

British Institute of Human Rights – 30/09/22 – Government Consultation Survey

1. Have you ever taken part in a government consultation?

Yes

No

I'm not sure

2. If you have wanted to take part in a government consultation but you weren't able to, what stopped you from taking part? Tick all that apply.

I didn't have time.

I didn't think it was for me.

I didn't understand the questions.

I didn't see the point.

It wasn't accessible to me. For example, it wasn't in a format that I could understand and use.

I needed support, but I didn't have it.

I didn't have the resources to respond. Resources could be IT equipment, money, staff.

Other, please tell us more:

3. How did not being able to take part in a consultation make you feel? Tick all that apply.

I felt like my voice didn't matter.

I felt frustrated.

I felt like I'd let people I work with or support down.

I felt discriminated against.

Other, please tell us more:

4. What would have made you more likely to respond? Tick all that apply.

More time

More support

More information about what will happen next

Simple, straightforward language

Clear, short questions

Different ways of taking part on offer (for example, video, phone call, workshop, etc.)

Other, please tell us more:

5. In a couple of sentences, please tell us how you find responding to government consultations.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to BIHR's consultation on government consultations. Responding to UK Government consultations can be extremely difficult, time-consuming, and frustrating for NYAS and the children and young people we represent due to their:

1. *Inaccessibility*: As a national children's charity, we respond to consultations about policy and legal changes that will affect children and young people. Many of these consultations do not offer child-friendly consultation documents, and it is even more rare for the outcome of the consultation process to then include a child-friendly summary.
2. *Bureaucratic nature*: Many children and young people would find it easier to speak and/or take part in workshops, send a short email, or make a short video telling the government what they think about current or proposed laws and policies. Unfortunately, few government consultations offer such diverse ways to take part.
3. *Complicated wording*: Confusing grammar, double negatives, and other flawed questions are frequently used in government consultations, which sometimes appears contrived to persuade respondents to agree to government policy that would be more controversial if clearly worded. This may deter many people from taking part and undermine the legitimacy of the consultation process.
4. *Length*: Government consultation documents are far too long for many people to complete. This puts them off sharing their views on government policies.

6. If you could tell the government one thing they could do to make their consultations better, what would it be?

Ground their consultations in human rights legislation and frameworks. Often in NYAS' responses to government consultations, we have had to cite articles from textbook human rights legislation such as

the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) which the proposed legislative changes could be in breach of.

In the context of policy affecting children, we ask the UK Government to refrain from consulting on proposed policy changes which have not been subjected to a Child's Rights Impact Assessment (CRIA).

7. Can you tell us if you are sharing you experiences with us as because you are:

An individual sharing your personal experiences

A worker for a charity, community group or voluntary group

As worker in the public sector / services

For your organisation (charity, community or voluntary group)

For your organisation (public body or service)

Other, please tell us more:

8. If you are sharing your experience of supporting other people, how many people do you or your organisation help each year:

1-10

11-50

51-500

Over 500

9. Where do you live or work?

England

Northern Ireland

Scotland

Wales

Channel Islands

Other, please tell us:

10. If you are responding in your personal capacity, which of the following characteristics apply to you?

N/A

If you're answering on behalf of the people you support or your organisation, which characteristics apply to the people you help?

You can pick more than one option and add your own options at the end.

Disabled, physical disabilities or impairments

Disabled, mental health issues

Learning disabilities

Autistic

Aged over 65 year old

Black and/or minority ethnic community

Children (aged 18 or under)

Refugee or person seeking asylum

Homeless person

Carers

Other, please tell us:

NYAS provides advocacy and legal representation to children and vulnerable adults when important decisions are being made about them. The children and young people who NYAS support might be in care, have a disability or special needs, be subject to child protection plans, have mental health difficulties or their parents might be separating.

11. Has Covid-19 changed how you take part in government consultations?

Covid-19 has made it easier

Covid-19 has made it harder

Covid-19 has not changed how I/we take part in government consultations

I'm not sure

12. Who organises the consultations you respond to the most? Remember this work is about government consultations in the UK. Tick all that apply.

UK government

Scottish government

Welsh government

Northern Ireland assembly

Other, please tell us more:

13. How do you find out about government consultations?

Government or state body website, email or social media

Charity website, email or social media

Trade unions

From friends and family

From people you work with

Other, please tell us more:

14. How often do you take part in government consultations?

Monthly

Every 3 months

Every 6 months

Annually

Less often than annually

Other, please tell us more:

15. What was the last consultation you took part in, if you remember?

You could tell us the name of the consultation, what it was about, and/or when it was.

Name: Introducing national standards for independent and semi-independent accommodation – tell us what you think.

Link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/introducing-national-standards-for-unregulated-provision>. - Closed July 2021.

NYAS' submission response: <https://www.nyas.net/wp-content/uploads/Introducing-national-standards-for-unregulated-accommodation-NYAS-consultation-response-Jul.21.pdf>.

What it was about: This consultation dealt with the introduction of new national standards and Ofsted-led registration and inspection for unregulated accommodation for 16- and 17-year-olds in care. In our response, NYAS urged the government to scrap plans to deny care to 16- and 17-year-olds currently living in unregulated accommodation.

When it was: The consultation closed July 2021.

16. How did you take part? Tick all that apply.

I completed a survey

I wrote a response

I went to a government event or meeting and shared my views

I went to a BIHR event or meeting and shared my views

I went to an event or meeting organised by a different charity or group and shared my views

Other, please tell us more:

17. How easy was it to take part? Tick all that apply.

Very easy

Easy

Neither easy nor difficult

Hard

Very hard

I needed support to take part

Other, please tell us more:

As NYAS employ staff who are accustomed to writing responses to consultations, we have the resources to take part in and share views on behalf of care-experienced children and young people. We involve children and young people in shaping our responses and wider campaign work, but consultations with short deadlines and no child-friendly summaries can limit our ability to meaningfully engage those affected by policy proposals.

The Department for Education's unregulated accommodation consultation did include a "young people's consultation document" on the proposed national standards for unregulated accommodation. Unfortunately, we believe this document could not be described as child-friendly. For example, the annex of indicators young people were asked to view before responding to a question had not been adapted for their needs. Sentences in these annexes such as "these indicators are not exhaustive, but will be used to inform the development of guidance" are inaccessible for many young people and may deter them from sharing their views.

18. How much time did you spend on taking part? This includes reading the consultation, collecting people's views, writing a response, and going to an event or meeting.

A day or less

2-4 days

4-7 days

1-4 weeks

More than 4 weeks

19. Did you feel happy with how you took part in the consultation?

I was/we were happy

I/we did what we could manage

I was/we were not happy

You can tell us more here:

QUESTIONS 20-22 SKIPPED

20. Do you think the amount of time you spent taking part in the consultation was worthwhile? This could mean you felt listened to, you saw a policy change, you were asked to help with the next steps, or you had a good experience overall.

Yes

No

Kind of

You can tell us more here:

21. How much did you feel listened to while taking part in the consultation? (1 = not listened to at all, 5 = very listened to)

22. If you felt listened to, what happened next? Skip to the next question if you did not feel listened to.

What I/we said was included in the Government's response to the consultation

The Government made changes that I/we agreed with

The people organising the consultation asked me/us to talk more about the issues with them

The people organising the consultation invited me to a meeting or event

Other, please tell us more:

23. If you did not feel listened to, what happened next? Skip to the next question if you did feel listened to.

Nothing happened

The Government made changes that I/we did not agree with

Other, please tell us more:

The results from this particular consultation have not been published. However, there was a separate consultation run by the government in February 2021 on banning unregulated accommodation titled '*Reforms to unregulated provision for children in care and care leavers*': https://consult.education.gov.uk/children-in-care-and-permanence/unregulated-provision-children-in-care/supporting_documents/Unregulated%20consultation%20FINAL%20link.pdf. We did not feel as though the young people we represent were at all listened to during this consultation.

This was the first consultation in which the government sought views on proposed new measures for unregulated accommodation. Children and young people were listed first as the top demographic who the government wished to collect responses from.

The government later reported that feedback was received from 165 children and young people, whose responses “significantly enriched the overall consultation response”. Unfortunately, these children and young people who gave up their time were not provided with a child-friendly consultation response document so they could find out the outcomes of the consultation for themselves. While organisational responses were summarised by the government, there was no narrative at all around what children and young people actually said.

24. Is there anything else you would like to tell BIHR to think about in this project?

N/A

25. If you want us to send you our report, please give your name and email.

This is **optional**, you do not have to give this information if you don't want to. By telling us this information you agree it is okay for us to email with information about this survey.

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