The 2015 Report on Children's Well-being

North Devon
Introduction

North Devon Homes (NDH) is a Registered Social Landlord being the main housing provider with 3174 homes across North Devon representing 1 in 12 households across the region. Their vision “to create communities where people want to live” recognises the role they play as a ‘community landlord’ in rebuilding and strengthening communities for the future.

North Devon’s picturesque beauty as a popular tourist destination belies the top quartile levels of poverty and hardship that exists for a significant number of the local population. Severe pockets of poverty exist in Ilfracombe, Barnstaple, Bideford, and surrounding rural communities.

This postcode poverty and deep seated place-based disadvantage for many young people living in these communities translates into:

- 70% eligibility for free school meals at primary age (excluding reception).
- 69% of households receiving some kind of benefits.
- Low educational achievement and erratic school attendance.
- Child poverty; children only having 2 sets of clothes; one for school and one other for all year round use.
- Drug and alcohol issues are prevalent within families and amongst young people.
- Low levels of well-being and poor health outcomes, unhealthy eating habits.
- Although household worklessness is now the lowest on record\(^1\) there still remains high levels of unemployment with some families having 3 generations with no paid income in the home.
- Fuel poverty and food poverty is an increasing issue.
- Levels of debt and in-work debt is prevalent (nationally two thirds of people in in-work poverty are in families containing children).\(^2\)
- Families with no resident positive male role model.

It is well documented that families in a debt trap and/or financial trap suffer more domestic strife, abuse, violence within the home\(^3\), often leaving children and young people in these families forgotten and left to cope on their own.

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\(^1\) JRF Monitoring poverty & social exclusion 2015

\(^2\) JRF Monitoring poverty & social exclusion 2015
NDH work with young people in ‘Area Based Initiatives’ (ABI) focusing ‘on the development of trust, increased educational attainment, young people’s connection with themselves and the wider community, and the development of health and wellbeing’.  

Recognising that ‘breaking the link between disadvantage and poor physical and mental health is crucial to narrowing the health gap and maximising opportunities for children and young people and the generations that follow’ has led to innovative partnership working with the NHS Northern Devon Healthcare Trust.

‘Currently 23.25% of children in Torridge, and 22.45% of children in North Devon live in poverty’

Current Lottery funding has enabled NDH to tackle locally identified and often hidden or unrecognised issues young people are seeking support with, for example;

- Self harming
- Low resilience and coping mechanisms
- Increasing loneliness and isolation amongst young people
- Anger management issues
- Lack of life skills to make friends and sustain friendships
- Low sense of self, self-confidence and self esteem
- Bullying
- Child poverty related issues

NDH have been working with upwards of 400 young people since 2009, which has led to a more formal participatory evaluation approach to evidence impact on current work aimed to increase resilience and coping mechanisms.

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3 Children’s Society The Debt Trap: Exposing the impact of problem debt on children

4 University of St Mark & St John, Plymouth: Evaluation of the Starfish NDH Project (2012 – 2015)

5 Children and Young People’s Health Outcomes Forum – Report of the Public Health and Prevention Sub-Group

6 Compilation of child poverty indicators update October 2014

7 University of St Mark & St John, Plymouth: Dr Susan Cooper Transformative Evaluation
Executive summary

The work of The Children’s Society encouraged North Devon Homes (NDH) to commission a survey for the region to support an existing Big Lottery funded Young People’s initiative. As part of the working partnership the initiative has developed this well-being survey, which has been jointly funded by the Police and Crime Commissioner for Devon and Cornwall.

The North Devon assessment of children’s well-being provides a unique insight into the lives of children and young people aged 8 to 15 living in North Devon. The assessment uses an online survey developed by The Children’s Society that enables young people to anonymously reflect on key aspects of their lives and provide an overview of subjective well-being across the area. Over 740 children and young people in two primary schools and two secondary schools participated in the survey. Following the survey more than 230 children and young people took part in consultations that sought to amplify the survey findings and provide illustrations of what young people consider to be the key challenges they face as well as what they find helpful. The survey questions and the consultation structure can be found in appendix one.

The Children’s Society has conducted an annual survey of subjective well-being on a national basis since 2006 and consequently is able to compare local area assessments with a national average. The annual survey is published each autumn as The Good Childhood Report (1) and the 2015 report includes comparisons on an international level as well as the national reflections. Since 2012 the local area assessments have been delivered in a wide range of rural, urban, coastal and inner city areas providing data that shows both common trends and local variations in well-being. The North Devon assessment can be seen in the context of the national picture but also alongside the results of assessments in other areas.

The results for North Devon indicate both positive responses and some real concerns.

Key findings

The results of the survey indicate that children of primary age are as happy as the national average for most aspects of their lives and have a life satisfaction that is equal to the national average. Although secondary age young people are also equal to the national average in respect of life satisfaction they drop below the national average for most other domains and especially with school experience.

Higher than average levels of well-being for primary age children are not being sustained into adolescence and in some areas of life are falling below what is average across the country. This is particularly noticeable when looking at the experiences of boys and girls. This indicates a challenge in the transition from primary to secondary school.

(Secondary school) is hard to make more friends, I think I will not make friends with older people, girl year 5 (age 9/10)

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8 Evaluation of the NDH Starfish Project (2012 – 2015), Dr Susan Cooper, University of St Mark & St John, Plymouth
I don’t really like secondary school because I get picked on and bullied and the teachers don’t do much, year 9 girl (age 13/14)

At primary age boys and girls express similar levels of happiness with their lives and girls in many areas have higher levels of happiness than boys. At secondary age that trend reverses and girls become less happy than boys in most areas of life. This change in happiness is most significant in how girls feel about school and their appearance. This indicates an emerging gender imbalance amongst teenagers. Particularly for girls the issue is about the way boys relate to them.

When you get to secondary school you are almost divided. Cool kids and normal people. Words like slut are aimed at girls which is so sexist. People judge you on size not on your personality. It makes you feel alone and horrible about yourself, year 8 girl (age 12/13)

Boys call us slags and sluts without knowing what it even means. It started to happen in year 7, year 8 girl

It’s just a little bitta banta, year 8 boy (age 12/13)

The responses about the local area suggest that primary age children have a higher than average appreciation of the facilities on offer. Typical for more rural areas all ages would prefer more shops although the nature of those shops changed with age, with young people being less satisfied with the kind of shops that please younger children.

I like that there are loads of shops like Tesco’s, year 5 (age 9/10)

We need like Starbucks and other clothes stores, year 10 (age 14/15)

Primary and secondary age children both had similar responses to how they felt about safety in their neighbourhood and shared similar anxieties about crime. For all age groups their most worrying thought about crime was the risk that a stranger might follow them and their least worrying thought was that someone might steal their bicycle. Although the consultations produced little evidence to indicate that actual incidents of crime were common in children’s experience, for primary age children less crime in their area was a high priority. The indications are that a fear of crime is a real issue for young children. How children interpret the behaviors of adults also affected their sense of safety and fears about crime with some concerns relating to the rural experience.

I don’t like pochers. Boy year 5

My next door neighbour is a bit of a stalker because everytime I go outside he stares at me sometimes he comes outside and watches my every move, girl year 6 (age 10/11)

I don’t like ******** because if he sees you he threatens you with his shotgun and it scares me, boy year 6

When you like look on the news there is quite a lot of crime, like there was people went to court yesterday, there was like a beating up last year, there was the church safe thing where they opened it up, it’s not as bad as other places where there’s killings but there is crime, girl year 8 (age 12/13)
The results reflect trends in North Devon and general views that most children and young people share and it should be recognised that for some children their well-being is less than the average due to their individual circumstances. But when considering the overall results what stands out is the diminishing well-being of girls as they move into their adolescence and in particular their unhappiness about their appearance. There is a risk that this is seen as a natural and normal response to growing up but that would be a false reading of the results for two reasons.

- The international well-being study \(^{(2)}\) reveals a wide disparity between countries in relation to how girls feel about their appearance. The results for England are near the bottom of the table suggesting that the way girls feel about themselves is due to cultural issues and not a factor of adolescence

- The local well-being assessments conducted by The Children’s Society also reveal wide variations in how girls feel about their appearance. The results for the London borough of Lewisham, for example, revealed that girls in that area had slightly higher than average well-being over their appearance

The comments and observations from girls in the North Devon assessment suggest that what troubles them most is the way boys start to use words and language of a sexist and sexual nature and fail to recognise the impact it has. The fact that it becomes common and largely unchallenged does not make it acceptable or even normal, but it does make it hard for girls to feel that it will be any different.

*As girls we think we just have to put up with this, like it’s life. We are so scared to stand up because we are afraid of being bullied or made fun of. It needs to stop, year 8 girl*

Challenging sexist and sexually overt language and attitudes needs to become a priority. It needs to be as common and expected as challenging racist language and attitudes if girls in North Devon are to grow up holding on to the well-being they enjoy as children.


1. Details about the survey and consultation work

The work with children was conducted in two distinct stages. The first involved an online survey administered through participating schools. The second stage involved a series of face to face consultations with children and young people.

The survey used by The Children’s Society has been created in partnership with the University of York and Prof Jonathon Bradshaw. It was started in 2006 as a comprehensive consultation with young people to ascertain their own measures of a good life and well-being and was subsequently developed with the University of York into an online survey.

The survey covers all of the aspects of children’s lives that are included in The Children’s Society’s Good Childhood Index:

- Feelings about life overall
- Self (appearance)
- Health
- Family relationships
- Friendships
- Home
- School
- Local area
- Money and possessions
- Time use
- Choice and autonomy
- The future

All these topics have been found to be important aspects of how children view, and feel about, their lives. The survey questions are found as an appendix to this report as is the consultation format.

The survey also asked children for information about their age, gender, ethnicity, abilities and living situation. Not all surveys will have been completed fully and where age and gender questions were unanswered those responses have been left out of the first graph showing age and gender profiles. But as surveys were completed in either primary or secondary schools it is possible to produce most results based on primary and secondary age responses.

Most of the children who took part in the survey were aged between 11 and 13. Consequently the consultations in schools were conducted mostly with the older children in primary schools (year 6) and the younger children in secondary schools (years 7, 8 and 9)

Figure 1: Age and gender of participating children

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Recruitment and administration

Two junior schools in Barnstaple and Tiverton took part in the survey along with two secondary schools in Barnstaple and Ilfracombe. The Children’s Society carried out face-to-face consultations with 230 children and young people in all of the participating schools as well as a youth club in Ilfracombe and a summer scheme in Barnstaple.

The survey was administered online by The Children’s Society. Children and young people were able to access and respond to a secure online questionnaire which varied according to school year to ensure that the content of the questions was age-appropriate. The survey was conducted in accordance with an ethical protocol approved by The Children’s Society’s research ethics panel, consisting of internal and external experts. Data cleaning and statistical analysis of the questionnaire has been conducted by staff in The Children’s Society’s in-house research team.

Profile of the young people taking part in the survey

Children completing the survey were asked to say whether they considered themselves as disabled amongst other defining circumstances. Their responses are based on what they understand about their home circumstances. As such they may differ from existing statistics for the numbers of children receiving free school meals or with a statement for special educational needs.

The consultations with children in young people in schools did not provide an opportunity for children to talk about these definitions without risk of exposing their circumstances to their peers. Consequently they were not explored and how children have described themselves and their circumstances is without further commentary. But it is possible to consider whether being a
child in receipt of free school meals has made a difference to how children report on their happiness and life satisfaction. The results of that analysis are shown later in this report when considering life satisfaction responses.

Table 1: Other information on participating primary age children who said:

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>They were Disabled</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had difficulties with learning</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They were receiving free school meals</td>
<td>35%</td>
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<tr>
<td>They were living in households with no adults in a paid job</td>
<td>8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>They look after someone because they are sick, disabled or elderly</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
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Table 2: Other information on participating secondary age children who said:

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>They were disabled</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had difficulties with learning</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They were receiving free school meals</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They were living in households with no adults in a paid job</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They look after someone because they are sick, disabled or elderly</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Presentation of findings

The Good Childhood index is a representation of how children have answered “how happy are you with ….” The results for the whole sample in North Devon show that in half of the domains of life the levels of happiness for children and young people are at least equal to the national average.

Figure 2: Happiness with different aspects of life, combined ages

The differences appear as children get older and as some aspects of life become more challenging and less satisfying. The combined results for all ages are buoyed by the generally positive responses from children of primary age. The lines in the following tables that are circled are those that show statistically significant differences.
There are some aspects of life where primary age children are more than equal to the national average particularly in how they feel about their future. But they also show some difference in terms of their thoughts about what they have and their appearance.
In terms of significant difference it is how children feel about their appearance where the greatest change takes place. At primary age children are higher than the national average with their happiness with their appearance and then at secondary age they drop to below the national average. The difference is more pronounced when the responses are separated into boys and girls.
At primary age girls had slightly higher levels of satisfaction with their appearance than boys with a score of 8.6 compared to 8.0 for boys. This also shows how significant the movement is for girls from primary to secondary. Consequently this issue became a main focus for the consultation phase and boys and girls were given opportunities to reflect on these results and give their own views on the issue. In general, girls had a lot more to say than boys and part of what they had to say was a reflection of how boys behaved and acted toward them.

Comments on my size stuff like anorexic and skinny midget make me feel small and useless. Also when people say it as a joke they don’t realise I actually take it to heart and then I feel like a weird emotional person and a creep, year 8 girl

It’s just a little bitta banta, year 8 boy

Boys say to girls that they are fat, year 8 girl
People can be racist, sexual and are just plain insecure. As girls we think we just have to put up with this, like it’s life. We are so scared to stand up because we afraid of being bullied or made fun of. It needs to stop, year 8 girl

Girls are more self-conscious when they go to high school because of the expectations, boys and girls talking about you, magazines with fit girls in it then look at me and us. Boys will think you should be perfect or get called a fat slag, year 8 girl

Why are girls more mean sometimes than boys, year 8 boy.

These comments from girls and boys although illustrative of the discussions are also an articulate summary of what was said. In general boys did not fully appreciate or recognise that their comments and observations made of girls was in any way a contributor to how girls actually felt about themselves.

It could be seen as part of growing up that girls become more concerned and worried about their appearance. But The Children’s Society is part of an international study into well-being where comparable data between participating countries allows for a better understanding of whether these issues are a normal part of adolescence. The study only uses comparable data from nationally administered surveys to ensure that the same issues are being measured. From this study the UK shows a poor response from young people to the question about body satisfaction. The table shows how young people in the UK compare to their peers in the other countries when asked to comment on how satisfied they are with their appearance.

Only South Korea has a poorer response. Worrying about how you look might be something that many young people worry about but cannot be seen as simply a natural part of adolescence. The Children’s Society survey work across the country shows regional variations in levels of low satisfaction amongst teenage girls regarding their appearance and being unhappy with how you look or how others comment on your looks is not to be confused with caring about your appearance. Girls in North Devon are more unhappy about their appearance than the national average and are unhappy with the comments and observations they receive.

About the consultation phase

Following the completion of the survey by over 740 children, The Children’s Society consulted with 230 children and young people face-to-face on the key issues that emerged from initial analysis of the survey. The aim was to explore and illustrate with children’s own words some of the key issues raised by the survey, and specifically the following topics:

- School experience
- Local area, with a focus on safety and crime
- Appearance and peer relationships

The findings of the survey gave direction to the consultation work and the focus on appearance issues stems from the significant change in how girls reported their happiness with this issue from primary age to secondary age. The focus on school was also due to the shift in levels of happiness from primary to secondary. How children feel about their local area is a constant theme and ensures that the consultations bring out views not limited to school life or relationships but give a broader view of children’s lives. The questions used and format for the consultations is found as an appendix to this report.

The school consultations involved classes in year groups 5 to 10. We used a variety of class activities that allowed children and young people to reflect on the survey findings, consider their own responses and discuss them with their peers. We recorded some of their comments and they provided written comments through some of the activities.

Throughout this report, we present these written and verbal comments from children and young people from the consultation alongside the main themes of the survey to which they relate.

The quotes that come from children and young people are there to illustrate and sometimes amplify the survey results and their anonymity is maintained. There are some quotes that are too identifying to be used and during the consultations there were some circumstances where children made comments that were drawn to the attention of staff within the setting. To maintain anonymity and confidentiality children were not asked to put their names on any written comments and some quotes are not reported as they may be too identifiable.
2. Life as a whole

North Devon is an area that many adults choose to live in and it offers a style of life that appeals to many. For children and young people living in the area also has an appeal and their overall satisfaction in life is equal to the national average.

Figure 7: Primary age life satisfaction scores

![Figure 7: Primary age life satisfaction scores](image)

Figure 8: Secondary age life satisfaction scores

![Figure 8: Secondary age life satisfaction scores](image)
Although in certain areas of life young people show signs of being less happy than the national average there are enough aspects of their lives where they equal to the average to give them average scores overall. There are reasons to be cheerful.

*I am a bit popular and life is awesome, year 6 boy*

*I love dogs and cats and guinea pigs and ferrets. I love horses. I love bunnies. I like sports. I like flowers. I like all my friends. I like the park. Year 5 boy*

*I've lived here all my life, I wouldn't live anywhere else. Year 8*

*I like where I live cos I live in Slade, and where I used to live in London it's much like where it is you can just walk out and see kids and they are on their bikes and there's a park and a community centre and there's lot's of things going on at the community centre and it's a nice sort of area, year 8 girl*

There is some suggestion from the survey results that for young people of secondary school age they are not quite as happy with their family life as the national average. Because family issues are very personal and the consultations are not conducted in private we choose not to consult on issues to do with family. What we do know from our national research is that family composition does not have as big an impact on well-being as family relationships. How people within a family relate to each other matters more than who is in the family when it comes to children’s own sense of well-being.

Despite the fact that North Devon is a coastal area with numerous beaches and resorts that attract many visitors there was very little reference from children and young people about going to the beach. The consultations did give space for children and young people to highlight the advantages of being in close proximity to beaches and seaside resorts but it was rarely mentioned.

From our national research we know that poverty and deprivation does have an impact on well-being and how satisfied children are with their lives. What seems to have the greatest influence though is whether children and young people feel as though they belong and can fully participate in life in a way that is equal to their peers. Having the same or appearing to have the same as your peers is a key influence on well-being and where children feel they have significantly less than their peers then their well-being is lower than average, but if they have significantly more than their peers it also has an adverse effect on their well-being.

As previously mentioned, although we were unable to consult with children on issues of poverty it is possible to look at the survey results for children who said they received free school meals. The results suggest that there is little difference between those on free school meals and those who are not, in respect of life satisfaction and well-being.
The small differences in well-being scores are not significantly different and although the life satisfaction scores do show a greater difference it is in response to the question about how happy children are with life. There is scope for further exploration on this theme. But the results
suggest that in general children and young people are feeling as though they have similar levels of ‘things’ and access to resources to each other. In some cases this might be a reflection of shared limitations rather than unequal access as many primary age children referred to parks and open spaces as the good things about where they lived.

3. **Feelings about different aspects of life**

As already detailed there are some areas of life that children and young people in North Devon are less happy with than the national average and these were the key areas followed up in the consultation phase. The methods used in consultations allowed young people in secondary school to discuss the themes but also to have the opportunity to write more personal comments down that could be put in envelopes to maintain their confidentiality.

**Appearance**

The fact that the survey suggested girls were increasingly worried about appearance issues was not a surprise to the girls and they engaged in the consultation activities with energy and with a lot to say. One activity asked young people to detail words that were either kind or unkind and words that were complimentary or brought people down. This activity normally generates a list of swear words as well as some words that need explanation from young people and it was no different in North Devon.

Unkind words both boys and girls thought were directed at girls

*Slut, cheap, slag, whore, ugly, fat, Slapper, You’re wearing too much makeup. You’re not wearing enough makeup. You’re skirts too short. You’re skirts too long. You’re too fat. You’re too skinny”*

Unkind words both boys and girls thought were directed at boys

*Your mum, Knob head, bastard, wanker, Player, is what they say if you go out with lots of people, your sister is a cunt, from a bully*

In general the insults and unkind words directed at girls had a sexual or appearance tone to them with the overall impression that any criticism about a girl’s body and image was possible. This tied in with some of the comments from the girls that it didn’t matter what they looked like or how they dressed as they would still be criticized or insulted.

Girls were less convinced that the media, models and social media contributed to low feelings about their appearance although some comments did talk about images in magazines. Girls were also aware that negative comments did not only come from boys but that girls themselves made critical observations of each other. Sometimes these comments were more hurtful than those from boys.

*Girls are more self-conscious because of social media, models, magazines, expectations, names and how you are always worried about what people think and how people have expectations on how the “perfect” girl should look like year 8 girl*

*Girls are generally more self-conscious about their appearance as they get older this is because of models on mags and names. The name that really gets to me is “fat” every time someone calls me it I cry, year 8 girl*
I think some people don’t think about what they are saying and think it’s just a joke but it actually makes you sad. My best friends are really nice but can joke around but don’t know it’s annoying year 8 girl

For the boys the insults and unkind words were less about their appearance or even about them, but rather they were insults about female members of their family or just swear words. This is an issue repeated in other similar projects across the country and by no means is it unique to North Devon. It is also more of an experience in secondary school and much less of a feature in primary school. But school experience was something that all children and young people had something to say about.

School

Primary school age children had levels of happiness with school broadly in line with the national average. Children were asked to score themselves between 0-10 on how happy they were with specific aspects of school life.

**Figure 11: Primary results for happiness with different aspects of school**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>National</th>
<th>This area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Safety at school</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schoolwork</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships with other young people</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilities</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listened to at school</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships with teachers</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For young people at secondary school levels of happiness were not as close to the national average.

**Figure 12: Secondary results for happiness with different aspects of school**

Across all areas of school life young people in secondary schools report a lower level of satisfaction than the national average and indicate a drop in satisfaction from primary school experience. It is normally anticipated that there is a drop in satisfaction and happiness from primary school to secondary school but the difference in North Devon is greater than might normally be expected.

The way in which boys and girls feel about school is also something that changes in the move from primary to secondary school. At secondary school the girls report lower levels of satisfaction than boys in all aspects of school life, whereas at primary school girls have higher levels of satisfaction than boys in almost all areas.
Figure 13: Secondary age gender differences in happiness with different aspects of school

![Graph showing secondary age gender differences in happiness with different aspects of school.](image)

Mean scores (out of 10)

- Safety at school: Female 6.7, Male 7.0
- Schoolwork: Female 6.7, Male 6.8
- Relationships with other young people: Female 6.8, Male 6.9
- Facilities: Female 6.2, Male 6.4
- Listened to at school: Female 5.9, Male 6.1
- Relationships with teachers: Female 6.0, Male 6.1

Figure 14: Primary age results in happiness with different aspects of school by gender

![Graph showing primary age results in happiness with different aspects of school by gender.](image)

Mean scores (out of 10)

- Safety at school: Female 9.0, Male 7.3
- Schoolwork: Female 7.5, Male 7.8
- Relationships with other young people: Female 8.0, Male 7.5
- Facilities: Female 8.2, Male 6.8
- Listened to at school: Female 7.7, Male 7.1
- Relationships with teachers: Female 8.6, Male 6.9
It should be noted that direct comparisons cannot be made as it is not the same children measuring their happiness with primary and secondary school life. But it does suggest that the transition for girls is more of a challenge than for boys as their high level of happiness is not sustained. In particular the biggest difference is in how satisfied girls are with their sense of safety in school.

From the consultations

In schools children and young people were given space to talk about their school experiences and to offer some thoughts about what they liked or found a challenge at school. The consultations in the youth club and summer scheme also gave space for children and young people to comment on their school experiences. In primary schools the consultation was based around written comments children could make about who was a star for them in school, what made school feel like a sunny or cloudy day and what they loved most about school. The children had shapes to write on that corresponded with those themes.

Primary school

What made school feel like a sunny day?

*Doing great work, having a great fun day with my friends. Doing English because it’s my favourite subject, girl year 6*

*Writing stories because I love writing stories it makes me feel safe, girl year 6*

*I love doing PE, boy year 6*

*It’s a lovely school. When I go to high school I’ll be so sad cause I’ll miss this school. I love all my subjects at school, girl year 6*

*I like golden play on Friday. I like PE. I like football, boy year 5*

*I like literacy, girl year 5*

What makes school feel like a cloudy day?

*People be mean to me and when you tell some to stop and they don’t do it, girl year 5*

*I don’t like school because I get bullied, boy year 5*

*I don’t like maths and hate Spanish, girl year 5*

*Some people are horrible, stop our learning. I mean by calling out and not doing what they’re told, girl year 6*

*When my friends fight, that’s the time my heart breaks, girl year 6*

*Lessons because I like to chillax at home, boy year 6*

*A little bit too much oil in the lasagne for school dinners, girl year 6*
Who feels like a star at school?

I care about my friends, boy year 5

I like Mr H my teacher and Mr C my teaching assistant at school. Girl year 5

My best Friend, boy year 5

What you love most about school?

Hanging out with my friends, we have the best teacher in the world, girl year 6

Class mates because they make me smile, PE is best, girl year 6

I love school because I have lots of friends and I love this school. girl year 6

Drama club, trim trail, PE Art tech, playtime, plays, music, learning new languages, boy year 6

I like playing with my best friend… My favourite lessons are literacy and art. I like Mrs XXX, Mrs XXXX and my best friend, boy year 6

Summary of primary school comments

Children in the primary schools were generally positive about their time at school. Of course there were children who found school a challenge or something they would rather not have to do. But where children were positive they were most positive about their relationships with each other and with staff, and many of their comments reflect this

Secondary school observations and comments

The consultations with secondary age pupils focused on two key themes. The first was on how safe they felt in school and the second was on their school facilities. The activities were a combination of open comments that were displayed and more private comments that could be placed in an envelope. School facilities were explained as anything from equipment through to food, toilets and classrooms. Young people were asked to record comments on the basis of what they liked about their school facilities and what they would change. Participating schools had specific responses that were pertinent to buildings or renovations in the school and inevitably some comments are a reflection of individual school issues. But there were common themes across both schools and all young people regarding facilities they wanted to see improved.

Toilets

Toilets are old and smell a lot – boy year 8

Need new toilet blocks and new changing rooms – boy year 8
**Toilets**

Toilets because the chain doesn’t work – girl year 8

Changing rooms and toilets smell and they have loads of writing on. Sometimes rude things… girl year 8

I would improve the toilets that haven’t been redone because they aren’t very nice, girl year 8

Toilets! Must be improved, most of them don’t have doors on them, girl year 8

Toilets because they are all dull and ripped about, boy year 8

It is not unusual to hear complaints from young people in secondary schools about toilets and the significance of having clean, secure and private toilets is not seen by young people as a trivial issue.

**Food**

The comments about food in school were a mix of things that young people appreciated and things they wanted to see changed.

The food and drink can be really expensive girl year 8

To improve the hygiene in the cafeteria, I have found hairs in the food and dirty plates, year 8 girl

I think that the food is good but they don’t have many choices for healthy food. – girl year 8

Lots of food to choose from – boy year 8

Seagulls always steal our food. The bins fall over outside. The price of food is too much, girl year 8

**Staff and teachers**

Unsurprisingly the relationships with teachers and staff in school are also an area of school life that young people have a lot to comment on, and how rules are enforced and bullying dealt with was a key issue.

Teachers can be mean, girl year 8

Lots of the teachers are scary, boy year 8

Some of the teachers don’t listen (especially the ones that are meant to)

I hate the way school is supposed to be bullying free yet all they do to stop it is tell them oh it’s not nice

I don’t really like secondary school because I get picked on and bullied and the teachers don’t do much, year 9 girl

I don’t like that you tell a teacher something important and they say they’ll do something about it and stop it but it just gets worse, girl year 8
The move from primary to secondary school brings many changes and new opportunities but it also creates a set of different relationships with staff. In primary school children can develop close relationships with one or two staff members and so we often see comments from children in primary school that reflect those close ties to one person. In secondary schools young people adjust to having a greater number of teachers and staff to relate to, who in turn have many more pupils to know and teach. For some children in primary school the move up to secondary school is something that worries them.

(secondary school) is hard to make more friends, I think I will not make friends with older people, girl year 5

I am worried about going to secondary school because I might not be smart enough, boy year 5

I’ve heard you get bad detentions. I think the work will be hard, girl year 5

School in summary

There is no doubt that experience at school makes a big difference to children’s well-being and it is an important and fundamental aspect of their lives. This survey suggests that for children in North Devon the transition from primary to secondary school is a little more challenging than the average experience. There may not be much that can be done about seagulls stealing food or the varying expectations of school food. But ensuring that young people are listened to when they raise concerns and providing an effective and trusted reaction to bullying concerns should be a priority if well-being is to be improved. Again, the concern should mostly be for the girls who are less happy than the boys.

4. The local area

In the survey children and young people are asked to respond to a series of questions about their local area. They are asked to think about the area where they live rather than the area where they go to school. In the consultation phase children and young people were asked to comment again on the area where they lived. In those consultations children and young people thought of their area as the street or place where they lived and the places they could get to by themselves. For most primary age children that resulted in them commenting mostly about their street and immediate neighbourhood whereas older children and young people commented as much on their local town.

The questions asked about the local area were questions relating to local adults and whether they were seen as friendly, fair people who listened. There were also questions about places too, a sense of safety and freedom for children their age and general views about the area. In a separate set of questions children and young people were asked to prioritise from a list of possibilities the things they thought would improve their area the most. The responses are different according to age and gender and so are presented according to primary age responses and then secondary age responses.
This age group has significantly higher than average levels of happiness with their area in general and with the facilities they have access to. But they are a little below the average for how safe they feel and how they feel about the adults in their area.

In the survey children are given a list of things they would like to see improved in their area. From that list they are asked to choose the three most important to them giving an overall impression of the priorities children have for improvements in their local area. This can also be compared to the national data that shows the most common priorities for children of that age group. The improvements primary age children in North Devon want to see in their local area broadly match their responses to questions about their happiness with different aspects of their area. Unlike the national average they place less emphasis on better facilities but rather put a heavier emphasis on less traffic, safety and crime and friendlier adults. Having more shops is also an improvement they would like to see. Consequently those were the issues that formed the basis of consultations with children.
Figure 16: Primary age priorities for improving the area

It is worth noting that despite the rural nature of North Devon that primary age children placed a greater emphasis on improving safety in their area and reducing crime than the national
average. They also placed a much higher emphasis on having friendlier adults in their community.

From the consultations

The activities used in consultation involved both written activities and an interactive activity where children moved around the room according to how strongly they agreed or disagreed about certain statements. One written activity was specifically about adults in the area where children wrote on gingerbread shapes their description of local adults who were friendly and those that were not.

When children thought about what they liked about their local area their responses related mostly to parks and open space, people and local facilities.

What primary age children like

I've got three great parks near. Really close neighbours. Lovely home and next door woods. Near shop and big field. Lots of cute cats that are around, girl year 6

I like the big fields and a little park because when I take my my dog for a walk I can run him in the fields. I also find the Tesco Express helpful because when my Mum needs something I can go and get it for her. I really like the neighbours because they can look after our pets when we go on holiday, girl year 6

I like the youth centre because it's a nice place for children to go to. I like Exe Park because I can meet my friends there. I like Tesco Express because it's a nice little close shop to go to, boy year 6

There's quite a lot of grass to play on, boy year 6

Peaceful street, mainly elderly

I like the kids because they are nice to me and I have 3 parks near where I like called co-op park, frankmarsh park and gorwell park. I like my friends because they play with me. I like the parks because they have all got monkey bars and I like most of my nabers, girl year 5

I like living here because I have a park were I lived and a shop. The park is fun and it have swings and monkey bars and it's called Co-op park, girl year 6

Being able to access local parks was something children valued and their comments about those parks were broadly positive. As noted previously there were virtually no comments from children about going to beaches or the seaside in general. Local shops that they appreciated tended to be food shops and convenience stores and the adults they liked were neighbours.

In terms of what they didn't like their responses were mostly about people, traffic and dog mess and the smells of the countryside.

What primary age children didn't like

I don't like where I live because lots of people swear and are horrible and don't treat you in a nice way, boy year 6
Boys hurt me (my feelings). One of the parks are full of dog poop. Lots of cars go fast and nearly hit me. some people make fun of me or chase me around, girl year 6

Crazed drivers (finger signs are used) smells like poo, boy year 6

My neighbours are cows, fields and open toilets for animals, girl year 6

My neighbours have really loud music. The corner house always is creepy at night because people died in the house, year 6 girl

I live in a place where a lot of people are mean, year 6 boy

I don't like pochers, boy year 5

I just absolutely don't like it, it’s so small and horrible and there’s not nice people around, year 6 girl

In my opinion there aren't enough sweet shops

It’s hard to find a parking space. There’s a big bird near my house. There’s cat poo everywhere on my garden but I have a cat myself, girl year 6

There were some comments from children about their neighbours that were too identifiable to include but there were a number of comments from children indicating they were not only unhappy about their neighbours but they also were a little fearful. Their thoughts about unfriendly adults unravelled this a little more and most children of primary age struggled to identify many adults in their community outside of their family. There are some comments from children that suggest they are aware of words and concerns about adults without it necessarily being a problem. During class sessions any comment made by a child that sounded concerning was checked up by the class teacher and that did reveal one or two situations that needed following up.

Primary age children’s views on neighbours and local adults

My next door neighbour is a bit of a stalker because everytime I go outside he stares at me sometimes he comes outside and watches my every move, girl year 6

I don't know any adults near, girl year 6

I don't like ******** because if he sees you he threatens you with his shotgun and it scares me, boy year 6

and the really rich people down the lane are always miserable or wanting more and more, year 6 girl

My neighbours are super nasty, if I ride my bike near her car, boy year 6

My neighbour because he always takes our parking space, boy year 6

My old naibour used to shout at me for no reason. The mangor of co-op is unfriendly, girl year 5

My next door neighbour is kind and she give us sweets, year 6 boy

All my neighbours are nice to me, girl year 6
For children in this age group the neighbours and adults in their street and neighbourhood hold a particular significance because the space around their house is their play space. If they are outdoors they are not likely to be going far and walking to and from school exposes them to daily contact with other adults in the street. Where those relationships are good children value and appreciate them but they are also concerned about grumpy adults and the perceived risk that some of them pose to their sense of safety. Aside from concerns about traffic and speeding cars children’s thoughts about safety in their community were sometimes unfounded but they were still concerns.

Overall the consultations suggested that children are broadly satisfied with the facilities they can use especially those that are free but that their relationships with neighbours determines how safe they feel in their neighbourhood.

**Figure 17: Secondary age responses to the local area**

As with the primary age children, young people in North Devon have a higher than average level of satisfaction with their local area except for their relationships with adults. Their positive responses are not as high as the primary age children but their feelings of safety and freedom are a little higher than the average. When looking at their areas of priority for improving their local area this pattern is continued and there are some similarities with the priorities expressed by primary age children. But they are less concerned about improving safety and crime.
As with primary age children it is friendlier adults and more shops that are key priorities although the emphasis on shops has become more pronounced. Concerns about traffic, crime and safety are less of an issue and more youth facilities fall way below the priority found in the national average. Adults, shops and local facilities became the focus of consultations with...
young people as well as thoughts about being safe. The responses to questions about the local area did have different responses according to gender. Boys were happier than girls in all aspects and particularly in relation to safety.

**Figure 19: Secondary age responses to improving local area according to gender**

As with the issue of school, girls at secondary age are less happy than boys with their local area whereas at primary age they are happier than boys.

**Figure 20: Primary age responses for improving the local area**
From the consultations

As with primary age children, secondary age young people were involved in activities that provided some opportunity to write their comments and other opportunities to be part of interactive activities that were recorded. The questions put to young people were about what they liked or disliked about their local area as well as how safe they felt when walking alone. There was a more varied response from young people about their views of the local area compared to younger children and different tastes and expectations were coming into play.

What young people liked about their local area

I have the woods 10 seconds up the hill and I’m about a minute away from the shops, girl year 8

I like where I live cos it’s near the high street, year 8 boy

I like my local area because I know everyone in my local area, year 8

I like living here because we are lucky to be living near so many beaches rather than living in a city. Year 8 girl

got a Lidl, boy year 8

There were one or two references to beaches and being part of a coastal area in these activities although most of those comments came from young people living in Ilfracombe. There were young people who had moved into the area who had mixed views on the merits of living in North Devon.

What young people didn’t like about their local area

I live near Buddies (a club) so I’m always hearing stuff from down there and it’s really annoying but I can easily access town from where I am, girl year 8

I don’t like it cos I live across the road from a crazy person, literally crazy, boy year 8

I don’t like Ilfracombe because I only like extremely busy and really big places with major companies like Exeter or London, year 8

I don’t like living here because the weather is depressing and close family live in Dorset, girl year 8

I don’t really like my road that much because we get tons of drunk people at night, year 8 boy

I don’t like living there isn’t many shops.

In many ways young people in the area are similar to younger children in that they appreciate some of the spaces and places to go that are free and accessible. But perhaps understandably as they grow older they would like more of the kind of clothes shops and other shops that young people relate to. The issue of neighbours remains a concerning one for young people as it is the people around them that they struggle with more than strangers or anonymous adults.
5. Safety and crime

The survey results show that in comparison to the national average primary age children place a higher emphasis on seeing less crime in their area and feeling safer. That priority is not shared by older children in the survey although girls do become less happy than boys with their feelings about safety.

In the survey children and young people were asked a question about crime and whether they were worried about crime that might affect them. Children could tick more than one box for issues that they were worried about. Their responses are in order of frequency.

Figure 21: Primary age responses to the question, are you worried about any of these things happening to you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your bicycle being stolen</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any other type of theft</td>
<td>32%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Your things being damaged, broken or ruined by someone else on purpose</td>
<td>43%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Robbery (being threatened/ hurt by someone who is stealing or trying to steal your possessions)</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pick pocketing (things being stolen from your pocket or bad without you knowing at the time)</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other type of crime not mentioned</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being followed by a stranger</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Someone calling you hurtful names</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Someone threatening to hurt you</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assault (being kicked, punched, pushed, slapped, hit on purpose)</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being shouted at in the street (which makes you feel uncomfortable)</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being called hurtful names</td>
<td>50%</td>
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</table>
The response shows that the most common worry that children of primary age have is being followed by a stranger and their least common worry is about having something stolen from them. In many ways this is typical, as children in that age group are reminded about stranger danger.

In terms of whether these are fears based on personal experience it isn't possible to identify in the survey whether children had experience of specific incidents but they were asked to say whether any of their worries had actually happened to them.

Table 3: Have any of these things actually happened to you in the last 12 months?

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure / missing</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This suggests that for most children concerns about crime are based on general worries and not necessarily based on actual incidents. For the consultation phase children were not asked to go into detail about any worries but were given space to reflect on how safe they felt in their area and if they had any worries about safety.

Well, round my house there is the river Exe, stupid people they just like jump into it year 6 boy

Um, only because like round near my house I live right near the railway line basically, and there’s like lots of unsafe people down there all the time, teenagers in the night and there’s been like lots of things going on down there, year 6

I walk to school by myself sometimes and I feel like safe cos I have a phone, year 6

Police they help keep us safe and don’t let us get hurt. Girl year 6

I hate the people that kidnap and the dognappers. And the people that throw rubbish and the dogs pooping, Year 5 boy

I don’t like my neighbourhood cos there are teenagers that bully, year 5 girl

Sometimes I feel safe and other times I keep seeing shadows and I feel unsafe, year 5 boy

My street is loud and the people who live there are really horrible, girl year 5

I normally go only to my school and to my home and they’re quite safe, year 5 boy

I could get lost and I could run into stranger danger, year 5 boy

If there was like child catchers, there probably isn’t, but they might just come and take you and nobody would know where you were, girl year 5

I’ve walked on my own once before but I didn’t really enjoy it cos I thought something might happen, boy year 5
Children in this age group had genuine fears about crime and safety but little direct experience. Their experience with some neighbours and people in their community did make them feel uneasy but the concern about being followed by a stranger seems to relate to a generic worry based on what they have been told or heard. The worries about being hurt or being shouted at does seem more likely to relate to those concerns about neighbours and the common anxiety younger children have about older teenagers.

Figure 22: Secondary age responses to the question, are you worried about any of these things happening to you?

- **Being followed by a stranger**: 50%
- **Assault (being kicked, punched, pushed, slapped, hit on purpose)**: 38%
- **Someone calling you hurtful names**: 37%
- **Someone threatening to hurt you**: 36%
- **Your things being damaged, broken or ruined by someone else on purpose**: 33%
- **Robbery (being threatened/ hurt by someone who is stealing or trying to steal your possessions)**: 29%
- **Being shouted at in the street (which makes you feel uncomfortable)**: 29%
- **Any other type of theft**: 27%
- **Other type of crime not mentioned**: 26%
- **Pickpocketing (things being stolen from your pocket or bad without you knowing at the time)**: 26%
- **Your bicycle being stolen**: 17%

The response for this age group suggests they are less worried than younger children about crime although their top concern is the same. Equally the concern about having a bike stolen is the least of their worries. As with the primary age children they were asked to say if any of these things had actually happened to them.
Table 4: Have any of these things actually happened to you in the last 12 months?

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure / missing</td>
<td>18%</td>
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The response is a little different in that half were clear that none of these things had happened to them and the proportion who had experienced something was a little higher than for younger children. This may in part be down to the fact that older children are more likely to be out on their own without an adult with them.

The consultations with young people again gave them space to reflect on how safe they felt in their area and walking by themselves.

What secondary age young people said about being safe in their area

_I live in a village it’s calm and not much happens there, year 8 girl_

_My local area is ok but it smells like weed and dog poo everywhere, year 8 boy_

_It’s alright in Bideford but feels isolated and a bit suffocating with constant crime I hear about around, year 8 boy_

_I don’t like being alone/walking alone because I have a fear of being alone I just can’t stop thinking that I’m going to turn around and be killed or taken away by people and I also think like a spirit is following me, year 8 boy_

_When you like look on the news there is quite a lot of crime, like there was people went to court yesterday, there was like a beating up last year, there was the church safe thing where they opened it up, it’s not as bad as other places where there’s killings but there is crime, girl year 8_

_I just don’t think people should really walk alone especially in the dark, girl year 8_

As with the younger age group the worries young people have about crime and being safe are genuine worries but seem to be based on what they hear rather than what they experience. Some of their concerns about the behaviour of drunk adults, car drivers and neighbours do bother them and make them anxious, but not always with direct experience to add weight to those concerns. There are other areas in country where the survey has thrown up concerns from children about crime and safety and through consultations their daily and regular experience of crime is revealed, but not in this instance. In some ways the lack of tangible experience should reduce their anxiety and fear, but for primary age children in particular this does not appear to be the case.
6. Conclusions

The purpose of conducting this survey and consultation was to gain a better understanding of how children and young people living in North Devon feel about their lives and their own sense of well-being. Making use of the results and responding to the issues raised will need the involvement and commitment of a range of agencies and organisations. There is good news that needs to be maintained and protected and there are some challenges that will need a response if children’s well-being is to be enhanced.

The good news is that for younger children life in North Devon offers a lifestyle that can nurture their well-being. There are parks and open spaces that give free access to play and environments that children can enjoy. There are clubs and activities that children want to make use of and their experience of school is as good as might be hoped for in terms of supporting their well-being. Of course that is not true for every child and the reality for some children is that their circumstances inhibit their enjoyment of what is on offer. The survey results show less than average levels of happiness with relationships within families and for some children conflicts within the family will have a profound impact on their overall well-being.

The biggest challenge however is in what happens to girls as they grow into adolescence. Their level of happiness with almost every aspect of their lives drops from a relatively good position and there are particular issues about their school experience and their worries about appearance. Although the survey and consultation work focused on year 8s our evidence nationally suggests that a decline in happiness at year 8 continues into older teenage years. It is probable that the issues concerning girls in year 8 are continued if not amplified as they grow into their adolescence.

What is of concern is the way that girls find themselves absorbing increasingly sexualised comments and observations from boys and how they become resigned to that experience. As one girl articulated it:

As girls we think we just have to put up with this, like it’s life. We are so scared to stand up because we afraid of being bullied or made fun of. It needs to stop, year 8 girl

The response to this concern should not only be about building resilience in girls and supporting them to cope and feel strong about themselves. There needs to be a more integrated response that addresses deep rooted and commonly held sexist views and amongst men and boys. Girls need to see that that sexist language is as taboo as racist language and boys need to know the same. Boys and girls need to have examples and models of behaviour exhibited by adults and be given the space and time to reflect and respond. This is not an issue confined to school but as school is such a significant part of young people’s lives it has a key role. The evidence that is emerging from recent scandals of sexual exploitation of young people is that attitudes and behaviours toward young people normalised what should have been seen as abnormal.

This study did not specifically focus on vulnerable young people or those young people witnessing domestic violence or sexual aggression in the family or community. But for those young people in those situations there is little to indicate that in their neighbourhood and school or amongst their peers they have the benefit of having sexist views and attitudes challenged.
There is much more to explore and understand about young people’s experiences and attitudes but this survey and consultation gives an indication that more needs to be done.

Jim Davis MBE

Head of Community Participation

The Children’s Society
Appendix I: The Consultations

The consultations with children and young people took place in schools and in some of the clubs and activities organised by North Devon Homes. The activities are those frequently used by The Children’s Society and combine some written activity with opportunities to talk and give verbal responses.

Consultation activities in primary schools

There were four activities used during an hour long session

Tops and pants: What you like or not about living in your neighbourhood. Children writing individual thoughts on templates of Tops and Pants

Star, cloud, sun and heart shapes on the topic of school: Choice of cards to reflect what children feel about school. Children chose what cards to write on to represent how they felt about different aspects of school life

Where do you stand? On worries about being safe, thoughts about the area and local adults. Children move about the room according to how they feel about statements that are read out. Their responses are recorded on tape

Gingerbread people: Adults who are nice and friendly, adults who are not as friendly. An activity where children write on shapes of gingerbread people details about adults they know who are either friendly or not.

Consultation activities in secondary schools

There were four activities in each class that lasted an hour

Where do you stand? The same activity as used in primary school on local area generally and safety

School facilities: Young people asked to write on cards their own thoughts about school facilities. Red cards for the one improvement they would make in school facilities, green card for the one thing they appreciate the most.

Girls and boys groups: Discussion activity in small groups on appearance and comments made between boys and girls. Sheets of brown paper and pens for each group, above the line and below the line comments on what negative comments make people feel unhappy and what positive comments make them feel good.

Envelope activity: Speech bubble cards available and envelopes to put them in. Private comments on why people want friendlier adults, on appearance issues or school experiences.
Consultation in youth clubs

In these consultations young people had a greater choice about participating and the activities were on display for them to contribute to during the session.

Moving from primary to secondary school: With two large sheets of paper, one for primary and one for secondary school. Young people were invited to add their comments on what they liked or disliked about primary school and the same for secondary school. They could also add their thoughts about moving up to secondary school.

Safety and crime in the community: Using sheets of brown paper as a graffiti wall some of the responses on the crime and safety responses from the survey were displayed. Young people were invited to add their comments and observations about their community and what helped them to feel safe.
Appendix II: The Well-being Survey Questionnaire

The survey questions have been developed/tested through qualitative research/consultation, cognitive testing and pilot surveys/statistical analysis, so are known to be suitable for use with children aged 8 and above. Since 2005, the well-being surveys have been used with over 60,000 children and young people, including over 12,000 children and young people in local authority surveys/consultations.

The following text and questions are the contents of the online survey presented to children and young people who participated in the North Devon assessment of children’s well-being.

1. Your Views

The Children's Society is a national children's charity. Our aim is to help make a better childhood for all children. This survey is about what young people think of their local area, school and how they feel about their lives in general. We are going the survey to learn more about your views. We will use the information to tell adults what young people think.

About the survey

You don't have to take part in the survey if you don't want to. It's up to you. And if you do take part, you can miss out any questions you don't want to answer.

The survey is

- anonymous (we don't ask your name)
- confidential (we don't know who you are and won't pass on any information you give us
- takes about 15 minutes to do

Answering the questions

There are no right or wrong answers. We want to know what you think. If there is a question that you do not want to answer you can miss it out.

Thank you for helping us.

2. How old are you?

[options: 8 / 9 / 10 / 11 / 12 / 13 / 14 / 15 / 16 / 17 / 18 / over 18]

3. Which year group are you in?

[options: 3 / 4 / 5 / 6 / 7 / 8 / 9 / 10 / 11 / 12 / 13]

4. (for primary school year groups only)

Are you… [options: A boy / A girl]
5. (for secondary school year groups only)

Are you… [options: Male / Female]

6. Some of the questions in this questionnaire are like the one below. For these questions, please say how much you disagree with each of the sentences.

How much do you agree or disagree with each of these sentences?

- My life is going well
- My life is just right
- I wish I had a different kind of life
- I have a good life
- I have what I want in life

[options: strongly disagree / disagree / neither agree nor disagree / agree / strongly agree / don’t know]

7. A lot of the questions ask you how happy you are with different things in your life.

These questions use a scale from 0 to 10. On this scale

- 0 means you feel very unhappy
- 5 means that you feel neither happy nor unhappy
- 10 means you feel very happy

For these questions, please tick one of the boxes to say how happy you feel. So, please answer the question below about how happy you are with your life as a whole.

How happy are you with your life as a whole?
[options: 0 to 10; 0=very unhappy, 5=neither happy or unhappy, 10=very happy]

8. How happy are you with...

- …the home that you live in?
- …the school that you go to?
- …how much choice you have in life?
- …the things that you have (like money and things that you own)?
- …your relationships with your friends?

[options: 0 to 10; 0=very unhappy, 5=neither happy or unhappy, 10=very happy]

9. How happy are you with...

- …your health?
• ...your appearance (the way you look)?
• ...what may happen to you later in life (in the future)?
• ...the way that you use your time?
• ...your relationships with your family?

[options: 0 to 10; 0=very unhappy, 5=neither happy or unhappy, 10=very happy]

10. The next question is about how you feel about the way you look. Please tick one of the boxes to say how much you agree or disagree with the sentence below. If you're not sure what you think please tick the box next to 'Don't know'.

I often worry about the way I look

[options: strongly disagree / disagree / neither agree nor disagree / agree / strongly agree / don’t know]

11. How happy are you with...

• ...the facilities at your school (like the classrooms, toilets, sports facilities etc.)?
• ...your relationships with teachers?
• ...how you are doing with your schoolwork?
• ...your relationships with other young people at school?
• ...how you are listened to at school?
• ...how safe you feel at school?

[options: 0 to 10; 0=very unhappy, 5=neither happy or unhappy, 10=very happy]

12. On the next few pages, there are questions about what you think about the area you live in. For each question, please tick one of the boxes to say how much you agree or disagree. If you're not sure what you think please tick the box 'don't know'.

How much do you agree or disagree with each of these sentences about the area that you live in?

• I like where I live
• I feel safe when I am out in my local area during the day
• There is nothing to do in my area
• There are places for me to go in my area
• I wish there were different people in my area
• I like my neighbours

[options: strongly disagree / disagree / neither agree nor disagree / agree / strongly agree / don’t know]
13. How much do you agree or disagree with each of these sentences about the area that you live in?

- There are lots of fun things to do where I live
- Adults in my area treat young people fairly
- Adults in my area listen to young people’s views
- I have plenty of freedom in the area I live in
- I feel safe when I am out in my local area at night
- I wish I lived somewhere else

[options: strongly disagree / disagree / neither agree nor disagree / agree / strongly agree / don’t know]

14. Which three things, if any, do you think would most improve this area as a place for you to live? Please tick up to three boxes.

- Better schools
- Better, cleaner parks and playgrounds
- Less crime
- Safer area
- Better public transport
- More shops
- Less traffic
- More sports facilities
- More youth clubs or facilities for young people
- Friendlier adults
- Nothing (fine as it is)
- Not sure

15. Are you worried about any of these things happening to you? Please select all that apply.

[options:]

- Being shouted at in the street (which makes you feel uncomfortable)
- Someone calling you hurtful names
- Being followed by a stranger
- Someone threatening to hurt you
- Assault (being kicked, punched, pushed, slapped, hit on purpose)
- Pick pocketing (things being stolen from your pocket or bag without you knowing at the time)
- Robbery (being threatened/ hurt by someone who is stealing or trying to steal your possessions)
- Your bicycle being stolen
- Any other type of theft
- Your things being damaged, broken or ruined by someone else on purpose
- Other type of crime not mentioned

Have any of these things actually happened to you in the last 12 months?
[options: Yes / No / Not sure]

16. Some children your age have to help look after someone because they are sick, disabled or elderly. Is there anyone living with you who you look after or give special help to?
[options: Yes / No / Not sure]

17. Who do you look after? Please tick all that apply.
[options:]
- Mother/stepmother
- Father/stepfather
- Brother/sister
- Grandfather/grandmother
- Another adult in your family (e.g. aunt or uncle)
- Another child in your family (e.g. cousin)
- Someone else who lives with you

18. How often do you look after someone in this way?
[options: Hardly ever / Sometimes / Often / Very often / All the time / It depends / Not sure/can’t count]

19. Would you say that you...
- Are disabled
- Have difficulties with learning
[options: Yes / No / Not sure / I don’t want to answer]

20. How many adults that you live with have a paid job?
[options: None / One / Two / More than two / Don’t know]
21. Do you receive free school meals?

[options: Yes / No / Not sure / I don't want to answer]

You have completed this survey!

Thank you for taking the time to answer this survey.
It is a painful fact that many children and young people in Britain today are still suffering extreme hardship, abuse and neglect.

The Children’s Society is a national charity that runs crucial local services and campaigns to change the law to help this country’s most vulnerable children and young people.

Our supporters around the country fund our services and join our campaigns to show children and young people they are on their side.

Further information

To find out more about our well-being programme, please visit our website at childrenssociety.org.uk/well-being