

The Big Conversation Let's Break it Down...

What did we do?

The Big Conversation provides a platform for young people to voice their views to Welsh Government Ministers. The Young Wales team travelled across Wales, and spoke to young people about issues that mattered to **them**.

Who did we speak to?

In our initial work, we spoke to 122 young people from across Wales, including those from:

8 Local Authorities and 17 groups

The Big Conversation concluded at the Young Wales Festival, where we held symposiums exploring the themes from our initial findings. **This event engaged an additional:**

168 attendees

★We prioritised the following areas for discussion with young people...★

Feeling Safe Online and in Relationships

Mental Health and Wellbeing

Education and Training

Transport

Climate Change

Young Carers

Social Justice

Cost of Living

We gathered opinions in our **Big Conversation sessions**, and in our **Young Wales Festival Symposiums**.

Here's what you had to say...

"Everyone has bad days, but we are not getting the opportunity to fix it when we've messed up"

Discussing young people's performance in exams

"More should be done across Wales."

Wales is not Cardiff-central."

Discussing local participation opportunities

"There's a lack of support for 2nd or 3rd language pupils. They're struggling to complete exams."

Discussing experience of 2nd / 3rd language pupils in education

"In rural areas, there aren't any services for young people"

Discussing mental health services

"A lot of teachers thought that I was being badly behaved."

Discussing perception of mental health in schools.

"If you don't have money, you're left out"

Discussing school expenses

What Happened Next?

Through discussions at the **Big Conversation** sessions and the **Young Wales Festival Symposiums**, children and young people had the opportunity to share their recommendations for Welsh Government Ministers on a range of topics.

Here are some of the young people's recommendations...

"Further consultation with Children and Young People is needed on costs of **education**."

"Improved **mental health** support services in schools, such as long-term counselling and more quiet spaces"

"Increased focus on reducing **homophobic and transphobic** attitudes in rural areas of Wales."

"Further consultation is needed with children and young people experiencing **poverty**."

"Introduction of a rewards scheme for **environmentally-friendly** actions."

"Consistent education on **healthy relationships** in schools, on topics like consent."

Sharing our Findings

After the Young Wales Festival, the views collected through the Big Conversation sessions and Festival Symposiums were collated into a report, and shared with the relevant Welsh Government Ministers. The Ministers were invited to the Young Wales Advisory Boards and Residentials in Spring 2025 to speak with our volunteers.



Ministerial Engagement

Our Young Wales volunteers spoke to the Ministers for **Mental Health and Wellbeing, Children and Social Care**, and the Cabinet Secretary for **Social Justice**.

Additionally, a response by letter was received by the Minister for **Climate Change and Rural Affairs**.

Each Minister responded to our volunteers, and addressed the questions and recommendations put forward.

Young Wales volunteers asked...

"What is the Welsh Government's plan to improve the standard of Mental Health and Wellbeing support for those in education?"

Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing Responded...

- Plans for launching the Mental Health and Wellbeing strategy for all ages.
- She is hoping that waiting lists will drop soon - she is doing as much as she can, and thanked the young people.

Young Wales volunteers shared...

"What happens after speaking with Ministers? It sometimes feels like your voice is not actually valuable or not actually listened to."

Minister for Children and Social Care responded...

- She outlined the importance of Children's rights to Welsh Government, and in her work as a Minister.
- She thanked the young people for their time, and honesty in giving her space to listen to their thoughts.

Young Wales volunteers asked...

"How does the Welsh Government propose to boost youth participation and engagement? Specifically in rural areas?"

Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice responded...

- Welsh Government are aiming for policies to reach out to more rural areas.
- They are working to address the intersectionality between poverty and participation.
- Reporting to Welsh Youth Parliament helps to make change.



Young Wales Volunteers with Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Jane Hutt MS.



Young Wales volunteers asked...

"Is the concept of complete public transport in Wales a possibility in the future?"



Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs Responded...

"I do not think the concept of complete public transport is possible in Wales... even the best bus and rail networks won't reach every single community, all the time."

Young Wales Volunteers asked...

"How is the Welsh Government working to tackle homophobic and transphobic rhetoric within the education and healthcare system?"



Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice Responded...

- New Welsh Government Curriculum on relationships contains a strand ensuring inclusivity.
- She outlined plans to update anti-bullying policy, and the work on the LGBTQ+ Action Plan.
- Ensuring there is policy for Rights, Respect and Equality.



Young Wales Volunteers with Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing, Sarah Murphy MS.



Young Wales Volunteers with Minister for Children and Social Care, Dawn Bowden MS.

Concluding Thoughts



The engagements made throughout The Big Conversation are more than just conversations; they are opportunities to drive real change and empower young people to help shape the future of Wales.

The Big Conversation project highlights the ongoing commitment of Young Wales and Welsh Government Ministers to ensuring the voices of children and young people shape policy and decision-making in Wales.

It has been widely acknowledged that the Ministerial Engagement process within this project, of listening to young people and meeting with Ministers, has been a success and is something that should be built on going forward.

Coming soon, The Big Conversation 2025/26...