

Youth Participation Report: 2020/21

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Summary

Participation Overview

The United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) was ratified by the UK government on 16th December 1991 and was made law by the Welsh Government in the Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011. One of the four general principles of the UNCRC is the right to be heard. Article 12 specifically states that “Every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously”, with a child being defined as everyone under the age of 18.

Participation work actively involves young people in decision-making processes on issues that affect them. Young people make invaluable contributions to communities and are empowered themselves when they participate. Here in Monmouthshire our work is guided by the Children & Young People’s Participation Standards for Wales can be found in the Youth Service’s Participation Strategy 2019-22.

The Welsh Government’s statutory guidance on the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 reemphasises Section 12 of the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010. This states that “A local authority must make such arrangements as it considers suitable to promote and facilitate participation by children in decisions of the authority which might affect them” (Welsh Government, 2016, p46.)

Engage 2 Change (E2C) – Monmouthshire’s Youth Council

E2C is a representative group of young people aged 11-18 from across Monmouthshire who meet to represent the views of their peers, with a view to inform decisions that affect young people in Monmouthshire. E2C members represent young people from Monmouthshire nationally at the British Youth Council and Welsh Youth Parliament, regionally at the Gwent Regional Youth Forum (GRYF).

The British Youth Council’s Make Your Mark Ballot

The BYC’s annual Make Your Mark ballot is an opportunity for 11-18 year olds across the UK to have their say and begin their democratic journey by voting on the policy areas they want to introduce or change. Young people vote for their top priority issues from a ballot list of 10 issues proposed by the British Youth Council. Last year, the UK Youth Parliament opened the ballot on 1 November 2020 as part of UK Parliament Week. In Monmouthshire, we have been using the results of the Make Your Mark to inform the work of the Engage 2 Change (E2C) Youth Council, the Youth Service and the Public Services Board for the past 5 years. Following the Make Your Mark ballot, results are collated and analysed in the autumn of each year. Typically E2C will host a youth conference at the end of each year where young people and decision makers interact to unpack and understand the top priorities in order to affect change. In July of the subsequent year, a youth forum / feedback event where decision makers will be able to inform young people of progress made in relation to the youth conference, and young people are able to hold them to account.

The Monmouthshire-specific Ballot

In 2018 the Youth Service worked started to work in with the Partnerships team and identified the need for Monmouthshire specific issues. E2C developed a Monmouthshire-specific ballot, which highlights local issues raised by young people in Monmouthshire, and enables young people aged 11-18 to vote for their local priorities from a ballot list of 10 and gives opportunities for young people to identify issues not included in the ballot list. To be able to view the Monmouthshire Survey and the 10 tiles please visit our website. <https://www.monlife.co.uk/connect/youth-service/make-your-mark/>

Findings

Despite the extraordinary challenges 2020 had E2C continued to throughout the year they developed a way to deliver both the Make Your Mark and the Monmouthshire-specific ballot digitally through online surveys (national - [Make Your Mark \(National\) - Monlife](#) and Monmouthshire-specific - [Make Your Mark \(Monmouthshire\) - Monlife.](#))

UK-wide Make Your Mark results

- A full report of the UK-wide Make Your Mark results can be found here: [2020-v2-Make-Your-Mark-Results-with-Infographics.pdf \(netdna-ssl.com\)](#) (NB. Wales's results can be found in **Appendix A.**)
- The top priority for the **UK** in 2020-2021 is **free universities**.
- The top priority for **Wales** in 2020-2021 is **support our mental health**
- The top priority for South East Wales, based on votes from the former-Gwent counties in 2020-2021 is **Domestic Violence**. **Homelessness** is also considered a priority by the region as it was the highest-voted priority in three out of the five counties.

Monmouthshire-specific ballot results

- The top priority Monmouthshire in 2020-21 is **Sex Education eXplained (see Appendix B).**
- Outside of the 10 priorities identified in the Monmouthshire-specific ballot, young people were asked to identify other priorities for them. These have been categorised into themes and sub-sections, detailed in **Appendix C.**

An infographic summarising all of the above results can be seen in **see Appendix D.**

E2C's progress to date

UK-wide Make Your Mark results: Nationally (UK) – free universities

E2C have elected a youth representative to stand as a Member of Youth Parliament to work collaboratively on behalf of their constituents.

Nationally (Wales) – support out mental health

E2C will be responsible for informing the Welsh Youth Parliament of the results and will work collaboratively with Children in Wales on behalf of their constituents. Our youth representative will be attending the national conventions on behalf of Wales, and stand in the Next UK Youth Parliament. Our Youth Representative has been attending regular fortnightly meetings with Children in Wales to take part in the project work

South East Wales

E2C is working collaboratively with the Gwent Regional Youth Forum (GRYF) in the initial planning and research stages of planning programmes of work around the below priorities, to raise awareness of these issues and highlight the support services available for young people in South East Wales. :

1. **Domestic violence**
2. **Homelessness**

Monmouthshire-specific ballot results

1. Sex Education eXplained

E2C is working collaboratively with the Youth Service & schools to address the issue of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) in Monmouthshire and act as a key partner in the development of a RSE programme for Key Stages 3 & 4.

Monmouthshire Youth Service have been working with the Healthy Schools Officer to help inform plans and delivery for sex education in schools to KS3&4 we are currently working on a proposal of work to send to schools.

2. Other topics / themes identified

In addition to this, the other nine priorities will all be addressed throughout the delivery of Youth Work in 2021 as they have all been identified as important to young people. In addition to the general work of the Youth Service, a new project called 'Friday Friendlies' has been developed:

Friday Friendlies are a series of online webinars designed and directed by E2C to give young people the opportunity to unpack identified topics, to gain new knowledge and to influence change with identified decision makers. Historically we have held youth conferences and invited young people from all schools to attend, however due to the current Covid situation we have looked to tackle the issues in a completely different approach. To date we have carried out six Friday Friendlies starting in January 2021, we have engaged with young people on The Budget, Bullying, Votes@16, Children's Mental Health, LGBT History, Red nose day special and Gender Equality.

3. Mental Health

Mental Health has been a top three priority for young people in Monmouthshire for the past 6 years of the national Make Your Mark ballot. E2C has been involved in a number of projects and influences pertaining to the development and delivery of Mental Health Services in Monmouthshire and South East Wales, including:

- A self-help booklet called 'Help Yourself'. E2C took part in workshops and discussions with health professionals to aid in the development of a booklet which was later rolled out to schools.

- E2C as part of the GRYF helped develop a strategy mental health and wellbeing strategy for children and young people with the Public Health Board.
- Creating resources and an online package for other young people as part of the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) transformation project to raise awareness about the new changes in the ALN Reform Act and how it affects young people.
- Influenced the deployment of the Youth Service's work around well-being, including the Shift project which is designed to support young people aged 11-25 who are experienced low level mental health and emotional well-being issues through non-clinical, Youth Work interventions and methodologies to develop resilience and independence.

Recommendations

That the committee:

- Recognises the importance of the national Make Your Mark ballot, and Monmouthshire-specific ballot in identifying current needs of young people in Monmouthshire.
- Supports the development of ways to address some identified priority areas from the Monmouthshire-specific ballot, including from the 2020-21 survey: BAME, gender equality, transport and drug awareness.
- Strengthens links and communication channels between Monmouthshire County Council and E2C.
- Utilise E2C as a mechanism of engagement with young people in Monmouthshire in order to inform their agendas and decision-making.

Appendix A: A screenshot of the Wales results in the annual UK-wide Make Your Mark for 2020-21

Wales

	Support Our Mental Health	Free University	Tackle Child Poverty	Stop Plastic Pollution	Increase Racial Awareness in the Curriculum	Take Action on the Climate Emergency	Votes at 16	Tackle Discrimination and Hate Crime in the UK	Include Young People in the Plan for Covid-19 Recovery	Protect Human Rights	UK & Devolved Topics Total Vote	Access to training and jobs	Young people's voice should be heard in creating local services	Leisure and culture	End the health postcode lottery	Improve places to go, and things to do for young people	Access to technology and broadband for learning	Childhood obesity and food poverty	Homelessness	Domestic Violence	Transport	Local Topics Total Vote
Blaenau Gwent	18	16	2	7	1	-	-	1	-	6	51	6	6	4	2	0	1	5	10	14	1	49
Bridgend	57	30	16	20	14	15	-	7	-	13	172	37	19	27	8	0	7	12	30	32	6	178
Caerphilly	347	249	53	136	44	52	-	44	-	54	979	183	113	75	44	0	31	50	232	197	35	960
Cardiff	43	33	11	11	15	17	-	14	-	12	156	25	17	12	10	0	8	3	35	30	16	156
Carmarthenshire	79	57	17	22	12	33	-	14	-	14	248	51	28	20	8	0	11	18	50	41	12	239
Ceredigion	24	36	6	11	8	20	-	7	2	6	120	22	14	12	9	5	8	9	15	27	7	128
Conwy	3	3	3	3	1	-	-	-	-	1	14	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	3	5	2	13
Denbighshire	1	3	2	1	-	5	-	2	-	1	15	2	1	1	2	0	0	2	6	0	0	14
Flintshire	14	8	4	1	4	13	-	1	-	3	48	8	2	3	3	0	1	3	12	11	4	47
Gwynedd	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	5
Isle of Anglesey	2	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	1	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	4
Merthyr Tydfil	272	146	53	41	72	30	-	31	-	29	674	90	50	40	30	0	31	81	151	192	29	694
Monmouthshire	61	18	9	12	13	14	0	6	0	6	139	18	12	13	3	0	4	28	17	33	10	138
Neath Port Talbot	87	129	36	51	42	25	-	7	-	26	403	61	46	26	18	0	17	29	103	84	18	402
Newport	10	11	-	4	3	8	-	3	-	1	40	9	8	3	1	0	1	3	10	9	0	44
Pembrokeshire	132	100	49	51	23	42	-	25	-	28	450	96	60	36	22	0	22	47	65	60	25	433
Powys	5	3	2	2	-	2	-	3	-	1	18	2	2	0	0	0	4	2	4	3	0	17
Rhondda Cynon Taff	40	25	7	5	7	8	-	7	-	9	108	26	7	5	13	0	3	4	24	18	8	108
Swansea	4	11	1	-	2	2	-	-	-	4	24	4	4	1	1	0	1	2	4	7	1	25
Torfaen	67	9	14	-	2	5	-	33	-	2	132	13	37	2	0	30	1	4	8	40	1	136
Vale of Glamorgan	203	177	68	107	40	86	-	31	-	50	762	123	69	71	13	0	31	70	201	144	41	763
Wrexham	28	20	7	5	3	9	-	4	-	7	83	12	4	2	2	0	5	9	20	22	3	79
TOTALS	1,500	1,084	361	490	307	386	-	240	2	273	4,643	789	502	356	189	35	188	381	1,001	969	222	4,632

Appendix B: The 'tile' created by E2C which enabled other young people who were completing the Monmouthshire-specific ballot to fully understand the topic and what they were voting for

7 Sex Education explained

ONLINE VS REAL LIFE
Bodies, relationships and sEx are often being portrayed as unrealistic in the media. We want to re-direct this with a healthy view to reliable and trust worthy sources.

NORMALISING
What does normal look like? lumps, bumps and wiggly bits lets talk about it all. We want to debunk what's okay and what needs a doctors opinion.

LGBTQ+ INCLUSIVITY
Is sEx Education Inclusive yet? We want to make sure it is!

LETS TALK ABOUT...
Creating safe places to have discussions and normalise conversation about sex, puberty, bodies and relationships by giving young people the opportunity to ask the questions they want answered in a safe and confidential environment.

HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS
We want to talk about recognising toxic behaviors, ghosting , effective communication, love languages, understanding people have different needs / wants and what consent really looks like.

LOVE IN LOCKDOWN
Lets talk about sExting how to maintain boundaries you are comfortable with during lockdown.

Appendix C: Report Part 1: Overview (graphic created by Ruby Scott; member of E2C)

MAKE YOUR MARK 2020



MAKE YOUR MARK #MAKEYOURMARK

E2C
engage education

1. Which of these 10 issues do you think is the most important in Monmouthshire?

2. These top 10 priorities were identified as issues in Monmouthshire, if you could add another priority to this list, what would you put?

MONMOUTHSHIRE'S LOCAL BALLOT IS AN ANNUAL CONSULTATION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 11-25.

THE CONSULTATION IS DESIGNED TO GIVE YOU A VOICE AND FOR YOU TO TELL US WHAT MATTERS TO YOU ON A LOCAL LEVEL

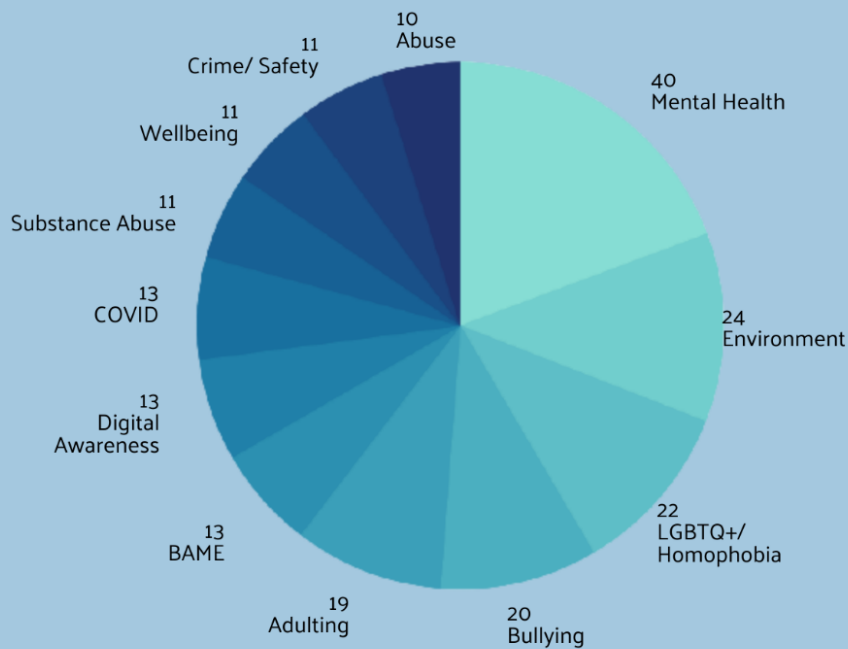
WE ASKED THAT YOU READ THE 10 TOPICS AND CHOSE THE ONE THAT WAS THE MOST IMPORTANT TO YOU

WE THEN ASKED YOU TO CHOOSE ONE OF YOUR OWN PRIORITIES

THIS INFOGRAPHIC DETAILS THE RESPONSES TO THIS QUESTION

Report Part 2: Overarching themes identified in the Monmouthshire-specific ballot (graphic created by Ruby Scott; member of E2C)

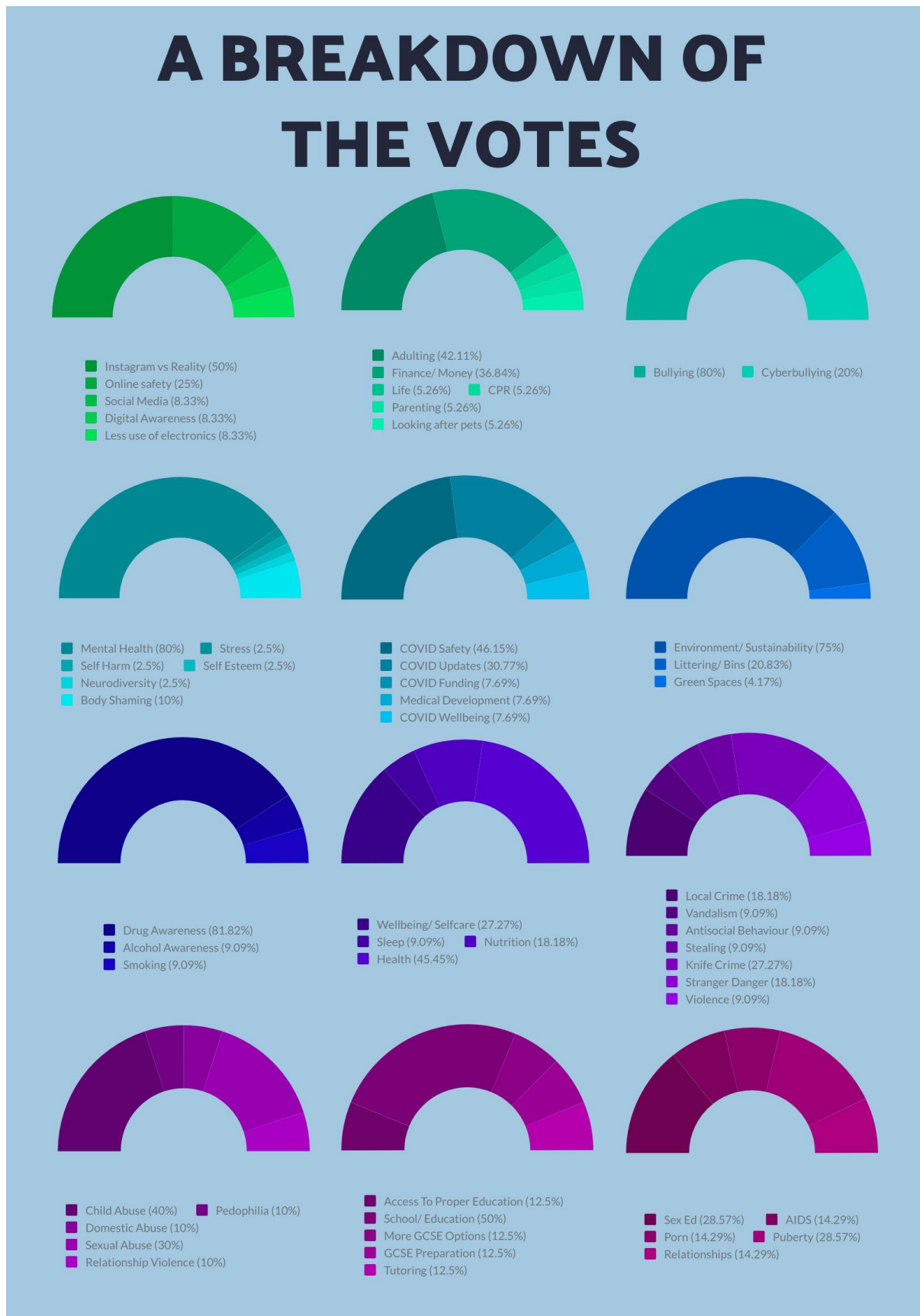
WE ASKED YOUNG PEOPLE IN MONMOUTHSHIRE WHAT ISSUES THEY THOUGHT WERE MOST IMPORTANT



LESS THAN 10 PEOPLE SAID



Report Part 3: Specific break-down of feedback per identified themes (graphic created by Ruby Scott; member of E2C)



Appendix D: Infographic of the top voted priorities by area (graphic created by John Ng; member of E2C)

