

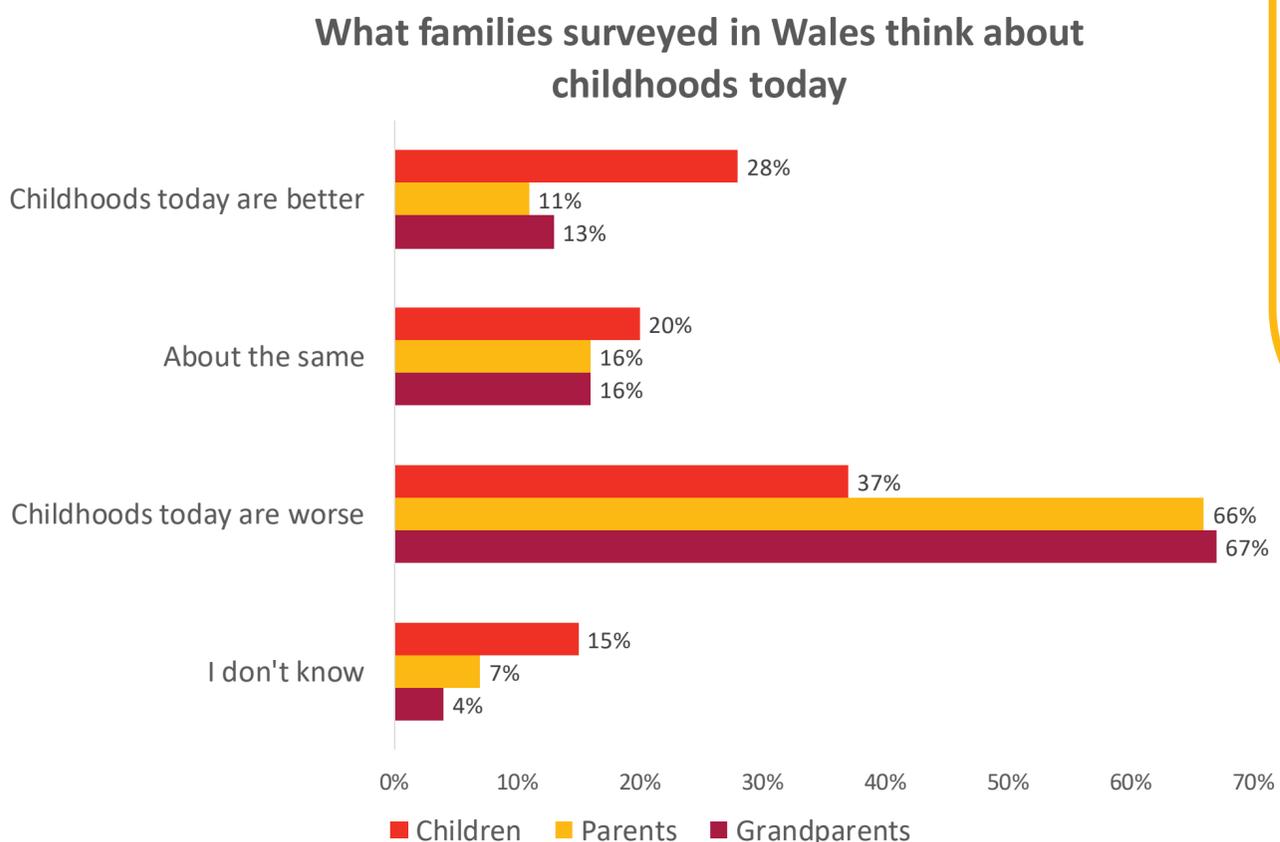
**Securing a better childhood and
a brighter future for every child
in Wales**



Are childhoods getting better?

One of the first and most fundamental responsibilities of any government is to make sure that every generation of children has a better childhood and a brighter future than the last.

However - our survey of children, parents, and grandparents, found that many families do not see this reflected in their own lives.



Becca's family across three generations told us how they think childhood has changed:

Becca, 16 - "Even though I'm 16, I do worry financially as prices are going up on everything and I worry about social media, definitely."

Becca's mum, Delyth said "it's not how it used to be with people in and out of each other's houses, that dynamic has gone. You don't make the same connections now, it's different."

Becca's grandmother, Gwladys: "I think it's worse these days, they can't have the freedom they used to have...You used to be able to play in each other's gardens or a playing field, but you can't do that these days."

Two-thirds of parents and grandparents surveyed in Wales said that childhoods today are worse and well over a third of children (37%) agreed.

What we did and our recommendations

To understand people's perceptions of the quality of children's lives, we conducted a unique survey of grandparents, parents, and children across the UK.

Across the UK we surveyed 2,073 children, 2,115 parents, and 1,353 grandparents. Additional survey boosts were also undertaken to increase sample size at the nation level. In Wales, we surveyed a total of 210 children, 197 parents, and 178 grandparents.

The results show **that too many children face big barriers to fulfilling their potential.**

To help ensure that this generation of children does have a brighter future than those before, we think the Welsh Government should take three steps:

1. Ensure child and adolescent mental health services are adequately resourced and invest in community-based pre-CAMHS support.
2. Recognise the importance of early intervention and preventative work for supporting families.
3. Publish a revised child poverty strategy.

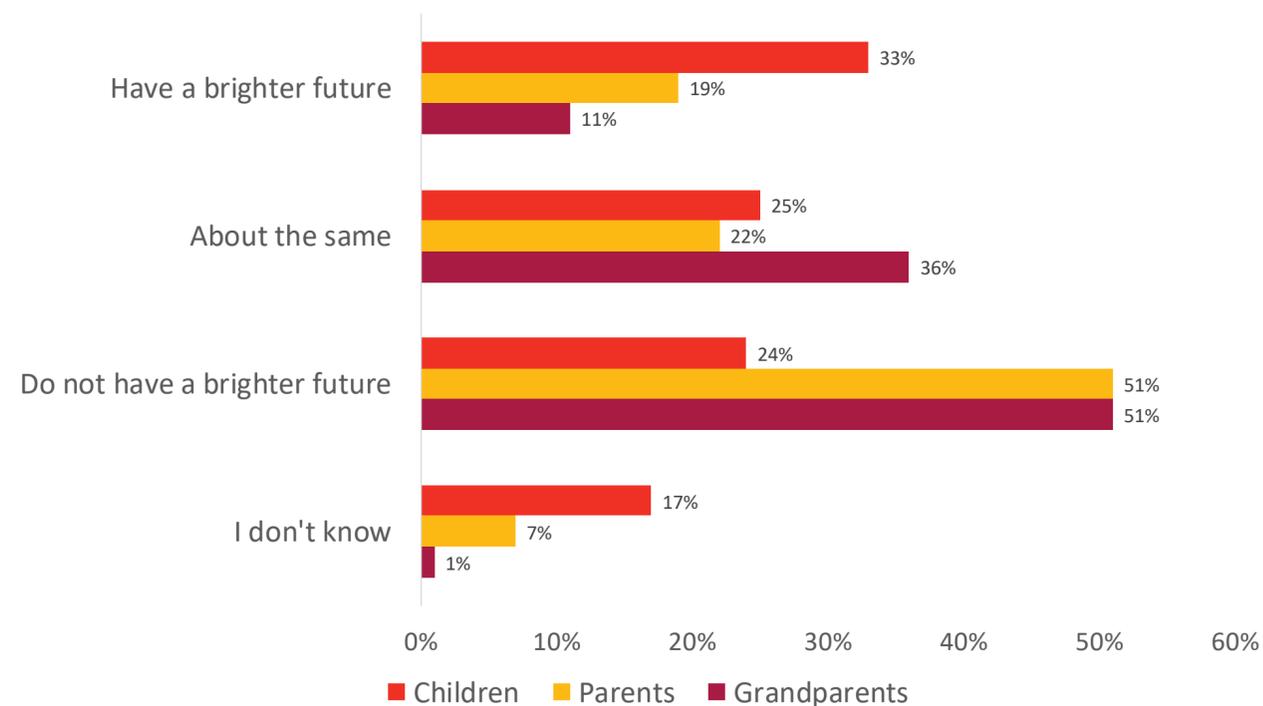
Do children have brighter futures?

At Action for Children, we give children the foundations they need to thrive and fulfil their potential. For lots of families in Wales, it doesn't feel like children do have bright futures in front of them.

When asked if they have a brighter future than their parent's generation:

- Only a third (33%) of children surveyed in Wales said yes.
- A quarter of parents (26%) and 15% of grandparents said their child/grandchild have a brighter future. Half said they didn't.
- Almost a quarter of children surveyed in Wales (24%) said they didn't think they had a brighter future than their parents did at their age – but parents and grandparents were more than twice as likely to think so.

What families surveyed in Wales think about children's futures



Barriers to having a brighter future

To understand more about the barriers children and young people face, we asked them what they think makes it more difficult to have a brighter future than their parents did.

Children surveyed in Wales said:

34%

More pressure from school



32%

Fewer opportunities to get a good job



32%

Less safe streets/higher risk of crime



31%

More pressure around physical appearance



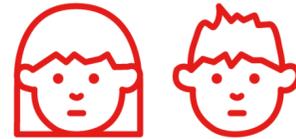
Parents pointed to their child's **use of social media/devices** (56%), **pressure around physical appearance** (47%), and **fewer opportunities to get a good job** (41%) as all making it harder for them to have a brighter future than they did.

Grandparents surveyed in Wales said that their **use of social media/devices** (58%), **less safe streets** (56%) and **the pressure on their grandchild's physical appearance** (49%) are all top factors in making their future less bright than their parents' generation.

What is getting in the way of children's potential?

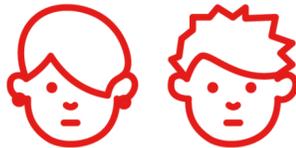
Children

- The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic (47%)
- Too much pressure from school (36%)
- Poor mental health (32%)



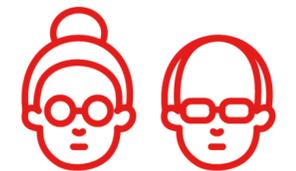
Parents

- Too much time spent on social media (65%)
- The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic (52%)
- Being overwhelmed by negative news (43%)
- Poor mental health (41%)



Grandparents

- The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic (60%)
- Too much time spent on social media (52%)
- Being overwhelmed by negative news (39%)



What are children worried about?

As well as being concerned about their futures, children in Wales are worried about their day to day lives.

Our survey found children were most commonly worried about:

40% Pressure from school

37% Their mental health

37% Their physical appearance

36% Them or their family catching Covid

30% Fear of Missing Out



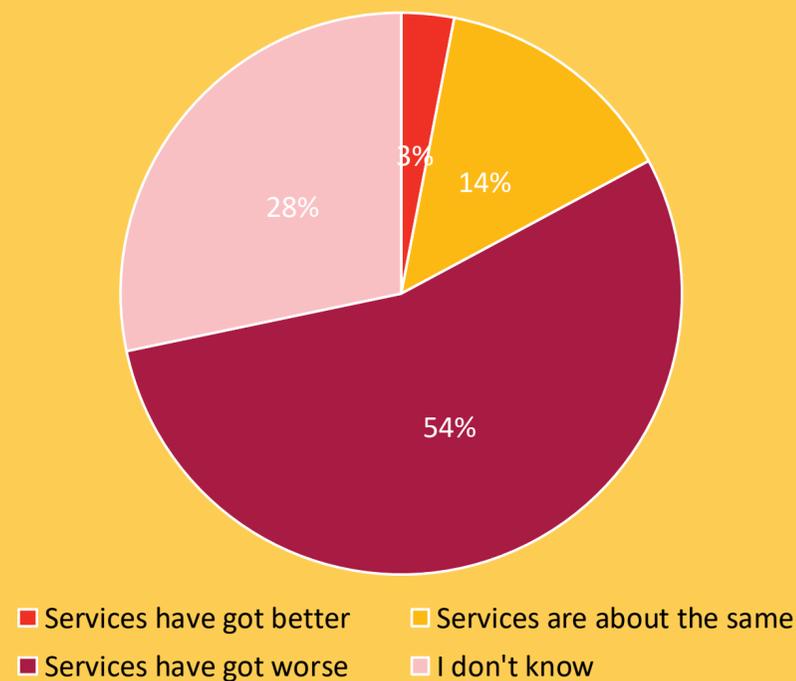
56% of children we surveyed in Wales said they **cover up at least one of their worries** from their parent/carer.

Are we doing enough?

69% of parents that we surveyed in Wales, and **66% grandparents**, said that the Government is **investing too little in services that support childhoods**.

Parents and grandparents surveyed in Wales had the least favourable view of services among the UK nations – with **over half** of parents (54%) and grandparents (52%) saying that **services in their area have got worse since 2011**. Only 3% of parents and Grandparents we surveyed thought they have improved.

Parents' views on local services that support childhoods



What needs to happen: Mental health

Even before the pandemic, children were experiencing long waiting lists for mental health services. During the pandemic, many young people were adversely affected by bereavement, social isolation, a loss of routine, anxiety and uncertainty about their futures, or a breakdown in formal and informal support structures.

This is supported by our survey data. 37% of children surveyed in Wales said they worried about their mental health in 2022, compared to 29% in 2019.

27% of children with mental health worries admitted to covering them up from their parent or carer. Nearly one in five (18%) said they cover up their worries about their appearance.

We call on the Welsh Government to:

- Ensure Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services are better resourced so all children and young people can access support when needed.
- Increase community-based, therapeutic support for children and their families, providing support for those children who are pre-CAMHS.
- Ensure care experienced children receive the consistent mental health assessments and support they need.

What needs to happen: Family support

Action for Children run Family Support services that aims to help children and their families. We work together at an early stage to explore solutions and prevent more long-term problems from arising.

Our support builds on the strengths of families, promotes parenting skills and increases the parents' ability to nurture successfully, while developing the resilience of children and young people.

We call on the Welsh Government to:

- Recognise the importance of early intervention and ensure an element of funding for specialist support is ringfenced for prevention and early intervention work.
- Support the vital work of volunteers delivering important preventative services to families in the home.
- Recognise emotional and practical support for parents as an important preventative service and the associated need for investment in this area.

What needs to happen: Poverty

In our survey, **27% of children surveyed in Wales said they worry about their family having enough money to live comfortably**, and 24% worry about the impact of the pandemic on their family's finances.

We know that local policies have the potential to prevent poverty. We are calling for further action to meaningfully respond to the 31% children living in (relative) poverty in Wales.

We call on the Welsh Government to:

- Build on the statutory child poverty duties prescribed through the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010 to publish a revised Child Poverty Strategy, with clear measurable and ambitious milestones, supported by transparent monitoring arrangements.
- Establish a Welsh Benefit System, as a single point of access for assistance, to help address some of the shortcomings with the approach taken in Wales to financially support low-income families.
- Ensure that existing statutory duties placed upon relevant public bodies to tackle child poverty through the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act are being sufficiently delivered, and that robust monitoring arrangements are in place to assess the quality and implementation of local Well-Being Plans.



There's a
Star in every
Child

Help them shine