

GROWING UP WITH DAD

Fathers and their impact on substance use



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Children in Wales
Plant yng Nghymru



CHILDREN IN WALES

Children in Wales is the national umbrella organisation for voluntary, statutory and professional organisations and individuals who work with children and young people in Wales. It aims to promote the interests of children, to improve services in Wales and to put children high on the Welsh agenda. Children in Wales works closely with its members who come from a variety of backgrounds. It collects and disseminates information about children and promotes good practice in children's services through research, policy and practice development, publications, conferences, seminars and training. Children in Wales co-ordinates a range of forums and networks on issues impacting on children and young people in Wales enabling professionals to come together and exchange information and ideas. Children in Wales has offices in Cardiff and Caernarfon.

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Catch22 is a national charity, working across the UK, with young people who find themselves in difficult situations. Whatever the reason for their situation, Catch 22 helps them out. It works with their families and their communities wherever and whenever young people need them most; in schools, on the streets, in the home, at community centres, shopping centres, in police stations, and in custody. As young people become more positive, productive and independent, the whole community benefits. Before it became Catch22, it was previously Rainer and Crime Concern, two national charities that came together in 2008. Catch22 backs up this work with research about the lives of young people. One of the ways this is done is through the Communities that Care programme. Catch22 is the only organisation licensed to deliver the Communities that Care Programme in the UK.

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INTRODUCTION

This report provides an outline of statistics looking at young people's relationships with their fathers and the impact that they have on the likelihood of a young person drinking, smoking and taking drugs. It has been developed from the analysis of 17,933 questionnaires completed by young people of secondary school age in four local authority areas in Wales. It looks at family structures, and how young people rate their relationships with their fathers. It then considers alcohol, smoking and drug use and what impact a young person's relationship with their father has on their use of these substances.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The involvement of fathers impacts on children and young people across a whole range of outcomes. However increasing levels of family breakdown result in around a third of teenagers not living with their biological fathers, and around 8.2% indicating that they do not see them. This equates to approximately 15,000 young people in the 11 to 15 year old age range.

The vast majority of children in Wales today reported feeling close to their fathers, and perhaps most significantly almost half, 47% still reported feeling very close to them even if they did not live together.

The impact of these relationships, or in some cases the lack of it, was measured in respect of three areas of teenage behaviour: alcohol, smoking, and drug use, specifically cannabis. In all three areas a close father child relationship clearly acted as a protective factor against the worst excesses of using these substances, often to a highly significant degree.

- **21.3% of the 15 year olds surveyed who professed to feeling close to their father had had 5 or more drinks more than three times in the previous 4 weeks. However amongst those who did not feel close to their father this figure rose to 33.2%. Interestingly the figure for those who did not see their fathers, at 27.3%, fell between those who felt close to their fathers and those who did not. Among young people drinking over 10 times in the**

previous four weeks, the figure rose from 3.2% to 6.0%

- **A similar picture emerged in respect of smoking. 14.4% of those who felt close to their father smoked regularly, but the figure rose to 25.1% amongst those who did not enjoy the benefits of a close relationship, and to 25.7% amongst those who had no contact with their father.**
- **The use of cannabis also changed depending on how close the young people felt to their father. 13.8% of those who felt close to their father had used the drug, with the figure rising to 24.7% amongst those who did not feel close to their father, and 20.3% for those who had no contact with their father.**

The young people's perceptions of their parent's attitudes also impacted on whether or not they drank, smoked or used cannabis, and to what extent.

- **55.7% of 15 year olds who believed that their parents thought it was not wrong at all for them to drink alcohol had drunk 5 or more drinks on more than 3 occasions in the last four weeks. This compares to 10.7% of those who believed that their parents thought it was very wrong for them to drink alcohol.**
- **5.0% of 15 year olds who believed that their parents thought it was very wrong for them to smoke, smoked regularly compared to 77.2% who believed their parents thought it was not wrong at all.**
- **74.6% of 15 year olds who believed that their parents thought it was very wrong for them to smoke cannabis had never smoked it compared to 17.7% of those who believed their parents thought it was not wrong at all.**

ABOUT THE DATA

The statistics were derived from the Communities that Care Youth Survey. Communities that Care (CtC) was developed in the US in the 1980s and established in the UK by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation in 1997, under licence from Professors J David Hawkins and Richard M Catalano of the University of Washington, Seattle. CtC became part of Catch22 in 2007. Using analysis of longitudinal research studies the programme identified 17 Risk Factors and 5 Protective Factors which can potentially lead young people into the problem behaviours of drug and

alcohol misuse, youth crime and anti-social behaviour, academic failure and school age pregnancy.

The Communities that Care Youth Survey was designed by Oxford University to measure young people's involvement in the problem behaviours of drug and alcohol misuse and youth crime and anti-social behaviour and the level of risk and protection in their lives. To date Catch22 has surveyed over 300,000 young people in the UK using the CtC Youth Survey. The survey has also been used to evaluate the UK Government's On Track programme and was the basis of a report commissioned by the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales.

The data used in this report was collected using the CtC Youth Survey from four local authority areas in Wales during 2004 and 2005. Data was gathered using a self-completion questionnaire delivered through secondary schools and Pupil Referral Units. Completed questionnaires were scanned and edited for inconsistencies, routing errors and inappropriate answers. During this process the validity and honesty of pupil's responses was assessed. Pupils were removed from the dataset if they met any of five conditions used for this basis. These results are based on 17,933 valid questionnaires completed by young people of secondary school age in four local authority areas.

FATHERS

Over the last twenty years social researchers from a variety of disciplines have been building an ever increasing body of knowledge about the impact fathers have on the lives of their children. What becomes apparent from this literature is that no single model fits the role of fathers in families today. This has been further complicated here in Wales by the absence of any Wales specific data. Access to the Catch22 dataset has offered us for the first time a unique window into the impact of fathers in the lives of Welsh children today.

Analysis of the data has focused initially on three areas. Firstly the make up of Welsh families today, whether there is a father present, and if so whether or not he is the biological parent of the children concerned. And secondly, and perhaps more importantly, the nature of the father child relationship, from the perspective of the young person. By asking

the young people how close they feel to their fathers we are able to gauge the quality of the relationship. This approach differs from much of the previous research which has focused on the amount of time fathers are spending with their children, rather than the quality of that time, and certainly not from the young person's perspective. And finally, what were the young people's perceptions of their parents attitudes to a range of behaviours. We know from the literature that father involvement, or the absence of it, can have a marked impact on outcomes for children and young people across a whole range of measures. For an overview of the research see *The Costs and Benefits of Active Fatherhood, Fathers Direct*¹.

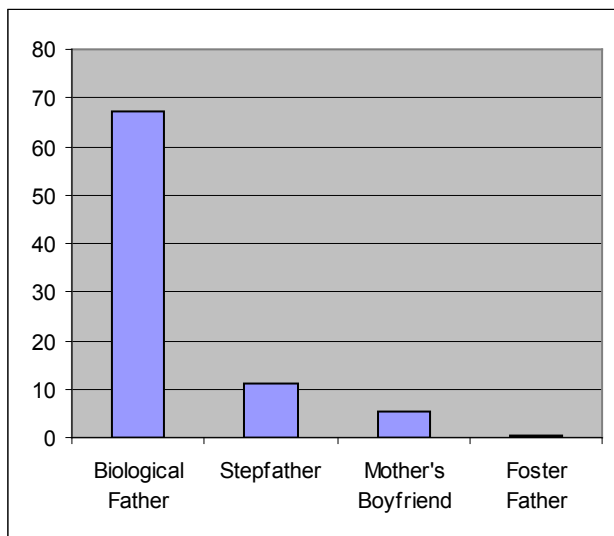
The analysis concentrates on the impact the father child relationship has on the young person's use of alcohol, cigarettes and drugs. Young people today are exposed to a whole range of influences on their lives, peer group pressure, the internet, films, television and so on. Parents in general, and this includes fathers, can and do act as gatekeepers to many of these influences. Our hypothesis therefore is, can a good father child relationship act as a protective factor against the worst excesses of these influences and can it therefore be used to predict many of these outcomes? We cannot stop teenagers being teenagers, but we can, and should, attempt to keep them safe whilst they are.

WELSH DEMOGRAPHIC

In 2007, 19% of the population of Wales was made up of children aged 0-15. This equates to around 556,600 individuals out of a total population of 2.98 million people². With the exceptions of Cardiff and Carmarthenshire, all Local Authority areas in Wales showed a decrease in the number of children aged 0-15 over the preceding year. However during the same period the number of children under 5 rose, by around 2.2 per cent. The total fertility rate currently stands at 1.9 children³ and is projected to remain at that level for the next two decades. This trend for rates to fall below 2 (the rate at which population numbers remain stable) is not restricted to Wales and is seen across much of Western Europe.

The number of 11 to 15 year olds, the age group in our dataset, rose up until 2003 before starting to decrease. This decrease is projected to continue until

Chart 1. The Percentage of Young People living with Father Figures



2015 when the population of 11 to 15 year olds will fall to 165,000, a 16.6% decrease from 2003. In 2007 there were 40,200 15 year olds in Wales, the age group which much of this research has focused on.

FAMILY STRUCTURES

Children from intact two parent families tend to have better outcomes in their late teens and early adult life. Research⁴ shows that those children living in a single parent household at age 16 were by age 30 more likely to smoke, be a single parent themselves, be in social housing, receive benefit and be living in a workless household.

Some 67.4% of the children questioned were living in a household with their biological father present at the time of the survey, and a further 11.0% were living with a stepfather. 5.5% had a 'father figure' present in the form of their mother's boyfriend and finally 0.4% lived with a foster father. Cumulative analysis indicates therefore that slightly over 15% had no significant male present in their family home. This is not to suggest that many of these children did, or do not, have contact with a non-resident parent at some time.

Over the age range of the sample group there was

no major increase in the number of fathers becoming non resident. The implication of this would appear to be that the majority of fathers leaving the family home have either done so by the time the children are 11 years old, or have never lived with them.

In comparison, 93.8% of children were living with their biological mother at the time of the survey, 1.8% with a stepmother, whilst 1.0% lived with their father's girlfriend present and finally 0.6% had a foster mother. It is likely that a significant proportion of the remainder may have been living in single parent households with their father.

Extrapolated across the whole of Wales, these figures would suggest that around a third of children will have experienced family breakdown by the time they reach their mid-teens, broadly in line with the UK average. Further research would be needed to ascertain how many of these young people have some contact with the non-resident parent, and to what extent that contact occurs.

RELATIONSHIPS

The dataset also offered insights into whether the young people felt close to their fathers (and mothers).

Almost three quarters, 73.4%, of those surveyed reported feeling close or very close to their father. However this figure rose to 89.0% when the same question was asked regarding their relationship with their mother. Since these figures are likely to be skewed by the significant levels of absence of the father from the family home mentioned earlier, the data was correlated with that reporting whether or not the young people lived with their father. 86.2% of young people who lived with their father described themselves as feeling close or very close to him, much more in line with the figure for mothers.

Most importantly however almost half of the young people, 47.0%, who did not live with their father still reported feeling close to him. 24.0% of those who did not live with their father reported that they did not see him indicating that a significant majority of those who continued to see their fathers still felt close to them despite family breakdown having occurred.

Finally the analysis was broken down by gender.

More boys felt close to their father than girls; 78.6% compared to 69.0%. Interestingly, slightly more boys, 90.4%, compared to girls, 88.1% , also felt close to their mothers.

Sadly around 4.0% reported not feeling close to either parent, and a tiny percentage, 0.3% indicated they did not see either parent. This would suggest that around one in twenty young people in Wales today are part of families where the parent child relationship has completely broken down.

ALCOHOL, SMOKING AND DRUG USE

The impact of the young people’s relationship with their father on their use of alcohol, cigarettes and drugs was then analysed. To do this we looked at the use of alcohol, cigarettes and drugs over the whole age group, and then at the impact that the relationship with the father had on 15 year olds. It was necessary to look at one specific age group in this respect as both the relationship with the father and the use of substances are influenced by age.

ALCOHOL

Many young people are likely to experiment with alcohol at some time whilst growing up. The behaviour in itself does not necessarily present a problem. However, consistent drinking in excess of recommended levels has serious implications not only for the health of the young people but also a range of other outcomes. The survey asked therefore, “In the past four weeks, how many times have you had five or more alcoholic drinks in a row?”

The table below shows the percentage of young people of each age group, from 11 to 16 who reported drinking 5 or more drinks more than three times in the previous four weeks.

Table 1.

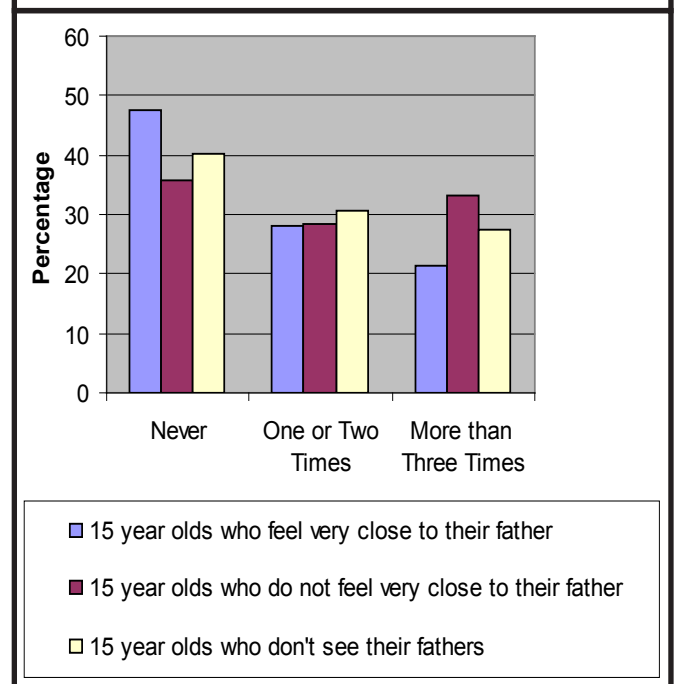
Age	Percentage of young people who have drunk 5 or more drinks more than 3 times in the past 4 weeks
11	2.0%
12	3.9%
13	8.1%
14	15.4%
15	24.4%
16	30.2%

Looking at just the 15 year olds:

- 24.4% had had 5 or more drinks more than three times in the previous four weeks
- 28.3% had drunk 5 or more drinks on one or two occasions
- 44.4% had not drunk 5 or more times in the relevant period

This data here is irrespective of the nature of the relationship with their father. This would suggest that around a quarter of fifteen year olds are drinking regularly at levels which are likely to do them serious harm, either now or in the future. The data was then controlled for the nature of the relationship with their father.

Chart 2. The Effect of the Father Child relationship on Alcohol use in 15 year olds



For those young people who felt very close to their father:

- 21.3% had had 5 or more drinks more than three times in the previous four weeks
- 28.1% had drunk 5 or more drinks on one or two occasions
- 47.7% had not drunk 5 or more times in the relevant period

However for those young people who did not feel very close to their father:

- 33.2% had had 5 or more drinks more than three times in the previous four weeks
- 28.3% had drunk 5 or more drinks on one or two occasions
- 35.6% had not drunk 5 or more times in the relevant period

Among those who had did not see their fathers:

- 27.3% had had 5 or more drinks more than three times in the previous four weeks
- 30.5% had drunk 5 or more drinks on one or two occasions
- 40.2% had not drunk 5 or more times in the relevant period

Among young people drinking more than 10 times in the previous four weeks, the figure rose from 3.2% to 6.0% in those that did not feel close to their fathers. The results would therefore appear to demonstrate that a good relationship with their father appears to act as a protective factor amongst those at highest risk.

SMOKING

A not dissimilar pattern appears to apply in the data relating to young people's propensity to smoke.

Table 2.

Age of Young Person	Have never smoked a cigarette	Smoke regularly
11	78.9%	0.8%
12	71.0%	1.5%
13	59.2%	5.2%
14	46.4%	11.6%
15	38.7%	17.7%
16	35.6%	18.9%

Again the data for 15 years olds was controlled for the nature of the relationship with their father. The relationship with the father appeared to have an impact on both whether a young person had tried smoking and whether they had become a regular smoker.

- 44.0% of young people who felt close to their father had never smoked, compared to 24.7% of those who did not feel close to him, and 31.2% of those who didn't see him.
- 14.4% of those who felt close to their fathers smoked regularly, compared to 25.1% who didn't feel close to them and 25.7% of those who didn't see him.

Although these results demonstrate the potential impact of the father child relationship they do not control for whether or not the father (or mother) are themselves a smoker.

Accordingly the data for all young people in the sample was correlated against whether either the respondents' parents, or step parents, were themselves smokers. Separate figures for mothers and fathers were not available for this.

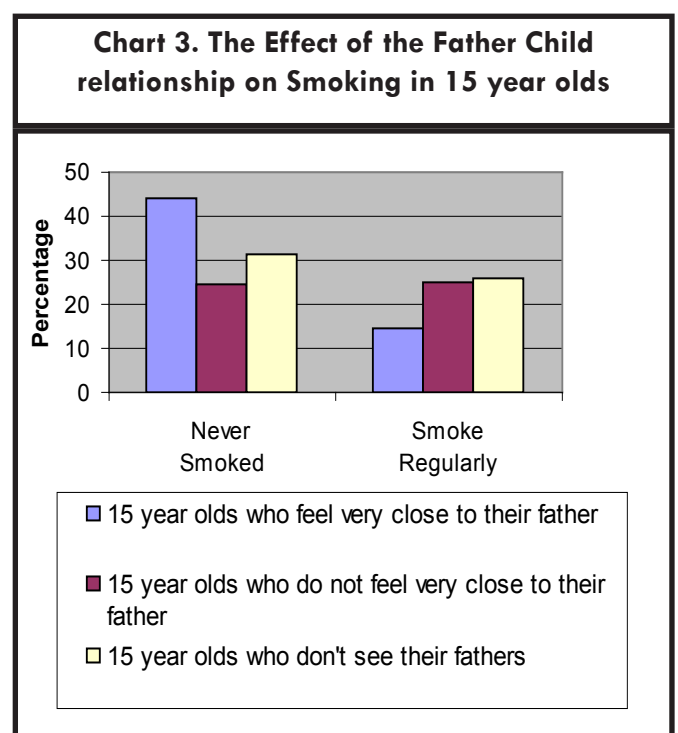


Table 3.

	Have never smoked a cigarette	Smoke Regularly
Parent Smoke	47.2%	14.3%
Parents do not Smoke	64.2%	5.1%

The figures show that 14.3% of the young people whose parents smoke, smoke regularly themselves, compared to 5.1% of those whose parents don't smoke. This demonstrates that young people whose parents smoke are much more likely to try smoking and smoke regularly.

DRUGS

The data was also analysed in respect of the 15 year olds use of drugs. Respondents were asked if they had ever taken any of the following drugs: cannabis, ecstasy, LSD, solvents gas or aerosols, amphetamines, magic mushrooms, cocaine, crack, heroin, barbiturates, tranquilisers, or tamazepam without a doctor's prescription.

The table below shows how drug use increases with age.

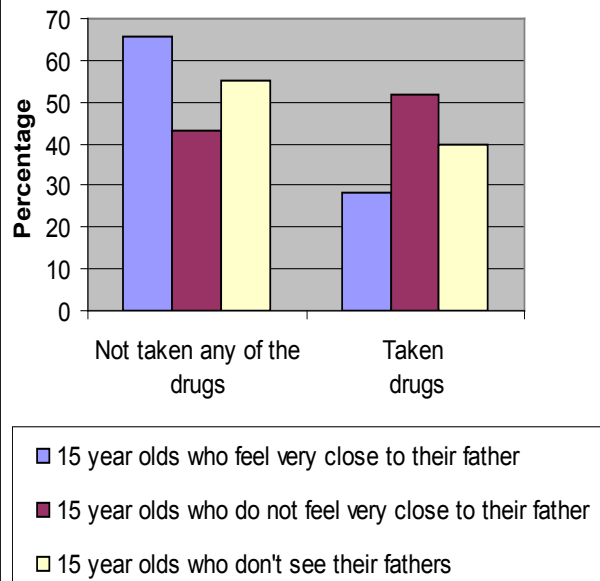
Table 4.

Age	Percentage of young people who have tried one of the drugs listed
11	5.7%
12	8.3%
13	14.6%
14	23.0%
15	31.4%
16	37.5%

As previously, looking at just the 15 year olds the data was controlled for the nature of the relationship with their father.

For those young people who felt close to their father, 27.0% had taken at least one of the drugs listed compared to 43.2% who did not feel close to their father and 37.6% who did not see their father.

Chart 4. The Effect of the Father Child relationship on Drug Use in 15 year olds

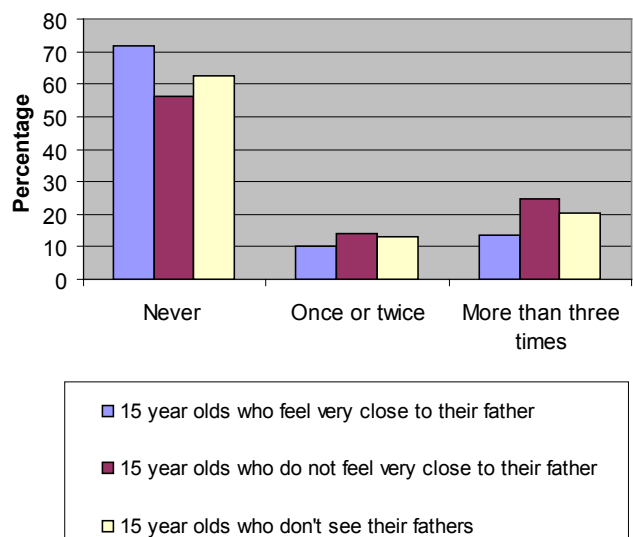


CANNABIS

Many of the drugs on the list were used in very low numbers, as a result further analysis concentrated on the use of cannabis, the most used drug amongst this age group. 28.0% of all the 15yr olds surveyed had used cannabis at least once.

However to distinguish between those young people who simply experimented with it, and those who

Chart 5. The Effect of the Father Child relationship on Cannabis Use in 15 year olds



were more regular users, we separated out those individuals who had used it three times or more. 16.8% of the fifteen year olds had used cannabis three or more times. Again this data was correlated against the nature of the father child relationship.

For those 15 year olds who felt close to their father 13.8% had taken cannabis three or more times, compared to 24.7% of those who did not feel close to their father and 20.3% who did not see their fathers.

PERCEPTIONS OF PARENTAL ATTITUDES

The analysis also looked at the attitudes of both the young people and their parents to alcohol, cigarettes and drugs. In this case the parental attitudes cover both mothers and fathers as separate data was not available.

ATTITUDES TO ALCOHOL

The young people were asked “How wrong do you think your parents feel it is for you to drink alcohol?”. They were then able to choose responses from “Very wrong”, “Wrong”, “A bit wrong” or “Not wrong at all”. The following table shows their responses:

Table 5.

Age of Young Person	Wrong or Very Wrong	A Bit Wrong	Not wrong at all
11	92.0%	5.0%	1.6%
12	90.7%	6.4%	1.8%
13	84.4%	11.8%	3.0%
14	76.5%	17.5%	5.0%
15	64.7%	26.7%	7.9%
16	55.6%	32.2%	11.6%

This information was correlated with whether or not the young people actually drank alcohol regularly. 55.7% of 15 year olds who believed that their parents thought it was not wrong at all for them to drink alcohol had drunk 5 or more drinks on more than 3 occasions in the last four weeks. This compares to 10.7% of those who believed that their parents thought it was very wrong for them to drink alcohol.

ATTITUDES TO SMOKING

As with alcohol, the young people were asked “How wrong do you think your parents feel it is for you to smoke?” Their responses are shown in the following table:

Table 6.

Age of Young Person	Wrong or Very Wrong	A Bit Wrong	Not Wrong at all
11	96.8%	1.2%	1.1%
12	96.3%	1.7%	1.1%
13	92.7%	4.4%	2.2%
14	87.0%	7.5%	4.4%
15	80.5%	11.8%	6.8%
16	74.6%	15.4%	9.3%

Again this information was correlated against whether or not the young people smoked. 5.0% of 15 year olds who believe that their parents think it is very wrong for them to smoke, smoke regularly compared to 77.2% who believe their parents think it is not wrong at all.

ATTITUDES TO CANNABIS

The young people were asked “How wrong do think your parents feel it is for you to use cannabis?”

Table 7.

Age of Young Person	Wrong or Very Wrong	A Bit Wrong	Not wrong at all
11	98.0%	0.1%	0.7%
12	97.6%	0.5%	0.8%
13	96.8%	1.4%	1.2%
14	94.8%	2.8%	1.3%
15	93.2%	4.1%	1.8%
16	92.4%	5.0%	2.1%

Again this information was correlated with whether or not the young people used cannabis themselves.

74.6% of 15 year olds who believe that their parents think it is very wrong for them to smoke cannabis had never smoked it compared to 17.7% of those who believe their parents think it is not wrong at all.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The data was derived from four Local Authority areas that offer a good representative sample of Wales as a whole. Because of that fact, and because of the large sample size, we are confident the data represents an accurate picture of Welsh family life today.

We recognise that in addition to the importance of the father child relationship, young people's relationship with their mother also has an impact on many of the outcomes we have looked at. Whilst we would not wish to belittle the impact of this, the purpose of this analysis was to focus on the role fathers play in raising their children. There were two reasons for this. Firstly, much of the focus on supporting parents has traditionally concentrated on working with mothers not fathers, and secondly due to the high rates of absence of fathers from the lives of many children we were able to use this as a control for the impact that relationship has. This is not possible with mothers as around 94% of the young people who responded to the survey were currently living with their mothers.

The absence of the father can operate on two levels. Firstly they may be physically absent from the lives of the young people, generally as a result of family breakdown. But secondly, and perhaps more significantly, they may be absent on an emotional level. By analysing the closeness the young people felt to their father we were able to gauge whether a secure attachment is something, more than the physical presence of a father, that can impact on the behaviour of many of these young people in respect of substance use during their teenage years.

In all three of the subject areas we chose to look at, alcohol, smoking and cannabis, a clear pattern presents itself. A strong father child relationship can act as a protective factor against young people abusing these substances. This would appear to be particularly true in the most high risk groups.

In addition we appear to have strong evidence of the way parental attitudes influence the behaviour of young people. This is particularly true in respect of the attitude of 15 year olds towards smoking, although it also impacted on the other areas we looked at.

The implications of this are therefore clear. If, we wish to reduce these behaviours in young people we recommend the following actions.

- We must do more to maintain the relationship between children and their fathers following separation. The Welsh Assembly Government is already committed to promoting the rights of children and young people as laid down in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Article 9.3 of the convention states: "States parties shall respect the right of the child who is separated from one or both parents to maintain personal relations and direct contact with both parents on a regular basis, unless this is contrary to the child's best interest". The fact that these results show around 8% of adolescents in Wales may not see their father suggests that we need to do far more to make this a reality.
- We need to re-examine the work life balance in many families. Constraint caused by long working hours is consistently given by fathers as the biggest single barrier to their being more involved in, and available for, the lives of their children. We have come a long way in terms of family friendly practices in the workplace for mothers, sadly there is not yet an equivalent, or level playing field, for fathers.

Although there would undoubtedly be cost implications in implementing these proposals, this report clearly demonstrates that the concomitant benefits to young people, both on an individual level and also in terms of the cost burdens to society as a whole, would more than compensate for any outlay. At the same time we could be confident of improving the quality of life for our children as well as improving many of the outcomes for them.

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