

# Attitudes to Shared Education: Findings from the 2018 Young Life and Times and Kids' Life and Times surveys

## Research Briefing



This research briefing presents key findings from the 2018 Northern Ireland Young Life and Times and Kids' Life and Times surveys

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## Reader Information

<b>Purpose</b>	The purpose of this research briefing is to present key findings about young people's attitudes to Shared Education in Northern Ireland from the 2018 Northern Ireland Young Life and Times and Kids' Life and Times surveys.
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## Key findings

The key findings from the 2018 surveys were that:

- Forty per cent of YLT and 63 per cent of KLT respondents said they had been involved in Shared Education.
- KLT respondents attending Integrated schools (81%) were most likely to say they had been involved in sharing with other schools.
- Among the YLT respondents, pupils attending formally integrated post-primary schools (69%) were more likely to say they had been involved in Shared Education than their peers attending either secondary (48%) or grammar (32%) schools that are not formally integrated.
- Doing projects with pupils from other schools was the most common activity (67% of YLT and 51% of KLT respondents).
- Almost one half of KLT (49%) and 43 per cent of YLT respondents had made at least one close friend from a different religion as a result of taking part in Shared Education.
- Around two thirds of survey respondents (62% KLT and 65% YLT) either strongly agreed or agreed that they were better able to respect the views of other people since taking part in Shared Education.

## Introduction

1. The legislative framework for the implementation of Shared Education is set out in the Shared Education Act (Northern Ireland) 2016<sup>1</sup> which places a duty on the Department of Education (DE) '(so far as its powers extend) to encourage, facilitate and promote Shared Education'. The definition of Shared Education set out in the Act is as follows: 'Shared education means the education together of those of different religious belief, including reasonable numbers of both Protestant and Roman Catholic children or young persons; and those who are experiencing socio-economic deprivation and those who are not, which is secured by the working together and co-operation of two or more relevant providers.'
2. In the Advancing Shared Education report (2018), DE highlights the methods that are used to monitor compliance with the Act, including the use of an online questionnaire issued to staff in DE and to the organisations named within the Act. Data from these sources are supplemented by surveys of children and young people including Young Life and Times (YLT) which is an annual survey of 16 year olds and Kids' Life and Times (KLT), an annual survey of Primary 7 children aged 10/11 years. This briefing summarises the research findings from two modules of questions on Shared Education commissioned by DE and included in the 2018 YLT and KLT surveys. While the main focus of the research is on the experiences and attitudes of children and young people attending education establishments in 2018, it draws comparisons, where possible, with the 2017 and 2015 YLT and KLT findings and highlights any changes and trends that have occurred.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nia/2016/20/introduction>

## Aim and Objectives of the Research

3. The overall aims of the research were to:

- Assess the attitudes of children and young people towards Shared Education and Lessons and discussion about different groups of people in our society in 2018;
- Compare the views of Primary 7 children (10 and 11 year olds) with their older counterparts (16 year olds);
- Explore changes in experiences of, and attitudes to, Shared Education in 2015, 2017 and 2018.

## Main findings

### 4. The key findings from the 2018 surveys were that:

- Forty per cent of YLT and 63 per cent of KLT respondents said they had been involved in Shared Education.
- KLT respondents attending Integrated schools (81%) were most likely to say they had been involved in sharing with other schools.
- Among the YLT respondents, pupils attending formally integrated post-primary schools (69%) were more likely to say they had been involved in Shared Education than their peers attending either secondary (48%) or grammar (32%) schools that are not formally integrated.
- Doing projects with pupils from other schools was the most common activity (67% of YLT and 51% of KLT respondents).
- Whilst very positive overall, YLT respondents enjoyed sharing equipment (88%) with other schools slightly more than doing projects (85%) or having classes (82%). The pattern was similar for KLT respondents.
- Almost one half of KLT (49%) and 43 per cent of YLT respondents had made at least one close friend from a different religion as a result of taking part in Shared Education.
- Around two thirds of survey respondents (62% KLT and 65% YLT) either strongly agreed or agreed that they were better able to respect the views of other people since taking part in Shared Education.
- In the primary school setting the Lessons and discussion about different groups of people in our society topics the children were most likely to have had in school were gender and disability; least discussed was political opinion.
- Seventy per cent of YLT respondents said they have had Lessons and discussion about different groups of people in our society either in school or in their youth project/centre. One half (50%) of them said they have had these lessons and discussion in school only, seven per cent said they have had them in the youth project/centre only, and 12 per cent have had them in both settings.
- The topic YLT respondents had covered most often in both settings was 'people with different religious beliefs'.
- Over one third of both YLT (38%) and KLT (36%) said they would like their school to be part of a shared education campus. However, a high percentage of respondents to both

surveys said they did not know whether they would like their school to be part of a shared campus or not (39% YLT and 41% KLT). Respondents who had been involved in Shared Education were more likely to say they would like their school to be part of a shared campus than those who had not – especially among YLT respondents.

## Conclusion

5. Overall, the evidence from the 2018 YLT and KLT surveys suggests that as in previous years the majority of children and young people are positive about Shared Education with pupils from other schools. They particularly like the fact that sharing enables them to make new friends, mix with those from different backgrounds to themselves; enhance learning opportunities, and have access to a wider range of activities and subjects than they would otherwise have.
6. While the attitudes to taking part in Shared Education in 2018 are generally similar to the findings from the 2015 and 2017 surveys the most notable difference is the decrease in the percentage of YLT respondents saying they had taken part in Shared Education. However, a note of caution is that the questions differed across the three years: direct comparisons can be made between 2015 and 2018 which shows a fall of eleven percentage points in the number of young people saying they had done Shared Education. This difference was statistically significant. Similarly, in 2018, the figure for KLT respondents saying they had been involved in Shared Education was lower than in 2017; however, the direct comparison between 2015 and 2018 when the question was exactly the same, showed a rise.
7. In 2018, for the first time, survey respondents were asked whether they had made any close friends, from a different religion, as a result of taking part in Shared Education. The findings showed that 49 per cent of KLT and 43 per cent of YLT respondents said they had made at least one close friend, from a different religion. The respondents were also asked whether they felt better able to respect the views of other people since taking part in Shared Education and around two thirds of both KLT and YLT respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that they had.
8. Among respondents to both surveys, the activities that were liked the most were making new friends and being with children and young people who had a different ethnic background to them. While still positive, the aspect of sharing they liked least was being taught by different teachers.
9. KLT and YLT respondents were asked if they had taken part in lessons and discussion about different groups of people in our society in their school (and/or youth setting in YLT). The majority (around 70% in both surveys) said they had. Children and young people who had

been involved in Shared Education were more likely to say they had taken part in lessons and discussion about different groups of people in our society than their counterparts who had not been involved in Shared Education. A higher percentage of YLT respondents who had done Shared Education said they had become more favourable towards all of the Section 75 groups as a result of having lessons and discussion about different groups of people in our society than their peers who had not done Shared Education. In contrast, a slightly higher percentage of KLT respondents who had not done Shared Education said they had become more positive than their peers who had done Shared Education in relation to five of the Section 75 groups they had discussed in school. However, where KLT respondents indicated that their attitude had not changed it is not clear whether they were already positive or negative towards any of these groups before having had lessons and discussion about different groups of people in our society in school.

10. The findings from the 2018 surveys showed that, overall, only a minority of respondents who had done Shared Education said they were very unfavourable towards sharing classes, doing projects, or sharing equipment with other schools. Over half of KLT respondents, and almost three quarters of their YLT counterparts, said they were mostly favourable or favourable towards Shared Education.

### Young Life and Times (YLT) Survey

11. YLT is a postal survey conducted annually by ARK among 16 year olds in Northern Ireland (with optional online and phone completion where respondents prefer this). The sample for the YLT survey is taken from the Child Benefit Register (CBR). ARK receives the names and addresses of eligible YLT respondents directly from Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC). Child Benefit is paid to people bringing up children in the UK. Although the UK government recently introduced means testing for Child Benefit, for the purpose of undertaking the YLT survey, ARK still has access to the addresses of all families in NI who have registered for Child Benefit even if they are no longer entitled to receive it due to their income. Therefore, the CBR provides the opportunity to select a random sample of 16 year olds whose parents have registered for Child Benefit for the YLT survey.
  
12. Fieldwork for the 2018 YLT was planned to be undertaken between October and December 2018; however, due to staff turn-over at HMRC and changes in procedures that accompanied the introduction of GDPR, the dataset with the names and addresses of eligible YLT respondents was not released to ARK by HMRC until late January 2019. The delay in the delivery of the dataset from HMRC meant that fieldwork was conducted from the end of January to mid-March 2019. Measures were put in place to make up for the delay. One step was to send out the survey questionnaire alongside the information sheet/opt-out letter - this was done in the last week of January 2019. This mailout contained a letter from the project team, a paper questionnaire and a return envelope with a FREEPOST address. This letter contained a unique identifier (with a check letter) under the address, which was highlighted as "Your identification number". This letter provided information about the survey, including the aims of the project and the three possible methods of completing the questionnaire. Recipients were also advised about the financial incentives, namely, a prize draw for 5 cash prizes of £100 in which everyone who completed the survey would be entered, plus a £10 gift voucher for all who completed online by 8th February 2019. In mid-February 2019, a reminder letter, a second questionnaire and another FREEPOST envelope was posted out to all those 16-year olds who had not responded or opted out of the survey by that stage.
  
13. All young people who celebrated their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday during January, February and March of 2018 were invited to take part in the survey. In 2018, there were 5,152 eligible respondents.

These were randomly split into two samples – one receiving a green questionnaire (2,575 – Version 1) and the other a purple questionnaire (2,577 – Version 2). The survey instruments were mailed to potential respondents. Subsequently, 149 initial mailings were returned because the addressee had moved or was unknown at the address provided by HMRC; this left an overall sample of 5,003 eligible respondents. Overall 1,152 completed questionnaires were received by the end of the fieldwork period. This represents a response rate of 23 per cent. As in previous years, the most popular mode of completing the survey remains postal/paper completion.

#### Kids' Life and Times (KLT) Survey

14. KLT is an online survey whose target population is all P7-aged children in Northern Ireland. In addition to pupils attending mainstream primary schools and special schools, KLT targets children who are in alternative education units and those who are educated at home. The 2018 KLT school survey target included approximately 25,530 children from 852 primary schools across Northern Ireland. 5,300 children from 209 schools took part in the survey representing 21 per cent of children and 25 per cent of schools. Each school is allocated a unique three-digit identification number which is used to identify the school so that the principal can be sent a confidential school report. However, the children are anonymous.
15. The 2018 KLT survey had a split sample; approximately half the children completed Version A and the other half Version B. The children were randomly assigned to either Version A or Version B when they logged on. All respondents completed the core questions including home and family, happiness and bullying at school. They also all completed the Shared Education module. Half the children completed Version A that included citizenship education and languages in school while the other half completed Version B that included wellbeing and participation in research. Of the 5,300 children who participated in the 2018 KLT, 2697 completed Version A and 2603 completed Version B.
16. Consent to participate in the 2018 KLT involved three levels: firstly, the school principal agreed that the school could participate; secondly, a parent or guardian of each P7 pupil within the participating schools received a consent form which they were asked to complete and return to the school if they **did not** wish their child to take part. Thirdly, at the start of the questionnaire, each child was asked if s/he agreed to take part.

17. Fieldwork started on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2018 and was anticipated to end on 15<sup>th</sup> February 2019. However, at the request of some schools, the deadline was extended by one week to 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2019. A dedicated telephone line was set up so that principals or parents could contact the survey team for more information and a PDF version of the questionnaire was made available on the KLT website.
  
18. The online questionnaire was designed and administered by the ARK team. ARK has obtained permission to use characters from 'Bang on the Door', which many children of this age will be familiar with, to make the survey as much fun and interesting to complete as possible. Throughout the design of the questionnaire, the KLT team worked closely with C2KNI which is the organisation responsible for the provision of an ICT-managed service to all schools in Northern Ireland.
  
19. When the child logged on and confirmed that s/he wanted to take part, they were asked to enter the three-digit school identification number or their seven-digit DE number. When the code was entered, the full name and address of the school appeared on the screen, and the child confirmed that this was the correct school before progressing with the survey. No further identification codes or names of children were required. The questionnaire took about 20 minutes to complete and each question had a 'Skip' option which the children could use if they did not want to answer it.

## The Project

20. The project was undertaken by ARK (QUB) and funded by the Department of Education. The total cost of the project was £17,980.
  
21. The full research report entitled 'Attitudes to Shared Education: Findings from the 2018 Young Life and Times and Kids' Life and Times surveys' is available on the Department of Education website at <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/>.