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Little Voices Shouting Out Final Report

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With Foreword by Jane Williams



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Foreword

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) has helped to bring about changes in attitude to children's involvement in decision-making. This applies to decisions about research with children as to decisions about all other matters that affect them. In Wales, the UNCRC has a special status because Welsh Ministers, many public bodies and some service-providers are bound by law to have 'due regard' to its requirements as they carry out their work, and to ensure the public, including children, have information about it. Welsh Government, the Children's Commissioner for Wales, many Welsh local authorities and third sector organisations in Wales have information about the UNCRC on their web pages. Some Welsh schools are using the UNCRC in their everyday work, not simply to strengthen their equality and diversity practices but also as a framework for 'pupil voice' and curriculum delivery.

The Observatory on Children's Human Rights is an initiative based at Swansea and Bangor Universities dedicated to ensuring that children's human rights are respected, protected and fulfilled. As one of the Observatory's founders, I understand we can only do this successfully if we work with partners across disciplines and sectors and with children themselves. Partnership working led to the transfer to the Observatory of *Little Voices Shouting Out*, 4 months into a 3-year project. I would like to record our great thanks to Big Lottery People and Places, to the trustees and former staff of Funky Dragon, to Swansea and Bangor Universities and to the Lleisiau Bach team, Helen Dale and Arwyn Roberts, for ensuring the continuity and development of the project since that time.



Lleisiau Bach Little Voices became and remains the approach used by the Observatory to empower children as researchers and advocates. It cuts new ground, going beyond involving children in adults' research. It uses the UNCRC as a conceptual foundation and normative framework to enable children to be the researchers – to choose the subject, research questions and methods, to analyse results, reach conclusions, make their recommendations and engage with whoever can help bring about the desired changes. It evolves with experience, adapting for different needs, age-groups and special interests, and latterly developing new emphasis on age-inclusive co-production. We constantly review and reflect on the approach and its implications, not only for involvement of children in research, but for the way all of us of any age can learn together and work together, better.

I believe we are only beginning to realise the transformative potential of the Lleisiau Bach Little Voices approach within education, training and research as well as in community action, community development and participation in democratic governance. At this time, when the National Assembly for Wales is preparing for elections to the first Welsh Youth Parliament, this report could not be more timely. I am delighted to welcome this report which presents the main achievements of the three-year *Little Voices Shouting Out* project, highlights some of the journeys of discovery along the way, what we did next and our plans for the future.

Jane Williams,

*Lead on Innovation & Engagement, Hillary Rodham Clinton School of Law;
Manager, Lleisiau Bach/Little Voices; Co-Ordinator, Wales Observatory
(Children's Rights).*



Introduction and Background

We began our work on *Little Voices Shouting Out* with Funky Dragon, the charity which from 2002 – 2014 was known as the Children and Young People’s Assembly for Wales. Amongst its many achievements, Funky Dragon produced reports on children’s human rights in Wales. (Funky Dragon, 2011) One of these, *Why Do Children’s Ages Go Up Not Down? (2007)*, reported on views and experiences collected from children under the age of 11. Building on this, we developed methods and resources to empower children in this age group to select issues, conduct research and recommend change. This ‘*Children as Researchers*’ approach would enable younger children to participate in Funky Dragon and ‘... create a body of work and ways of understanding that adults could not replicate’. (Funky Dragon, 2013: 198) Between 2009 and 2014, with support from Welsh Government and from the Big Lottery, we used the *Children as Researchers* method successfully with groups of children in over 30 locations throughout Wales. (*Little Voices, Big Choices*, 2014).

In *Little Voices Shouting Out (2014 -17)*, thanks to further funding from Big Lottery and support from the Observatory, we have continued and developed this work. We worked with schools throughout Wales to conduct research which produced real impact in the schools and their local communities. We supported children to conduct Wales-wide research and to deliver in 2015 a ‘world-first’ child-led report from children as young as seven to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, helping to shape the Committee’s Concluding Observations to the UK and Welsh Governments. We developed and piloted professional training in the method and produced an on-line training manual.

Soon after we started to deliver *Little Voices Shouting Out*, Funky Dragon was forced to close its offices and disband its youth-led Grand Council, due to cessation of its core funding from Welsh Government. The voluntary Board of Trustees re-focused their work, started the Campaign for a Children and Young People’s Assembly for Wales and continued to work on their 11 – 24-year-olds’ report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. *Little Voices Shouting Out* transferred to the Observatory on Children’s Human Rights at Swansea University. The move was the result of unwelcome events but it brought welcome benefits, including a presence for the Observatory at Bangor University as well as Swansea University, helping to embed its Wales-wide reach. In the university environment, beyond a nurturing base for our projects, we have had opportunities to give sessions about our work to students and staff, to present at international conferences and to find researchers in different disciplines who could help with the children’s research. We have gained recognition from the research community in ways that would not otherwise have been possible.

In November 2016, *Little Voices Shouting Out* was nominated as a finalist at the Engage Awards of the National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement, sponsored by Research Councils UK and the Wellcome Foundation. Against high quality competition from universities throughout the UK, the judges’ appraisal of the project included the following:



The panel felt this project took an exemplary approach to involving young people – as young as 7 – as active researchers, using research to reflect critically on issues that really mattered to them, and to communicate their findings to key decision makers.



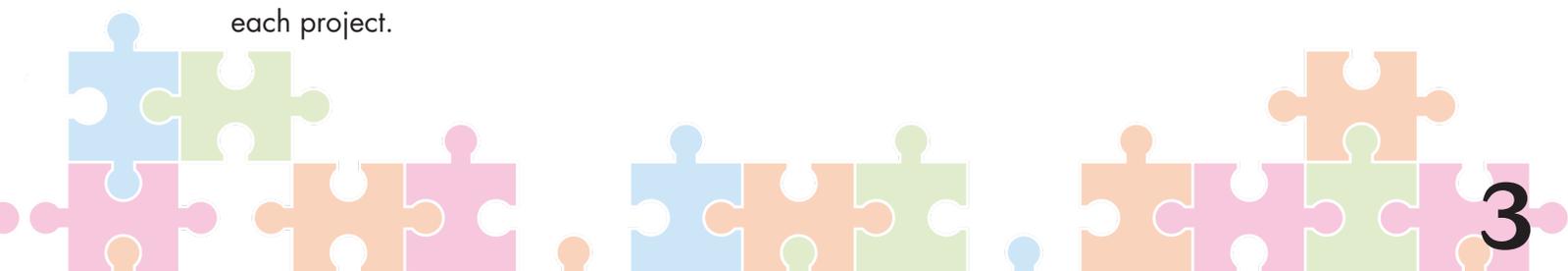
The Children as Researchers Method

Our method has developed over 10 years. We learned from the work of pioneers like Mary Kellett, Priscilla Alderson, Jo Boyden, Judith Ennew and Virginia Morrow, who showed that research can be done in ways that value children as participants and respect their rights. This was reinforced by our practical experience working with Funky Dragon on youth-led projects including reports to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. The Lleisiau Bach Little Voices approach has two overarching, distinguishing features.

We use the UNCRC as a framework within which to select research topics, and to guide the conduct of each project.

We do not suggest or impose research topics, methods, conclusions or recommendations. The work is led by the children.

- *We use the UNCRC as a framework within which to select research topics, and to guide the conduct of each project.*
 - o The UNCRC has 42 articles containing requirements with which the State Party must comply. They are wide-ranging, covering children’s rights to survival and development, equality and non-discrimination, protection from harm, educational, cultural and recreational matters, fundamental freedoms (of expression, assembly, association, religion and belief), provision of health and social care, environmental security and support for families and communities to help care for children and help them access their rights.
 - o The wide range of the UNCRC gives participating children plenty of choice as to their topic whilst staying within the realms of public policy, community action and realisation of human rights.
 - o In every project, children learn, by doing, about aspects of decision-making in organisations and communities and/or about citizenship and government, framed by respect for human rights.
 - o The UNCRC guides our conduct and that of the children doing the research. This means that non-discrimination, respect for individual choice, the role of parents and communities and the highest possible standards of health, safety and protection are built in to the approach and in to each project.



- *We do not suggest or impose research topics, methods, conclusions or recommendations. The work is led by the children.*
 - o Each research group moves from brainstorming different topics, to selecting and exploring their top 3 topics, voting for the single topic to research and choosing the research questions.
 - o As we deliver the sessions, we demonstrate, by doing, different types of participative research, for example using questionnaires and surveys, Plickers, different kinds of voting, interviews, finding out what is already known and using creative tools such as film and sound recording.
 - o Data collection and analysis is supported by the delivery team, who help with collation and presentation of results according to the needs of the group, but the conclusions and recommendations are always the children's.

We have produced an on-line training pack, with links to resources that can be used or adapted. We have developed and piloted a training day, which can be adapted to suit the needs of different professional groups, and have established a CARS Network to share best practice, news and events.

The training manual is freely available at the Lleisiau Bach website: www.lleisiaubach.org

CARS network contact: [Helen Dale](#)

Twitter: [@lleisiaubach](#)

The Six Stages of the Children as Researchers Method

The method has six stages, which can be delivered over several weeks or intensively over consecutive days. Working with schools in Little Voices Shouting Out, the usual gap between sessions was one to two weeks, but this can vary according to the needs of the group, the school and the project. The six stages and approximate time we spent in sessions with the group at each stage are set out below.

1. Selecting the research question: 4 hours
2. Choosing research methods and planning research: 2 hours
3. Data collection and analysis: collection variable according to method; analysis: 2 hours
4. Planning for age-inclusive co-production and impact: 2 hours
5. Follow up with children: 2 hours
6. Impact meeting/future planning 2 hours

In between sessions, we supported the progress of the project in whatever ways were necessary, for example by preparing materials or writing up, or contacting people who could help with the research or impact. At the end of each project, each member of the group was given a folder to keep, containing the group's working papers and the project report.



The Little Voices Shouting Out UNCRC Report

The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child was set up under Article 43 of the UNCRC. Its members are highly regarded experts on children and human rights. They are elected from States Parties and they serve on the Committee for two years at a time. Their job is to examine the progress each State Party is making to give effect to the UNCRC. Each State Party must submit an initial report to the Committee, and then every five years. The State Party must send its representatives to appear before the Committee to answer questions at one of the Committee's sessions at the Office of the High Commission on Human Rights in Geneva. The Committee then publishes its Concluding Observations noting what progress has been made and advising the State Party what more it needs to do.

The Committee does not hear only what the State Party says. The Committee invites 'alternative reports' from organisations outside of government to help the Committee know what to ask. Wherever possible, the Committee sends one or more of its members as a rapporteur to visit the State Party and meet such organisations. The Committee and visiting rapporteurs welcome the opportunity to meet with and learn from children.

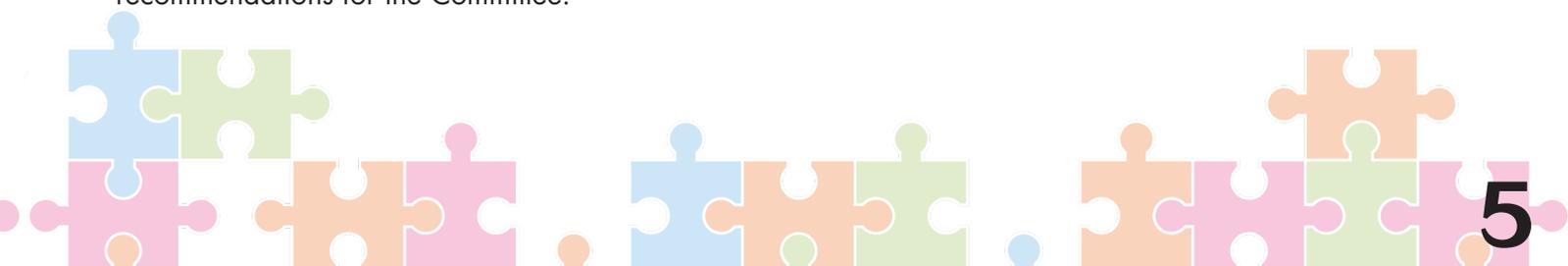
At the time when *Little Voices Shouting Out* was planned, while youth reports had been submitted to the Committee in many State Parties' examinations under the UNCRC, it appeared that there had never been a child-led research report from children under 11. Typically, participation initiatives engage with young people between the ages of 11 and 24. There are far fewer opportunities for younger children.

We believed it was important that the experiences and views of younger children are authentically represented to the Committee. *Little Voices Shouting Out* therefore included as one of its objectives the production and representation of a report by children under 11 in the UK's fifth periodic examination by the Committee. Not only would this mean the Committee would have the benefit of younger children's perspectives from Wales, but we would be able to show how this could be done.

We decided to work with primary schools in Wales because, although not every child under 11 attends school, most do, and schools presented a location and a structure within which we could work with minimum disruption to the daily lives of participating children. We decided not to target specific types of school but to invite participation by any school in each of the 22 Welsh local authorities, on a first-come, first-served basis.

The Model

The model we chose was to work with 24 primary schools in each year of the project. Twelve of these schools would be 'governing body' schools in which the research groups would design a national survey. The other twelve schools would be 'research participant schools' which would run the survey with their peers. The governing body schools would then analyse the results, provide a commentary and make recommendations for the Committee.



At the time when we designed the model, it was thought that the likely date for submission of alternative reports to the Committee would be during 2017. In fact, the Committee brought forward its proposed examination of the UK and the submission date was 1 July 2015. So our report to the Committee had to be submitted based on the first year’s work. This presented both a challenge and an opportunity.

The Challenge

The challenge was to produce a convincing report based on just one year’s work. The number of research participants was lower than would have been the case over three years, but we were pleased that nonetheless some 1200 questionnaire booklets were distributed, with 724 completed and returned. Schools participating either as governing bodies or as research participants were from 17 of Wales’ 22 local authority areas. The age distribution of children who completed the questionnaire is shown below.

Age	%
10 - 11	29
9 - 10	31
8 - 9	27



The Opportunity

The opportunity that arose from the earlier than expected submission of our UNCRC report was that by the end of the second year of *Little Voices Shouting Out*, the Committee had had time to consider our report along with all the other alternative reports from the UK, question the State Party and publish their Concluding Observations. (UNCRC, 2016) This meant that when introducing the project to groups in 2016-17 we were able to show the way the UNCRC can create a dynamic for policy advocacy and change. Part of the legacy of Little Voices Shouting Out is that the Observatory is working with partners in Wales and the UK to find ways to strengthen this dynamic, expanding the conversation to include more people and connect with local and national decision-making as well as the UN’s reporting process.

The Dynamic of the UNCRC



The Geneva Hearings

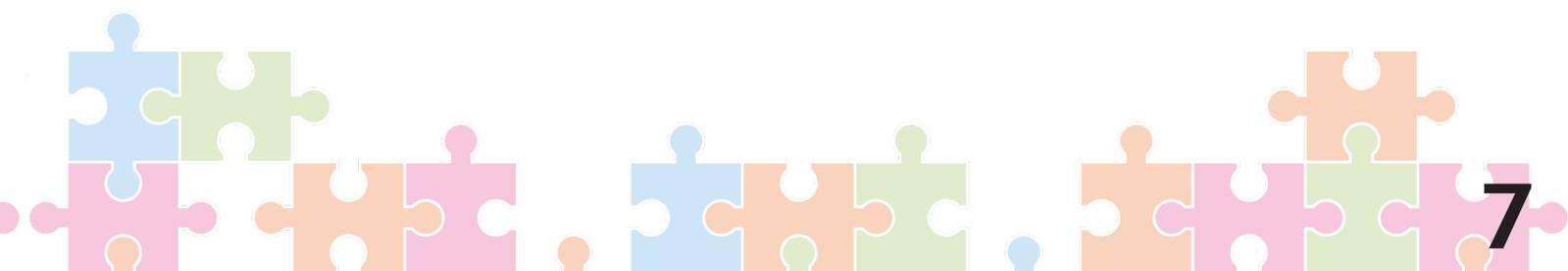
The *Little Voices Shouting Out* report was one of some 17 alternative reports submitted to the Committee in the UK's fifth periodic examination. After it was sent to the Committee in July 2015, it was represented at three important stages. First, at meetings with Committee's rapporteur, Professor Olga Khazova, during her visit to Wales in September 2015; second, at the Committee's pre-sessional hearing in Geneva in October 2015; and third, at the UK State Party hearing in Geneva in May 2016. On each occasion, *Little Voices Shouting Out* was represented in person by two young members of Funky Dragon's Board of Trustees, supported by our project manager, Jane Williams, who had also become a member of the Board.

At each stage, every alternative reporter wants to ensure that their issues and their recommendations are heard by the Committee. Time is strictly limited, and the alternative reporters must work together to avoid repetition of the same points yet also negotiate a fair allocation of time for each reporter. The Committee was especially keen to hear from the children and young people from the different parts of the UK, and arranged a children's meeting at the pre-sessional hearings as well as ensuring the children could participate in the full pre-sessional meeting with all the other reporters. During the State Party hearings, at which the alternative reporters are technically observers only, Committee members met again with the children during breaks to receive updates and to listen to their comments on what the UK Government representatives were saying.

Matthew Walker (aged 17) represented the report in the pre-sessional children's meeting, to which the Committee invited only reporters under 18 years old. Alex Atkins (aged 19), and Jane Williams (aged 58) joined Matthew in the other meetings to represent the report together with the youth report, FUNC+, and, in Jane's case, the report by Wales' UNCRC Monitoring Group. All these reports are publicly available on the UN Committee's web pages:

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CRC/Pages/CRCIndex.aspx>

Such was the interest generated by the child and youth participation in the UK State Party examination that at one point during the final hearings, '#UNCRCWales' and 'CRCUK16' were trending on Twitter!



Findings, Recommendations and the Committee's Response

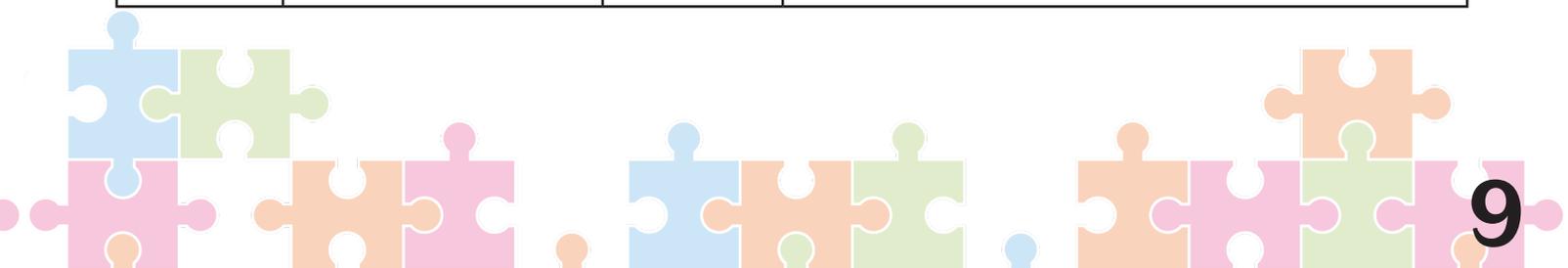
The UN Committee has issued guidance for alternative reporters as to how the reports should be organised and presented, but accepts reports from children in whatever format the children choose. The *Little Voices Shouting Out* governing body schools chose to organise their report under seven headings: Play; Where We Live; Information; Education; The Environment; The UNCRC and Health. Data was collected during the Spring Term of 2015 and analysed during the Summer Term.

The findings reveal certain widely-shared worries, concerns, preferences and wishes amongst the children who responded to the questionnaire. We were able to compare the results with some of the results from the 2008 research for *Why Do Children's Ages Go Up Not Down?* and with messages from consultations by other organisations in Wales. This revealed consistency in children's experiences and views on some subjects, for example about the quality of their local environment, parks and play facilities, the need for help to keep safe and healthy at home, at school and in their communities, and the need for everyone to learn more about children's rights and the UNCRC.

The table below shows the children's recommendations to the Committee, the people they identified who could help bring about changes, and what the UN Committee said in its Concluding Observations on these issues.

Heading from LVSO report, July 2015	LVSO Recommendations	Who can help us	UN Committee Concluding Observations on the UK's fifth periodic report under the UNCRC, June 2016
Play	More opportunities to play, especially outside, and with children of our own age. Improved facilities in public parks: safer, cleaner, welcoming and attractive	Councils, parents, schools, community, clubs and teachers	Government should: Provide children, including those with disabilities and children in marginalized and disadvantaged situations, with safe, accessible, inclusive and smoking-free spaces for play and socialization and public transport to access such spaces. (para 74 b.) Strengthen its efforts to guarantee the right of the child to rest and leisure and to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child, including by adopting and implementing play and leisure policies with sufficient and sustainable resources. (para 74 a.)

<p>Where We Live</p>	<p>All children should feel safe and happy where they live. Check parks more for safety, ban smoking in parks and raise awareness of how it affects our environment, health and play. Involve children aged 7 – 11 more in their communities.</p>	<p>Government and councils</p>	<p>Government should:</p> <p>Fully involve children in planning, designing and monitoring the implementation of play policies and activities relevant to play and leisure, at community, local and national levels. (para 74 c.)</p> <p>Establish structures for the active and meaningful participation of children and give due weight to their views in designing laws, policies, programmes and services at the local and national level Particular attention should be paid to involving younger children (para 30 a.)</p>
<p>Information</p>	<p>Age-appropriate news for children: be aware of how it affects us. Help us explore the news, not just hear the headlines. Help us understand how to keep safe on the internet. Ban adults from contacting children on the internet.</p>	<p>Government, parents and teachers</p>	<p>Government should:</p> <p>...train children, teachers and families on the safe use of information and communication technologies, raise awareness among children on the severe effects that online bullying can have on their peers, and increase the involvement of social media outlets in the efforts to combat cyberbullying. (para 48 b.)</p>
<p>Education</p>	<p>Schools should look for ways to make their schools healthier, like becoming an eco-school, or a rights-respecting school, super ambassador school and healthy school. Teachers should make the lessons fun. Teachers should train children on what to do if they are being bullied. There should be anti-bullying ambassadors who run anti-bullying meetings with teachers' help, anti-bullying posters in parks, schools, shops, libraries and work offices. Use lunchtime check-ins and worry boxes that children can use.</p>	<p>Government, schools and teachers</p>	<p>Government should:</p> <p>Intensify its efforts to tackle bullying and violence in schools, including through teaching human rights, building capacities of students and staff members to respect diversity at school, improving students' conflict resolution skills, conducting regular monitoring of incidences of bullying at school, and involving children in the initiatives and monitoring aimed at eliminating bullying. (para 48 a.)</p>



Environment	Children should live in a safe, healthy, clean environment. Raise awareness of how a bad environment affects children. In parks and on paths, put more rubbish bins, dog mess bins and dog mess bags. Help us learn how to be safe in our environment.	Police, teachers and parents	The Committee's recommendations on Environment were directed at air pollution, especially near schools and residential areas, and at putting children's rights at the centre of action on climate change. (para 67
UNCRC	Have a national campaign for children's rights. Children's rights and the UNCRC should be taught to all ages in school. Teachers should learn about children's rights and the UNCRC when they are trained to be teachers. Parents should be taught about children's rights when they become parents. The Government should make a TV advert about children's rights and work with children to make a book that can be used by children on their own and with teachers in lessons. The Children's Commissioner for Wales and experts should visit schools to help teach about children's rights. Hold events for school councils to meet and talk about children's rights.	Government, the Children's Commissioner for Wales, teachers, parents, NSPCC, paramedics, police and helplines.	Children's rights education should be made mandatory – that is, required by law. (para 72 g.)
Health	Ban smoking in parks and raise awareness about how it affects children. Doctors, dentists and hospitals should explain treatment and equipment in ways children understand and have more child-friendly spaces. Adults and children should learn more about healthy eating, for example by food tasting activities in schools.	Government, health professionals, schools and parents	The Committee recommended smoking-free play spaces in public places (see 'Play' above)



As the table shows, the Committee makes broad recommendations directed at 'government', whereas the children's recommendations contain more details about specific actions and who at the local level can help make them happen. This reflects the principle of subsidiarity, which says that decisions affecting people should be taken as locally as possible. No-one wants to be micro-managed by an international committee, but the UN Committee gives vital guidance on the overarching requirements of international children's human rights law which should frame local decisions. The Committee gives the headlines, leaving the detail for local implementation.

We were pleased to see key recommendations on involvement of children in decision-making, compulsory education on children's rights, protection from bullying and cleaner play spaces. And in light of our prior work with Funky Dragon, and the youth report which the young trustees had managed to complete, we were pleased to see the Committee's recommendation that there should be:

Youth Parliaments in all devolved administrations and territories as permanent fora for children's effective engagement with national legislative processes on issues that affect them. (para 30 c.)

Soon after the Committee's Concluding Observations were published, the National Assembly for Wales promised to establish a Welsh Youth Parliament. It will be for young people over 11. So we are working with the Observatory and partners to see how our community and school-based work can support the widest possible engagement by children of all ages. (See further, 'Reflections and Next Steps' below.) We hope that by the time the Committee next examines the UK State Party, we will have made a lot of progress on this.

Local Projects 2014 – 2017

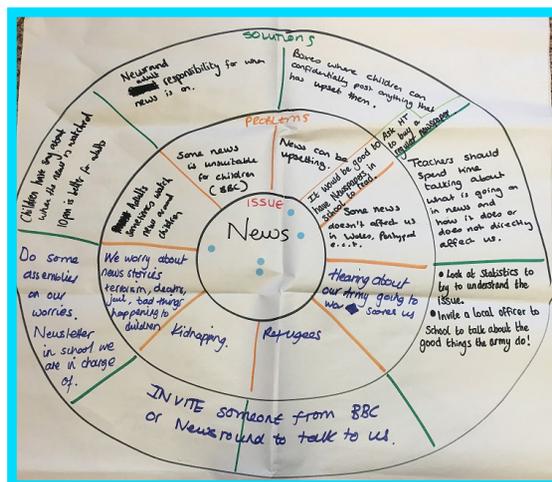
Where we worked

We carried out 60 projects in which we worked for the first time with the school concerned. Schools were selected by advertising via social media and emailing all primary schools in a local authority area, trying to achieve a spread across Wales.



Who we worked with

We worked with 524 children as members of research groups. The research group children were selected by teachers at the participating schools. We did not dictate how children were selected but welcomed the fact that many schools selected children who were not otherwise involved in 'pupil voice' or similar activity. In total the research groups engaged almost 6,000 people – most of whom were other children in the same age group – as respondents to local or national surveys. Many more people – children and adults – were involved in impact events, action plans or as recipients of the research reports.

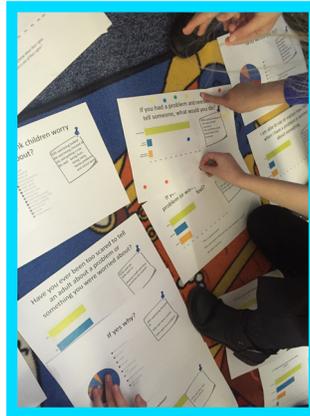


What we did

Following introductory sessions about the UNCRC and about research, the children were invited to identify the 'top three' issues they might like to research. They explored each of these 'top three', then voted for which one to take forward. During the three years of *Little Voices Shouting Out*, the most common topics that made it to the 'top three' were:

- Their immediate environment at school and in the community;
- The plight of vulnerable groups;
- Responses to societal and sometimes global issues;
- Children's ability to be safe and feel safe;
- The way in which children receive and understand news;
- Knowledge of rights;
- Being involved in decisions.

Having chosen their research questions, the children explored various methods they might use. Online surveys and paper questionnaires were popular choices, with many groups deciding to augment these by holding a 'research day' for the whole school. Some groups went on a site visit or sought specialist knowledge from experts.



Following their data collection, we helped them collate and visualise the results so that they could draw their own meaning from the results and make their own recommendations. Lastly, we supported them to prepare an infographic report and hold an end of project impact meeting at which they could share their work and get buy-in for further action.



Over time, we found that we were leaving the projects at what often felt less like the end of a project than the beginning of a new one. At impact meetings, sometimes the group simply shared their work, but often professional and community attendees pledged support for action to bring about changes. Some projects led to change in the school environment, but some projects also had transformative potential beyond the school gates. A good example is the case of 'Moel Hirradug' below.

Case Study: 'Moel Hirradug'

This group was from a school situated by Moel Hirradug in a semi-rural village in north Wales. The group comprised members of the School Council and Eco Committees. They explored: 'Traffic in the village', 'Renovate the School Pond' and 'Access to Moel Hiraddug'. The last won the vote and was selected for the research. As one member of the group put it: 'The mountain is great, but no one uses it. We could improve paths and signs'.

The group chose to investigate what pupils knew about the mountain and how they used it. They created a questionnaire for the whole school. They found that 60% had never been up Moel Hirradug and that 58% believed it to be unsafe to visit, due to lack of paths, fences and the steps being too steep and slippery.

The group visited the mountain to assess the situation. They found a need for better signage and for repair of some of the wooden paths. They also found that the area was very interesting: they found fossils in limestone as well as signs of woodland creatures and lots of native trees.

The group shared their findings with the rest of the school, following which the head teacher organised an inset day for the teachers to visit the mountain and look at opportunities to use the mountain for curriculum-based activities.

The group also liaised with the farmer who grazes the mountain, who was happy for them to use the mountain and welcomed any improvements. Natural Resources Wales were approached and agreed to look at improving the signage and to involve the school in their design. The school produced a book "Dyserth Legends" for use in lessons with stories such as Dafydd Ddu of Hiraddug, some written by pupils in the school.

The group's work was recognised in Estyn's report on the school in 2015, which stated "*Older pupils extend their skills effectively through the contributions they make to the local community, such as their involvement in the 'Moel Hiraddug' project.*" Further accolades came from a mixed professional audience to which the group presented their work at Bangor University in November 2015, including the Children's Commissioner for Wales, the University's Vice-Chancellor, academic staff and health practitioners.



Within the scope of Little Voices Shouting Out, this was a successful project. And yet, there seemed so much more that could follow. As a result of the project, the school's head teacher had the idea of forming a network of Mountain Schools in Wales, and contacted several other schools in Wales to gauge interest. Supporting the development of this idea was, sadly, beyond the scope of our project.

Follow On Projects

This made us start to think about how we could build flexibility for a 'follow on' stage in our future work. So in the final school term during the project, we worked with schools in 'follow-on' projects to see how this could be done. In this way, we began to see how a dynamic could be generated by the children's work and we were able to see what kind of support would help this happen.

Dynamic of local research projects



The case studies below illustrate the additional impact achieved by 'following on' after the local research was completed.

Case Study: Awel Y Mor, Neath Port Talbot

This group of 7 – 10 year olds explored the topics of 'Improving the Local Library', 'School Dinners, and 'Improving the Local Park. They selected the last, and set about planning their research. They ran an online survey to which 69 pupils responded. They went on a site visit, gathering evidence of the state of the park. They produced a two-page infographic report and held an action meeting attended by school staff and governors, local councillors, local environment officials and their Assembly Member. They also made an iMovie which can be seen on the Lleisiau Bach You Tube channel.

At the action meeting, two key actions were agreed:

1. Invite the local football club, which used part of the park, to a meeting to discuss litter
2. Local environment officials to continue dialogue with the school to work towards
 - a. park improvements and
 - b. setting up a 'Friends of Vivian Park' group

At this point, our project work was complete – yet clearly, there was more that could come from it. So we undertook 'follow on' work, which had not been part of the original project plan. This helped to achieve:

- A visit by the local Member of Parliament to the school, which produced a picture and report for his monthly newsletter, an invitation to staff to attend a conference at the House of Commons and an offer to provide sessions for the school children in future;
- Involvement of the council's play development officer leading to repairs to play equipment and repainting of buildings in the park;
- Establishment of a 'Play Heroes' group supported by the local councillor;
- An undertaking from the council's neighbourhood department to consult the children about requirements for leases of the sports facilities to keep the area clean and free from litter;
- Increase in number of pupils putting themselves forward to be a member of the school's Eco-committee;
- Partnership working between the school, Keep Wales Tidy and the council to hold a competition for design of a new sign encouraging people to help keep Vivian Park clean, safe and tidy. Over 80 pupils took part, with the council issuing a press release to celebrate the winning entry and publicise the scheme



Reflecting on the impact of the original project and follow-on work, the school told us:

Many of our children do not realise their importance in the role of developing their communities and had little or no knowledge of their rights. They demonstrated little or no capacity to have an impact on their wider community. However, due to the work of the Little Voices Project, which has provided the children with the knowledge and the confidence to shout out to adults and be heard, which has had a huge impact on them as individuals. In turn this has raised their self-esteem and self-confidence. From being involved in this project we as a school have developed many links with the wider community..... Since the children undertook their research on improving their local park, many changes have been made and are continuing to be made with the help of the children.

Case Study: Garth, Bridgend

This group explored the topics of 'Smoking', 'Speeding Cars' and 'More opportunities for PE in school'. They selected Smoking for their research and set about finding out how children felt about people smoking near them. They ran an online survey to which 90 pupils responded. The results showed children wishing to see changes in law and changes in people's behaviour in relation to smoking. The group's recommendations were directed at what they could achieve in the school and its local environment:

- Raise awareness of smoking around children
- Make posters and put up signs
- Tell parents and the community about our research
- Hold a school assembly
- Hold an awareness-raising day in school with lots of activities

The children made a two-page infographic report and an IMovie which can be seen on the Lleisiau Bach YouTube channel. They held a smoking awareness day in school. An action meeting was held at the school to disseminate the research and celebrate the children's results and achievements. The meeting was attended by local councillors, school governors, parents, school staff, pupils and a representative of Public Health Wales. The Garth research group was amongst those attending the Lleisiau Bach end of year event in 2016, where they met with university researchers (and Swansea City FC's Community Ambassador, Lee Trundle)



Our project work would have stopped at this point, but we agreed to 'follow on' with the school. Public Health Wales remained involved and the school began working towards the Welsh Network of Healthy School Schemes National Quality Award (NQA). At the same time they developed a 'Smoke-free School Gates' campaign which was launched in February 2017. The campaign was taken up by Bridgend County Council to apply to all schools in the local authority area.



The NQA report described the Lleisiau Bach work as one of the drivers of ‘confidence and resilience’ in the school which resulted in an ‘exceptional approach to pupil voice’. The report noted the extraordinary impact of the smoke-free school gates initiative, recognising that it ‘... involved considerable partnership working with local leaders and external agencies such as ASH Wales ..’ and had ‘...contributed in a recommendation to Welsh Government that smoking should not be permitted at school gates in Wales – what an impact!’

The NQA was celebrated at the school by the partners and guests including – continuing the football theme – Wales’ then national team manager, Chris Coleman.



Follow on projects also revealed school staff’s interest in learning more about the method. In one school, as part of the ‘follow on’, we delivered a training day for staff. From this we developed and piloted a training day open to any professionals. Learning from these experiments with ‘follow on’ projects, we included follow on projects and free training as part of our current 3-year project Little Voices Being Heard (2017 – 2020).

Our Analysis

Each local project group produced and analysed data and drew its own conclusions, but this section deals with our analysis of all the local projects put together. Our methodology is rooted in the UNCRC and in each local project the UNCRC was the framework within which research topics were selected and research projects were planned and carried out. So we wanted to see how the projects and outcomes could be linked back to the UNCRC. For this purpose we constructed a set of themes derived from the guidelines issued by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child for State Party reports under the UNCRC. We anticipated that all the topics selected by the children for exploration would 'fit' within one of these themes. This proved to be broadly true, but some minor adjustments were needed. The themes are listed below.

Themes

- A. Disability, basic health and welfare (includes health, health promotion, well-being)
- B. Education/leisure/cultural activities (includes school)
- C. Environment and amenities
- D. Road Safety
- E. Food
- F. Play, leisure, recreation, culture and art
- G. Community (includes topics relating to general public well-being, poverty, social exclusion affecting others, public security and public services)
- H. Civil rights and freedoms (includes identity, information, privacy/image, freedom of association, assembly, thought, conscience and religion)
- I. Knowledge of rights/UNCRC
- J. Special protection

The table below shows the 'top three' topics the children chose to explore, organised in to these themes. Where the topic was chosen more than once, this is indicated by a number in brackets.

Theme	'Top three' topics for exploration
A	Smoking (16), school nurse, defibrillator training, help the disabled, organ donation, drugs and alcohol, children's health (2), more PE (4), school health, happy school, team sports, more sport, adults' use of mobile phones.
B	Art club, mountain school, school pond, more PE (4), improve outside school (3), school shop, more plants in school, school newspaper, after school clubs, football posts, cooking (2), school health, schoolyard equipment, relaxation corner, school pet, school meals (4), happy school, playtime, sitting boy/girl at lunch, school buses, golden time, school facilities, school garden, learn a new language, education on politics and decision-making, paying for university.

C	Mountain school, school pond, improve outside school (3), school shop, more plants in school, football posts, schoolyard equipment, school pet, school buses, school facilities, school garden, environment as a general topic (10), gardening club, litter (4), improve local park (5), improve log train, woodland path, windmills and pylons, dog mess, deforestation (2), more shops, bus stop, abandoned buildings, improve local library, public toilets, ban smoking in parks.
D	Speed bumps, traffic, speeding (3), safer routes to school, children being safe on the road, adults' use of mobile phones.
E	School meals (4)
F	Art club, after school clubs, relaxation corner, playtime, golden time, gardening club, improve local park (5), improve log train, woodland path, play equipment (2), 'pub' for children, team games, team sports, sports equipment, video games, places for children to go, more sport.
G	Improve local park (5), more shops, homelessness (3), water for Africa, homes for poor people, help the poor, food for the poor (4), help old people, help sad people, water for people (2), bus stop, fundraising (3), abandoned buildings, improve local library, public toilets, war and terrorism, children being kidnapped, bullying, cyber-bullying, peace, more support for children in hard circumstances – refugees (2), disabled children and children in the developing world who don't go to school.
H	Image and identity, school newspaper, sitting boy/girl at lunch, education on politics and decision-making, 'pub' for children, team games, team sports, places for children to go, age limits (2), news and media (4), war and terrorism, social media, the internet (3), accessing videos on social media, adults' use of mobile phones, children's rights/UNCRC (7), children have their say more.
I	Education on politics and decision-making, children's rights/UNCRC (7), children have their say more.
J	Children being kidnapped (4), bullying (7), cyber-bullying.



Using the same themes, the table below shows the research areas selected following exploration of the 'top three'. The third column shows local outcomes. Every project had the outcomes of an impact meeting bringing stakeholders and gatekeepers of change together, and every project had outcomes in terms of the participating children's individual experiences. In years 2 and 3 of the project, most groups also made an l-movie, many of which can be seen on the Lleisiau Bach You Tube channel. The table highlights specific other outcomes.

Theme	Topics	Local Outcomes
A.	Children's health (emotional and physical) (2), Organ donation, Healthier school (2), Smoking (2), Disability	Awareness raised via school newsletter articles on healthy diet and exercise and smoking awareness-raising day. Head teacher commitment to link up with disabled groups and special school. Engagement with head teacher in discussion on school anti-bullying policies. School agreeing to discuss content of school meals. Ideas put forward for new tools to help raise children's awareness of how to be emotionally safe and well.
B.	More PE (2), More play/equipment (2), More cooking (3), Learn a new language, School yard/outside area/garden/plants (4), After-school club, School shop, Quiet corner, Mountain school	Changes in school: more use of school hall for 'rainy day' breaks; more play equipment; 'play leaders' scheme for break times. Fundraising for new play equipment. Engagement with local play officer to trial new activities. Weekly play equipment checks. Awareness-raising about play-time rules. Grants received from Lloyds Bank and Keep Wales Tidy for school garden improvement. Other grant applications and/or grant proposals made. Free seeds and advice from local garden centre. Engagement with Parent Teacher Association to seek support for after school club. Proposals for development of cooking activities (fundraising for new equipment, after-school cooking club, involving parents). Head teacher's undertaking to integrate more cooking in delivery of curriculum. A smoothie tasting session. A collection of historical stories written for use in lessons. Action project engaging with local community shop to design and sell a product and enter Welsh Government's 'Big Ideas' competition.
C.	Improve local park (2), Dog mess, Litter, Environment (mainly local, focused on litter, smoking, dog mess, adult/older child behaviour, danger) (5)	Reports and requests delivered to local councils. Engagement in community action with councils and organisations such as 'Tidy Towns' and 'Keep Wales Tidy' to address dog mess in parks, provide more bins, maintain or mend equipment and other improvements. Creation of a community action group. Poster competition and campaign. Recommendations for poster and recycling competitions.

D.	Speed bumps, Adults' use of mobile phones (2)	Public awareness campaigns supported by local police, including promotional film and posters. Identification of 'speeding hotspots'.
E.	Featured in projects under B.	
F.	Featured in projects under B., H. and J.	
G.	Fundraising to help a child go to school, Fundraising, Homelessness (2), Support for refugee children	Funds raised and donated to Save the Children. 2 car loads of items for local homeless shelter. Donation of rice, sugar and coffee to local asylum seekers' project. Plans for awareness-raising and future fundraising.
H.	News/media (3), News/refugees, Image and identity, Education, politics and decision-making	Raised awareness of the impact of news on children. Proposals for more space in the curriculum to discuss news, especially children's fears, and how to keep safe. A rap about gender, image and identity performed for whole school. Sharing of a poem on how children feel about Brexit, taken up by a University-led research project on Children and Brexit. Participation in a further University-led project on pupil participation in school governance (the Understanding Participation Initiative)
I.	UNCRC/Children's rights/Rights day/Rights area (4)	Rights Days held in school. Poster competition held. Poem written on children's rights for use in lessons. Workshops delivered by National Assembly for Wales Youth Engagement Team. Costed proposals for rights area presented to head teacher. Parents' coffee morning to raise parents' understanding of rights. Engagement with council youth worker leading to presentation to local council cabinet committee as agenda item.
J.	Keeping safe (kidnapping, internet), Internet safety (2)	Proposals for more training for children on being safe in public spaces and online. Agreement by police community safety officers to engage with school in awareness-raising.



The range of interests and ideas generated by the children is remarkable. It is important to keep in mind that in our method, the children can choose any topic provided it can be related to human rights. They are not asked specifically to choose 'children's issues'. In this respect, it is different from many consultations, which seek children's views on what they need to access their rights, or what government and other people should be doing for children. An excellent example of such a consultation, which took place during the same period as Little Voices Shouting Out, was the Children's Commissioner for Wales' 'Beth Nesa, what Next?' (2016) held to inform the Commissioner's priorities in carrying out her work. This consultation included 7 – 11 year olds as well as older children (11–18) and younger children (3–7). In the 7–11 age group there were some 2,900 responses. The survey included a question about priorities to make things better for children in Wales, with a list of 12 from which to choose.

Some of the topics explored and research questions chosen by the Little Voices local project groups resonate strongly with one or more of children's top 'priorities' in Beth Nesa?, as well as other consultations that have been held with older young people in Wales. However, the Little Voices groups were able to range more widely in to issues of community or general public interest, and they 'owned' the subsequent investigation and analysis.

In many projects, what emerged went beyond a wish-list for action by adults and was rather, an agenda for co-production of change by children and adults working together.

Dissemination, Reach and Impact

We raised the profile of Little Voices Shouting Out through our social media presence on Twitter and at milestone events and conferences. The table below shows some highlights in activity on Twitter:

Tweet content	Tweet Impressions (to nearest 100)	Profile visits
NCCPE Engage Finalist announcement	12,700 16,900	483 1,270
Little Voices Shouting Out Projects: 'Don't text and Drive Campaign' 'Smoke Free School Gates Campaign'	18,200 16,700	691 671
Children's Commissioner 'Rights Hour' features Little Voices Shouting Out Project: 'Keeping Children safe' video	19,500	600
Little Voices Shouting Out Project Impact Meeting with guest Chris Coleman	19,100	880
Hillary Rodham Clinton meets Little Voices Shouting Out Project children at Swansea University	19,800	689
'Children as Researchers' Training Manual published	14,500	579

Events and Conferences: some highlights

November 2015, Bangor

We celebrated the Little Voices Shouting Out report at Bangor University. The same event saw the launch of the Making Sense report about CAMHS on which the Observatory and partners had worked with young mental health service users, and a celebration of the establishment of the 'Observatory@Bangor'. Children from three local project schools presented their work to an audience of researchers, teachers, health professionals and students.



July 2016, Bangor and Swansea

Summer 2016 saw events at Bangor and Swansea where children from different local projects shared their research with each other and with professional researchers.



The resonance between the children's work and that of professional researchers (methods, approaches, focus, presentation, etc.) was also very clearly apparent. This was excellent 'citizen scholarship' in action!

*Researcher in Human Geography,
after the Swansea event, July 2016.*

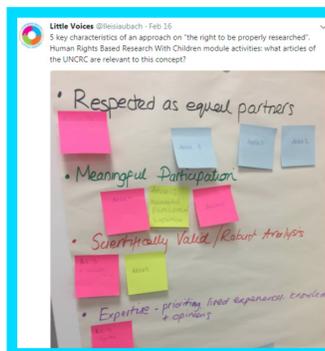
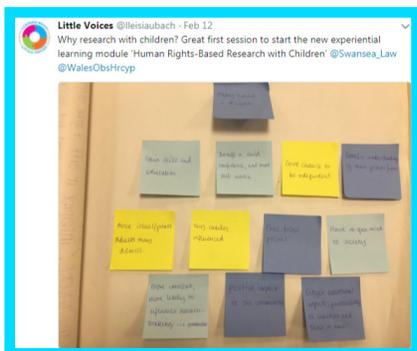
November 2016, Bristol

Little Voices Shouting Out was the only Welsh finalist in the Engage Awards hosted by the National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement.



Integration in higher education and professional training programmes

Anyone who works with children has a part to play in ensuring that children’s human rights are respected, protected and fulfilled. As Williams (2016) amongst others has argued, professionals have a special part to play in this, and yet many initial professional training schemes offer little or no training on children’s human rights. From our university base at Swansea and Bangor we have delivered occasional sessions to students in Law, Nursing, Childhood Studies and Education. We have also become involved with cross-disciplinary research development groups. From 2017–18 we have expanded this aspect of our work, helping to develop and deliver a new module, *Research with Children*, for taught programmes in Welsh universities. In these ways, we are building capacity now and for the future, for adults and children to work together, better.



Evaluation

Feedback from local projects, recorded both by independent evaluators and by ourselves, was overwhelmingly positive. Children in project groups reported and demonstrated increased understanding of rights and research. Positive impacts were consistently reported at school, community and local authority levels. Professional researchers who came into contact with the projects remarked upon the significance of the methods for greater involvement of children in research and for co-production.

Some comments from school staff and governors who responded to the independent evaluation are set out below.

They are a lot more aware of their rights. It has become more meaningful to them, seeing action being taken, and real because of this project.

...the children realise that they can be more part of things...and I think some of my colleagues have been convinced more by this project.

Our children gained so much confidence, from the beginning when they didn't really speak out, to what they achieved by the end, was brilliant, for themselves and for the school.

...the children got so many learning opportunities out of it; IT skills, literacy, numeracy research and oracy skills...to name a few...

We are always talking about getting the school more involved in the community and this really helped us to do that.

The children impressed the governors and parents so much, that has helped change attitudes about how we should involve the children more.

The school has definitely made better links with the community and we are now planning to do other things to keep up the momentum.

The children presenting to the local councillors was impressive...The children were amazing...they were so proud and it reflected well on the school.

The children that took part in this project are not the ones who usually get involved...wouldn't be on the schools council or anything like that...this has given them such an opportunity and confidence.

The independent evaluation concluded that the project

...is reimagining possibilities for the greater involvement and participation by children in Wales in effecting change in the services provided for children and influencing and promoting a stronger organisational culture to support the embedding of children's rights more generally across public services and our local communities, both locally and nationally.

Reflections and Next Steps

Wider exposure to a cross-disciplinary, cross-sectoral community of interest in children's human rights and participative research has brought home to us that Little Voices is unusual in allowing children to 'paint on a broad canvas'. They are not constrained by adults' requests or suggestions as to what they should research, nor directed to 'children's issues'. This enables them to identify issues of general community and public benefit, not necessarily focused only on children. We have been struck by the children's appetite both to learn and to engage with adult 'impact partners' on a wide range of issues of public importance, including: homelessness, organ donation, news media, asylum seekers and refugees, road safety and public health. This has led to our greater current emphasis on age-inclusive co-production in community action and community development. It has also encouraged the Observatory to support local experimentation in enhanced pupil participation in school governance (the Understanding Participation Initiative) and to develop cross-disciplinary work on the implications of the methodology for curriculum delivery.

Reflecting on the positive feedback we have received from professionals, we believe the Little Voices approach should become less unusual. It seems to us to have potential for wider use in schools, and application in many other areas of work affecting children. We are glad to be delivering more teaching on the methods for students, including a new 'Research with Children' module which is being delivered for the first time during 2017–18 to students in Law and Criminology at Hillary Rodham Clinton School of Law, Swansea University.

Our reflections on the three years of working on Little Voices Shouting Out informed our current project, Little Voices Being Heard 2017–20, again supported by the Big Lottery, Swansea University and Bangor University.

In Little Voices Being Heard, we continue to support local research projects in schools, but have added five important new dimensions. First, the age range is extended to offer projects for groups of children in any age group up to 18 years. Second, one third of the projects are reserved for children who face additional barriers to participation, whether by reason of disability, social exclusion or other reasons. Third, more time is allowed for working co-productively with adults and children for greater impact and influence. Fourth, one third of the projects are 'follow on' projects developing impact from prior work.



Fifth, free training and networking events are held each year for up to 300 professionals whose work engages with children or who want to engage children in their work.

Working on this project has further reinforced our conviction that children's involvement in decision-making in their own lives and the lives of their communities should be and can become, simply, 'normal'. We feel sure that in Wales, with its special laws on children's human rights, its agenda for school curriculum reform prioritizing skills for independent learning and citizenship, numerous past and on-going efforts at national and local levels to consult with and engage children, and forthcoming in 2018, the first elections to a new Welsh Youth Parliament, there is an excellent opportunity to make this happen

Appreciation

We would like to express our thanks to Swansea and Bangor Universities, and to Big Lottery. Without their support, the project would have been impossible. Last and most, we would like to thank all the participating children, schools and impact partners who worked with us with such enthusiasm, creativity and generosity of spirit.

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