

The Big Conversation

2026 Findings



During the summer of 2026 **'Parents Connect Wales'** carried out a Big Conversation with parents across Wales. The topics included were decided by a pre-poll with parents.

168 parents from across the whole of Wales shared their views through an online survey.

NB When we refer to 'parents' we use this as an inclusive term that includes parents (both mothers and fathers), grandparents, foster parents, adoptive parents or anyone with parental responsibility.

Parenting Support



When facing challenges, **39%** of parents were able to access the support needed for their child/ren **'Most of the time'** or **'Always'**.



However, **24%** answered **'Rarely'** or **'Never'**.

Parents shared more about their experiences:

- Unequal access to support from health, education and family services.
- Relying on family, friends and online resources for advice and help.
- Gaps in provision for older children and those with additional needs.



What support parents have said would help:

Clear, trusted information and advice

Better support for additional learning needs (ALN)

Easier access to professional services

Mental health and emotional wellbeing support

Parenting classes and local groups

"Trained professionals, understanding & empathic professionals to support rather than parent-blame."

"Support groups, drop-in sessions, health visitors, better funding."

"A carers' assessment, appropriate mental health support, better support for lone carers, paid time off to take my children to appointments."

Support with Additional Learning Needs (ALN)



37% said that they had concerns about their child/ren or they had been assessed for/ diagnosed with ALN



Support parents would like with ALN are:

**Better support
in schools**

Shorter waiting times

**Earlier help
and intervention**

More specialist services

**Clearer information
and communication**

**Feeling listened to
and understood**

**Equal access to
support across Wales**

Childcare

Parents told us what they want from childcare:



Help us save money

**Make working
more affordable**



**Make childcare easier to
access and closer to home**

Give us more choice



**Give us childcare hours
that fit around our lives**



**Help our children learn,
play and make friends**

The expanded childcare offer could help families by:

- Reducing childcare costs and financial pressure
- Making it easier for parents to work more hours
- Providing childcare that fits around family life
- Making childcare fairer and easier to access
- Helping children learn, play and make friends

“Not putting pressure on family members to care for my child, grandparents are elderly and it’s a lot for them.”

“It would reduce our childcare costs so much and make life more enjoyable.”

“It would mean we have more money for feeding our children, electric and water bills. Living more comfortably..... we still spend a huge amount of money on childcare monthly.”

Cost of Living

79%

79% said that financially things were worse than this time last year.

Top 3 issues affecting families and those on a low income

1. Energy costs/ fuel poverty
2. Childcare costs
3. Debt



Parents shared more about their experiences:

Rise in the cost of living e.g. food, fuel

Increasing housing costs

Unaffordable childcare costs

Growing financial stress and insecurity

Wages and benefits not keeping up

Fewer opportunities for children and families

Struggling to afford everyday essentials

Ideas for support for low-income families included:

- Cheaper and more flexible childcare
- Help with everyday living costs
- More support with school costs and children's activities
- Fairer financial support for all families
- Empowering children's voices and upholding rights

"We all just want to be able to survive without having to stress what we should have to choose to pay next, debt/gas and electric/ food or shoes and clothes.."

"Council tax reductions, lower fuel bills, universal free school meals, free local activities for children."

"Free activities, more affordable childcare, less pressure to continue paying for overpriced stuff for school... more pressure on workplaces to be flexible for families"



Social media and phone use



82% supported the proposed ban on social media for under 16s



Parents shared their views on a social media ban:

- Will improve online safety and protection from bullying
- Will encourage less screen time and more family time
- Some worries about children missing out and feeling left out from online activities

Parents told us what would make a social media ban easier for families:

- Give us clear advice and guidance
- Make age checks and online controls stronger
- Help parents and schools work together
- Give children more affordable things to do

Views on a Wales- wide ban on mobile phones in schools



72% of parents supported a mobile phone ban in schools



Parents felt a phone ban could:

- Reduce bullying and distractions
- Improve learning and safety
- Encourage children to make friends

"I completely support a ban on mobile phones to improve concentration and focus in school and for kids to develop their social skills."

"Agreed, bullying can be far worse with a phone in school."

However, some parents didn't support the full ban and felt:

- Children should be able to contact parents during emergencies and on their school journeys
- Phones should be available for children that need emotional or additional support
- Restrict access to phones during lesson time rather than a full ban.

"My son has school anxiety and being able to check in with me helps him throughout the day."

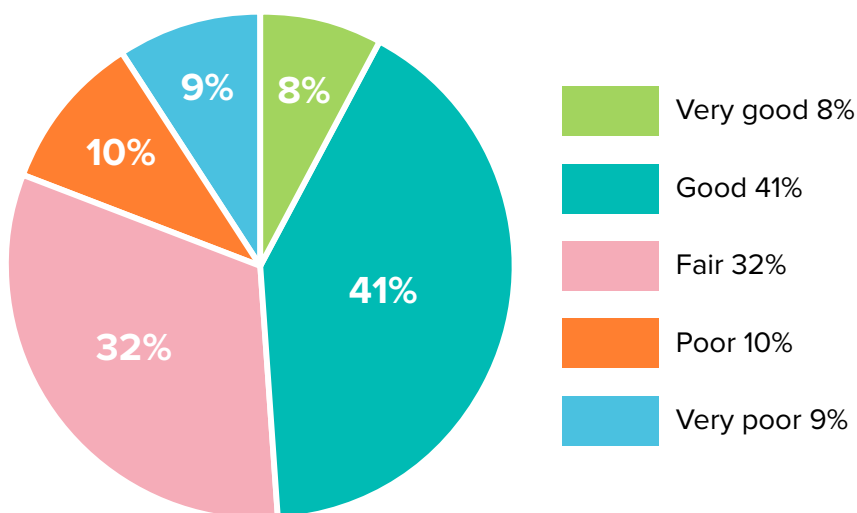
"For many children living rurally having a phone on the walk to and from school is a safety precaution."

"Phone use should be limited to break times."

"They have a place in secondary school if used responsibly."

Wellbeing

Parents were asked to describe their emotional/ mental wellbeing:



Parents told us what mental health and wellbeing support they would find helpful:

- Get us quick access to mental health support when we need it
- Give parents and carers more help and time to rest
- Help us connect with others through local groups and activities
- Support us with money worries and everyday stress
- Give new parents more support and someone to talk to

"Better and easier access to lower-level support within GP surgeries rather than just being dismissed."

"More support for family bonding, less pressure, more financial security."

"Being able to have a personal life will help. My children are still young and it's almost impossible to have a personal life. It's draining without good support."

Our Ideas

Parents were asked: If you were First Minister for the day, what one thing would you do for parents and families in Wales?

Here are some of the great ideas:

Childcare

- "Make things easier and cheaper."
- "More free childcare for working parents."



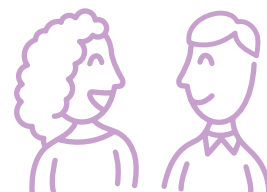
Help with finances

- "Provide families the opportunity to experience a day where they didn't have to stress about finances."
- "I would look into making sure that fresh healthy meat and veg was cheaper to buy than unhealthy processed food."



Involving Parents

- "Sit down and talk to parents."
- "Listen to us and try to implement as much of our views as possible to make it easier for us all."



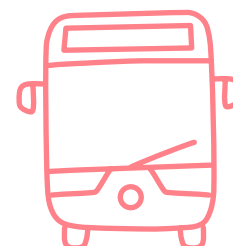
Community Support

- "Allow families to make connections in communities."
- "Create more affordable and educational activities in my local area."



Transport and access

- "I would purchase a fleet of buses and train drivers to support those living in rural communities."
- "Wi-Fi for all."



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We would like to thank all the parents who took their time to share their views.

We continue to empower the voice of parents across Wales.

To find out more, go to [Children in Wales | Parents Connect Wales Hub](#)