

## **2019 Youth Attitude Survey – Note from Dave Kendall, Chief Officer**

In 2019 the Church of Scotland launched the Youth Attitude Survey that was designed to record young people's view on a wide variety of issues. The Church received 373 responses and is grateful to people who took the time to fill in the survey. At the time of launch the intention had been to collate the results and distribute them without delay in order that congregations, kirk sessions and presbyteries could use the knowledge in order to support children and young people within the Church of Scotland.

As the proposed report was undergoing review in 2020, there was a realisation that the methodology of the survey had shortfalls in some crucial respects. As a result of this the survey responses could not be analysed in a manner which translated into a formal report that would meet ethical and statistical standards. We have learned from what has happened including establishing a greater focus on our Research and Analysis capability to ensure that we professionalise our approach across the National Office. This includes the introduction of an ethics approval process as part of our overall improvements to governance.

The survey was conducted in 2019 and since then the onset of a worldwide pandemic has resulted in the situation having changed dramatically for young people as well as for the entire church. There are however some important high-level findings from the survey which can be reported upon and which future work needs to be focused upon.

**Finding:** Although the majority of young people said they have spoken up about issues that matter to them around half of those who have spoken out say they don't feel listened to.

**Finding:** The majority of young people completing the survey said that their family have the most significant impact on their faith. This suggests that faith formation in young people needs to include a focus on helping families discuss and share their spiritual values and beliefs.

**Finding:** Very few young people read the Bible on their own.

**Finding:** Young people in the church are engaged in social issues and named a number of topics that matter to them including climate change and equality for all.

**Finding:** Young people within the Church share the same mental health challenges as their peers across the country. Feelings of depression and anxiety along with concerns about body image, self-acceptance and feeling judged by others were all mentioned as significant challenges to young people within the Church.

**Finding:** Belonging to a church or a church group can be supportive but does not inoculate young people from the stresses and pressures facing all young people, including on social media. Young people told us they want mental health and self-esteem issues to be recognised and discussed more openly and supportively within the church.

*Anyone interested in finding out more about young people and mental health should refer to large national studies such as:*

The Mental Health Foundation: <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/state-generation-preventing-mental-health-problems-children-and-young-people-scotland>

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/news/hundreds-thousands-young-people-scotland-report-feeling-isolated-lonely-and-uncertain>

Youth Commission on Mental Health Services: <https://youngscot.net/observatory/youth-commission-mental-health?rq=youth%20commission%20mental%20health>

You can find out more about children, young people and social media use here:

[https://www.ofcom.org.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0023/190616/children-media-use-attitudes-2019-report.pdf](https://www.ofcom.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0023/190616/children-media-use-attitudes-2019-report.pdf)

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/healthy-social-media>

The Scottish Government is taking a rights-based approach to work with young people. You can find out more about that here:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/children-young-peoples-voices-matter/pages/4/>

### **Next Steps**

Building on the themes from the survey Suzi Farrant, our Young People and Young Adult's Development Worker, has been developing resources that are focused on supporting congregations as we progress this key area.