

**Credwch
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Believe in
children**



**Barnardo's
Cymru**

**Title: Children and Young People Committee
Inquiry to review effectiveness of the
Welsh Government's policy and
guidance to promote positive
behaviour and attendance within
education provision for pupils of
compulsory school age.**

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- **This response may be made public.**
- **This response is on behalf of Barnardo's Cymru.**

Information on Barnardo's Cymru

Barnardo's Cymru has been working with children, young people and families in Wales for over 100 years and is one of the largest children's charities working in the country. We currently run 93 diverse services across Wales, working in partnership with 20 of the 22 local authorities, supporting in the region of 8,500 children, young people and families last year.

Barnardo's Cymru services in Wales include: care leavers and youth homelessness projects, young carers schemes, specialist fostering and adoption schemes, family centres and family support, parenting support, community development projects, short breaks and inclusive services for disabled children and young people, assessment and treatment for young people who exhibit sexually harmful or concerning behaviour and specialist services for children and young people at risk of, or abused through, child sexual exploitation.

Every Barnardo's Cymru service is different but each believes that every child and young person deserves the best start in life, no matter who they are, what they have done or what they have been through. We use the knowledge gained from our direct work with children to campaign for better childcare policy and to champion the rights of every child. We believe that with the right help, committed support and a little belief, even the most vulnerable children can turn their lives around.

Context to this inquiry response

This response is based upon both our service experience and our research and policy work. Issues such as bullying and behaviour in school are generic and affect many children and young people who use our services. In addition we have education specific services in different local authorities in Wales that undertake various support roles in partnership with education and schools. These vary from school counselling services, specialist behaviour support, preventing bullying and anti-discrimination programmes and support into the work place. We have also made our response evidence based, referencing various research projects and consultations in relation to specific points, and there is a bibliography, with web links where possible, at the end of our response. These research projects and consultations include young people's responses to the proposed changes to current SEN legislation, commissioned research by Cardiff Young People's Partnership exploring identity related bullying and gender based bullying, Government commissioned research regarding experiences of illegal school exclusions and briefing papers.

We have not consulted directly with children and young people in order to complete this response because we feel that there is already enough information regarding the issues that the inquiry sets out to explore.

Strategies and support in place to address behaviour and attendance

Preventing bullying behaviours work

Barnardo's Cymru has been a member of the anti bullying network Cymru since 2006. Bullying is cited by ChildLine as the second issue that children and young people ring them about and it is high on the list of issues that are dealt with by school counsellors in Wales. In much of our research and consultation work with children and young people, bullying regularly arises as an issue regardless of the topic we have set out to explore. For example, it has arisen; in work with young people in care as an issue that impacts upon educational outcomes; in unpublished work for a local authority when identifying gaps in provision for disabled children and young people; as an issue for young parents and young disabled people when discussing changes to the current SEN legislation. In these circumstances children and young people have commonly told us that in their experiences bullying frequently goes unrecognised, that teachers are often unable to stop it and that it is often very difficult for a child or young person to feel confident enough to report it to a teacher. Our two research projects (2007, 20011) regarding bullying show that there is varied practice with regards to preventing and responding to bullying behaviour. Despite the updated Welsh Government guidance in 2011 'Respecting Others', bullying being included within the Equality Objectives Action Plan, the introduction of the KIVA anti bullying programme in Wales and activities within the Anti bullying network Cymru between government, local authorities and third sector organisations, we feel that there are the following obstacles to preventing and responding to bullying:

- There is no statutory obligation upon schools or local authorities to monitor or record bullying. This results in a lack of concrete evidence regarding different types of bullying and a lack of willingness within some schools to admit that bullying exists. We feel it would be of benefit not just to have coherency in monitoring incidents of bullying, but also monitor the whole school ethos and strategies in place that reduce incidents of bullying. This could link into Estyn's monitoring of well being in schools.
- There is no national strategy with regards to anti bullying practice and few bench marks which results in little background evidence for identifying good practice and difficulties in sharing practice.

Teacher training and development

Within the illegal schools exclusion research we undertook, parents often spoke about their frustration regarding the lack of training teachers and teaching assistants seemed to have with regards to behaviour support. One of the recommendations within the report is that teachers and education support workers receive better behaviour management training, particularly in techniques of distraction, praise and reward systems, and avoidance of incidents rather than only implementing systems of punitive techniques and restraint. In consultations, young people have said that when teaching assistants are good it is because they listen and know how to support them so they are helped to maintain positive behaviour. We would suggest that behaviour management is crucial to young people with additional needs, as highlighted within the illegal school exclusions report.

We feel that teaching staff and school staff (who may not be teachers) need more components of their training that focus upon techniques for inclusion, children's rights, preventing discrimination and techniques for positive behaviour management. Whilst this may not appear to be directly relevant, positive peer relationships and a whole school ethos of inclusion can impact upon maintaining positive behaviour and serve to reduce trigger points that cause negative behaviour.

We welcome the recent changes to the teaching Masters qualification that includes elements of these topics and preventing bullying.

Use of exclusion

Our research regarding illegal school exclusions found that generally exclusions are used as a behaviour management tool. We found that some children and young people with behaviour difficulties were excluded on days that were not routine, such as school trips, plays, school photos etc., because there was not thought to be the support available to manage them. The impact of this upon children and young people cannot be underestimated and it is these non routine days that often build group identity and friendships. We also found that some schools illegally exclude in order to try and avoid stigmatising a child and are generally 'stuck' in terms of knowing how to support the individual. The issues regarding illegal exclusion are complex but often result from a child not being given the support he/she needs, examples of which include when a child's medical requirements are not being met or staff undertaking behaviour management that escalates negative behaviour rather than reduces it.

The statistics for 2010- 2011 highlight how exclusions have patterns in terms of pupils who receive exclusions. Boys are affected more than girls, certain ethnic groups receive more exclusions and there is more prevalence of exclusion for SEN pupils. We would suggest that these patterns should be explored in conjunction with effective practice to reduce exclusion. This would enable a more targeted approach to support those who are most at risk of exclusion. (Statistics examined from: <https://statswales.wales.gov.uk/Catalogue/Education-and-Skills/Schools-and-Teachers/Exclusions>)

In addition to impact upon attainment, school exclusions also have a huge impact upon family life and the emotional well-being of the pupil. Families we spoke to described to us the problems of having to be available when school repeatedly exclude a child, with some parents occasionally being forced to give up work, particularly an issue for single parents with obvious income/poverty implications. It creates problems for families with young siblings and disrupts the expected routine of family life. We found that children and young people subject to exclusions to often be withdrawn and lacking in any peer groups which is crucial for learning softer skills needed in adult life such as conversation, peer collaboration and shared problem solving.

Behaviour support services

Parents in the illegal school exclusions research and in unpublished research exploring gaps in provision for disabled children young people and their families tell us that when behaviour support services are good they are fantastic and enable accelerated learning and positive education experiences for children and young people. However, when behaviour support services do not meet the needs

of the child or do not work in partnership with parents and carers, the experience of school can become a long negative process. We would suggest that behaviour support on a day to day basis for children with additional needs is highly variable between schools and regions. Parents of disabled children often feel that their children are being punished for behaviour that is linked to their disability rather than behaviour which is negative per se.

In our view the school counselling services undertake an important role in enabling pupils facing difficulties to find support which can avoid reaching a crisis point or increasing negative behaviour. In consultations some young people have told us that they are not aware of the service or that they cannot self-refer and feel unable to talk to the referring teacher. This latter point was particularly an issue for pupils who may have a negative reputation among school staff. However, when children and young people have talked to us of their use of a school counselling service, they describe how beneficial it is to them.

Collaborative working arrangements

Our general experience is that the autonomy of schools can lead them to not be fully aware of the resources and expertise held in the third sector. However, once working with schools, communication and joint working with the third sector is seen as positive and there is an improved commitment to achieving the shared outcome of improving opportunities for individual pupils.

Further information:

Barnardo's Cymru research

Illegal school exclusions in Wales: a qualitative study- 2011

(Currently available in English language only due to website updating)

http://www.barnardos.org.uk/illegal_school_exclusions_in_wales.pdf

The complexities of girls social interactions and the impact of negative peer relationships 2011 (Gender based bullying)

English language version:

http://www.barnardos.org.uk/final_anti_bullying_report_english_v3.pdf

Welsh language version:

http://www.barnardos.org.uk/cym/final_anti_bullying_report_welsh.pdf

Briefings

2011 all Wales NGO policy group young people NEET briefing paper

English language version: [http://www.barnardos.org.uk/07e -
_not in education employment or training pobl ifanc heb fod mewn addysg
na hyfforddiant briefing paper eng.pdf](http://www.barnardos.org.uk/07e_-_not_in_education_employment_or_training_pobl_ifanc_heb_fod_mewn_addysg_na_hyfforddiant_briefing_paper_eng.pdf)

Welsh language version:

[http://www.barnardos.org.uk/cym/07c -
_pobl ifanc heb fod mewn addysg na hyfforddiant not in education employm
ent or training papur briffio cym.pdf](http://www.barnardos.org.uk/cym/07c_-_pobl_ifanc_heb_fod_mewn_addysg_na_hyfforddiant_not_in_education_employment_or_training_papur_briffio_cym.pdf)

Barnardo's Cymru relevant consultation responses

Barnardo's Cymru Written Response to Forward in partnership for children and young people with additional needs: Proposals for reform of the legislative framework for special educational needs

English language version:

[http://www.barnardos.org.uk/121019 -
barnardos cymru written response to the additional needs consultation.pdf](http://www.barnardos.org.uk/121019-_barnardos_cymru_written_response_to_the_additional_needs_consultation.pdf)

Welsh language version:

[http://www.barnardos.org.uk/cym/cym - 121019 -
barnardos cymru written response to the additional needs consultation.pdf](http://www.barnardos.org.uk/cym/cym-_121019_-_barnardos_cymru_written_response_to_the_additional_needs_consultation.pdf)

Cardiff & Vale Community Links Service user response to: Forward in partnership for children and young people with additional needs: Proposals for reform of the legislative framework for special educational needs

English language version:

[http://www.barnardos.org.uk/121019 -
_barnardos cymru cardiff and vale community links service users response to
the additional needs consultation.pdf](http://www.barnardos.org.uk/121019_-_barnardos_cymru_cardiff_and_vale_community_links_service_users_response_to_the_additional_needs_consultation.pdf)

Welsh language version:

http://www.barnardos.org.uk/cym/cym - 121019 - _barnardos_cymru_cardiff_and_vale_community_links_service_users_response_to_the_additional_needs_consultation.pdf

Newport young families service user response to: Forward in partnership for children and young people with additional needs: Proposals for reform of the legislative framework for special educational needs

English language version:

http://www.barnardos.org.uk/121019 - _barnardos_cymru_newport_young_family_group_service_user_response_to_the_additional_needs_consultation.pdf

Welsh language version:

http://www.barnardos.org.uk/cym/cym - 121019 - _barnardos_cymru_newport_young_family_group_service_user_response_to_the_additional_needs_consultation.pdf

Pembrokeshire family links – V-Linx group service user response to: Forward in partnership for children and young people with additional needs: Proposals for reform of the legislative framework for special educational needs

English language version:

http://www.barnardos.org.uk/121019 - _barnardos_cymru_pembrokeshire_family_link_service_users_response_to_the_additional_needs_consultation.pdf

Welsh language version:

http://www.barnardos.org.uk/cym/cym - 121019 - _barnardos_cymru_pembrokeshire_family_link_service_users_response_to_the_additional_needs_consultation.pdf