



# Children and young people

The government's aim, through the Children's Plan, is to make England the best place in the world for children and young people to grow up. The Plan covers a wide range of aspects of children's lives including learning and schools, health and wellbeing, tackling risky behaviour, child safety, and support for parents. At the same time the Child Poverty Strategy aims to have halved child poverty by 2010 and eradicated it by 2020.

At TNS we have extensive experience of work with children and young people. These age groups require a sensitive approach and awareness of the ethical and practical constraints. We are used to tailoring our research to make it appropriate for different age groups. We have also worked with parents and carers.

**Recent examples of projects include:**

## Connexions Direct Service

We have conducted several waves of research on the Connexions Direct service, which is aimed at young people, starting with a feasibility study on how to conduct user satisfaction surveys. The first element was an evaluation of the CXD advice services, using a combination of telephone and web interviewing. In a follow-up study we conducted depth interviews and focus groups among young people who had not used the service to establish how it could be improved. The user survey has subsequently been repeated, using telephone, web and mystery shopping surveys.

## Evaluation of Parenting Contracts

On behalf of DCSF we have recently conducted an evaluation of education related Parenting Contracts. The study involved a survey of LEAs, a survey among schools using Parenting Contracts, and case studies among LEAs, schools, parents and young people.

## Youth Cohort Surveys

We have completed five sweeps of the Youth Cohort Survey series. These took a sample of around 30,000 young people as they completed compulsory full-time education and followed them by means of a series of self-completion questionnaires as they moved into the world of work and further education. Response rates in the order of 65% were achieved at each sweep as a result of a series of postal and telephone reminders. The surveys required relatively complex editing, analysis, weighting and database construction and careful project management, as well as the ability to track and interview a sample of young people.



## Truancy

TNS conducted a study for the (then) DfES to investigate parental attitudes to truancy. The project was commissioned to help inform the Government's long-term drive to reduce levels of truancy. The study involved both quantitative and qualitative research among parents and professionals who operate in this area, as well as some qualitative research among pupils.

## London Councils

Each year we conduct surveys amongst residents for around 14 London authorities as part of the London Councils' public satisfaction tracking studies. Typically, each survey involves interviewing 1000 residents face to face. Over the last sixteen years more than twenty authorities have participated. We interview members of the public about the quality of public services in their local area and how they perceive their local Council. The survey also provides information on what residents see as their main concerns in terms of crime, health and other social issues. The information is used by Members and officers to inform corporate planning and communication. Since 2005/6 we have included a module interviewing young people aged 11-17 in those households where we interviewed an adult. The young person survey covers issues of concern, opinion of local council, satisfaction with services and involvement in the democratic process in school and in the local community.

## **A study of Schools Meals in Primary Schools in England**

This study was conducted on behalf of the (then) DfES and Food Standards Agency. We completed this project, carried out with Kings College London, to assess whether food provided in primary schools meets the statutory Nutritional Standards set out in the regulations and associated good practice guidance, and whether it meets the Expert Working Group's Nutritional Guidelines for School Meals. The study identified the food consumption and nutrient intakes of primary school children from school meals. Fieldwork was carried out in 150 schools, for five days per school, and over 7000 pupils were interviewed, their meals recorded, and leftover foods weighed. A full inventory was made of foods available each day, and standard portions were weighed.

## **Disciplining Children: Research with parents in Scotland**

In 2002, the Scottish Executive was considering changing the law relating to the physical chastisement of children. One of the most controversial issues was a proposal to ban the smacking of children aged under three years. TNS were commissioned by the Executive to undertake research with parents in order to provide information on the prevalence of various forms of discipline and parents' attitudes towards them. The research had two main components: a series of qualitative interviews and a quantitative survey.

The qualitative work used a variety of different methods including focus groups, paired depth interviews and peer group interviews. The quantitative element consisted of a nationally representative probability sample of 700 across Scotland and was carried out using CAPI (computer-assisted personal interviewing), with CASI (computer-assisted self interviewing) used for the more sensitive questions.

## **Parents' access to and demand for childcare**

This research, conducted for the Scottish Executive, was designed to provide a basis for an assessment of current use of childcare services in Scotland, to measure the effectiveness of their Childcare Strategy in responding to parental demand, and to assist in future planning and development of childcare services.

The study was conducted in two stages: the first, a national survey of parents to provide baseline data on the use of and demand for childcare, and to explore the affordability of childcare and its links to the labour market; the second stage involved a series of qualitative depth interviews among a range of target groups including ethnic minority parents, single parents, and parents of children with Special Educational Needs.

## **Research on pupils' views of school meals**

This study was commissioned by the Scottish Executive in support of the work of the Expert Panel on School Meals. It involved group discussions with pupils in secondary schools, paired depth interviews with pupils in primary schools and participant observation of school canteens throughout Scotland.

This research was designed to sit alongside the consultation exercise seeking views on the interim report of the Expert Panel on School Meals and can be viewed on the Scottish Executive website.

## **Contact us**

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