



Children in Scotland Brexit Survey Findings

This paper summarises the key findings from Children in Scotland's survey on the impact of Brexit on children and young people. The survey focused on three key themes: the direct impact of Brexit on children and young people; the impact on the sector, and information needs.

The survey ran from 29th March to 1st May 2018, and had 55 responses in total. Around half of the respondents (47%) were members of Children in Scotland, with 38% non-members. The remaining 13% were not sure whether they were currently members or did not provide an answer.

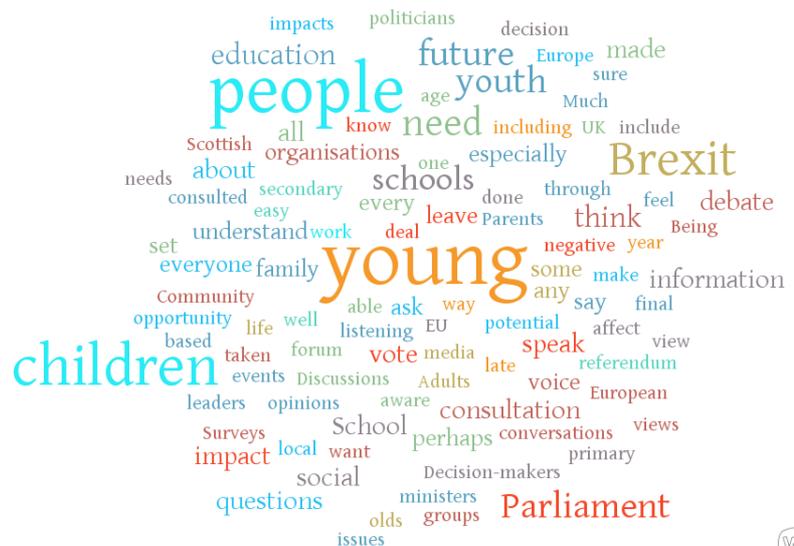
Executive Summary

The survey results indicate an overall disconnect between the Brexit process and children and young people, as well as those who work with them.

Respondents called for better, clearer information on all aspects of Brexit, from trade deals to free movement and a there was a strong call to protect EU nationals living in the UK.

The need for meaningful participation with children and young people to input their views and experiences into the Brexit process overall was identified as an urgent priority by members and non-members alike, and calls for a second vote with 16- and 17-year-olds being eligible came through clearly.

Respondents saw Children in Scotland's role as being a champion for the voices of children and young people, and indeed the sector, with opportunities to further use its existing network to share information, lobby decision-makers and put pressure on the government to respond to the concerns of children and young people and those who work with them.



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Impact on Children and Young People

Overall, the results overwhelmingly showed that respondents do not think children and young people have been included in the debate so far, with 65% stating they have not been included at all, and 22% saying they have only been somewhat involved. Of the remaining responses, 5.5% said they had been fairly involved, while 2% said they had been completely involved. 5.5% of respondents did not answer this question.

When asked for suggestions for next steps, respondents consistently called for **more consultation and engagement with children and young people** (47%). It was strongly expressed that they have the biggest stake in what will happen next, and that there was a lot of frustration at the lack of involvement of children and young people in the debate to date.

“Attempts need to be made to actively seek young people's views and take them in.”

“They need to be able to express their opinion about what they want for the future as it will affect them.”

“A consultation throughout every nursery, primary and secondary should be [under]taken.”

Clear, impartial information was also consistently highlighted as important, featuring in 20% of responses, with several respondents suggesting roadshows or forums as helpful ways to engage:

“There needs to be the opportunity to have their views heard. Government roadshows around schools and universities perhaps.”

“Children and young people should be supported to understand what the potential impacts of Brexit are before being asked what they think about Brexit... Steps needs to be taken to empower children and young people to articulate this view to decision-makers. Decision-makers need to be made aware of the importance of listening to children and young people.”

Some 15% saw **direct links with the Scottish Parliament, Scottish Youth Parliament or politicians** as being a key mechanism for driving change:

“Proper market research that covers the different opinions of young people on Brexit should be considered during the conversations in the Parliament.”

“Discussions at school leading to questions in the Scottish Parliament.”

“Regional events hosted by a local school featuring ministers and shadow ministers”

Several responses (9%) also expressed a sense of defeat, citing **concerns that Brexit will have a substantial and negative impact on children and young**

people and that it may be **too late for children and young people to have their say**:

"I feel children and young people have been deprived of a future and patently ignored. Brexit will affect their future life opportunities and choices."

"Being involved in the Brexit debate is not the issue. Leaving the European Union will have a dramatic negative impact on children and young people and the adults who were eligible to vote in the initial referendum, have let down future generations."

"There is nothing that young people can say or do that will make the slightest difference."

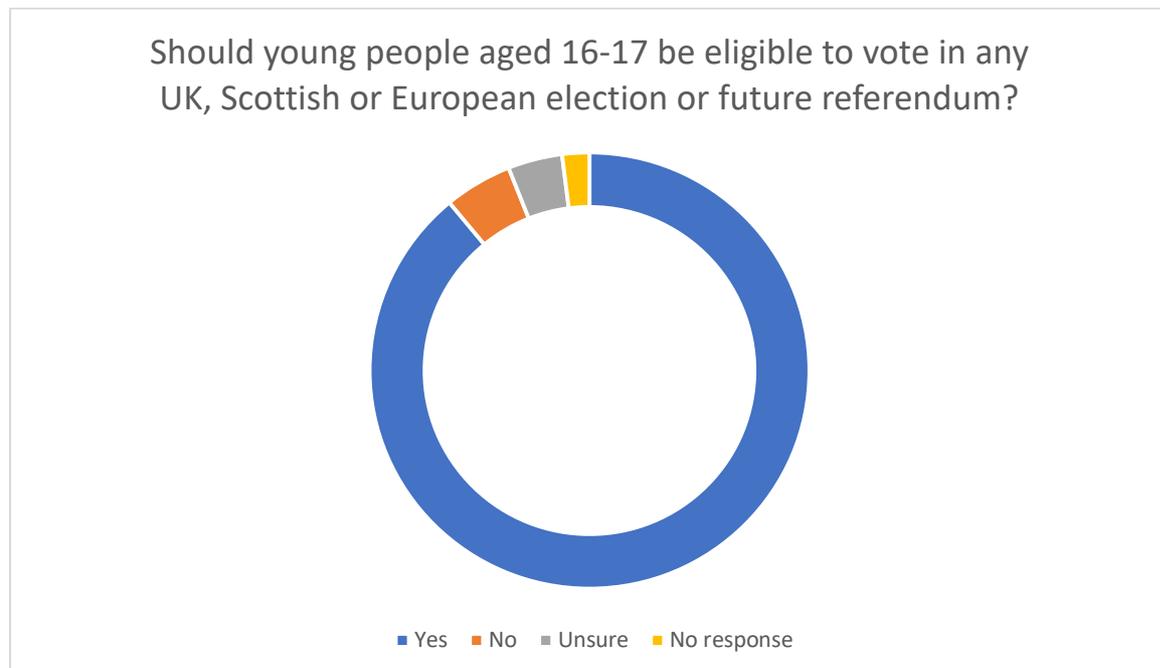
As one respondent succinctly put, *"with the age of voting set, not sure what could be done. The ballot box is all that currently counts."* A further four responses expressed a desire for a **second vote where 16- and 17-year-olds would be eligible**.

We asked respondents whether **young people aged 16-17 should be eligible to vote** in any UK, Scottish or European election or future referendum.

The overwhelming response was positive, with 89% of respondents voting yes, with 5% voting no and 4% selecting unsure. The remaining 2% did not provide an answer.

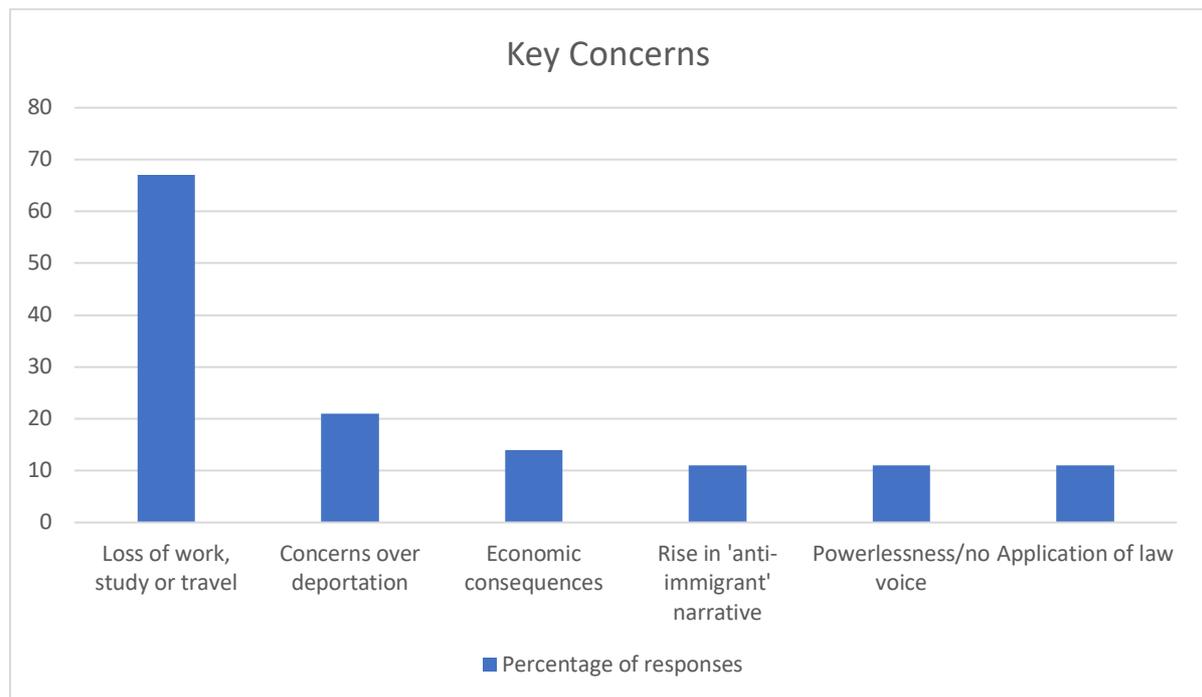
"Absolutely we believe it is their right to have a say in what is their future!"

"Why ever not, they are often more informed than many older people and more motivated to vote and have their say."



Young people's thoughts on Brexit

Forty-five per cent of respondents have spoken to children and young people about Brexit, while 51% have not. The remaining 4% did not answer this question. Those that had spoken to young people (28 respondents) highlighted several key issues that have been raised, including: the loss of work, study and travel opportunities (67%); concerns they or their friends/family may have to leave (21%); economic consequences (14%); concerns over the rise of an 'anti-immigrant' narrative (11%); a lack of say in the process (11%) and concern over the application of law (11%).



Concerns over the **loss of opportunities for young people**, both in a professional capacity and personal capacity were consistently highlighted:

“Worries re loss of opportunities to work/ live abroad; concerns re impact on economy.”

“Freedom of movement, equity for all.”

“The lack of opportunities to live and travel, make friends and fall in love in Europe.”

The **loss of rights protections** was also specifically mentioned by several respondents:

“They are concerned about changes in the law if European legislation doesn't apply. They are worried about the ECHR and the UCRC and will these rights apply.”

“As a Rights Respecting School, concern about changes to judicial and human rights once out of the EU.”

“Our P7 pupils have concerns about 1) the future of them [our international /EU students] in our school and country 2) the future of their friends and the uncertainty that Brexit brings.”

A notable point that was expressed in 11% of responses, which focused on the trend that the majority of the younger electorate voted to remain and therefore that the **Brexit vote was not representative of younger people**. This was compounded by the fact that the majority of young people were unable to vote.

“Young people felt that the majority of people who voted to leave were older people who weren't going to be around for the fall out in years to come and the young people would be left with the consequences of someone else decision that didn't seem to care about what they thought as the younger generation. They felt disregarded and that older people didn't feel that YP had the knowledge to know what was best.”

The **tone of debate and values** that were shared by some following the vote were highlighted as particularly concerning by 11% of respondents, expressing *“concerns re nature of some of the narrative which can appear anti-immigrants”* and the *“Anti-Muslim and racial hatred that appears to be spreading.”*

Young people expressed concern or fear over the **future of EU nationals in the UK**, highlighting the need for clear information and transparency around EU nationals' rights. Several responses spoke of a *“fear of future deportation”* or concern that *“they might have to leave the country next year.”* When asked further, 42% of respondents said that issues had arisen for them as for EU citizens living in the UK, or UK citizens living in the EU, while a further 27% were unsure. This has implications for the workforce, and for families' outcomes.

“I work with families who have children with palliative needs, they have concerns about the impact [Brexit] may have on the families' financial welfare and medical provision.”

Another respondent expressed that *“a number of workers in our sector are EU nationals therefore they will be worried about their status and right to remain here. This is at a time we need every worker in ELC and many more with the expansion of childcare in Scotland.”*

“I'm an EAL teacher - many young people I work with & their families are impacted. Many parents are tense and angry about the situation and also worried about their children's futures”

One respondent highlighted their particular issues as a parent, explaining that because their children were born in different years, different standards apply to evidence their right to remain:

“One can have his British citizenship fairly easily... the other one... has to prove that his parents ... had the right to live and work in the UK in order to get his British citizenship. A significant [amount] of evidence are requested including a £940 fee.”

Information Needs

Respondents' views were more mixed when it came to how informed they felt, but more than half said they either felt somewhat (36%) or not at all (20%) informed about the process.

Of the remaining responses, 24% felt fairly informed, 13% felt very informed and 2% felt completely informed. 5% did not supply an answer.

When asked whether there had been enough opportunity for public scrutiny, 78% said no, with 13% saying they were unsure. The remaining 2% said that there had been enough opportunity, and 7% did not provide an answer. Concerns were expressed around the use or misuse of inaccurate information, and lack of forthcoming information:

“There were a lot of erroneous messages and figures used by politicians during the Brexit campaign, widely used and re-used by media without any questioning regarding their validity.”

Further information was called for on the **discussions being had at a senior government level**, and more information on the **impact of decisions, how they are made and why**. There were specific concerns on **the impact of leaving the EU on rights**, along with concerns about funding for various work streams. Several respondents expressed **distrust of news sources**, citing a perceived dearth of unbiased information. There were also several **calls for a vote on the final deal**, or a **way to stop Brexit altogether**. 27% of respondents wanted more information on everything.

“There have been few details shared on all aspects. We need very clear information on EVERY area and the impact.”

“The details of the actual deal. I think we should have an opportunity to review and vote again after the final negotiations are complete.”

This feeling is not completely uniform though, as one respondent did say that they did not feel they needed more information, saying, *“I keep myself as informed as possible.”*

When asked about what future priorities ought to be, many respondents repeated their request for **clear information (27%)**, **safeguarding citizens'**

rights (16%) and **another vote** (13%) where CYP can have a more meaningful say. Concerns about the Irish border were also raised and the uncertainty this has caused.

“Clarity and honesty about the financial and social cost.”

“Giving children and young people a voice.”

“Finalise the actual settlement and then let us vote again.”

Several responses also called for concerted, **cross-party work** to produce the best outcomes for children and young people and families.

“Remove... the lack of clarity around the impact of Brexit. There is too much confusion and political game playing, at times back stabbing, between parties, rather than working together to achieve the best result for the UK.”

“Anything that promotes genuine inclusivity - cross party working, awareness of impact on all parts of the UK - and a focus on restructuring for the long term, not firefighting.”

Impact on the sector

Anecdotally, many organisations have said that Brexit was not part of their anticipated workload, and that a lot of work that has been done has been unfunded and on an ad hoc basis due to capacity issues leaving little resource for concentrated pieces of work. This appeared to be backed up by responses to questions on how much of priority Brexit is for them, with 5% saying it is the most important issue for them. 29% said it was very important, 25% said fairly, 22% said somewhat and 5% said not at all. 13% did not respond.

European funding and the financial impact of Brexit in the UK were also consistently highlighted, with one response stating:

“As we are a youth organisation, we need to know the national impact, as this will inevitably impact upon our locally based work. We are experiencing significant cuts to Local authority services and funding cuts to voluntary organisations now and in coming years. If Brexit causes further uncertainty, it will inevitably impact on public services and those most disadvantaged. Political trust is very low amongst young people, the future looks quite bleak currently.”

In terms of funding, 18% of respondents said that Brexit had already impacted on their access to funding, 25% said it had not, but almost half (44%) of respondents said they did not know. The remaining 13% did not answer. Concerns over access to funding were raised by respondents in previous questions, and it seems this is an unknown quantity for many organisations with less than a year until Brexit, and that already it had impacted several organisations.

With regards to staffing, 18% said it had impacted on staffing their organisation, 36% said it had not and around a third (31%) were not sure, again highlighting that this is an area of uncertainty but already almost one quarter of respondents have faced staffing issues as a consequence of Brexit.

“We are an organisation with 25 team members of which only three currently hold UK passports. We are fighting for survival and for not losing our friends and their families.”

“It's added to our workload but we've had no further resource so the existing staff team has had to work beyond capacity to meet the needs of our members.”

Children in Scotland's role

Respondents stated that Children in Scotland could play a significant role in continuing to provide information and build networks, acting as a link between the Government and children and young people. This may be that through disseminating information, shining a light on the views of children and young people and/or raising awareness in the sector when more is known about the final deal and its implications for children and families through training or forums.

“Continue promoting the voices of children and young people as much as possible - really important. Take a position on calling for a vote on the final deal.”

“Once [the deal] is known then Children in Scotland could use their position to raise the alarm and ensure people are made aware of what is being proposed and rally the troops to make an educated and informed decision. Children in Scotland could keep turning up the heat so that government is forced to reveal the real deal while there is still time to negotiate; otherwise, our children and YP are even more at risk.”

“Protect and inform children of EU nationals and their families of what they may face. The future of a child can never be jeopardised by a political decision. Put differently, a political decision should never affect adversely the life of a child.”

One respondent stated that *“the voice of Children in Scotland is vitally important to lend weight and influence for organisations”*. Children in Scotland remains dedicated to amplifying the voices of children and young people and working with our members and partners from all sectors to protect the rights of children and young people throughout the Brexit process and beyond.

Appendix A – Survey Questions

Q1. To what extent do you think children and young people have been included in the Brexit debate to date?

Q2. What, if anything, do you think should happen to ensure children and young people can have their say in the Brexit process going forward from this point?

Q3 Have you spoken to children and young people about Brexit?

Q4 If so, what key issues, if any, have they highlighted?

Q5 We are interested in our members' views on the impact of Brexit on families, particularly for EU citizens living in the UK, or UK citizens living in the EU. Has this arisen as an issue for you or your organisation and, if so, how?

Q6 Should young people aged 16-17 be eligible to vote in any UK, Scottish or European election or future referendum?

Q7 Are you a member of Children in Scotland?

Q8 How informed do you feel about the Brexit process?

Q9 What about Brexit, if anything, would you like to know more about?

Q10 Has there been enough opportunity for public scrutiny during the Brexit process?

Q11 What should the priorities be from now on?

Q12 How significant an issue is Brexit for your organisation?

Q13 Has Brexit had an impact on access to funding on you or your organisation?

Q14 Has Brexit had an impact on staffing on your organisation?

Q15 What, if anything, do you think Children in Scotland should be doing about Brexit?

Q16 Have you got any other comments? Is there anything else you would like to add that hasn't been asked about?