary to over 18	9%
16 upwards	5%
All age groups	12%

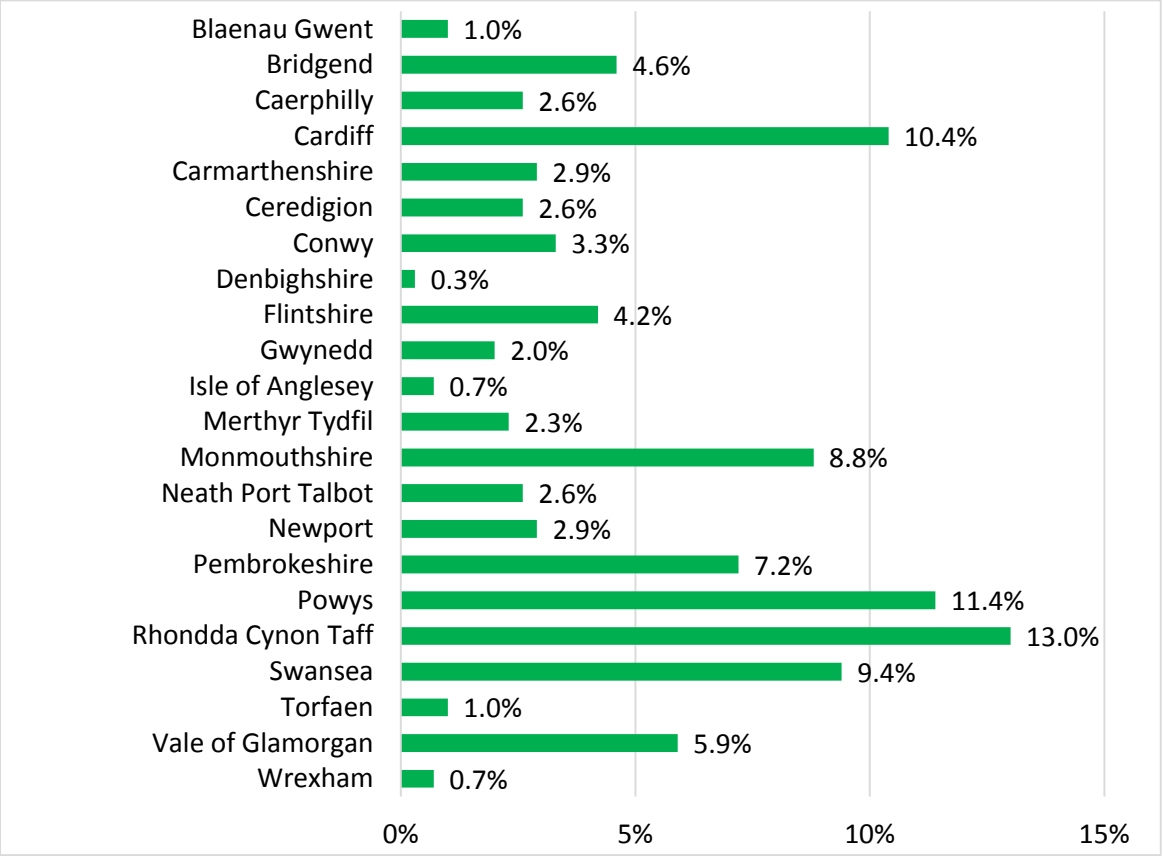
Around one in eight professionals said that their remit covered the whole of Wales. Of the remaining professionals, the proportion who worked in each local authority area are shown in Figure 1. Many professionals worked in more than one area so the percentages in the chart add up to much more than 100%.

Figure 1: Percentage of professionals working in each local authority area (excluding 'All Wales')



Other respondents were asked which local authority area they lived in. The results are shown in Figure 2. There was a spread across all areas of Wales, with the highest proportions in Rhondda Cynon Taf, Powys and Cardiff, and the lowest in Denbighshire, Isle of Anglesey and Wrexham.

Figure 2: Percentage of non-professionals living in each local authority area



The questionnaire

Apart from the factual information described above, the questionnaire consisted of two main sections asking about :

- Levels of concern about a range of issues affecting children and young people
- Views on issues that should be priorities for the Children's Commissioner

Most questions were in closed tick-box format. There were a few open-ended response format questions. Wordings of questions and response options are provided in the relevant sections on findings.

Presentation of findings

Rounding

For simplicity of presentation most percentages have been rounded to the nearest one percentage point, so totals for questions may not add up to exactly 100%.

Interpretation of findings

It is important to bear in mind that this survey is not a representative sample of professionals or of parents and carers. No attempts have been made to weight the data and no claims can be made about the extent to which the views of participants are typical of adults in Wales in general or those in particular groups.

Structure of the report

The structure of the report follows the structure of the questionnaire, with findings presented in two sections. Each section provides information about the questions asked, summarises overall responses and makes comparisons between different sub-groups as appropriate.

Levels of concern about different issue

Participants were presented with a list of key issues that were derived from the consultation with children, young people and adults in the first stage of the project. They were asked to indicate the extent to which 'these issues are a concern to you regarding the lives of children and young people in Wales at the moment.'

Responses were on a five-point scale from 0 to 4 where 0 indicates *'Not a concern at all*' and 4 indicates *'A major concern'*. Participants were asked *'Please try to avoid scoring most issues at the same level as this will reduce the value of your responses'.*

A summary of responses for the whole sample is shown in Figure 3:

- The issue of greatest concern to participants was the availability of mental health and well-being services for children and young people which as a major concern for over 60% of respondents.
- The next highest levels of concern related to poverty and geographical inequalities in services.
- The three topics with the lowest levels of concern were children's participation in decisions at home and at school, and issues of safety for children in their local area.

Table 4 shows the rankings overall and for the two main respondent groups (professionals and parents. Overall the relative levels of concern with different issues were similar for these two groups. However there were some differences:

- Parents had relatively higher levels of concern regarding services for disabled children and bullying than did professionals.
- Professionals had higher levels of concern about support for young people making the transition to adulthood and about support and services for looked-after children.
- In terms of lower levels of concern, parents were notably less concerned about safeguarding issues at home than were professionals; while professionals were less concerned about safety in the local area and at school than parents.

Figure 3: Levels of concern about different issues regarding the lives of children and young people in Wales

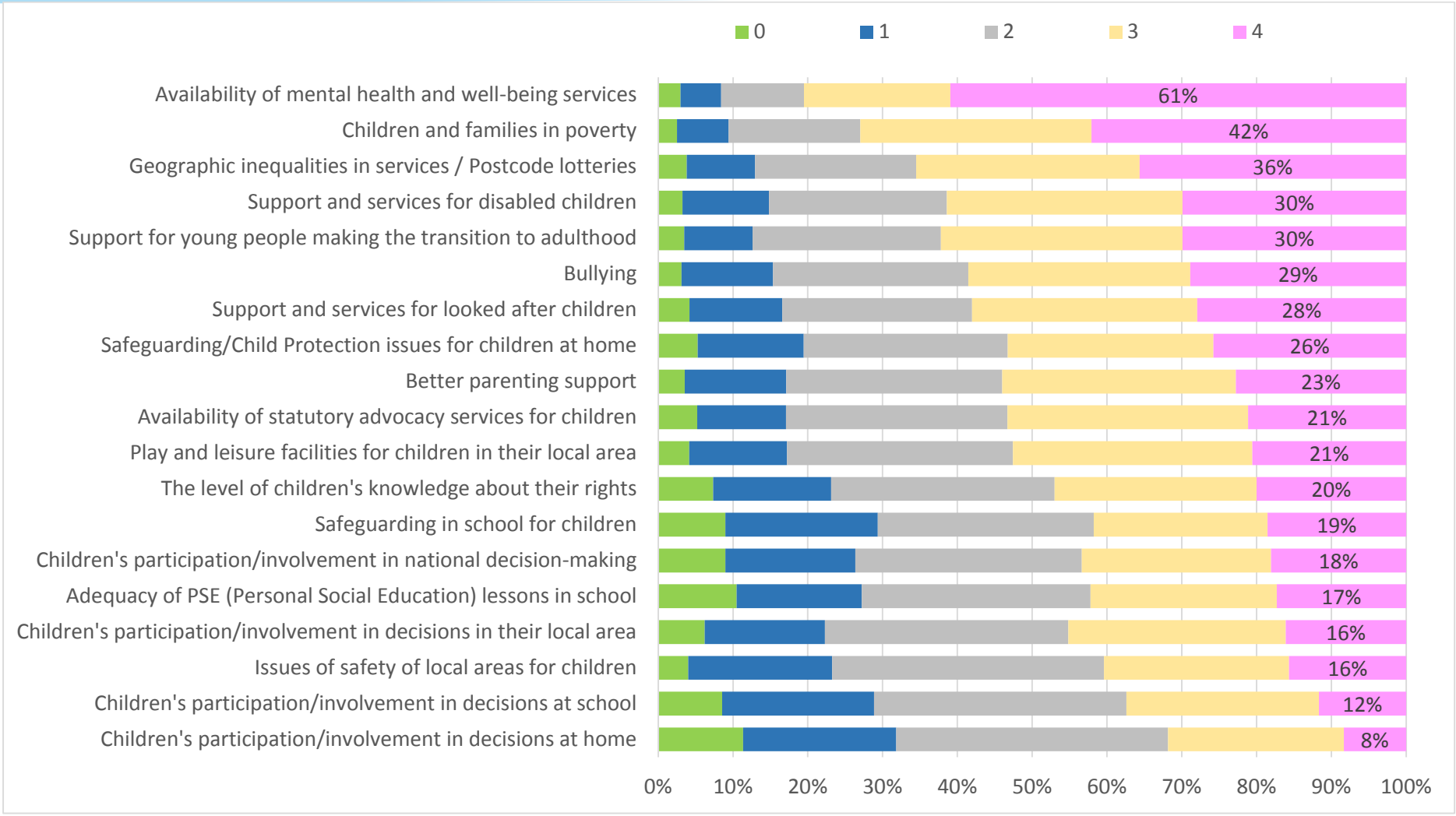


Table 4: Ranking[2] of levels of concern by respondent type

	All	Profess-ionals	Parents
Availability of mental health and well-being services	1	1	1
Children and families in poverty	2	2	3
Geographic inequalities in services / Postcode lotteries	3	4	2
Support for young people making the transition to adulthood	4	3	7
Support and services for disabled children	5	8	4
Bullying	6	9	5
Support and services for looked after children	7	5	8
Better parenting support	8	7	13
Safeguarding/Child Protection issues for children at home	9	6	15
Availability of statutory advocacy services for children	10	10	9
Play and leisure facilities for children in their local area	11	11	6
The level of children's knowledge about their rights	12	12	11
Children's participation .. in decisions in their local area	13	13	14
Issues of safety of local areas for children	14	16	10
Children's participation .. in national decision-making	15	14	18
Safeguarding in school for children	16	17	12
Adequacy of PSE (Personal Social Education) lessons in school	17	15	17
Children's participation .. in decisions at school	18	19	16
Children's participation .. in decisions at home	19	18	19

[2] Based on mean scores.

Similarly, Table 5 shows both similarities and differences in the highest levels of concern of different types of professionals. The top two priorities – availability of mental health services and children and families in poverty – were the same across all groups. However:

- Education professionals had higher levels of concern than other groups with parenting support
- Social work professionals were, as might be expected, more concerned than other groups about support for looked-after children and with safeguarding issues at home.
- Voluntary sector and other groups of professionals tended to have higher concerns about the availability of statutory advocacy services.

Nevertheless the rankings were mostly similar across groups.

Table 5: Top five concerns by agency type (professionals)

	All	Education	Health	Social work	Voluntary	Other
Availability of mental health and well-being services	1st	1st	1st	1st	1st	1st
Children and families in poverty	2nd	2nd	2nd	2nd	2nd	2nd
Support for young people making the transition to adulthood	3rd	5th	3rd	5th	3rd	3rd
Geographical inequalities / Postcode lotteries	4th	3rd	4th		4th	4th
Support and services for looked-after children	5th		5th	3rd		
Safeguarding/Child Protection issues for children at home	6th			4th		
Better parenting support	7th	4th				
Support and services for disabled children	8th					
Bullying	9th					
Availability of statutory advocacy services for children	10th				5th	5th

Priorities

Respondents were then asked to select from a list of 18 priorities which were derived from the outcomes of the consultation which formed the first phase of this project.

The question wording was as follows:

> *The following is a list of possible priorities for the Children's Commissioner's work that have emerged from the consultation.*
>
> *Please tick up to five items that you think should be the Commissioner's priorities over the next few years*

The results of this question are summarised in Figure 4 in descending order of prioritisation. As with levels of concern, the highest ranked priority was better mental health and well-being support for children. However there were differences between levels of concern and priorities for the Children's Commissioner. For example, better play and leisure facilities for children in their local area was the fourth highest priority for the Commissioner but was only the 11th highest ranked issue in terms of levels of concern.

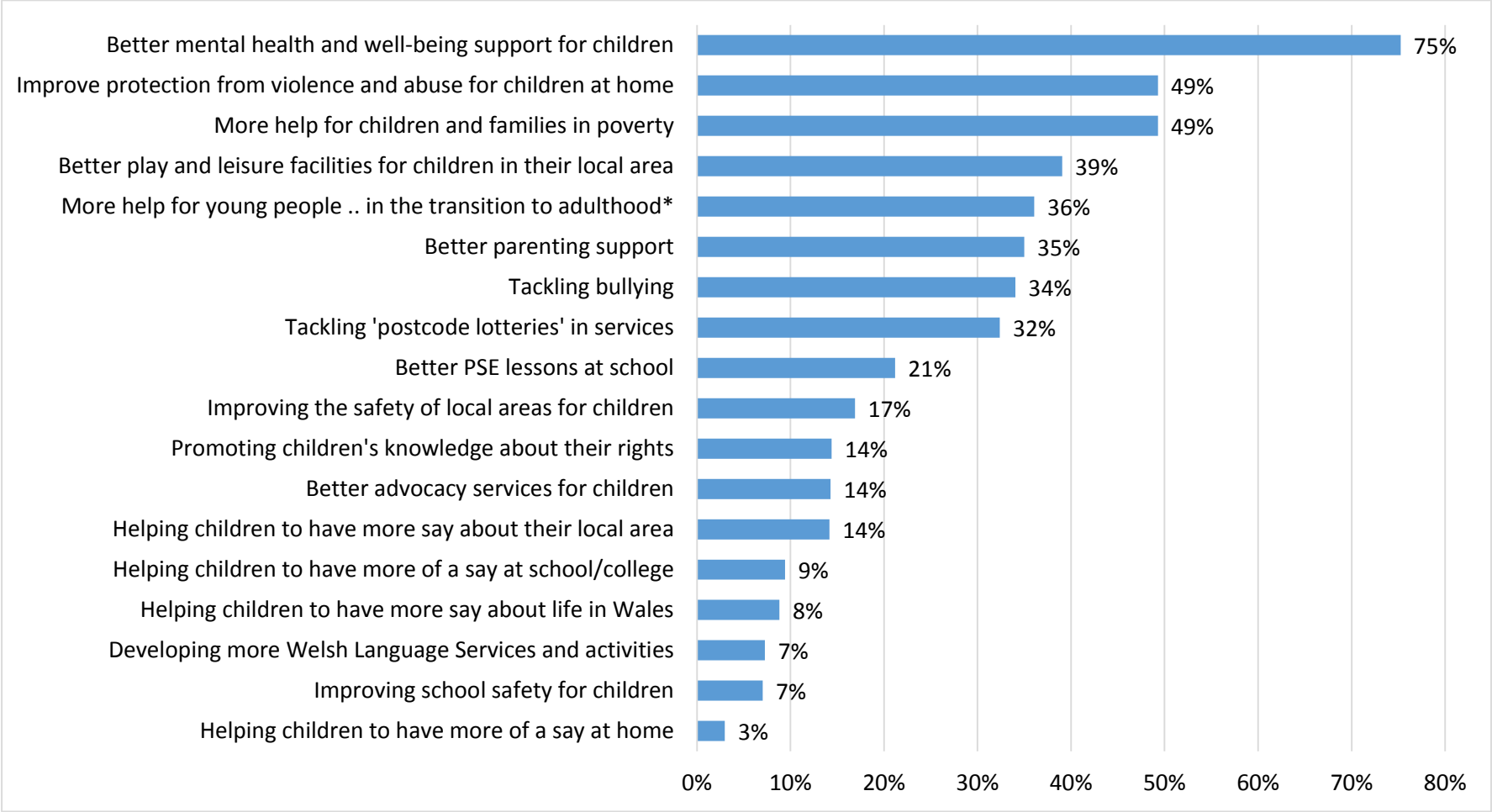
Figure 5 compares the responses to this question for the two main groups in the survey – professionals and parents. There are some clear differences in priorities here:

- Professionals were more likely than parents to prioritise mental health and well-being services; safeguarding children at home; better parenting support and (to a lesser extent) help for children and families in poverty
- Parents were more likely than professionals to prioritise play and leisure facilities for children in the local area; tackling bullying and safety for children in the local area and at school.

Finally Table 6 shows the top five ranked priorities by professional group. There was a fair deal of consistency in rankings here but a few differences.

- Health professionals were more likely than average to prioritise tackling geographical inequalities in service provision
- Education professionals placed a higher than average priority on local play and leisure facilities
- Voluntary sector professionals were more likely than average to prioritise tackling bullying.

Figure 4: Adults' priorities for the Children's Commissioner's work over the next few years



* The full wording of the fifth item was 'More help for young people who need extra help in the transition to adulthood'

Figure 5: Priorities of professionals and parents for the Children's Commissioner's work over the next few years

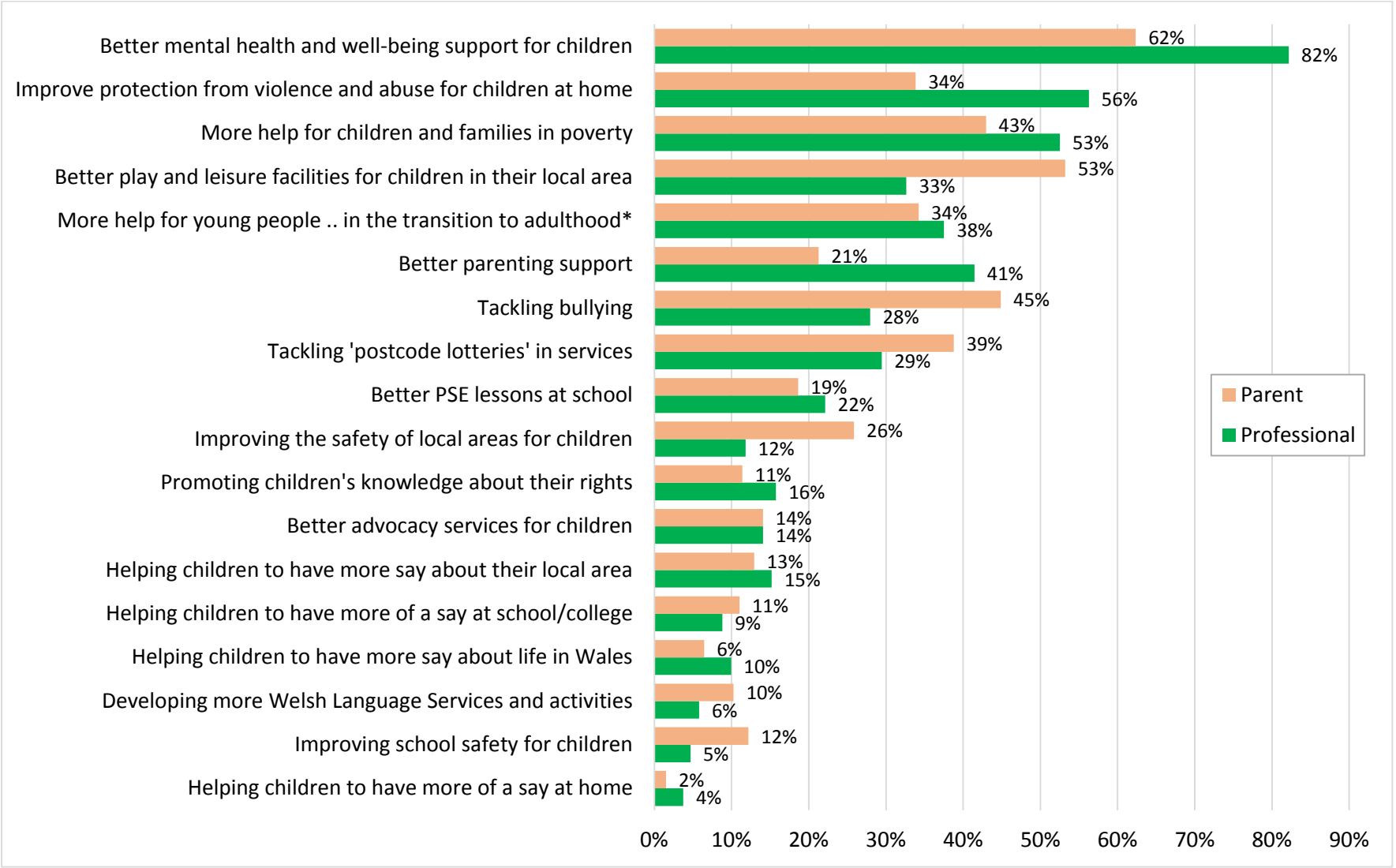


Table 6: Top five priorities by agency type (professionals)

	All	Education	Health	Social work	Voluntary	Other
Better mental health and well-being support for children	1st 82%	1st 73%	1st 93%	1st 84%	1st 84%	1st 85%
Improve protection from violence and abuse for children at home	2nd 56%	3rd 55%	2nd 62%	2nd 67%	3rd 49%	2nd 52%
More help for children and families in poverty	3rd 53%	2nd 56%	3rd 49%	3rd 63%	2nd 54%	4th 43%
Better parenting support	4th 41%	4th 49%	5th 47%	5th 37%		
More help for young people who need extra help in the transition to adulthood	5th 38%			4th 39%	4th 38%	3rd 50%
Tackling 'postcode lotteries' in services			4th 48%			
Better play and leisure facilities for children in their local area		5th 44%				
Better PSE lessons at school						5th 34%
Tackling bullying					5th 33%	

The survey also asked: '*Are there any particular groups of children that you feel should be a specific priority for the Children's Commissioner's work?'* Response options were as shown in Table 7.

This question, and the response categories, was included because of feedback in the first phase consultation from various professionals about the specific needs of these particular groups. Responses to this question for the whole sample and also separately for professionals and parents are shown in Table 7.

Overall a high priority was given to three groups – looked-after children and care leavers, young carers and disabled children. There were some differences in the views of professionals and parents.

There was an additional text box for comments. A number of respondents suggested other groups that should be prioritised. These were quite wide-ranging. The two most common suggestions were children with mental health issues and children living in poverty or deprived areas. However over 30 respondents expressed the view that there should not be this kind of prioritisation and that all children should be prioritised.

Table 7: Prioritisation of specific sub-groups of children and young people

	All	Professionals	Parents
Looked after children and care leavers	51%	59%	41%
Young carers	41%	44%	40%
Disabled children	39%	38%	47%
LGBTU young people	15%	17%	10%
Children from BME backgrounds	12%	15%	6%
Other groups	15%	16%	15%