

NSPCC Cymru/Wales

Response to:

**Welsh Assembly Government
Consultation on a Single Brand for
Children and Young People**

March 2009

NSPCC Cymru/Wales, Capital Tower, Greyfriars Road, Cardiff, CF10 3AG
Tel: (029) 2026 7011 Email:



Registered charity number: 216401 and
SC037717

About us:

The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) is the UK's leading charity specialising in child protection and the prevention of cruelty to children. The NSPCC's purpose is to end cruelty to children. We seek to achieve cultural, social and political change - influencing legislation, policy, practice, attitudes and behaviours for the benefit of children and young people. This is achieved through a combination of service provision, lobbying, campaigning and public education.

The NSPCC exists to end cruelty to children through a range of activities designed:

- to help children who have suffered abuse overcome the effects of such harm;
- to prevent children from suffering abuse;
- to prevent children from suffering significant harm as a result of ill-treatment;
- to help children who are at risk of such harm; and
- to work to protect children from further harm.

The NSPCC has more than 180 teams and projects throughout Wales, England and Northern Ireland. Their work includes:

- family support, assessment, counselling and therapy to children and families experiencing abuse;
- investigations into allegations of child abuse; and
- work within schools and other youth organisations to provide a voice for children and advocate their rights.

Since February 2006 NSPCC has also delivered the ChildLine service, the UK's free, 24-hour, confidential helpline for children and young people.

Introduction

NSPCC Cymru/Wales welcomes the opportunity to respond to this consultation on the Welsh Assembly Government's Single Brand for children and young people. We have answered the questions where we feel we have a relevant experience.

A Single Brand

5 possible choices for a single brand are:

- Young Wales/Cymry Ifanc
- Agenda 0 – 25
- Right here, Right Now/Yma Nawr, Hawliau Nawr
- Rights to Action/Gweithredu'r Hawliau
- A Right to Be/Hawl i Fod

1. What do you think of these as possible choices? Place them in order, writing 1 for your favourite to 5 for your least favourite.

We believe that it is crucial that the overarching headline for the single brand includes the words "rights" within it. From our experience of working across the UK the Welsh Assembly Government's explicit use of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) as the basis for its policy in relation to children and young people is what marks it out from the other nations. This should be clearly referenced in the overarching title and should also be celebrated as a positive desire to ensure children's rights are realised in Wales.

Our preferred title would be *Rights to Action*, as this is what both the Welsh Assembly Government and partner agencies in the statutory and voluntary sectors have been working to since 2005. Much work has already been undertaken to explain the Rights to Action approach to all levels and we believe that considerable progress has been made. By changing the title now we are concerned that this would have to start again and lead to confusion.

In saying this we also believe it would be useful to consider what children and young people themselves think the title should be, as it is a brand that needs to be accessible to them as well as to adults working to support and help them.

2. How would your chosen message help in your work with (a) children and young people and (b) your wider organisation and partners?

Based on our experience to date of the current brand of *Rights to Action*, we believe a new, single brand for such work would help communicate in a more effective way, the progress the Assembly Government is making in realising the rights of children and young people in Wales.

A clear and consistent single brand for all work with children and young people would enable all agencies to be able to articulate the rights-based approach to policy making taken by WAG. Currently the rights based approach is something that has been looked to positively by other agencies across the UK, but more work needs to be undertaken to ensure that as a programme the future single brand hangs together more effectively.

It is crucial that the new single brand is also more than just a title. The way in which it is presented is important, for example an easily accessible website that links to all relevant

policy and guidance. We also hope that a single brand would go some way in helping Assembly Government department's to make the appropriate links internally and ensure that a consistent and joined-up working ethos is put into practice. Quite often in consultation responses, particularly involving strategy or guidance developed outside of core children's policy, there is a need to reference *Rights to Action*, the 7 core aims and the UNCRC. Recent examples have included *Talk To Me: A National Action Plan to Reduce Suicide and Self Harm in Wales* and the *Ten Year Homelessness Strategy*. Both of these are significant to vulnerable groups of children and young people, and contained actions relating to them, but failed completely to reference the children's policy framework that the Welsh Assembly Government has put in place.

Connected to this point it is also important that this is a brand not only owned by those whose core work relates to children and young people, but that there is also a wider understanding across all policy makers and practitioners about how the new policy structure links to their areas of work, be it housing, transport or rural affairs.

The new brand needs to guard against being something that is too adult focused and so children and young people are unable to access it. We do not underestimate the challenge in developing a brand that is accessible by adults and children and young people. Children and young people need to be involved in the development and ongoing evolution of the single brand.

We would also like to take this opportunity to highlight the recommendations within the 2008 Concluding Observations of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child. The UK State Party, of which WAG forms a key part of, was urged by the Committee to ensure the effective co-ordination of the implementation of the Convention. A single brand would go some way in co-ordinating this approach and enable WAG to demonstrate current best practice and developments in realising the rights of children and young people in Wales, but also, through this, better identify gaps in practice and areas to further improve. We are encouraged by the work currently ongoing between WAG and the UNCRC Monitoring Group around the development of a 5 year national action plan for the promotion and implementation of the UNCRC, and look forward to working together on its progress.

In terms of communicating the brand to children and young people, we would hope that there would be a continued engagement in the development of the single brand, maybe eventually even the development of a child and young person friendly version that could sit alongside the adult version under the same overall title. We would hope that the Welsh Assembly Government would seek to innovate, using new technology to create something dynamic for children and young people in Wales, something that they can engage with that would allow for the Welsh Assembly Government to connect with their lives. This would be an ambitious concept, but should be considered. NSPCC have recently re-launched the ChildLine website to be more interactive for children and young people and have included a section called Idea, which encourages children and young people to think creatively about ChildLine as a service and helps us as an agency design products for children and young people that engage them.

The ChildLine website can be accessed via:

<http://www.childline.org.uk>

The Idea section can be accessed via:

<http://www.idea.me.uk/>

3. How could you use it to publicise and explain your work?

Our experience to date, despite the efforts made under the 'Rights to Action' programme, is that it can sometimes prove difficult to establish where certain developments with services, policy and/or guidance fits within the overall work agenda. We feel a single brand would in turn help us publicise this work and set out a clear policy framework to highlight the voices of the children and young people we come into contact with and the work that we do.

4. Do you have a better suggestion and how would this better help describe your work?

We welcome the vision of WAG in proposing a single brand and continue to be encouraged by their commitment to children's rights. However, we would like to highlight the possibility that the current emphasis on the broad safeguarding agenda, with its emphasis on prevention and early intervention, could inadvertently have had the consequence of reducing the focus on protecting the most vulnerable children and young people. We would highlight the need to balance a broad strategic approach with an acknowledgement of the vulnerability of certain groups. The current 7 Core Aims we believe achieves this and we would be concerned if these were diluted too far and become so broad as to lose the focus on the most vulnerable.

Making the message meaningful to all

In addition to developing a single message we propose to use seven broad outcomes to describe wellbeing - the basis for our work - in a common language. They are:

Have a Flying Start/ Be Prepared

Be Skilled

Be Healthy

Be Active

Be Involved

Be Safe

Be Free from poverty

6. Does it help to have these outcomes to describe your work?

Yes – Why does it help? No – Why doesn't it help?

Broadly these are outcomes that all agencies would probably share in terms of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people in Wales. Without having further details about what these would mean in practice attached to them it is difficult to comment on whether they reflect the performance indicators that sit below them.

7. Can you fit your services within them? Yes/No

If yes, please give an example. If No, why not?

9 What does each outcome say/mean to you?

NSPCC Cymru/Wales believes that more clarity is needed with regard to Core Aim 3 and Core Aim 6. The safeguarding and child protection work that we undertake broadly falls within these two aims and we are concerned that there has been a spilt in some children's plans to place core child protection work under Core Aim 3 and then any issues relating to domestic abuse, and in some cases bullying, under Core Aim 6. We believe that this spilt some vulnerable groups away from the others and certainly as far as domestic abuse is concerned contradicts the Welsh Assembly Government's stated position that domestic abuse is a child protection matter.

This confusion is reflected in these seven outcomes, with Core Aim 3 being "Be Healthy", which ignores the second half of the current wording relating to freedom from "abuse, victimisation and exploitation", and Core Aim 6 being "Be Safe", when in the reality of the recently published children's plans it is only usually domestic abuse that would meet this definition. We would welcome an acknowledgement in the new single brand that all issues relating to child protection, including domestic abuse, should be included under Core Aim 3 and that the outcome should read "Be Healthy and Safe" or "Be Healthy and Protected". We would not support the moving of child protection to be included under Core Aim 6 as this also relates to housing and the fit is much better with health than housing. In particular if you look at the support needs of children and young people who experience abuse they are often delivered by health professionals.

This is an issue that is probably more fundamental to the wording of the original 7 Core Aims than the outcomes themselves. We believe that this single brand exercise provides an opportunity to clarify this situation and include an outcome that recognises the rights that children and young people have to being protected under Article 19 of the Convention and to receive timely services to help them if they have experienced abuse under Article 39.

10. Is there anything you particularly like or dislike about them?

The use of the term "Be" appears to change the context of the 7 Core Aims and we do not believe it accurately reflects the Welsh Assembly Government's rights based approach. The 7 Core Aims as they currently stand suggest a collective effort to protect and promote the rights of children and young people. By placing "Be" before the outcome this appears to place more emphasis on the child or young person themselves being responsible for meeting these outcomes. We recognise the difficulty in attempting to simplify the Core Aims into short catch all outcomes, but there is a need not to lose the focus on the outcomes being something that all of society should contribute to, including children and young people themselves. It may be that the 7 Core Aims as they stand explain exactly what the Welsh Assembly Government wants to achieve for children and young people and so there is not a need to develop these specific outcomes. It is interesting to note that the Scottish Executive's *Getting it Right for Every Child* strategy contains some quite lengthy values and principles:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Young-People/childrenservices/girfec/Practitioners/PrinciplesandValues/Q/editmode/on/forceupdate/on>

If the exercise is to look at something that can be easily communicated to children and young people then we would recommend that they are consulted and involved in determining what the Core Aims mean to them.

Conclusion

NSPCC Cymru/Wales would be happy to discuss further any of the points we have raised within this consultation response

Simon Jones, NSPCC Policy and Public Affairs Manager Wales, (029) 20267011, simonjones@nspcc.org.uk

Nia Lloyd, NSPCC Policy Support Officer, (029) 20267013, nlloyd@nspcc.org.uk