



Kent Children and Young People's Survey (2008)

Executive summary

Introduction

Kent County Council (KCC) and its partners are committed to hearing and acting upon the views and opinions of children and young people. In 2008, they commissioned the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) to carry out a second, independent survey of children and young people in Kent. Building on the information gathered in the 2006/07 survey, this year's survey sought to find out what children and young people think about a range of issues relating to the five *Every Child Matters* (ECM) outcomes and to hear their ideas for improving life in Kent.

Over 45,000 children and young people aged from 7-19 participated in this year's survey. Findings from the survey will be used by KCC, the Kent Children's Trust, local children's services partnerships and individual schools to inform the planning and development of services for children and young people in Kent.

Key findings

Being healthy

Children and young people in Kent have a good understanding of healthy eating and are aware of the dangers of drinking alcohol and smoking. Findings from the survey, however, suggest that children and young people are not always leading such healthy lifestyles.

- About two-thirds of primary children, around a half of secondary and a two-fifths of post-16 young people told us they eat five or more portions of fruit or vegetables on most days. Take-away food is eaten at least once or twice a week by just over a quarter of secondary and around a third of post-16 young people.
- Around a quarter of young people over the age of 16 say they get drunk at least once or twice a week and about a fifth smoke at least once or twice a week. The prevalence of regular smoking and drinking amongst secondary young people is lower, however just under ten percent of secondary young people told us that they smoke or get drunk at least once or twice a week.

Large numbers of children and young people are physically active. The majority of primary children play sports and play outside on most days. Just over a half of secondary, and around a third of post-16 young people say they exercise for an hour or more on most days.

In terms of mental and emotional health, about three-quarters of primary children say they usually feel happy and a similar proportion of young people aged 11 to 19 say they enjoy their life. About a quarter of secondary and a fifth of post-16 young people, however report feeling sad or depressed at least once or twice a week.

Most young people feel they receive enough information about healthy living, however nearly half of 11-19 year olds say they need more information and advice about relationships and about a quarter feel they need more information about sexual health.

Staying safe

Most children and young people say they know how to stay safe, and report that they feel safe travelling to and from school or college, whilst at school or college, and in the area where they live. There are, however, particular things in their local area that worry some children and young people.

- Primary children worry most about broken glass on the ground and groups of people hanging around (about two-fifths of 7-11 year olds highlighted these issues as concerns).
- People carrying knives was the most frequently identified concern for 11-19 year olds (identified as a concern by just over a third of secondary young people and a fifth of post-16 young people).

However, overall the proportion of children and young people who worry about glass on the ground, groups of young people hanging around and people carrying knives, has declined slightly since 2006/07.

Bullying is a problem for children and young people.

- Around half of primary children told us they have experienced either verbal or physical bullying at some point.
- As children get older, reports of bullying decrease. Just over a quarter of 11 - 16 year olds say they have been bullied in the last year, with verbal bullying the most common form of bullying experienced by young people in this age group.
- Children and young people, who are bullied, are most likely to be bullied at school or college. Around a third of secondary and post-16 young people who have been bullied in the last year, told us they experience bullying behaviour at school or college on most days.
- Of the post-16 young people who are being bullied, the percentage that has experienced bullying via mobile phone has increased from two per cent in 2006/07 to 12 per cent in 2008.

Enjoying and achieving

Around half of children and young people report that they enjoy going to school or college. Whilst there, they particularly enjoy seeing their friends, and say that doing practical things and going on school trips are the activities which most help

them to learn. However, just over a half of secondary and two-fifths of post-16 young people told us that the disruptive behaviour of other pupils in lesson makes it difficult for them to learn.

Overall, most children and young people feel they are doing well at school or college.

- Two-thirds of primary children think they are doing well at school but around a quarter are not sure.
- Of the 11-16 year old young people, most think they are doing 'quite well' although a fifth feel they are doing 'very well'.
- Just under two-thirds of post-16 young people feel they are doing 'quite well', compared to a small proportion (15 per cent) who say they are doing 'very well'.

Children and young people participate in a range of activities after school and at the weekends.

- After school, the most common activities for primary children include homework, activities with family members, playing with friends and watching television. Around 80 to 90 per cent of primary children engage in these activities at least some of the time. The least common activity for primary children to participate in was after school clubs.
- On weekday evenings, secondary and post-16 young people are most likely to stay at home, whilst at weekends they are more likely to go to a friend's house or just 'hang out'. Just under half of post-16 young people also spend their weekends doing paid work (a slight increase compared to 2006/07).

Around a third of secondary young people and post-16 young people told us that there are other activities that they would like to participate in. These are mostly sports-related activities such as swimming, football and dancing. Some of the barriers preventing young people from participating in these activities are cost, lack of time and activities not being available locally.

Making a positive contribution

We asked young people if they felt they had opportunities to contribute their views about what happens in their school and the area where they live.

- Around three-quarters of secondary and post-16 young people feel that they can have the opportunity to have their say about school issues, and approximately a third feel they can have their say on issues affecting the area where they live.
- However, around 60 per cent of secondary and post-16 young people told us they would not be interested in joining a school council and just over 40 per cent would not vote in a school or college election.
- Over half of 11-19 year olds feel that they can not make a difference to the area where they live or to world issues.

We also asked children and young people whether they did or would consider doing a range of community activities.

- The majority of primary children told us they always put litter in the bin, and would help other people and tell an adult if they saw someone being bullied. Three quarters of primary children recycle, and just under half have helped collect money for charity. There is an eight per cent increase in the number of primary children who say they recycle compared to 2006/07.
- Around a quarter of secondary and post-16 young people say that they already help someone who is being bullied, raise money for charity and help a neighbour. An additional two-thirds of secondary and post-16 young people would like to help someone who is being bullied, and around half would like to raise money for charity, or help a neighbour. About two-thirds of secondary and post-16 young people recycle.

Achieving economic well-being

Most children and young people know what they want to do in the future. The most popular choices are to get a job, or to continue with their education at sixth form, university or college.

- Around two-thirds of secondary and post-16 young people think they will be able to get the sort of job they want in the future and that their school or college is giving them useful skills and knowledge. However, less than half agree that they are receiving good careers advice.

Secondary and post-16 young people were asked what, if anything, might prevent them from achieving their future aspirations.

- About two-fifths of secondary young people and nearly a third of post-16 young people believe that nothing will stop them from achieving their future aspirations. However, about a quarter of secondary and over a third of post-16 young people told us that a lack of money and not having the right qualifications was likely to stop them from doing what they want to do.

We asked secondary and post-16 young people whether they feel positive about their future. About two-thirds told us that they do but around a fifth of young people are unsure

Living in Kent

Just over 80 per cent of primary children in Kent like the area they live in (a slightly higher proportion than in 2006/07). 11-19 year old young people are slightly less positive with about two-fifths reporting that their area is a good place to live and a further two-fifths think that it is an 'OK' place to live.

About the Survey

The study involved two specifically-designed questionnaire surveys: one for primary pupils (aged 7-11) and one for secondary and college students, including those participating in work-based learning (aged 11-19). Pupils in special schools and pupil referral units were also invited to participate in both surveys.

The paper-based primary questionnaire was administered in schools, at class level, by teachers. In total, completed questionnaires were received from 389 schools. Young people from 84 secondary schools and other educational provision completed the secondary online survey.

The findings are based on the responses of 33,056 children aged 7-11, 11,790 young people aged 11-16, and 685 post-16 young people.