



Young People's Views on Rights and Advice Services

A report on a national consultation survey
to inform JustRights' Young People's
Manifesto

September 2014

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1. Introduction and Background

1.1 About JustRights

Founded by Children's Rights Alliance for England, Law Centres Network, The Howard League for Penal Reform and Youth Access, JustRights is a coalition of around 30 charities campaigning for fair access for children and young people to good quality advice, advocacy and legal representation.

JustRights believes that:

- Children and young people are a uniquely vulnerable client group with advice needs and advice-seeking behaviour that are distinct from those of all other client groups
- Only carefully tailored - and properly resourced - service delivery approaches will be successful in meeting the specific advice, advocacy and legal representation needs of children and young people
- Current arrangements do not provide the advice, advocacy and legal representation needed by children and young people if they are to enjoy the rights and protections the law affords them

1.2 JustRights' Young People's Manifesto

JustRights is developing a Young People's Manifesto on Rights and Advice Services, so that young people themselves can tell government what they think needs to be done to help young people understand their rights and get the help they need to enforce them.

Youth Access, the youth advice and counselling charity, has been leading a national consultation on behalf of JustRights with young people across the country to find out what issues concerning their rights matter to them, what good advice means to them, what concerns they have about cuts to local services, and how their understanding of their rights and access to rights-based advice could be improved. Local working groups of young people and a youth editorial board will determine the final content and design of the manifesto, which will be launched towards the end of 2014.

As part of the consultation, we ran a national survey and a series of focus groups with young people to elicit their views on a range of issues relating to young people's rights and advice services that had been raised by our manifesto working groups.

1.3 Purpose of this report

This report sets out the findings from the national survey run as part of the consultation on the manifesto.

It should be noted that there were many issues deemed unsuitable for exploration in the survey, either because they were too complex for a survey of this type or because they might have raised sensitive issues requiring support to be made available to young people. Such issues were explored in the series of focus groups we ran instead.

The findings from both the survey and the focus groups will inform the work of our working groups and editorial board as they write our Young People's Manifesto.

2. Survey and Methodology

2.1 Survey format

The survey questionnaire was made available in both online and paper formats.

The electronic survey can be viewed at: <http://bit.ly/Youthmanifesto>

2.2 Sampling and solicitation methods

The survey was promoted as suitable for young people aged 15 to 25.

A number of methods were used to encourage young people to complete the questionnaire, including:

- messages to JustRights' Twitter followers
- email requests to youth agencies and advice agencies to alert users of their services
- promotion of the survey at an event held by NHS England's Youth Forum
- blogs and articles posted on websites, e.g. LegalVoice

2.3 Data collection period

The survey opened on 10th June 2014 and closed on 31st July 2014

2.4 Survey response rate

A total of 114 completed survey responses were received from young people. Of these, 72 were completed online and 42 were completed on hard copies of the questionnaire.

3. Findings

3.1 Profile of respondents

The questionnaire only sought two simple pieces of information to help assess the profile of respondents and to enable more detailed analysis of responses:

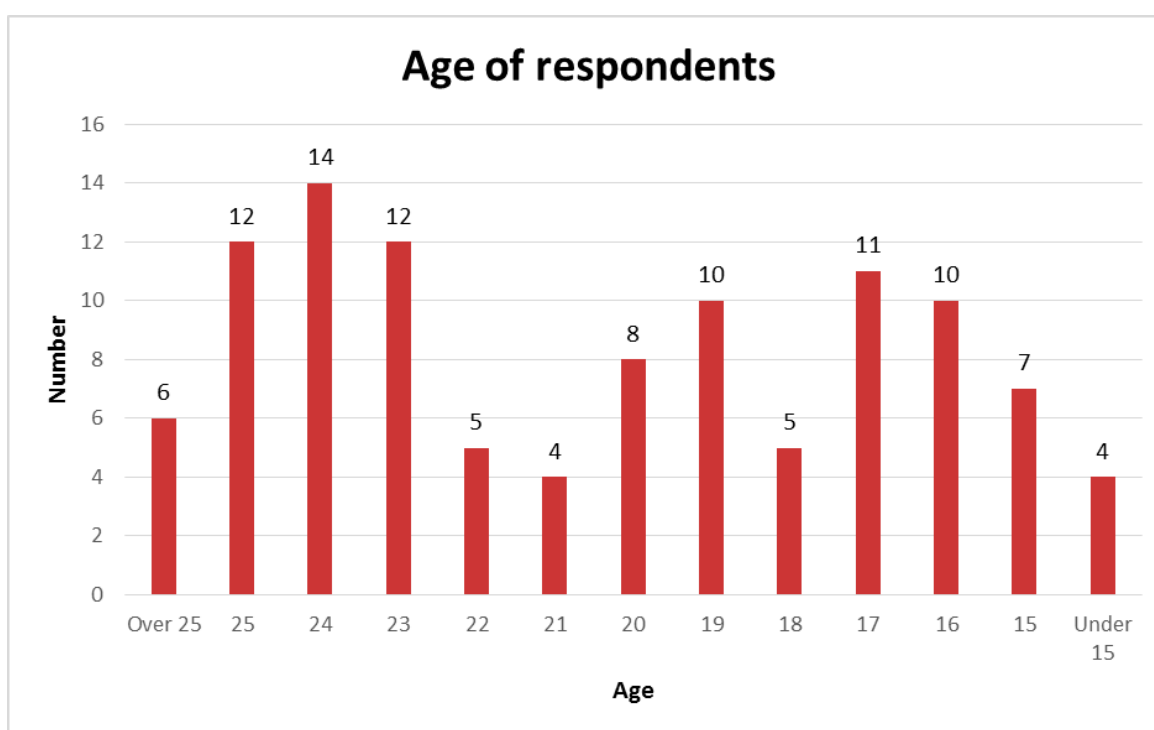
- young people's age; and
- whether they had ever used an advice service before.

Age

90% of respondents were aged between 15 and 25 – the target age range for the survey – with a further 6% aged over 25 and 4% aged under 15.

- 30% of respondents were aged under 18;
- 25% were aged between 18 and 21; and
- 45% were aged 22 or over.

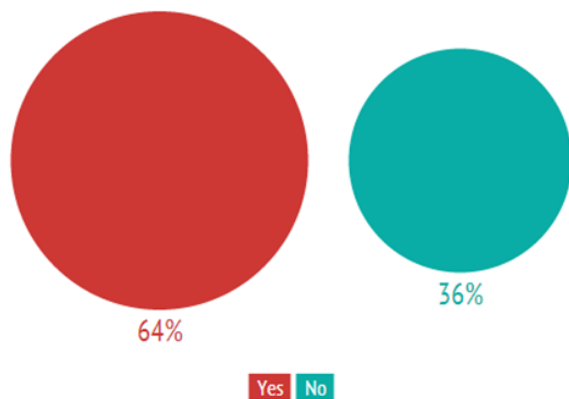
Fig.1: *Age of respondents*



Advice service experience

64% of respondents said they had used an advice service before, whilst 36% had not. Given national data showing low levels of successful advice-seeking amongst young people, this suggests that the respondent group were probably more likely than young people in general to have used an advice service.

Fig.2: *Have you ever used an advice service?*



3.2 Key rights-related issues for young people

The survey asked young people 'In your experience, what issues relating to rights do you think young people need advice and support on?' and gave a list of issues. The question was partly designed to ensure respondents understood the type of issues to which the survey and the manifesto related, and partly to gauge the issues of greatest concern to young people.

The following issues were all cited by a majority of respondents:

- Money and debt (cited by 86%)
- Work and employment rights (83%)
- Housing and homelessness (81%)
- Accessing services, e.g. mental health/health care (80%)
- Education rights (70%)
- Issues with family or relationships (70%)
- Welfare benefits (67%)
- Discrimination (59%)
- Rights related to being in care or a care leaver (58%)

Immigration, asylum and refugee issues were cited by a smaller (but still substantial) number (42%), but this is not surprising considering we were asking young people to answer from their experience of young people's needs.

Young people also identified a number of other issues on which help is required, including: online safety, negotiating complaints systems and the rights of specific groups of young people (including young carers, young prison-leavers, LGBT young people, disabled young people and young people with drug and alcohol problems).

3.3 Characteristics sought in an advice service

The survey asked for views on some statements that had been made by young people in the manifesto working groups.

Corroborating the views from the working groups, young people gave a clear message that they want services that are young person-centred, confidential and integrated with other services that they need.

Young person centred services

Fig.3 "A good advice service has staff who are skilled at working with young people"

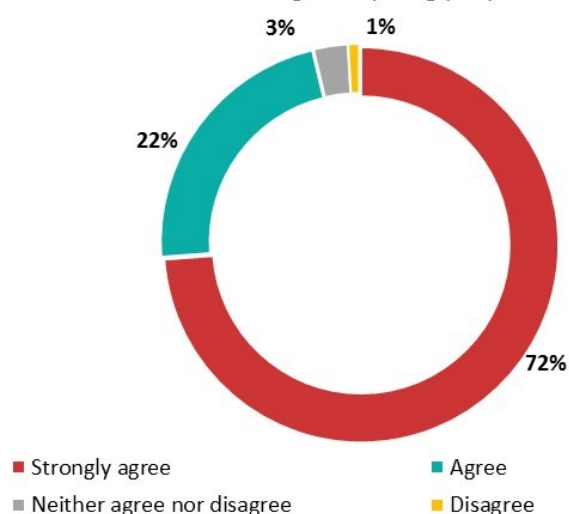


Fig.4 "A good advice service is tailored for young people"

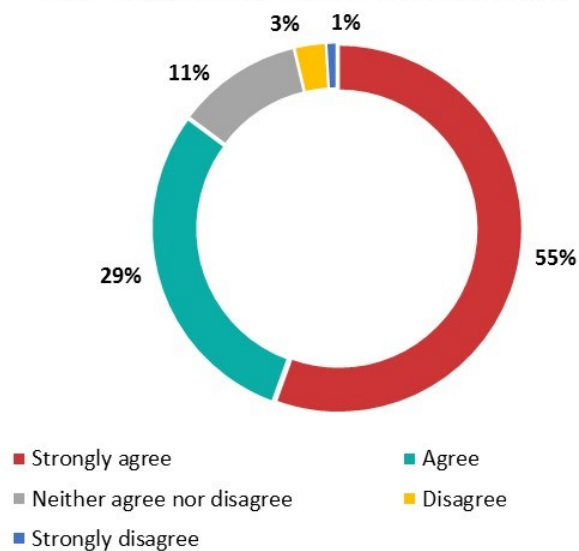


Fig.5 "A good advice service empowers you to solve problems yourself"

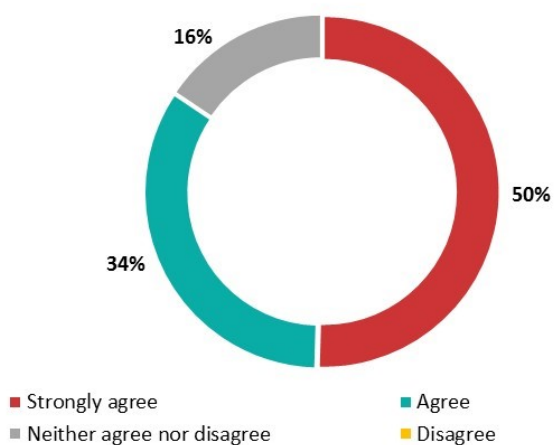
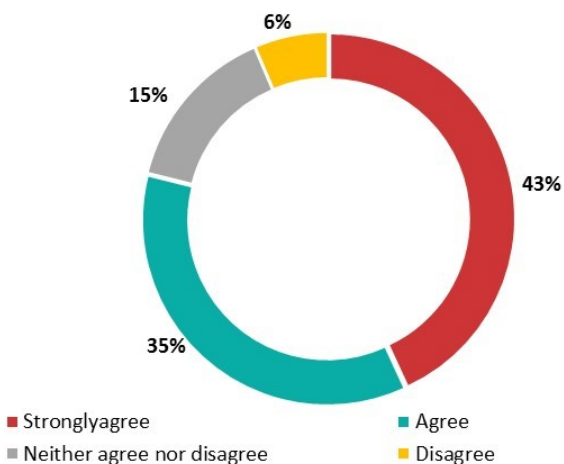
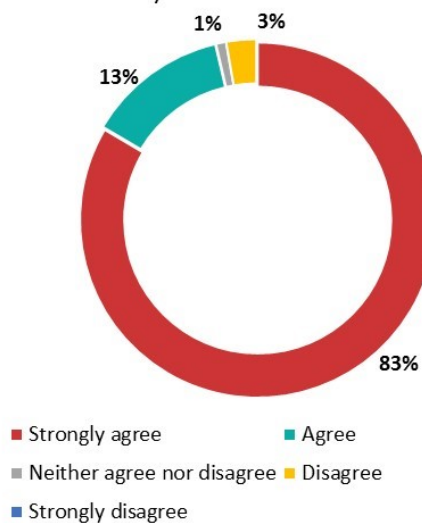


Fig.6 "I prefer using services specifically aimed at young people"



Confidentiality

Fig.7 "A good advice service is confidential – they won't tell anyone else unless it is needed"



Integrated services

Fig.8 "It is important to get help with everything that's troubling you in one place"

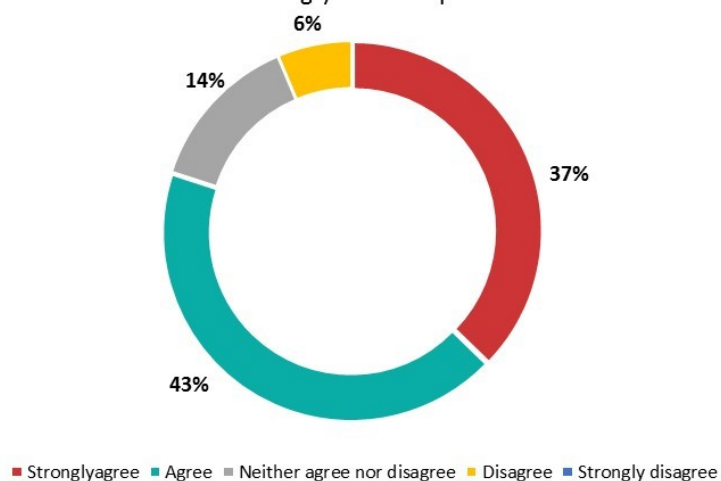


Fig.9 "A good advice service allows you to drop in and ask anything (or nothing)"

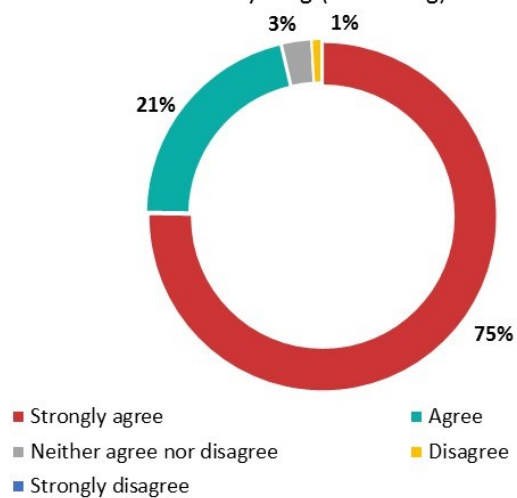
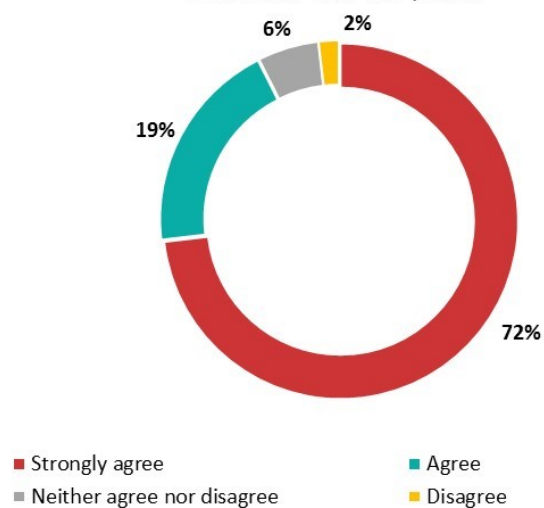


Fig.10 "A good advice service allows you to build a connection with one person"

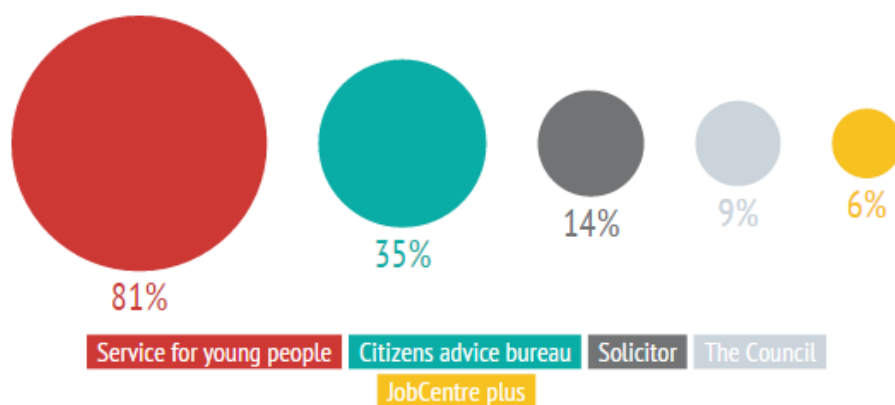


3.4 Confidence in accessing specific types of advice service

The survey asked young people whether they would feel comfortable approaching five specific types of service for advice: a Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB); a solicitor; the Council; Jobcentre Plus; and 'an advice service specifically for young people'.

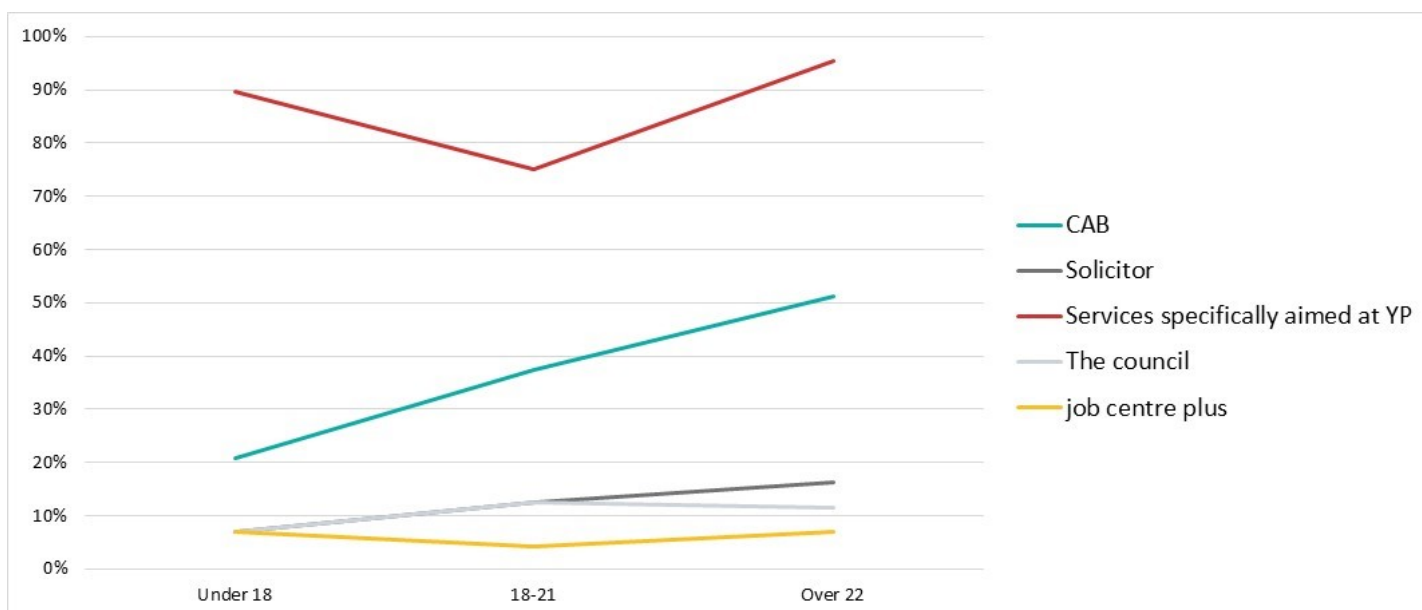
Young people's responses indicate a distinct lack of confidence in Jobcentre Plus (only 6% saying they would be comfortable approaching the service for advice), Council advice services (9%) and solicitors (14%); ambivalence towards CABs (35%); and a marked preference for advice services specifically for young people (81%).

Fig.11: Which of the following services would you feel comfortable approaching for advice?



Responses show young people becoming significantly more likely to feel comfortable approaching most services as they get older (and, presumably, more experienced in advice-seeking). This pattern particularly applies to CABs, but did not extend to Jobcentre Plus and was not clear for Council advice services.

Fig.12: Changing attitudes to services with age



There were some interesting differences in the responses of young people who had and had not used an advice service. Those young people who had used an advice service were more likely to report feeling comfortable approaching an advice service specifically for young people or a CAB, but even less likely to feel comfortable approaching JobCentre Plus, Council advice services and solicitors

The following comment left at the end of the survey provides a typical insight into the challenges facing young people searching for good advice:

“It is impossible to get an appointment with CAB without being referred to them, especially for financial help, and the quality of assistance varies greatly depending on the volunteer. The Jobcentre are a bit better than they used to be but again it depends on the advisor and I have had had some very upsetting experiences there. The council seem very reluctant to help, especially with housing and although the [legal aid] Gateway is quite efficient the hoops you have to jump through whilst you are desperate and vulnerable seem impractical. I have never been in a situation where I could afford to consult a solicitor and I would not know which firm to go to.”

3.5 Attitudes to statutory advice services

The survey asked for views on some statements that had been made by young people in the manifesto working groups. Young people's responses indicate a high degree of mistrust in statutory advice services, reinforcing the findings from the previous question and suggesting that their lack of confidence in approaching JobCentre Plus and Council advice services is at least partly based on negative experiences.

Fig.13 "The JobCentre doesn't give young people good advice"

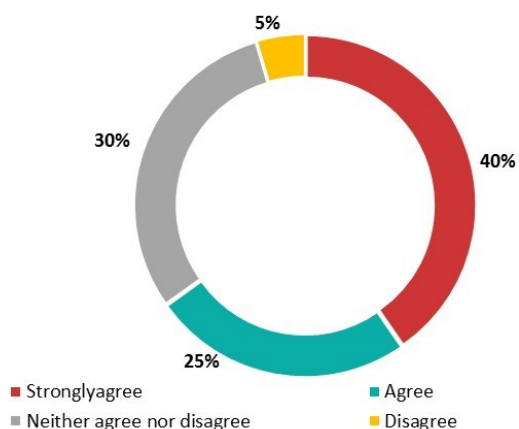
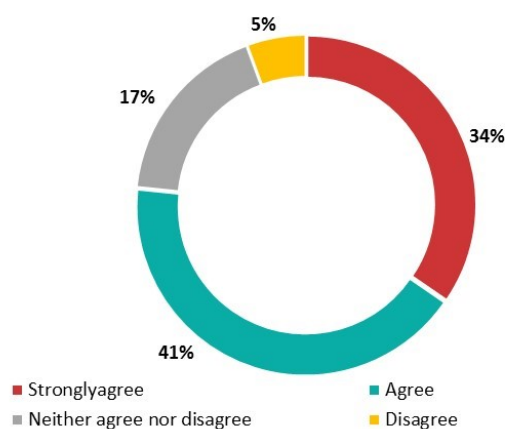


Fig.14 "The Council's advice isn't always in young people's best interests"

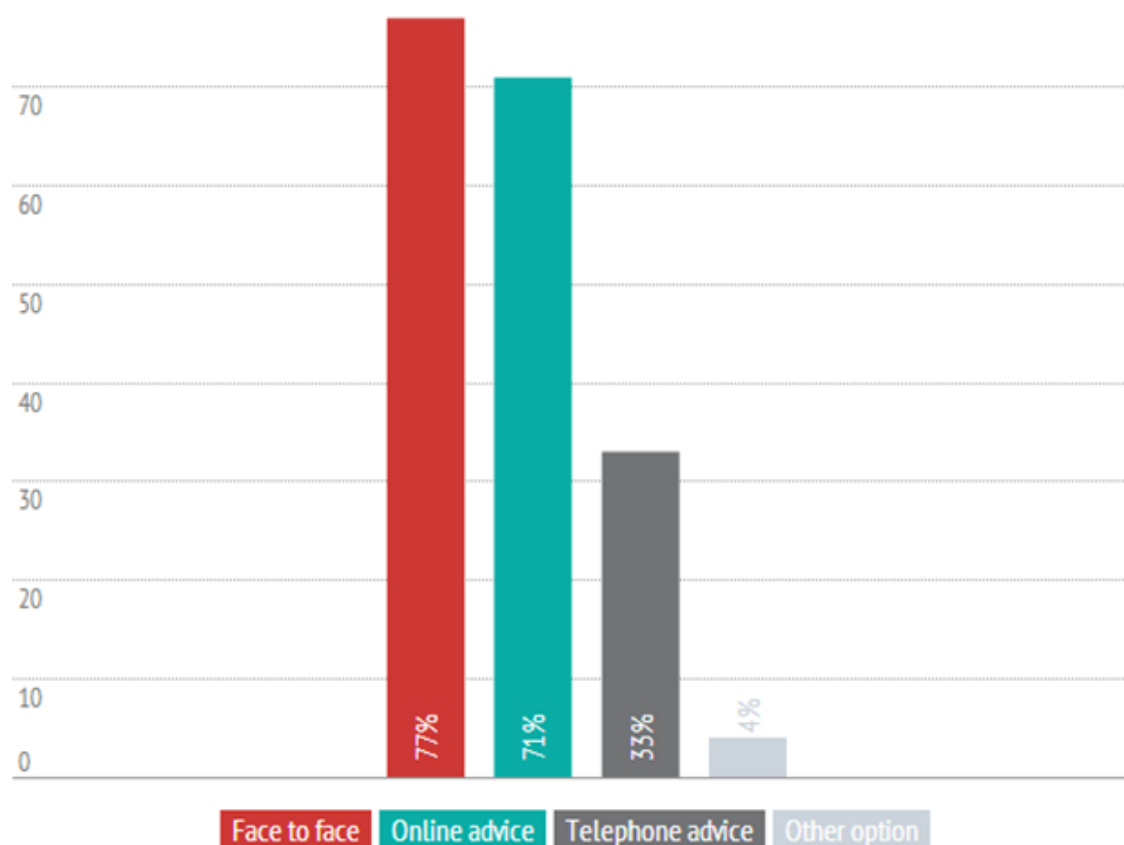


3.6 Preferred modes of access to advice (Telephone/Face-to-face/Online)

The survey asked young people 'Which of the following options for getting advice and information would you like to have available to you if you had a problem concerning your rights?'

Overall, 77% of young people selected face to face advice, 71% online advice and 33% telephone advice.

Fig. 15: Which of the following options for getting advice and information would you like to have available to you if you had a problem concerning your rights?



The most popular combination of options, selected by more than half (51%) of respondents, was face to face *plus* online advice. Many of those selecting both these options also wanted telephone advice to be available: in all, 25% of young people selected all three options, i.e. face to face, online and telephone advice.

Telephone was not favoured as an option other than in conjunction with the availability of both face to face and online advice. Only two young people selected telephone advice alone.

There was a greater preference for face to face services amongst young people who had previously used an advice service, whilst those with no experience of advice services were more likely to favour online services.

Amongst those who had previously used an advice service, face to face advice only (31%) was the most common response, followed by: face to face + online (25%); face to face + online + telephone (25%); and then online only (18%).

Amongst those who had not previously used an advice service, the most popular response was face to face + online + telephone (32%), followed by: online only (24%); face to face + online (22%); and then face to face only (16%).

There were no significant differences found in the preferred options selected when we analysed responses by age.

Young people's comments provided further insight into their selections:

- Choice was seen as essential by many, as every young person has different needs and preferences and each method has its advantages and drawbacks.
- Online services were liked for their anonymity, speed of access and 24 hour accessibility, but seen often only as a first port of call and not available to all young people.
- Face to face services were seen as more personal and tailored to individual needs, allowing you to build up trust so you could open up about your problems and get more in-depth advice.
- Telephone services were disliked by many as they didn't feel comfortable speaking on the phone, but were seen as an important option to have available.

Here is a selection of young people's comments:

"The more mediums available to young people to access information is much better than having one. I prefer face to face advice out of the three but if I do not have the time to attend an advice centre then I would likely use either of the other two options."

"Online - very accessible at any time. A wealth of information for a wide range of issues. Face to Face-advice is tailored to your needs and is specific"

"All forms of communication should be available to make it as easy as possible for young people to access services"

"When you have a problem it is best to have a personal touch, not everyone has access to the internet, and the telephone you can't or don't always have privacy"

"Online advice helps me find a general idea of what's available to me, but is largely difficult to communicate with. Face-to-face advice allows a more in depth discussion with a knowledgeable individual."

"[Face to face allows you to] read each other's body language, goes at my pace, a real person listening and then helping."

"Face to face is easier if limited English, can ask questions if unsure- can't do that online. Online for info about council, government, rights etc."

"Online is much easier quicker, for both the adviser and advisee, it means you can work 9-5 and within 24 working hours get the information you need – but there would need to be exception for example advice on mental health, suicide etc."

"I dislike speaking on the phone. Face to face feels more intimidating, but more effective. Online is a great, easy first step."

"i would prefer a face to face advice from a person that is fully qualified in giving advice to young people"

"I'd rather face to face as I get a better understanding but if I couldn't get somewhere online is better for me"

"1- online advice is quick to look up if need. 2- face to face is more personal than over the phone."

"It is easier to answer and ask questions because they are easier to explain when you are face to face."

"Lots of choice - makes it more likely YP will gain help"

"Need to be able to access a service with as many options as possible"

"First place I'd go is online because it is safe and can be informative. Then if I felt like I needed to talk to someone I'd prefer to talk to them face to face rather than on the phone - they are more likely to listen."

"Having all 3: I would first search online but if I couldn't find the info I wanted I would then use the telephone. I would use face to face if I couldn't explain on the telephone."

"Online, as i sometimes struggle to chat on the phone and this way it's easy to access. But also face to face as they can get to know me more"

"Advice should be available through all mediums"

"Because you can communicate more easily face to face. Also can express emotions easier."

"It's easier to talk online - I have an Anxiety Disorder so struggle with phone calls or talking face to face"

"Don't like phone. Don't have computer."

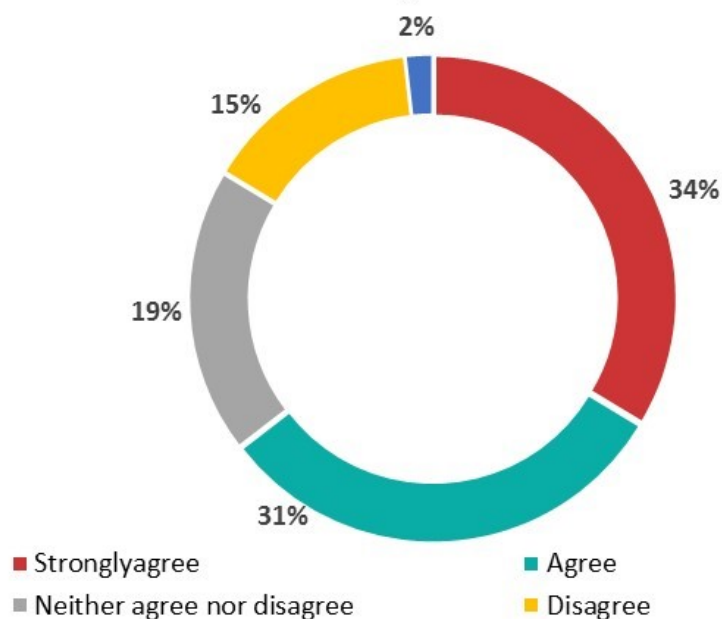
"Being able to find information online but then also being able to talk to someone as some times it may be hard fully understanding that information. Face to face would be easiest and clearest."

"Online is accessible all the time, whenever you may need it. But sometimes it's easier to do things face to face and feel supported on a more personal level."

3.7 Finding out information about rights

The survey asked young people whether they agreed with the statement 'The Government doesn't want young people to know about our rights and entitlements'. 65% of young people agreed with the statement (including 34% who agreed strongly), whilst 18% disagreed (2% strongly). This would appear to confirm that the high degree of cynicism found in our working groups and focus groups about the State's intentions towards young people may be more widespread.

Fig.16 "The government doesn't want young people to know about our rights and entitlements"

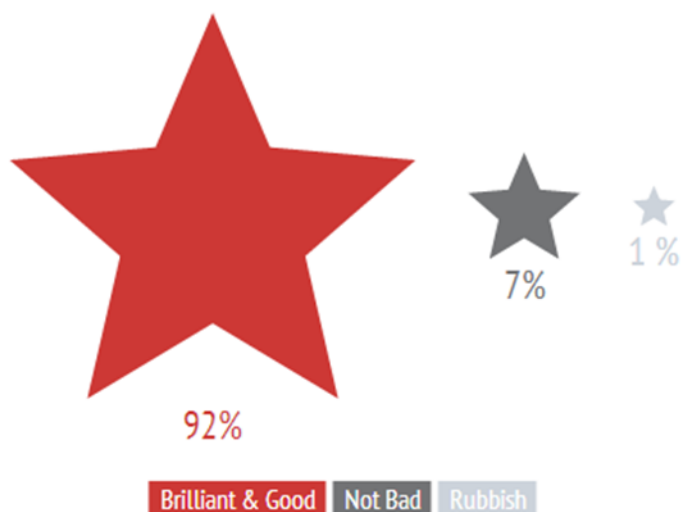


The survey also asked young people to rate some of the ideas suggested by the manifesto working groups for improving young people's access to clear information on their rights.

Idea 1 – Young people should be taught about their rights in school

This emerged as the second most popular of the four ideas, with 92% of young people rating it as a pretty good (28%) or brilliant (64%) idea.

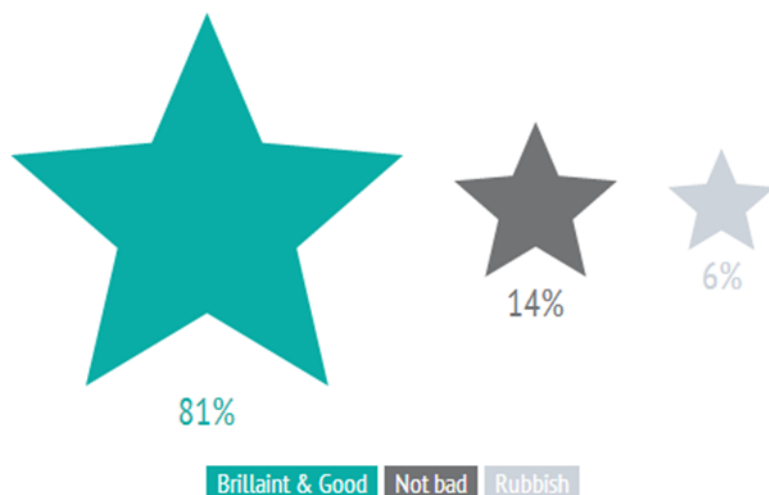
Fig.17: 'Young people should be taught about their rights in school'



Idea 2 – When you turn 16, you should be sent a pack of information on all your rights in the post

This was the least popular of the four ideas, but was still rated by 81% as pretty good (39%) or brilliant (42%).

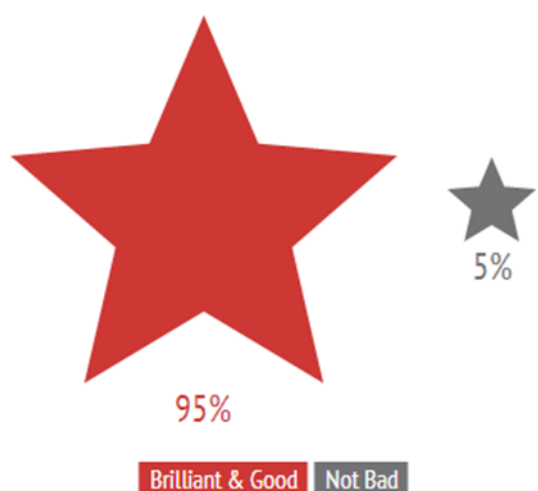
Fig. 18: 'When you turn 16, you should be sent a pack of information on all your rights in the post'



Idea 3 – Accurate information about young people's rights should be easily available online in one place

This was the most popular of the ideas suggested in the survey, with 95% rating it as either pretty good (26%) or brilliant (69%).

Fig. 19: 'Accurate information about young people's rights should be easily available online in one place'



Idea 4 – Young people could be trained to understand their rights and then share their knowledge with other young people

This emerged as the third most popular idea. 84% rated it as pretty good (35%) or brilliant (50%); whilst 3% thought it was a rubbish idea.

Fig. 20: 'Young people could be trained to understand their rights and then share their knowledge with other young people'



There were no significant differences in responses when analysed by whether the young person had previously used an advice service. However, older young people were slightly keener on Ideas 1 and 3 and slightly less keen on Idea 2.

Comments provided by young people focussed on how young people should be educated about their rights in school:

- *"Part of National Curriculum, but run by independent organisation."*
- *"I think you should be told at the age of 15 not 16 as you need time to understand the rights and also an opportunity to ask questions about them."*
- *"Basic rights taught from an early age say year 8 onwards as part of an enrichment at school as this is when most people start to form a judgement about themselves and as such would help them to know what they are entitled to and allow them to know where to get advice."*
- *"Being part of the school curriculum from primary school will ensure young people are confident about their rights and how they apply when they hit the teenage years."*

The survey also asked for any further ideas young people might have for improving young people's access to clear information on their rights. A number of ideas were put forward, including:

- Ensuring youth organisations where young people already go can inform, educate and empower young people (mentioned by several young people)
- Talks provided by independent organisations in schools, youth centres and care homes
- Use of social media, e.g. Twitter and Facebook, to disseminate information
- Better information about where to go for advice
- A publicity campaign involving celebrities to make young people think
- Leaflets and posters about young people's rights displayed in places where young people go.
- A special section of CABs aimed at young people with young people giving the advice.
- An app for signposting young people to the relevant service.
- Simplifying rules and rights so that they are more understandable

3.8 Young people's priorities for the manifesto

The survey asked young people 'If there was one thing you could change that would help young people understand and enforce their rights, what would it be?'

The most popular answers can be grouped into the following categories:

- Raising awareness of rights – and making information on rights simpler and more easily accessible
- Improving access to information and advice centres for young people – not cutting them
- Providing education on rights in schools – and making it compulsory
- Giving young people more respect
- Making sure a range of services (JobCentre Plus, Councils, employers, youth services) actively help young people to understand their rights

Further comments left at the end of the survey included the following:

"The [manifesto's] approach should be a positive, empowering one but avoid promoting a culture of entitlement. Rights come with responsibility and both are important."

"I think that we should employ a younger generation to give advice as they can relate more to the young people because some young people find adults around their mom and dad quite scary because they might often feel judged."

"[The manifesto] should relate to the UNCRC"

"Make sure that everyone knows and utilises their rights like in American Culture."

About JustRights

Justrights is a coalition of charities campaigning for fair access to advice, advocacy and legal representation for children and young people.

We are working to achieve a society in which:

- All children and young people enjoy ready access to high quality, independent advice, advocacy and legal representation whenever they need it.
- Children and young people's distinct needs for advice, advocacy and legal representation are widely recognised

If you require more information regarding this report, or have any questions, please contact James Kenrick james@youthaccess.org.uk