



A report into how well Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is put into practice across the UK

**It's YOUR right, your choice,
your voice**

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An organisation run
BY children and young people
FOR children and young people

Article 12 of the

United Nations

Convention on the

Rights of the Child

states that:

“All children have the

right to have their

views taken seriously

whenever decisions

are made that affect

them.”

Acknowledgements

Article 12 is an organisation run by children and young people. It was launched on 20 November 1996:

- to promote children's right to voice our views and have these views taken seriously whenever decisions are made that affect our lives, and
- to promote all other rights guaranteed to children in the UK by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Article 12 takes its name from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. We want young people everywhere to know their rights and have adults respect our voice.

Thanks

We would like to give our biggest thanks to all the young people who took part in the research.

Thanks to the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation for their support and for giving us a chance to do this vital project. Also thanks to all our friends and family who have supported us through this, and to our adult support workers Carolyn Willow and Andrea Legal Miller. We really appreciate the help from Barnardo's who paid for our interview tapes to be transcribed.

All our thanks to Simon Scott for helping us with the layout and design of the report - we couldn't have done it without him. Cheers to Save the Children Fund for letting us use them as a bank when it looked like our project budget was at its limit (well anyway, it stopped us from busking!).

Most of all we would like to thank everyone who respects children's rights and anyone who reads this report and makes a difference.

© Article 12, April 1999

Youth of today

People don't listen to us
They always make a fuss
Why don't they hear
They only interfere
Why don't they listen to us?

They don't seem to care
It doesn't seem fair
We don't get a say
Or get our own way
Why don't they seem to care?

Nobody hears our voices
We never have any choices
People make up these rules
To us it seems so cruel
Why doesn't anyone care?

We're the youth of today
We came here especially to say
Please hear our view
Because we're important too
Please will you listen to us!

Children Of Today

They stay out late causing trouble,
Breaking laws and messing about.
They litter our streets,
Just hanging around.
Going nowhere and putting us down.

What a load of rubbish

Not all of us cause trouble.
Not all of us steal.
We go nowhere because,
There's nowhere to go.
We do nothing because,
There's nothing to do.
If someone listened.
If someone helped.
We wouldn't be such a problem.
We wouldn't be such a pain.
Because we're just children,
With nowhere to go and,
Nothing to do.

Millie Collins

Becky Povey, Kartina Curley, Preena Mistry, Amber Timbrell

My Right to be Heard

I'm kept in the darkness, I don't know my rights
Somebody tell me and turn on the lights
Tomorrow's the future and you may not be there
Let my views be heard - it's only fair!
I should be taught to communicate ideas
My thoughts and my feelings, my alarms and fears
I can voice an opinion but it may not be real
It's only an impression, just what I feel
I believe in my head what I don't dare to express
Because I'm a child my status is less
I speak without knowledge of what I can do
Listen to me 'cause I'm talking to you.

Francine Lansdown

Foreword

When the British Government ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1991, it committed itself to ensuring the rights of the UK's 13 million under 18 year-olds are known, respected and safeguarded.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child has global support; only two countries in the world have yet to sign up to it. This important treaty gives a set of comprehensive rights to all children and young people. There are three main principles enshrined in the Convention: that the Convention applies to every child without discrimination; children's best interests should always be of primary concern; and children's views should be taken into account in all matters affecting them.

Once governments have ratified the Convention they must submit periodic reports to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. This year, the UK Government will send its second report to the UN Committee. While the Government's report will include contributions from children and young people, it is essentially a report designed and prepared *by adults for adults*. That is why the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation is delighted that Article 12 has carried out this innovative research project into children's perspectives on the implementation of the UN Convention. Although this unique project focused on one specific right – children's right to express and have their views taken into account – it contains many important messages about progress on other Convention rights.

The CR2000 project team have unequivocally demonstrated that young people have a critical role in ensuring their rights are respected. Team members invested a huge amount of energy and free time into carrying out this research project, and they had to overcome many obstacles not faced by adult researchers. Their report makes compelling reading and should stimulate us all into further action. Most importantly, this report is a reminder that safeguarding and monitoring children's rights is not a task for adults alone. If adults are serious about making children's rights a daily reality for children and young people across the UK, we must join forces with the people who can really make a difference – children themselves.

Ben Whitaker - Director
Paul Curno - Deputy Director
Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation

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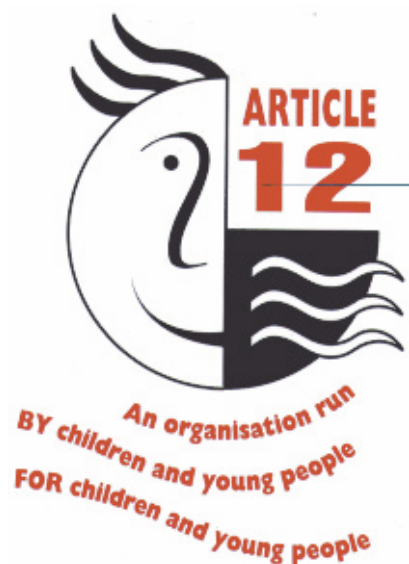
The United Nations was established to develop world peace after World War II.

On the 20th of November 1989, the Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted by the UN. All the countries in the world apart from two have signed up to it, which shows it's a strong and valuable Convention.

In the UN Convention, there are 54 articles altogether - 40 of them give children rights. These rights include the right to be safe and protected from violence; the right to be educated; the right to be healthy; for disabled people to be treated equally; the right to play; the right to know about the Convention; and most importantly, the right to be heard and taken seriously.

The governments of every country who have signed up to the Convention must report on their progress to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child regularly. The UN Committee is a group of 10 experts (all adults) on children's rights, who come from all different countries. They will assess the Government's report and evaluate whether the Government has been treating young people properly. If these rules have not been carried out the UN Committee will tell the Government where they're going wrong. If they have done well they can also be told.

Introduc



*"We're not just the
we're today's generation
our rights"*

We are hoping to achieve a lot with our report and let the UN Committee know the truth. We are hoping that all Article 12 members will read the report as well as many other people such as: the Government, teachers, young people, parents, social workers, councillors, lawyers, youth workers, foster carers, children's rights organisations - in fact, everyone (even the grumpiest of adults!).

We hope that our research will help young people know their rights and express their views.

Finally, if you're wondering why we're called the CR2000 team it's cos it stands for 'children's rights 2000'. By the year 2000 we want our report to have made such an impact that EVERYONE will know about children's rights.

ction

*future generation,
eration, so we need
nts NOW!"*



Meet

Anna

I'm Anna Fisher and I'm a member of Article 12. I decided to become a C.R 2000 candidate when I read about what we would be doing in a letter we were sent. It was the first project I had done with Article 12 but it's been great. When we went



to the first meeting, I was so scared. I wondered what the people would be like and if I would have a good time. When I had met everybody we learnt about the UN Convention and we also did training for interviews. It was really fun. My mum

and dad both work with children and I feel as though I'm following in their footsteps. Through all the residential meetings and everything, I've had a really fun time and learnt loads, from meanings of words, to laws the government have to keep to. I feel as though I've had and still have my view.

Daisy

Hi! My name is Daisy. I am 11 years old. This is one of the first things I've done for Article 12. I really enjoyed it. The first meeting was at Rotherhithe youth hostel in London on 27th and 28th June 1998. We worked on what kind of things we wanted in our report. We decided to do interviews, questionnaires, etc. I went to the Plymouth Youth Bureau and interviewed some people there. The next residential meeting was in the N.S.P.C.C training centre. We took the questionnaires and went through them to pick out the quotes. We stayed doing that all weekend! I feel this has been a good experience for me as I joined Article 12 to give me confidence in speaking out and getting my voice heard.



the



Emma

Hi, I'm Emma Richardson and I'm a member of Article 12. I have been a member for about a year. I got involved in this project after the Article 12 AGM in April 1998. Before the AGM, I didn't know any thing about children's rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. I never thought that I would be doing anything like this ever. Through this project I was chosen to go to Brussels to represent Article 12 and the CR 2000 team. Article 12 were invited by UNICEF to go to the meeting. There was only one other young person at the meeting and she was from Vietnam. Going to the meeting in Brussels was quite an experience.

I have built my confidence up. Before I was involved with Article 12, I was quite shy and not very confident. I did not know what to expect when I got involved because I had never done anything like it before. It has been very interesting being involved and I have found out new things about myself and about children's rights.

Francine

I'm Francine, and I'm 14. I've been in Article 12 since the beginning in 1994, and have been involved in setting it up, through all the trauma, catastrophe, hard work, achievement and fun. I was one of the original people in CR2000, and ran a workshop about it at our AGM, last April 1998. I knew it would be an interesting project and I knew I could get a lot out of it for the future. It has been hard work, and I found it difficult, but you have to struggle to succeed.

I think the past experience I've had in Article 12, and the projects I've done in school, have helped me contribute to the report, and I think it's given me experience for things I do in the future. I found a lot of hostility towards me from adults, and now I feel more confident expressing my views.

It has been very interesting, and a good opportunity I wish more young people had. If young people thought it was a cool thing to do, and adults let us all do things, the world could be better.

See Ya!

Frantastic!!



e team

Georgia

Hi, my name is Georgia and I am 8 years old. I have got millions of hobbies - like swimming (I passed my silver last weekend), reading, playing with my friends and looking after animals and my family. I got involved in Article 12 by my sister because she has been in Article 12 longer than me. My mum works for children's rights, and she also helped me to get involved because she was sure that I would be good. I thought that there should be some younger people in Article 12. I am glad that I got involved because I have learnt a lot of things to do with children's rights and I am enjoying what I have been doing so far. So hopefully I will be able to carry on until I am 18. I also think every person should be respected for who and what they are.



Hossnieh

Hi, my name is Hos. I first got involved with this project in June 98. When I went to the first meeting, I was really nervous about what would happen and if I would get along with the others, well I didn't have to worry for long. It was brilliant. I've met loads of new people and have made good friends. This has been the first thing I've done since joining Article 12 and I hope to do many more in the future. I hope that you enjoy reading this report, and realise how much we all want to have a say in life. I'll sign off now and leave you to read the report.

Bye

Hos



James

Hi, I'm James and this is me (oh by the way I'm 15).

I got involved with C.R 2000 as I had very basic knowledge of the UN Convention. I thought C.R 2000 was the perfect opportunity to represent my own and other people's views. I have been a member of Article 12 for one year and am a member of Article 12's Steering Committee. Since I first got involved, my knowledge and understanding of Article 12 has increased a lot. I hope to contribute even more to Article 12 and its progress than I have already. I'm hoping to pursue a career in social work or media (or even the next Article 12 adult support worker). I feel this report will not only benefit adults, but give young people independent advice on how to be heard. We won't be a nation of silent youth (we're actually quite loud!!) If you are an adult, please take this report seriously. If you or your work affects young people, listen! We need representation before we can get respect!



Laura

Hi! I'm Laura Fisher and this is me... I am a member of Article 12 and just recently we have been working on this C.R 2000. I got involved in this project as I thought it would help me with my ability to understand other people. I have achieved an enormous amount of skill. It has been really cool working with different people and they are all very kind and understanding. I don't think I could have done this project if my mum and dad hadn't have had the trust in me I needed.



Lucy

Hi, my name is Lucy and I'm 15. I've been a wheel-chair user all my life, but it doesn't bother me. I think having a disability has given me an outlook on life, which means I can appreciate people's differences instead of oppressing them.

I'm glad I'm me. I've been on the Article 12 Steering Committee for 2 years and really enjoy it, but it is hard work. I also run my own young peoples rights which is 50% disabled young people and 50% able-bodied young people. It's called Young & Powerful. We do a lot of campaign work especially around education. I joined C.R 2000 at the beginning and think it's a really important project. It's been hard work and I hope people take the report seriously. Our results prove that young people feel like their voices aren't heard. I want to work to change things after this project is finished. Doing this has also been a lot of fun. The team's been great thanks to everyone who helped especially to Damon who was so welcoming in Belfast.

Later on

Lucy!

Michael

My name is Michael James Baker. I am 15 years old and I live in Wombourne, a village near Wolverhampton. This is the first time I have worked on something like this. I found out about it through the Article 12 General Meeting where I volunteered to be part of the report. I was really excited about the report as it will be going out to the United Nations, the Government and people all over the world. I have so far attended four meetings. These meetings were hard work but we made it in the end.

I found the other team members to be different than what I expected. They were all friendly and we worked well as a team. They all though had one major thing which was a necessity for the group. A sense of humour.

The main reason why I joined Article 12 and the CR2000 project is because I am really, really, really interested in children's rights. And it was a good opportunity for me to help other people in the way that would matter. With the launch of the project I hope children's rights would improve and that people would begin to listen to us and understand us. In the future I want to help out more in projects like these. I will remain a member of Article 12 for as long as possible and when I leave I will still be supporting children's rights even though they won't affect me anymore.



Millie



I became involved in Article 12 about two years ago. I joined because I was interested in children's rights. I had already been on various committees that worked on children's rights. Committees like the Vale of Glamorgan Youth Forum and my Student Council. I was also part of the Barry Police Constabulary Consultative Panel and also got involved in the CREC, Cardiff Race Equality Council.

For a long time I was interested in the rights of the child and became aware of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child when I joined secondary school in 1993. That's when I decided to start working towards making people aware of them. So when the opportunity to work on the UN Convention project came up I jumped at the chance. I thought that this was the children's chance to show what was really happening in the UK.

I'd like to be either a teacher or politician in the future and working on these projects helped me to make the decision and will help me to carry it through.

Next year I will be too old to be a member of Article 12 but hopefully I'll be able to stay on as an Adult Support Worker because I love working on Article 12!!!!!!

Robert



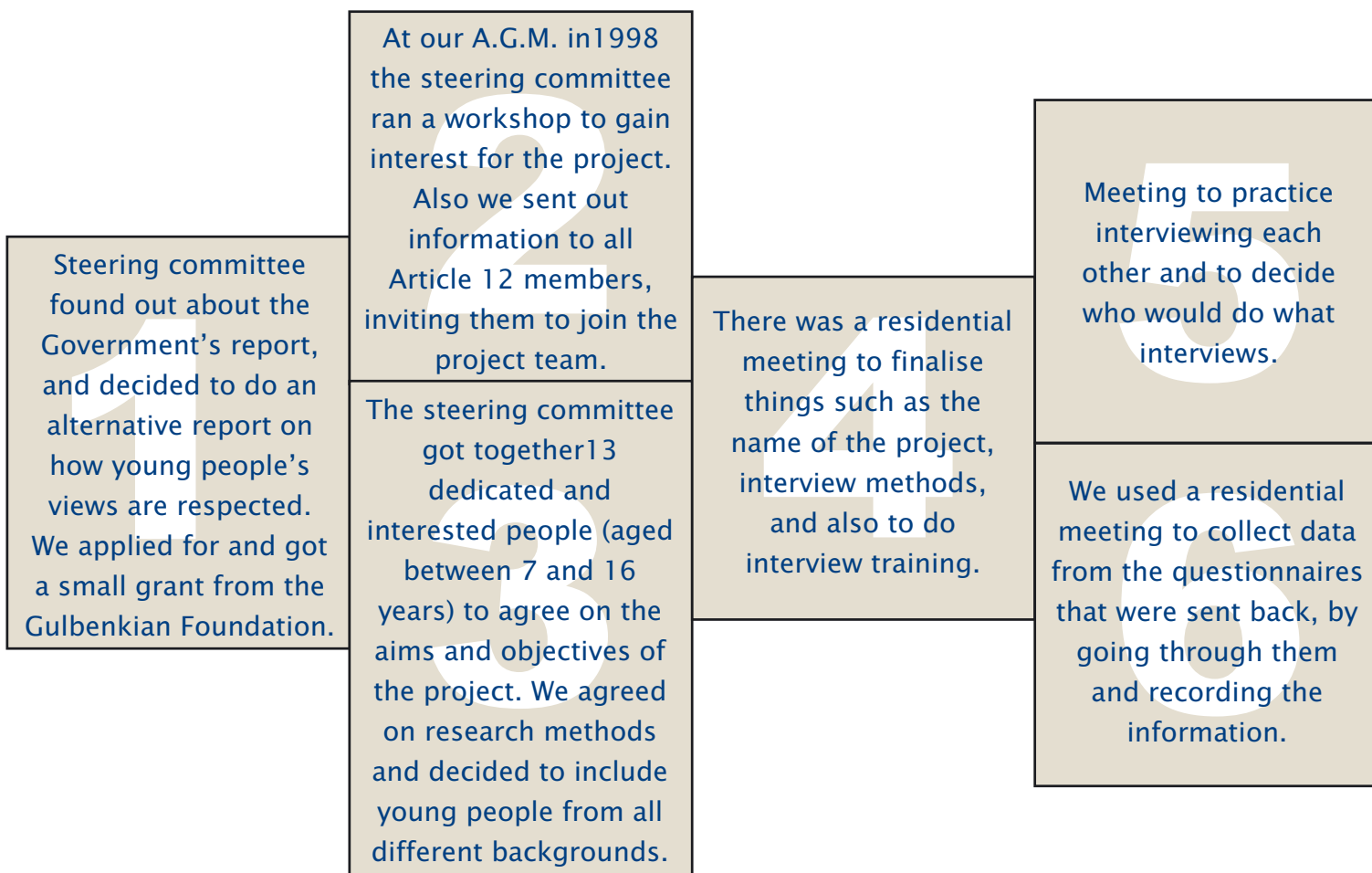
I joined Article 12 because I thought that you could get more messages across to adults this way. I also became involved as my sister Nina was a founder A12 member. She was on TV and radio and I look up to her.

I got involved in the CR2000 project because it gave me a chance to meet members of Article 12 other than the steering committee. It gave me more chance to help promote children's rights and to do questionnaires which I have not done before.

Tamsin

Hi! My name is Tamsin Landells. I am 17 years old and have been a member of Article 12 for almost 2 years. I found out about it through a project I was doing at school on children's rights. After my first Annual Festival I decided I would join the Steering Committee so that I could contribute more to the organisation and help us to move on and make a substantial difference to young people. Other things I enjoy doing are playing the clarinet, playing squash, going to the gym, doing theatrical work with the local young company and of course socialising with friends!

Project



We held a day meeting to look through other people's research, and analysed the main messages. We looked at the comments people had given in our own questionnaires and picked out the strongest messages. At the same meeting we worked briefly on the design and content of our report.

We did 15 group interviews (with young people aged between four and 16 years), which we then had transcribed from the tapes. We then had a meeting to analyse them and highlight the strongest points.

In the next meeting we analysed the results of both the questionnaires and the interviews and then we wrote a paragraph about the main contents.

In the same meeting we decided on the colours and design of our report and also wrote our own biographies, had photos done and talked briefly about how to launch it.

Our last meeting! We proof read our report, and made last minute changes. We also practised the launch to young people, and decided to do a separate launch for adults.

stages

Research methods

Questionnaires

First of all we thought of questions that would be relevant to our research. We then thought of many questions we could use and then rounded them down to the best 6, as we didn't want it to be too long as to bore people. We then contacted organisations that could circulate them to young people. Otherwise it would be hard to contact a wide number of young people directly. Also, we didn't want to just involve people from A12 as we would hope they would know about their rights, and this might not get a true picture. The questions included all areas of rights in different parts of daily life. We received 209 questionnaires back (see pages 18-25).

Group interviews

At the very first meeting we decided on some questions we could use for our interviews, but over time we improved them to suit our research. We picked 10 questions to include in the interview as well as prompts to make sure we didn't stray away from the subjects. We only did 10 questions so it wouldn't be too long and boring. We did 15 interviews as well as a mock interview Article 12 (CR2000) members took part in.

We also made sure again that we got people from all different backgrounds.

Chain letter

At the very first meeting we arranged to have a chain letter as part of our research. We decided on a new name for it other than a chain letter, because some people felt threatened at the idea. As it was a good idea we started to improve it so that we could send it out to article 12 members. Eventually we did send it out, however it was not very successful as we think people caught that it was originated from a chain letter.

News flash

We went through newspaper cuttings for one year (1997-98) and picked out articles to do with young people expressing their opinions. This helped us with our research to understand other people's views, and it helped us a lot to understand what young people are bothered about and their feelings.

Other people's research

We looked at other people's research to help us get an idea of what other people have been doing about children's issues. We couldn't get around to listen to everybody so we had a helping hand by summarising other people's research.

Methods

Interview process

Before we carried out the interviews we received training on how to conduct an interview, because people are giving up their time, not for it to be wasted. Also the researchers don't get paid like adults might. Our training included how to do interviews successfully and how to exchange comments using an interview schedule. We also tried to get all different people from different backgrounds as we could in terms of race, religion, age and sex. We also learnt about the UN Convention. We then did some mock interviews to make sure we all had the interview schedule to a T.

During our interviews we faced some anxiety amongst ourselves e.g. will it work, will we be taken seriously? We tried to make sure the questions we used were understandable to all young people because it is unfair to discriminate against people who have learning difficulties or are very young for example. It was important to remember our research tips. When we had been given answers to our questions we summarised them, to make sure we didn't miss anything out. Some of us were really anxious about meeting new people but we really wanted to hear their views and so we forgot about it. In some cases we found that some young people's rights had been

violated so much it was very distressing for them to tell us about it. The young people were also asked to fill out information sheets to prove we listened to a range of people from different backgrounds, and to also keep a record of the people we interviewed. In some interviews adults had to be present but they understood that the young people's opinions could not be biased because of this. At the beginning we asked if it was OK to do the interview. Most people said yes, however two disabled young people had to leave the interview as it was too distressing for them to tell us how they had been treated.

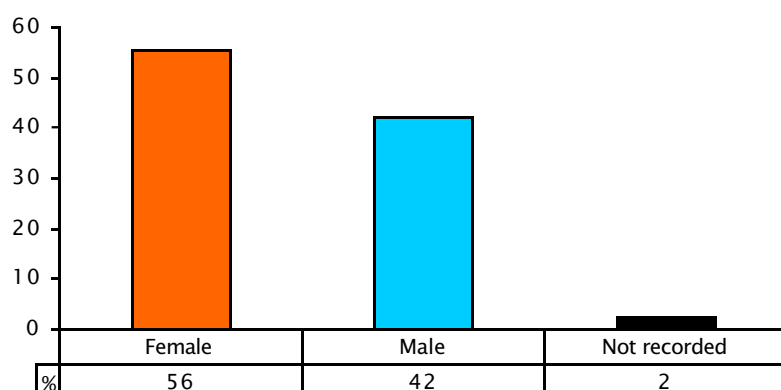
After the interview we assessed and reassessed the interviews and made sure that all parts of the interview were right and that it could be transcribed easily. We also thanked all the young people that took part. We then had the interviews transcribed and sent back to us. We then had a meeting to summarise and analyse the interviews. We then chose all the comments, which were most relevant to our project then we wrote a paragraph saying what we thought about the interview and how successful it was.

The Government's draft report

Our adult support worker translated the Government's draft report to the UN Committee so we could understand it. We wanted to check whether they had involved young people in writing this report. At that point they hadn't involved young people but we've now heard that they have asked young people about their rights. Well done, that's a much needed improvement. We commented on this report, and we'll be interested to see their final report. We hope they will make a copy which is easier for people of our age to understand.

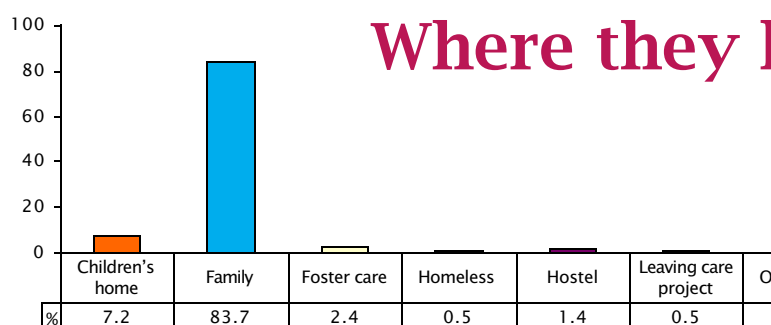
Question

Sex

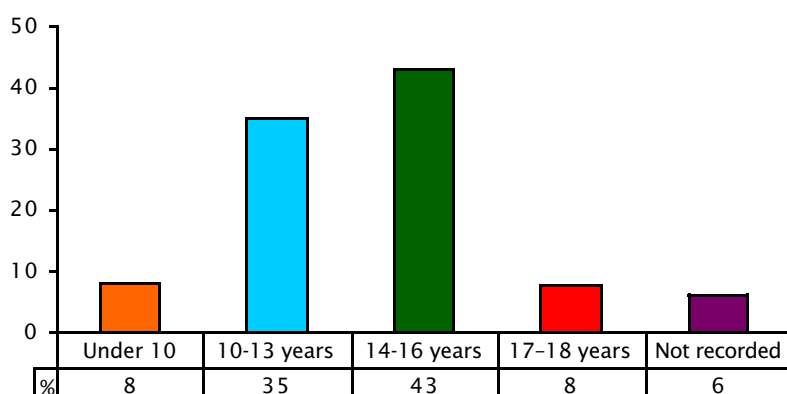


Here you can see that most of the people who filled in our questionnaire were girls (56%). 42% of the 209 people who took part were boys.

Most people (almost 84%) who returned the questionnaires lived with their family. Almost 10% of the 209 young people who took part were in care.



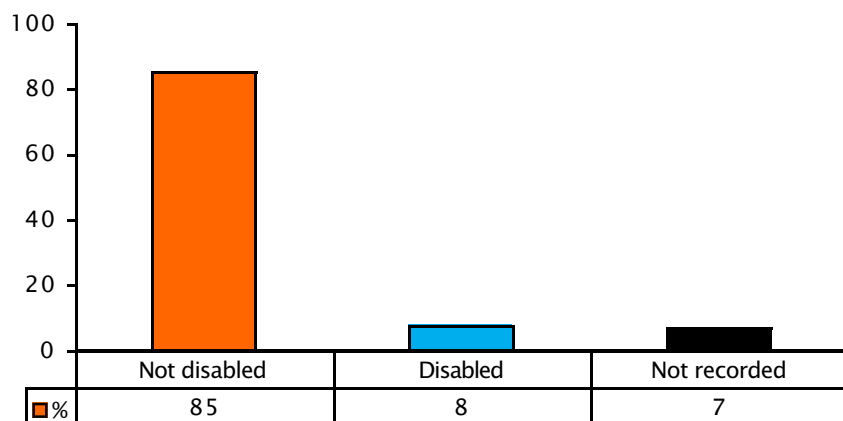
Age



43% of young people were aged between 14 and 16 years. 8% were under 10 years.

Questionnaires

Disability



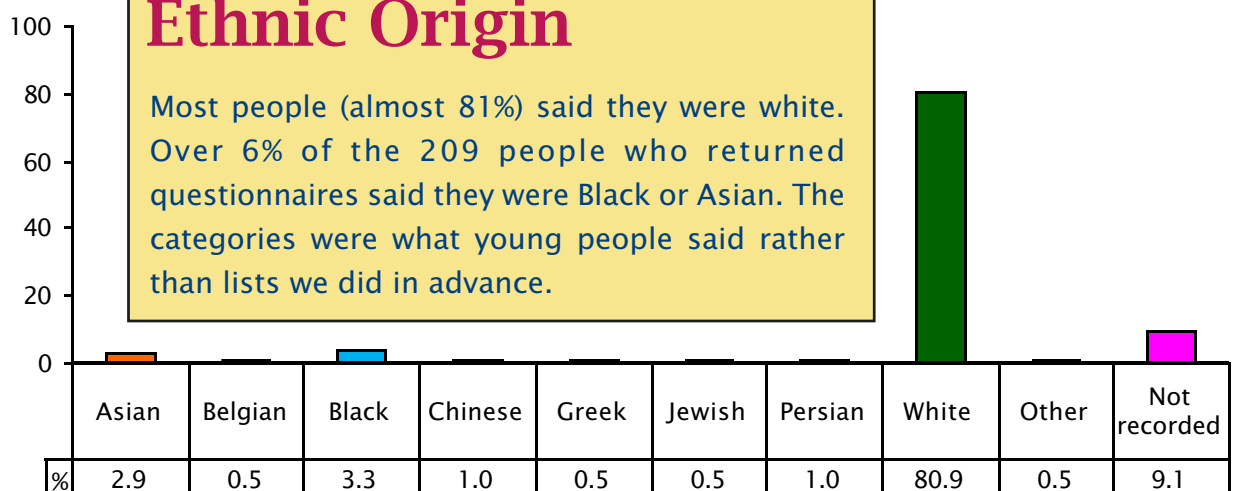
Most people (85%) who returned questionnaires said they were not disabled. 8% of the 209 people were disabled.

Live

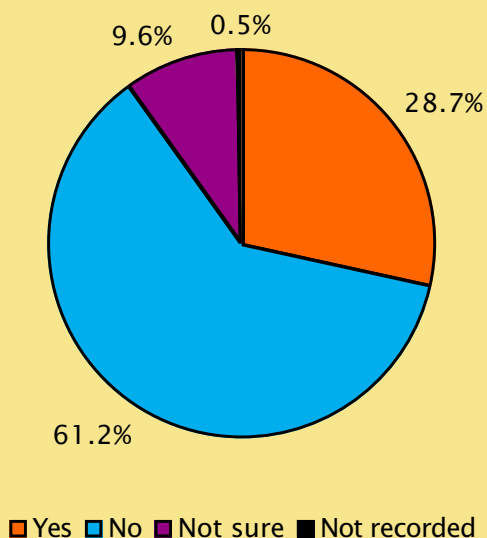
Own place	Traveller	Other	Not recorded
0.5	0.5	0.5	2.9

Ethnic Origin

Most people (almost 81%) said they were white. Over 6% of the 209 people who returned questionnaires said they were Black or Asian. The categories were what young people said rather than lists we did in advance.



Have you ever heard about Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child?



We think the number of people who have not heard of Article 12 of the UN Convention is worryingly low, but it is still an achievement from what we expected. Over 60% of the people who responded to the questionnaires said they had not heard of it. Nearly 30% had heard of it and the rest of them either were not sure or did not answer. Most of those people who had heard about Article 12 thought it was just about our organisation rather than an actual right. Also, a lot of people who had heard of it did not give any sign of knowing what it involved. This not a defect of the young people but an example of how information is not getting through.

"We have rights I found out from the family centre"

(15 year-old disabled girl)

"I'm not sure about the details, but I heard about Article 12 through Children's Express and I saw something else about it on Newsround"

(15 year-old girl)

"No but I know children have rights"

(10 year-old boy)

"I know that it is an organisation run by children for children, about the rights of the child. I found out about it from my teacher"

(13 year-old girl)

"It is the right a child has to have his/her opinion taken seriously. I read a leaflet"

(16 year-old Black girl)

"They don't listen if they think I'm being immature or if it's something they don't want to hear"

(10 year-old girl)

"Sometimes they do and sometimes they don't, but usually they just ignore the important views"

(14 year-old girl)

"Never - Adults are too pig-headed to admit they are wrong"

(15 year-old boy)

"Yes sometimes - It depends which adults and what view you are trying to put across"

(15 year-old girl)

"Yes always - My parent respect my views because I am a person and entitled to my own opinion"

(15 year-old girl)

"Yes sometimes - Because sometimes "adults" think they can tell me what to do and don't respect my views"

(12 year-old girl in foster care)

"Yes sometimes - I feel because I'm disabled, I don't have my own views"

(9 year-old girl)

"Never - Because you are always being told and patronised because of your age"

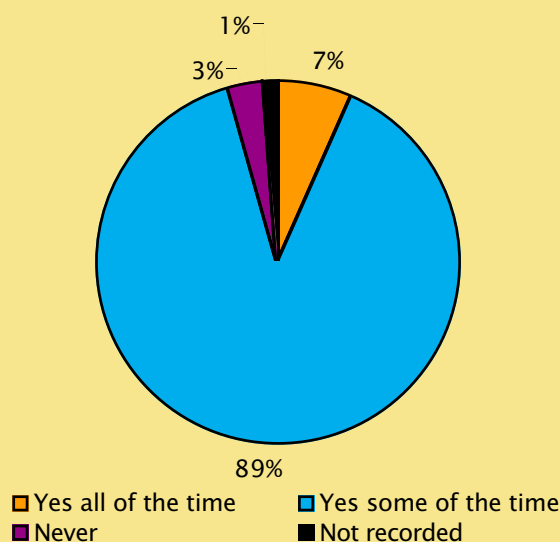
(17 year-old girl)

"Yes always - Because they are nice and they love me"

(7 year-old boy)

Do adults respect your views?

We were pleased that so many young people feel their views are respected by adults some of the time (89%) but really disappointed that so few are respected all of the time. This shows that Article 12 of the UN Convention is not being put into practice by adults because if it was our views would be respected a lot more. We think it's really sad that 3% of the young people feel that adults never respect their views. This shows that a lot more needs to be done to make sure children's rights and the UN Convention is fully respected in our society.



"Yes always - I am supported at home and give and receive respect"

(15 year-old girl)

"Yes always - If a major decision where to be made about moving house or school I would be consulted, they will always tell me stuff if I ask"

(13 year-old girl)

"Never - I'm not taken seriously"

(14 year-old boy)

"Yes always - I live with foster parents and I am always consulted"

(12 year-old girl in foster care)

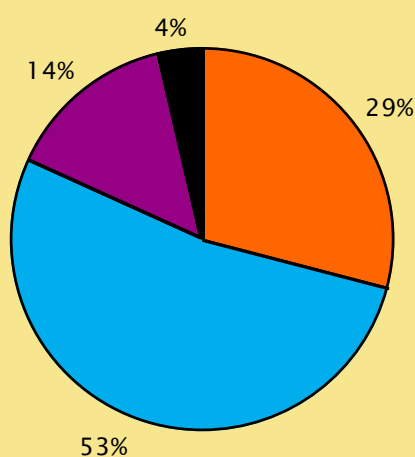
"Never - Too young to make decision. They don't realise I have my own views"

(13 year-old girl)

"Never - I'm a child and I don't count"

(11 year-old boy)

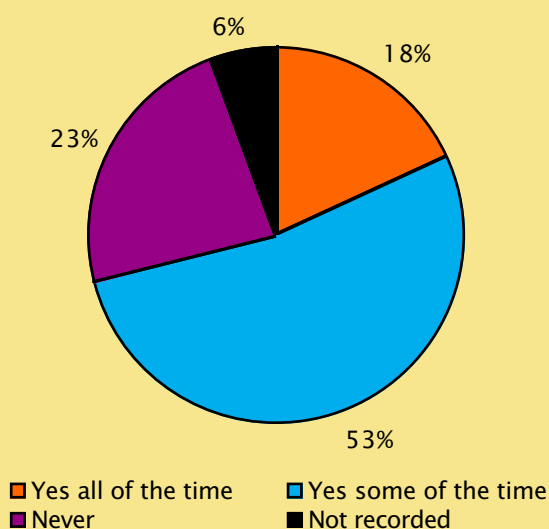
Are you consulted about your views in your family or where you live?



■ Yes all of the time ■ Yes some of the time
■ Never ■ Not recorded

Most of the young people answered yes some of the time. We think that this is because they felt unsure about the question or feel that they are only respected in small decisions. About 29%, or 1 in 3, said they were listened to all of the time. This is quite a good result and we were surprised that so many people were respected. However, in an ideal world it would be much higher. Of the few people in care who responded, it was very positive despite it being mainly foster care and not residential homes. We were surprised by this because we hear a lot about young people in care not being listened to.

Does your school respect your right to express your views?



The biggest amount of people, over half, said that their views are sometimes respected. We were quite surprised by this result as we expected schools to not respect young people's views. We did not expect that so many schools respected young people's rights all of the time – about one quarter of the people said this. We expected more people to say that their school never respected their right to express their views because of our own experiences, for example, when you tell teachers what you think about things and they just walk away and ignore you. Also, the way teachers sometimes talk to you as they often talk down to you and talk to you as though you know nothing.

"Sometimes they do not let you get a word in"

(13 year-old boy)

"Never - Teachers don't care what happens to children, as long as they get paid and have a easy life"

(15 year-old boy)

"Never - Schools don't like to think that children have good ideas and thoughts"

(16 year-old girl)

"Yes always - In my school, I feel the teachers think it's about the pupils more than themselves, they consult you before decisions are made"

(14 year-old girl)

"Never - Because the school wants to do things their way"

(12 year-old girl)

"Yes always - We are treated more like adults and listened to more"

(16 year-old boy)

"Yes sometimes - The school always want to hear your opinions, but probably will never act on them"

(16 year-old girl)

"Never - If you ask to go to the toilet"

(15 year-old disabled girl)

"Yes sometimes - They can't always do what we want as they might think it might not be good for us or the school but they still always try and listen"

(10 year-old girl)

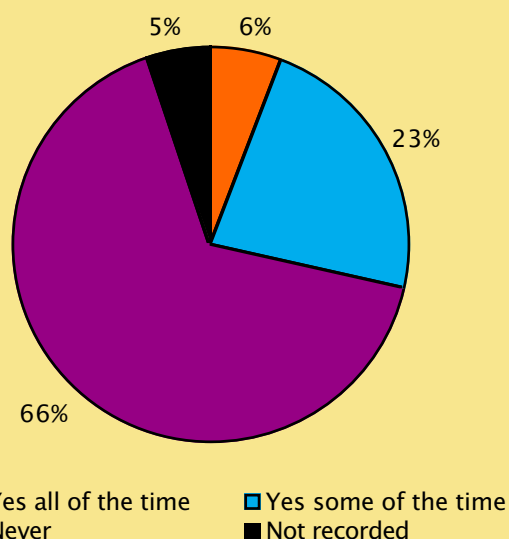
"Yes sometimes - Usually teachers give you the right to express your views, especially in class discussions but when it comes to for e.g. girls being able to wear black trousers the same as the boys, then getting your views across becomes hard work"

(16 year-old girl)

"Never - Because I am a child"

(11 year-old disabled boy)

Are you able to give your views when decisions are made in your neighbourhood or community?



Unfortunately the majority of young people surveyed (66%) said it had never been possible for them to express their views in their neighbourhood or community. 23%, which is almost 1 in 4 people, said that they could give their views in the neighbourhood or community some of the time. Many of the young people who commented said it depended on the issue. Article 12 believes that every decision will affect children if not now, in the future. However, not every young person wants to be involved or participate in every issue. Out of all the people surveyed only 6% said they were able to express their views all of the time. The results of this question show that young people are still not being valued in local neighbourhoods and communities.

"Never - I think children never have a chance to make decisions in the community. The councils are forever giving the go-ahead without consulting children"

(14 year-old girl)

"Yes sometimes - We are allowed to go do things like go down the community centre to express our views"

(10 year-old boy)

"Never - Because I'm young they think I don't know what I am talking about, so they don't bother asking me"

(10 year-old girl)

"Never - Adults like it as it is and don't want to make any changes"

(8 year-old girl)

"Yes sometimes - I speak my mind"

(16 year-old Gypsy girl)

"Yes sometimes - I get asked what I want to do at the fun forum"

(9 year-old boy who has learning difficulties)

"Never - No one asks me my views"

(16 year-old homeless girl)

"Never - No vote, no voice"

(17 year-old male care leaver)

"Never - People from the council don't come to see us because they don't think we're old enough"

(15 year-old boy)

What could be done to make sure children and young people's views are taken seriously?

"Tell councils to ask the whole public including children and young people about decisions and take those into consideration"

(13 year-old girl)

"I think Article 12 is ideal for letting children be heard, and everyone should make it more well known"

(14 year-old girl)

"Set up more things like Article 12 and children's talks about rights and make it more widely known"

(9 year-old girl)

"They should have a Children's Government"

(12 year-old girl in foster care)

"There needs to be more ways for children to get their views across- there should be many organisations that are easy for children to get access to"

(15 year-old girl)

"Give families books and leaflets"

(12 year-old boy)

"Schools could do a lot more, Have a conference and adults should listen more and take it seriously and children should have someone to talk to"

(15 year-old girl)

"Have child representatives in the Government"

(16 year-old girl)

"For a leaflet being sent around to houses for children to fill in and it goes to the local MP or someone of importance"

(12 year-old boy)

"What can be done is they could learn about their rights"

(12 year-old girl)

"Make the staff have one to one time with the young person involved"

(16 year-old boy in a children's home)

"I think that the older people should listen more to younger people because kids these days have strong views as it's a different way of life"

(16 year-old girl in a children's home)

"Let the families know about children's rights or give out letters and videos"

(12 year-old girl)

"Make sure that the Government asks about our views - have local reps/ youth workers to do this"

(17 year-old girl)

"Hire people to do spot checks on households to check that A12 law is being obeyed"

(10 year-old girl)

"There should be a Children's Government"

(14 year-old girl)

Group int

During 1998 we carried out 15 group interviews with 75 young people, aged between four and 16 years. Most of these were in England but we also held one in Scotland and Northern Ireland, and two in Wales. The places we visited were: youth clubs, children's hospitals, in-care groups, a young disabled people's group, and we talked to a group of refugee children. Only five (7%) of the young people who took part in the interviews were from ethnic minority groups, and 38% were under 12 years old. Seven young people (9%) were disabled.

Interviews

It was hard work doing the interviews as we had to fit them in after school or at weekends. There was also a lot of places that wouldn't let us visit. We wanted to interview young people in a child prison but we were not allowed. Also, we wrote to children's homes and secure units, and to a very posh private school but they wouldn't let us in. When we contacted one children's hospital we couldn't even get past the receptionist who said that their hospital wouldn't allow us in! Some of us had to deal with uncooperative teachers in our own schools, and finally we got so fed up that we had to visit different schools.

The good thing was that there were lots of people willing to help us. It's good that there ARE adults out there who are not put off by the idea of young people doing research!!

This bit of the project was the scariest as we were worried about how people would see us, and whether we would be treated seriously. None of us had done group interviews before and it was all new. We also had to get used to hearing our voices on tape!

When we finished the group interviews the tapes were transcribed and sent back to us to pick out the best quotes, and the main messages. You can see our results on pages 28 to 39.

Things young people want to have a say on

Education

"I think you should get a say in your education."

Access to public spaces

"I want to go with someone to tell them I can't get into shops - they should build a ramp [for wheelchair users]. When I get in the shop I can't move around - they need to make the bloody shop bigger. It's disabled people's rights - make the shop bigger!"

"There's no ramps into the shops, there's steps into the shops. That's not fair, we want ramps."

"I have to go in [shops] the back way. I don't like going the back way."

Uniform, colour of clothes, types of earrings

"I think you should be allowed to want [at school] just so long as it's because... say if you want to get and school says you're not allowed doing things you want to do out"

Impressions

Young people are only consulted on matters such as what you do in school to do your homework. The young people were concerned about their opinions being concerned. Disabled people were concerned about the independence they have and are discriminated against in shops because of their disability. Young disabled people are in the community instead of being locked away. Young people are concerned about a wide range of things and affects them.

Where to live

"I find some of my disabled friends who want to live where to live - if they want to go and live independently with the Government and social services to living in residential homes than I think basically they should move out we can move out into the community away."

type of skirt,

*...to wear what you
...it's nothing extreme,
...your nose pierced
...owed to, it stops you
...outside school."*

...d about their opinions in trivial
...pare time and when you choose
...people in this particular section
...inions so far as education is
...re concerned about the level of
...e worried about how they are
...y the shop not being accessible
...ople want to move into the
...ed away. This shows that young
...de variety of issues that concern

*...ends don't even have a choice of
...o into a residential home or go
...n the community...It's like the
...hink it's more cost effective people
...v it is to make accessible housing.
...ake more accessible housing so
...munity instead of being locked*

What decisions young people are allowed to make

"I don't really make any decisions anywhere."

"Where I go at weekends, [and] when to do my homework"

"I'm allowed to watch what I want to watch [on television]."

"In school I get to choose what subjects I want to do."

"Once they were redesigning the park down at the end of my street and they were stuck for ideas so they asked the children at the youth club."

"What second language I take at secondary school."

"I'm in a residential school - you don't get to make decisions a lot of the time."

"When we were moving mum and dad asked us if we wanted to go. We told them 'no' but when they explained the situation, we agreed. They said we could help choose the house and school we went to."

Being listened to at school

"At my school you have to do two hours of PE, first thing Monday morning, even in the pouring rain, and the showers don't work properly, so you're dirty and sweaty all day."

"Things like staff at school, we have two canteens and when Year 11 left they shut one. The other one sells really unhealthy food - not a lot of vegetarian food - a lot of beefburgers and a lot of people said that was unfair. They sacked the staff; they were out of work for about three months."

"I think your age matters a lot because before we never get a choice [in the past] but this year it's different because...we got asked what we wanted to do, and we get a chance to go to different groups and do different things and there's a lot wider choice."

"Until Year 9, boys were allowed to do javelin but girls weren't. We didn't get to say if we wanted to do football or not because it was a boy's sport."

"We should be able to choose our own timetables because now I'm in Year 10...it's nice to be there with one or two of your friends in your class. Most of Year 10 absolutely hate the timetable because hardly anyone is with their friends."

Impressions

The young people were most bored of the lessons they have. They were aware that the school was making changes with

What we think

What the young people said did not match what we expected that most of what was said was because of past experience and not the past about schools.

bothered about choosing which
also bothered about how their
without even consulting pupils.

did not surprise us. We quite
as said by the young people,
and what we have heard in the

"Everyone who went back this year, has had their lunch hour changed. It used to be from 11:50 - 12:45 and now we have it from 1:05 - 2:00. It's a long time to wait for your lunch. We didn't get notice about that, when I asked they said 'you've been told' and it happened the next day, when we came back that was it. We had to do it."

"At our school we have a policy now: no unsuitable hair styles, no shaven heads because they think it's a gang thing, it means something bad, even the teachers aren't allowed."

"In our school the people who mess about or are slow, or can't read get all the attention and support and the people who are good don't get any, because teachers think they're okay and don't need any."

"Teachers say [this decision has] nothing to do with you and [they] don't ask you about it. Like there used to be a place outside school where we could get lunch and stuff and we were allowed to go out but they put gates up with the cameras and said you're not allowed to go out there - they said if you go out you'll be in really big trouble. Someone asked why. And they said because we don't want you to and they didn't give any other reason, so we're not allowed out. If you have to go - you have to get a special pass from your Head of Year."

Being listened to at school (cont)

"We've got a new deputy head and we were no longer allowed to go across the road to the chip shop to buy lunch, but it's because they don't want us running on the streets but I think it's because they didn't want to get a bad reputation."

"At school we had an investigation in which we had to make all our own decisions. The teachers were just there to make sure we didn't mess about."

"For lessons we normally have to gain respect and the longer the teachers know you, they respect you more. With someone who doesn't do their homework they look down on them, or if they are no good at their work. It feels like the teacher doesn't want to teach them, then the teacher pays a lot of attention to the people who do their work."

"In my school the top set of maths get the best teachers and the bottom set get the worst, it should be the other way round."

"Once I was doing my work and I was confused so I asked the teacher and she just said, go and think it over, go on to the next question."

"Once I was stuck on a question she said just leave it and go on to the next question."

Impressions

The young people were most bored and ignored them when they were spoken to. The teacher told them to miss it out and also came up again about how to do it without consulting the pupils.

What we think

What was said did not surprise us because of our past experiences.

"Once I was stuck on a question and I asked the teacher three times I thought she didn't hear me the first time so I asked her two more times and she just ignored me."

hered about how some teachers
stuck on something or how the
t and do the next question. It
schools were making changes

us. We expected what was said
5.

*“My teacher doesn’t really make me
do things that I do want to do, but
they’ll try and encourage me if they
think I am good at something and
they try encourage me to make
decision that’s best for me.”*

*“I feel that, teachers, most of them, if
they really like the job they are doing,
they try to guide you into doing what
the pupil likes doing best sometimes it
may seem wrong at the time, but
probably afterwards, you know, like...
I’ll agree with them.”*

*“The toilets in our school are not very
nice, everybody’s always complaining.
We complained so much, the teachers
are saying we don’t want to know
about the toilets, but we haven’t
anything else to say.”*

*“I went to a mainstream school but I
was still segregated because I was put
into a special class...I wasn’t allowed
to take part because I was special, I
was segregated. [For example]
someone in my year was dealing with
drugs and everyone in my year was
interviewed apart from me because I
was in a special class. I was treated
as innocent because they believed I
wouldn’t have anything to do with it.
OK I was, but I was treated differently
by my friends because I was unaware
of what was going on until
afterwards.”*

Importance of listening to young people

"Everywhere...children are never asked what they want and it affects them. Usually it affects them most of the time but they never get asked because people think we're incompetent... but we're gonna be around long than they are so we should get more choice than they do."

"If you don't tell your opinion, you don't get to say what's happening around you."

"Yes, because if you don't, they'll keep doing what they've been doing before and you won't ever get a chance to have your say."

"I think it's easier to voice your opinions because the more people do it then everyone else might do the same."

"If you don't give your views people are not going to know what you know."

Are young people respected?

"People talk on my behalf on the buses and I can speak up for myself. People think I'm blind when I'm not - I'm partially sighted."

"Sometimes they [adults] answer you very sarcastically when you're asking a serious question, which makes you feel really down."

"It makes you feel little because people in authority, people who have more say, they say they are listening to you but will be dead sarcastic, they think you're trying to act big, but you're just saying what you think."

"My mum and dad always respect my opinions."

"I'm not usually allowed to make decisions because if I say something, I get left out and my mum and dad decide but I would like them to take more notice so I can make more decisions."

"My mum and dad [who were drug addicts] died without me ever seeing them and my social worker never let me go to the funeral, saying 'you're too young to go to a funeral'. I don't agree with that because...that was my mum and dad and I would have had a chance to say goodbye."

Respect at work

"I think I was getting paid less than everyone else. I kept saying I should be paid the same, but he wasn't listening to us. So eventually my dad had to go and get him to put my pay up."

Impressions

This section shows most of all how adults often think young people are incompetent and just have stupid ideas, which don't mean nothing. Is this true? I think not!! Young people are discriminated against the work place and are often paid less. Most adults in the family do respect young people and are considerate in decision making so far as involvement is concerned. Young people think their parents try to guide them. This is really good but surprising. We think parents are likely to respect you as in most cases they love and respect you.

Family decisions

"When I used to be at home, I had my mum make decisions for me [but] I want to do it on my own."

"Over-protective parents don't let their children experience things. They miss out, like on a school trip to France."

"My mum and dad are dead good because they talk to you about it and take it into consideration and say what they think, then they say 'it's okay, it's your opinion'."

"It's up to me, in my family, to say what I want to do. I just say things like what I want to do in school and things that I enjoy and things that will probably help in my future."

"My mum and dad will stand by me, in whatever I think I want to do, but they'll try to encourage me to get a start on my exams."

"My parents try to guide me, but any decision is normally my own."

Does the Government take children's rights seriously?

"I think they are just starting to take us seriously...some of them are starting to realise that some of the decisions they make do affect us, so they want to do what is best for us."

"The Government does respect children's views like when that girl from Northern Ireland got listened to by Tony Blair...but they don't advertise you to put your views to them. Alright if you speak they'll listen to you, but there's no way they're promoting 'we want your views'."

"I find that the Government doesn't consult us as disabled people. They make our decisions for us...I think it's about time they started consulting us, we have a voice, we need to come out with our voices."

"Children in Britain, especially with politicians like Tony Blair, are just used for the publicity. When we went to the Labour Party conference Cherie Blair came with the press and she treated us dead sarcastic, just to get publicity."

Impressions

Young people would like to be listened to but the Government tends to not involve young people in the decisions they make. Many young people are not interested in politics but they would like to know about it.

What we think

We expected young people not to be consulted by the government because out of our age group we wouldn't normally be able to give our views and be sure that they'd even consider them. We think that many young people would like to have their rights and we think that more should be done to hear out their views.

listened to by the Government, not involve children and young people. We were informed about their rights and what we can do for them.

to be able to have a say to the government about our everyday experiences, you need to give your views to the government and they should consider it. We were not surprised that they should like to know more about their rights and we should be done for them to voice

"With the Labour Government being in power now, they are expecting disabled people to go to employment but how are we going to do that? [They need to] start having accessible transport to allow us to do that and start having accessible taxis as well - that we can afford. [We shouldn't have to] pay more, we should pay the same rate as everyone else, and [we] shouldn't be treated any differently with the prices."

"They don't consult us...how can you give your opinion if they don't consult us?"

"The Government think about themselves or other things - they don't think about children."

Knowledge of children's rights

"No, we don't learn about our rights, but I'd like to."

"We never heard of our rights and this kind of thing and we don't get taught about our rights."

"No, the teachers don't teach us about our rights. I would really enjoy learning about my rights so I could find out about all of them."

"I don't know about my rights but I'd like to."

Young people's priorities

"I feel strongly against bullying."

"I feel strongly about animal cruelty and about children having rights."

"Children getting more education and getting more athletic."

Who or what affects young people's decisions?

"Parents. 'Cos you live with them and they have the most control over you. They tell you when to go to bed, what to eat and everything."

"Mum, teachers, doctors, nurses, friends, dad."

"Dad, doctor, nurses, and teachers."

"My mum, dad, family, and older brothers and sisters."

"Family and friends."

"I find social workers have a lot to say in your life, because they have a care package set up. You are a plan and you really have to fight to get out of that care plan, and if you want to find a job they say 'you can't do that, you've got to go to a daycentre'."

Influencing laws and policing

"The police in our area, when curfews...they [came to our] school curfews and what was reasonable. that obviously the final decision was our opinions."

"Our police, round our way, if an places then they assume that stra come up to you and ask what you're you're kids. They like get your na"

Impressions

Young people believe that most their decisions. Some young pe the police towards them and wo more polite. Young people wou decisions that are made for the

What we think

We were not surprised to find o young people's decisions, beca their parents who live with them

there was a lot in the news about
to see what young people thought of
. and it was good. They had to explain
wasn't up to [us] but at least they asked

anyone's hanging around or in certain
right away that they're bad, so they'll
be doing. They're not polite to you... 'cos
me and stuff like that."

Mostly parents and teachers affect
people to not like the attitude of
would prefer it if the police were
and also like to have a say in the
m concerning their health.

But that mostly parents affect
use for most young people it's
n and affect their decisions.

Why do you want to have a say on your health?

"So that people don't do things I don't
want them to do."

"They should pay the Doctors and
Nurses a bit more to help them do a
better job. It would help them work a
bit harder."

Health decisions

"We never got to choose, we were just
told we have to get the BCG's done."

"I found with the medical profession
you go in asking for help but they've
already made a decision before you
get in there. They are not willing to
listen and support you, they just tell
you what's going to be done... I went
to a hearing specialist and the thing
that went through my head was, does
he know sign language? The way his
attitude was, he did not care about
my history, he'd sorted his decisions
out before I got in there. I was
intimidated."

"Our parents had to decide [about
vaccinations]; we had to get it. My
friend was pregnant, and she couldn't
get it done. Her parents don't agree
with vaccinations, so she didn't get it."

Advice to adults

"More adults need to listen to us."

"Listen a bit more to the children."

"Listen more to children and take
whatever they say and try and do it."

"Listen to children more."

"We need a Children's Parliament."

News

September 1997 – Teenage prisoner will stay with her baby

A pregnant teenager was told by a judge that she would be separated from her baby, as a 'real punishment' for stealing four shirts worth £60. Afterwards the 17 year-old threatened a hunger strike and the Culture Secretary Chris Smith said *'It is perfectly possible for a mother and baby unit at Holloway prison to be used for a young woman of 17'*.

November 1997 – Youth need say in Government

The Industrial Society carried out a 10,000 survey of 12-25 year-olds which showed that young people in Britain want *'ways of making their views count...'* The Society concluded that a Minister for Youth is needed to make sure children can finally have a say.

November 1997 – Pupil expelled for Speaking Out

15 year-old Sarah Briggs was expelled from school for daring to speak out about low standards of education in her school. Sarah's headteacher and governor decided to expel her when she talked to a local newspaper about her school's difficulties. In the headteacher's words, she was expelled for *'serious disrespectful conduct towards staff'*. Later the local education authority found that what Sarah had said was right, and the headteacher was forced to resign. Sarah said, *'it shows I'm not a liar. I had some concerns over the number of supply teachers being used by the school...I never wanted to be in the limelight and simply said what I thought was right at the time'*.

January 1998 – Children expect bullying at school

About 80% of young people in this country have been bullied. Children come to believe that bullying is part of their school life. Schools need to do more about bullying as over 45% of a group of parents and pupils surveyed, say that schools do not run any schemes to counter bullying.

February 1998 – Anxious children fret about parents' unhealthy lifestyle

Young people tend to worry about their parents' lifestyles. Parents should give children the chance to talk about how they feel about their parents' lifestyle.

February 1998 – Children of divorce

Children who are involved in divorce, should be able to speak their views and have a chance to say how they feel. In divorces, the parents can get so distressed that it can overshadow the emotional needs of children. Most children who have parents who are divorced, tend to live with their mother after the divorce. This is very hard for the children as they would have lost their father.

'Mum wants me to hate Dad and Dad wants me to hate mum. I feel guilty all the time'

It isn't the child who has divorced so the child shouldn't be the one feeling guilty and parents should make sure that their children don't have any feelings of guilt.

S

March 1998 - Schoolgirl mothers: Teen mags to help fight pregnancies

Young people need to be more educated about sex. They do not have all the information they need about sex. Young people need to feel that they can talk to teachers or parents about sex so that they can get the information they need to reduce the amount of teenage pregnancies. *'I am only 14 years old and I have this problem about sex. If you sleep with a guy and you don't have sex, can you get pregnant?'* From this quote it can be seen how much teenagers could have a lack of information about sex which could lead the girls to become pregnant.

March 1998 - There's no youth club...so what do you do?

A survey by the Schools Health Education Unit in Devon found that nearly a third of 14-15 year-olds living in rural areas have had experience of drug-taking.

May 1998 - Bully Free Zone

Young people in a school in Bolton got so fed up with bullying that they volunteered to become 'mediators' in their own schools and communities. They have heard more than 100 people and nine cases have been resolved successfully, from both the point of view of the bully and the victim.

June 1998 - Children feel the Pressure

Children's Express, a programme of learning support through journalism for children aged eight to 18, have carried out a survey of almost 40,000 young people aged between nine and 16 years. They found that young people feel pressure to succeed from school and family.

July 1998 - Children advise the Government

A group of children - aged 11 to 15 years - from Children's Express talked with the Government's Social Exclusion Unit. The Unit advises the Cabinet office on things like life on housing estates and dealing with poverty.

July 1998 - Teenage girls 'as likely' to truant as boys

The percentage of girls truanting from school is nearly equal to the percentage of boys that are truants. Boys are being portrayed as the only ones who fail and this stereotypical view should be changed so that both boys and girls get a chance and equal attention at school. Pupils should be able to participate more in decision making at school.

September 1998 - Child protection: gone too far?

Three of Rosemary West's victims were in care at the time, but nobody seemed to miss them. Who Cares? magazine recently ran a discussion group with young people in care about running away. Two main things bothered them: that adults never seem to ask why they run away; and being punished for running away. Young people were asked to come up with a 'wish list' about running away. They agreed on: talk to the kids and listen to them; have more experienced staff who've been in care or fostered; when young people come back just have a meeting with one member of staff; have more meetings for kids to talk about issues with independent group; and treat young people as if they were your own.

flash

Other people research

Listen to Us, the Views of Young People in Middle Park – by Young People’s Anti Poverty Project

Published by the Children’s Society and Greenwich Council in 1999

This report gives the results of a survey of 160 young people, aged between eight and 19 years, who don’t have much money. The young people live on the Middle Park estate in Greenwich in London. The survey covered:

- leisure
- working
- money
- education and advice
- health
- community safety
- travel
- environment
- housing

The survey found that most people take part in sport but nearly one-third said they couldn’t afford to go swimming. Young people aged between 14 and 19 years said that they got most of their help and advice about further education and jobs from family and friends. Hardly anyone knew about

places where they go for help and advice, run by the council and other organisations. 29% of the young people said they didn’t feel their GPs take them seriously – they thought the main reason for this is that doctors are too busy. About one in three young people felt unsafe in their local community. The biggest threat was drug abuse and drug dealing in their local area. Young people were worried about being attacked or raped, dangerous driving, burglary and people setting empty building on fire.

28% of young people said racism was a problem in their area – three people had personal experience of being physically or verbally abused. Three quarters of young people said that dog mess and litter is a big problem, and lots said there should be better street cleaning and action against graffiti.

The report is from a special project set up by the Children’s Society and Greenwich Council. The project helps young people living in poverty get their views and ideas heard and acted on.

People's

Young Opinions, Great Ideas – by Emma Tolley, Marchu Girma, Adam Stanton-Wharmby, Anthony Spate and Jenny Milburn

Published by the National Children's Bureau in 1998

This booklet was written to show people what concerns young people have, and what their worries are and how they can make people listen to them. The research was carried out by a group of young people who were trained by the National Children's Bureau. The young researchers interviewed 70 people in groups in different parts of England – 40% were female and 60% were male. They were all under 18 years.

They found out that drugs are a big issue; it was mainly mentioned by 11 to 16 year-olds. Bullying was mentioned by all the groups, especially because of colour. One group of young people living in secure units said they were bullied by staff, but not the other young people. People also talked a lot about having too big a workload at school, and a lot of pressure from teachers. Some were bullied at school.

Friends were very important for the young people interviewed. A group of young disabled people living in a residential school said they found it hard to have boyfriends or girlfriends. Many groups said that parents do listen but they don't always understand like friends do.

For older people money was important. Many people worried about smoking, and young people were also concerned about pollution and litter being dumped. Young people also worried about the opposite sex and younger kids having sex, sport, wars

and nasty things, pressure from school, and some were scared about dying. The majority of people interviewed felt that adults do not understand them, particularly parents and teachers. All the young people wanted a say especially in:

- building clubs and leisure centres
- fostered and adopted children should have a say as to their placement
- family decisions
- health decisions
- education
- Government decisions which affect them

Looking at this booklet I find that all the young people wanted to have a say in their communities and nationally. They felt that adults – especially teachers – didn't understand them well. They also felt that they should have a say in most things to do with them. Young people are willing to take some time to have their say, but there aren't many people willing to listen.

I especially liked the finishing quote of this booklet said by a young person: *'We are the future, we are part of the world, we know what we want but we just need help to get it.'*

I think a year after the publishing, there should be a feedback to see how much young people have gained from this report.

Remember My Messages – by Catherine Shaw

Published by the Who Cares? Trust in 1998

This report covers what it is like to be in care, and what rights and say you have in care. 2000 children in care, aged between 10 and 16 years, filled in questionnaires in 1997. Here are some of the results:

What would have made it easier when children came into care?

31% said that having more information would have helped

16% said that having a meeting or visit before hand would have helped

12% said that having more time to prepare would have helped

10% said having more contact with family and friends would have helped

8% said it would have helped if they had more support from social workers

7% said it would have helped if they felt safe and cared for

How much do children in care get listened to?

- Children in foster care were found to have more of a say than those in residential homes
- 38% of children said they get a lot of say in decisions about school and 19% said they get no say
- 26% of children said they get a lot of say on bedtimes and 28% said they get no say
- 59% of children said they get a lot of say about seeing their friends and 7% said they get no say on this
- 60% said they get a lot of say about plans for their future and 7% said they get no say
- 24% said they get a lot of say about seeing their social worker and 13% said they get no say
- 24% said they get a lot of say about their pocket money and 37% said they get no say
- 29% said they get a lot of say about seeing their file and 31 said they get no say

If I had to decide whether people in care had a lot of rights and say, I would say no because they're not asked their opinion all the time, and in care I think it's very important.

Challenging Newham, Young Power

The Newham report Challenging Newham, Young Power is a report written by 10 young people from Newham about problems in Newham from a young person perspective. The report was facilitated by 2 adults, but much information was accessed by having large groups of young people attend information giving sessions. Issues raised included, education, inclusion of disabled young people, health, social services, food and safety. The report suggested ways of improving these problems and highlighted statements that suggest or promise action by surrounding them in boxes.

Still Missing – by Jenny Morris

Published by the Who Cares? Trust in 1998

This report is about young disabled people living away from their families. There is a lot in it about young people not having a say. For example, here's the reaction from a girl called Monica who was sent to boarding school when she was five: *'I was saying no I want to stay home. My mum said no, you stay here and work, I'm going home, and I was miserable and said goodbye and gave my mum a hug and a kiss and mum went off'.*

The author of this report says that we shouldn't assume that people who have difficulty expressing themselves don't have views, because they do. The researchers who did this work made some observations of how young disabled people are treated:

- in one place people had to wait 40 minutes before tea was served
- in one place people were not allowed to go into the dining room before their tea was ready
- carers were pushing and pulling people to get them in and out of the dining room quickly
- everyone in one place got the same food and drink with no choices
- everyone is treated the same as if they can't do things for themselves, even when they can

I found the report very interesting. It shows the real opinions and lifestyles of real young people. It is very good research and it reads well. The researchers must have been like flies on the wall

Seen and Heard, Involving Disabled Children and Young People in Research and Development Projects – by Linda Ward

Published by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation in 1997

This report is about new ways of involving disabled children and young people in projects that affect them. Two of the main points are:

- children's perspective is different from adults
- it helps to have young people to do research: a young researcher in a Barnardo's project said, *'The boy I talked to was brain damaged, and he kept jumping around and on and off the bench but he still kept on talking and I think it was a good interview. It didn't matter because I am only 16, whereas if I had been an adult I think I would have had to make him behave more quietly, and I don't think he would have told me so much then.'*

The report gives lots of advice on how young disabled people can be involved in projects. Here are some examples:

- consultants and advisers to projects
- set up advisory groups
- young disabled people carrying out interviews themselves
- young disabled people advising on reports and other publications
- young disabled people advising on how to get information out to other disabled people
- being contributors to conferences or workshops

Everyone Needs Education for Participation

Written and researched by: PEG (Participation Education Group)

Published in 1999

The research was carried out to find the answers to four main questions.

1. What young people and children want to give their opinions about
2. How they want to give their opinions.
3. How they would know if adults took their opinions seriously.
4. What they need to know if they are going to feel confident on giving opinions.

The main things children wanted to voice an opinion on were:

Attitudes adults have to children- ie, adults in general, adults with power, not being treated with respect and equality.

Education i.e. what they are taught, how they are taught, what they wear, how they are treated, resources in school, and class sizes.

Leisure and Youth Services- ie, Open spaces, after school clubs, having a place to hang out, community centres, sports activities and the prices of all these things.

Personal Safety- ie, On the streets, in their homes, harassment and violence.

Health Services- ie, Having local, child friendly services, special health services that young people can use, delays because there is not enough to go around, attitude of doctors.

Social Services- ie, Help for families, counselling for parents, support for problematic families, protecting children from abuse.

Money- ie, Who has money, how it is spread out, how it is spent.

People who work with children- ie, How they are trained, how they're like as people,

how they work with us.

Most young people said adults who run services for young people don't ask their opinions, and hardly any of them had heard of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Those who did were already members of PEG.

The main issues of the report were that:

- most children, and adults who work with Young People had not heard of the Convention.
- if you want children to take part, you have to be bothered to put in the time and effort and money, so it is creative and accessible.
- to break barriers between adults and young people, so there is less hostility.
- young people and adults need to learn about; Article 12 and the convention; why it is important; the systems used to put it into practice; how to put it into practice; different ways of participation; how to choose the right method.

It hurts you inside. Children talking about smacking - by Carolyn Willow and Tina Hyder

Published by the National Children's Bureau in 1999

The main message from this report is that young children are angry about being smacked, and they are upset and it really hurts them. I think that they have a right to feel like that because smacking isn't the way to deal with a child. If an adult and a child have had an argument it isn't the way to solve it. This report shows that young children have just as good views as an adult.

Research tips for young people

Decide on your project idea.

Select a hard working group of people who are easy to co-operate with.

Use all your research to bind together a questionnaire and a group interview.

Set deadlines and stick to them.

Don't lose the plot.

Debate whether an adult is needed to help, if so in what areas?

In research (when interacting with other young people) remember there is never a right or wrong answer.

Always be well prepared.

Keep a good sense of humour.

Do not use leading questions in your research.

Do not patronise people who are different to you, treat them as equals.

When analysing your research take everything into account.

Record the interview if nobody in it minds.

Try to enjoy yourself and keep smiling.

Make sure adults don't take over - if they do try to protest about it.

If adults help with research make sure you ask questions not them.

Don't let adults interrupt when doing research (interviews).

Don't lose track in interviews.

Ask permission before interviewing someone.

"What is needed is laws which can help with keeping the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in the public eye. Eventually one day we will have laws which totally rule out ageism."

"It can be very distressing if young people think their views aren't taken seriously."

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"There are a lot of people out there who want to have a say but either they don't know enough about how to go about it, or they do have a say but are ignored so they won't speak out again."

"Young people seem to be interested about our research so there should be more research and projects that include younger people."

"In most cases where adults would think young people aren't too bothered about decisions such as uniform as trivial as it may seem, it's an obvious case of young people not having their opinions heard."

The main me

"The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is advertised more so that young people get to know about their rights."

"The Convention is something young people care about."

"Research is easy, but when you have school and other issues such as people refusing entry to places, it's made ten times harder."

"In a lot of cases, young people wanted more of a say, especially in education."

"Some children get scared about asking their mums and dads to let them make decisions."

"A lot of young people think that the reason that other people don't know about the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is because they're not properly educated about it, but in Italy all new-born babies are given a copy of the convention."

"Whether young people know about their rights or not, they can still be violated."

"Young disabled people have to put up with a lot of discrimination and are often overlooked."

Messages

What we to be do

Now that we have finished our research project we think there's loads more that needs to be done before children have real rights to express our views.

Family and places where young people live

Young people need to tell parents about our rights, and get their support.

Give new parents a copy of the Convention as soon as the baby is born.

Give fostering and adopting parents and children's home workers a copy of the Convention when they are considering looking after children.

All young people should be consulted about:

- pocket money- how much, how regularly, what you buy
- clothes- what you wear
- school - choice of school, is it near friends, pressure to pass entry exam
- holidays- where you go, how long for
- where you live- if you move away from friends, if you change foster families or have to live away from home
- television, radio- what you watch, how long for
- who you live with- mum/dad, foster family
- what you eat- vegetarian, vegan, mealtimes
- who you are friends with
- where you go and who you go with
- curfews - a choice
- house rules: decorating, style, and discussions.

This does not mean that young people make the decisions, but we should be consulted and listened to and taken seriously.

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Hospitals

Most people who stay in hospitals stay short term now but the Government should still ask or research into young peoples views in hospitals on things like: food and drink, entertainment etc. On the medical side of things, as soon as young people are able to understand they should be told everything that is happening to them and be able to say if they want something or don't want something.

School

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child should be part of the National Curriculum. All young people including disabled children should be in mainstream schools within five years. In the mean time compulsory segregation should be abolished along with the 11+ system.

Young people should have a choice whether or not to sit exams.

Young people should have a choice about the religions they study.

Young people should have a say on their school's budget e.g. what equipment to buy or what renovations should happen to the school. There should be more after school and lunchtime clubs. Young people should choose the format and who runs the club.

Young people in trouble should be allowed to have their say before any judgement is made.

Young people in serious trouble should be allowed an independent ally with them at any meetings about them.

Young people should have more opportunities to discuss issues like racism and children's rights.

There should be a national union of school students, which is run by under 18's and has real power.

Young people should have a choice in deciding school dinner menus.

Young people must be consulted when changing schools.

Young people should have more choice in what subjects they take.

Leisure centres

We found that most leisure centres are very patronising towards younger people even though they are their main customers. We think they should do research about young people to ask them how they would like to be treated and what they would like to see changed.

Youth clubs

Many youth clubs seem to give young people a lot of say, and youth workers are really nice. However we think young people should be asked our views more about the activities we do and what the tuck shop contains etc.

Local community

We could have a child and young person's council to help decide on local things concerning young people.

There could be a young person who can link with the local M.P so that children's views can be taken into account.

If there are changes to be made, consult the young people of the community as well as the adults.

If there is going to be things done in the local community for young people, for example having youth clubs or playgrounds built, then ask the young people how they want it made.

There are many local community groups, but have some that include young people in them.

Let young people have a say about what kind of shops or entertainment activities are made so that everyone is happy.

Politics and the media

We need more projects like what we are doing. We need a Minister for Youth. When the government do their own reports involve young people in the research. Rules for young people working with the media. Reduce the voting age to 16, and this will be another positive step. When there are changes in Government policies they should consult us. Have an accessible and understandable way of communicating with young people. e.g. the National Grid for Learning. Privacy rights for young people in the media. In national media or newspapers have young journalist representing young people's interests and views from a young person's perspective. The Government should make more links with youth councils and school councils, as an effective way of taking steps forward, in involving young people more in decision making.

Having more young people run organisations like Article 12 and they should be government funded, with adults assisting the young people in carrying out what they set out to do - respecting young people in other words!

Children and young people working with school OFSTED inspectors and working closely with the people involved with decision making in education.

If young people were more involved with the media then things would be changed for the better, negative stereotypes would be changed, young people would be more represented for what we are, not who people think we are, this in turn would lead to young people having respect from adults and this within itself would be a positive step.

Inform

Contact points

Article 12

8 Wakley Street
London EC1V 7QE
Telephone 0171 843 6026
and

Voluntary Action Centre
7 Mansfield Road
Nottingham NG1 3FB
Telephone 0115 934 8466

Advisory Centre for Education (ACE)

1B Aberdeen Studios
22-24 Highbury Grove
London N5 2DQ
Telephone 0171 354 8321

Amnesty International-UK

99-119 Rosebery Avenue
London EC1R 4RE
Telephone 0171 814 6200

A National Voice

PO Box 253
Leeds LS1 3RA
Telephone 0113 242 9767

Article 12 in Scotland

Haymarket House
Clifton Terrace
Edinburgh EH12 5DR
Telephone 0131 527 8200

Article 31 Action Network

c/o PLAY-TRAIN
31 Farm Road
Birmingham B11 1LS
Telephone 0121 766 8446

British Coalition of Organisations of Disabled People (BCODP)

Litchurch Plaza
Litchurch Lane
Derby DE24 8AA
Telephone 0113 295 5551

British Youth Council

65-69 White Lion Street
London N1 9PP
Telephone 0171 278 0582

Childline

Freepost 1111
London N1 0BR
Telephone 0800 1111

Children are unbeatable!

77 Holloway Road
London N7 8JZ
Telephone 0171 700 0627

Children in Wales

25 Windsor Place
Cardiff CF1 3BZ
Telephone 01222 342 434

Children's Law Centre

101 University Street
Belfast BT7 1HB
Telephone 01232 245 704

Children's Legal Centre

University of Essex
Wivenhoe Park
Colchester
Essex CO4 3SQ
Telephone 01296 873 820
(2-5pm weekdays)

Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG)

London N1 9BR
Telephone 0171 837 7979

Children's Play Council

National Children's Bureau
8 Wakley Street
London EC1V 7QE
Telephone 0171 843 6094

Children's Rights Office

319 City Road
London EC1V 1LJ
Telephone 0171 278 8222

**Children's Rights Officers
and Advocates (CROA)**

c/o Save the Children
Cambridge House
Cambridge Grove
Hammersmith
London W6 0LE
Telephone 0181 741 4054

**Commission for Racial
Equality**

Elliot House
10-12 Allington Street
London SW1E 5EH
Telephone 0171 828 7022

**Council for Disabled
Children**

National Children's Bureau
8 Wakley Street
London EC1V 7QE
Telephone 0171 843 6059

**EPOCH (End Physical
Punishment of Children)**

77 Holloway Road
London N7 8JZ
Telephone 0171 700 0627

National Children's Bureau

8 Wakley Street
London EC1V 7QE
Telephone 0171 843 6000

**National Youth Advocacy
Service**

1 Downham Road South
Heswell, Wirral
Merseyside L60 5RG
Telephone 0151 342 7852

National Youth Agency

17-23 Albion Street
Leicester LE1 6GD
Telephone 0116 285 6789

NSPCC

42 Curtain Road
London EC2A 3NH
Telephone 0171 825 2500

Save the Children

17 Grove Lane
Camberwell
London SE5 8RD
Telephone 0171 716 2132

School Councils UK

57 Etchingam Park Road
Finchley
London N3 2EB
Telephone 0181 349 2459

UNICEF-UK

55 Lincoln's Inn Fields
London WC2A 3NB
Telephone

Voice for the Child in Care

Unit 4
Pride Court
80/82 White Lion Street
London N1 9PF
Telephone 0171 833 5792

Voices from Care

25 Windsor Place
Cardiff CF1 3BZ
Telephone 01222 398 214

**VOYPIC (Voice of Young
People in Care)**

Albany House
73-75 Great Victoria Street
Belfast BT2 7AF
Telephone 01232 244 888

Who Cares? Scotland

Block 4, Unit C3
Templeton
Business Centre
Templeton Street
Glasgow G40 1DA
Telephone 0141 554 4452

Who Cares? Trust

Kemp House
152-160 City Road
London EC1V 2NP
Telephone 0171 251 3117

**Youth Forum for Northern
Ireland**

24a Ann Street
Belfast
Telephone 01232 331990

Young People First

Instrument House
207-215 Kings Cross Road
London WC1X 9DB

Useful books

Advisory Centre for Education (1995) *Children's Voices in School Matters*.

Association of Metropolitan Authorities (1995) *Checklist for Children: Implementing the UN Convention in Local Authorities*. AMA

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Lansdown, G. (1995) *Building Small Democracies, The Implications of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child for Respecting Children's Civil Rights within the Family*. Children's Rights Office

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Morris, S. and Wheatley, H. (1994) *Time to Listen, the Experiences of Children in Residential and Foster Care*. Childline

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Participation Education Group *Everyone needs Education for Participation. How to put Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child into Practice*. PEG and Newcastle City Council

Save the Children (1997) *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, An International Save the Children Alliance Training Kit*

Save the Children (1997) *All together Now, Community Participation for Children and Young People*

Save the Children (1996) *Children's Participation Pack, A Practical Guide for Playworkers*.

Thames Valley Partnership (1997) *Speak Out, a Guide to Youth Consultation*.

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Treseder, P. (1997) *Empowering Children and Young People*. Children's Rights Office and Save the Children

UNICEF (1998) *Implementation Handbook on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (available from UNICEF, 55 Lincoln's Inn Fields, London WC2A 3NB)

Wheal, A. and Sinclair, R. (1995) *It's YOUR Meeting, a Guide to Help Young People get the most from their Review*. National Children's Bureau

Ward, L. (1997) *Seen and Heard, Involving Disabled Children and Young People in Research and Development Projects*. Joseph Rowntree Foundation

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Young People's Anti-Poverty Project (1999) *Listen to us. The Views of Young People in Middle Park*. The Children's Society and Greenwich Council

“Now you’ve read it...”



“Use it”