

EDUCATION SELECT COMMITTEE INQUIRY INTO PERSONAL, SOCIAL, HEALTH AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION (PSHE) AND SEX AND RELATIONSHIPS EDUCATION (SRE) IN SCHOOLS—WRITTEN EVIDENCE FROM NPC

NPC (New Philanthropy Capital) is a charity think tank and consultancy dedicated to helping funders and charities achieve a greater impact. We provide independent research and advice for funders and charities and, as the leading think tank for the not for profit sector, we encourage debate about what makes a charity effective and build knowledge and tools to support effectiveness. We are an independent—rather than a membership—organisation and do therefore have no members to defend. Instead, we are driven by our concern that charities and their funders achieve the best outcomes for the people they serve or the cause they seek to address.

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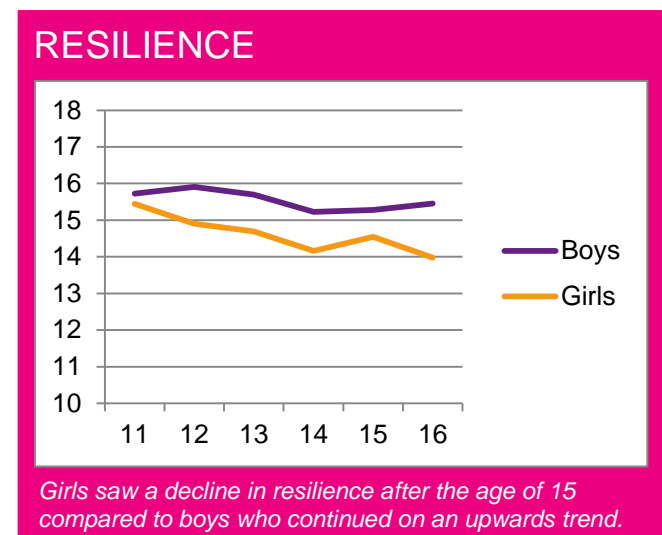
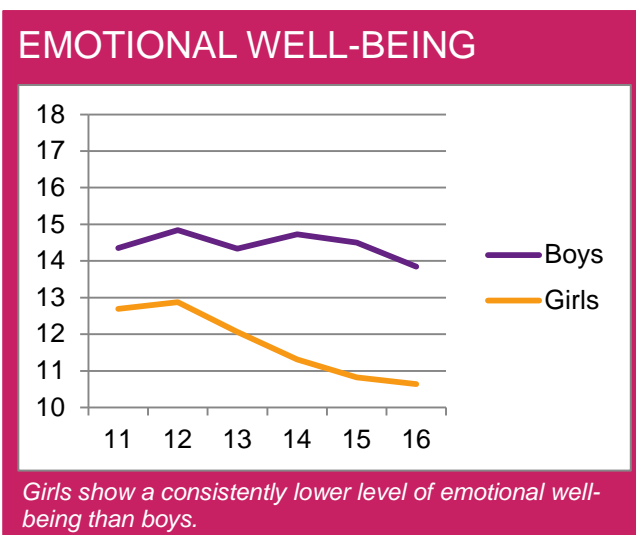
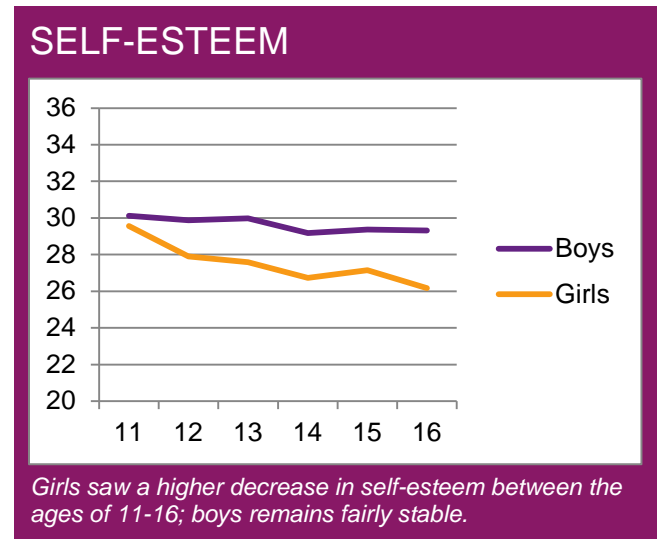
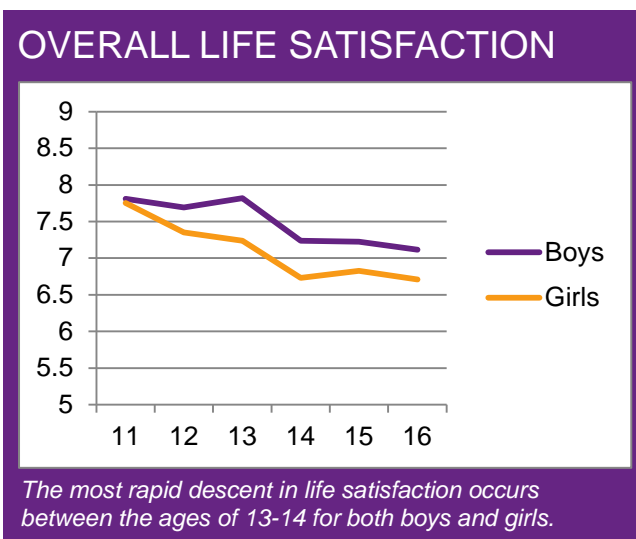
Executive summary

1. Since 2009, NPC has been developing a Well-being Measure, a tool designed to record levels of well-being and satisfaction in children aged 11-16. Between 2011-2014, NPC worked with more than 50 UK charities which work with young people, and these charities used this tool to record the well-being of nearly 7,000 school-age children, under eight different aspects of subjective well-being. We published this data, and an accompanying report *Measure what you treasure* analysing our findings, in May 2014.¹
2. NPC found that boys and girls alike grow more dissatisfied with their lives as they get older, with girls' happiness falling significantly faster than boys. Girls' self-esteem and emotional well-being both fall consistently from the age of 12, and their satisfaction with friends drops from the age of 12. This original data forms the backbone of our submission, and is described in detail in paragraphs 6-9.
3. *Measure what you treasure* analysed why these trends might have developed, and particularly why girls suffered a greater fall in their well-being than boys. We raised our grave concerns about 'the insidiousness of sexism to which girls are now subject', and its impact on girls' satisfaction as they grow up. We also observed that these fears for children's well-being have emerged at a time when the Secretary of State for Education has removed reference to well-being entirely from the Ofsted inspection framework.
4. NPC strongly believes that our evidence demonstrates enduring problems in girls' well-being in particular, and reflects a wider social trend which places young girls under significant and destabilising pressures. Sex and Relationship Education (SRE) in schools can play a central, urgent role in addressing this. Because of the nature of NPC's expertise, this submission will focus on the 3rd, 4th and 5th questions in the Committee's Terms of Reference, on the accountability systems in place, the government's steps to address issues around cyber-bullying, and how the effectiveness of SRE should be measured.
5. NPC would be very interested in providing further, oral evidence to the Committee.

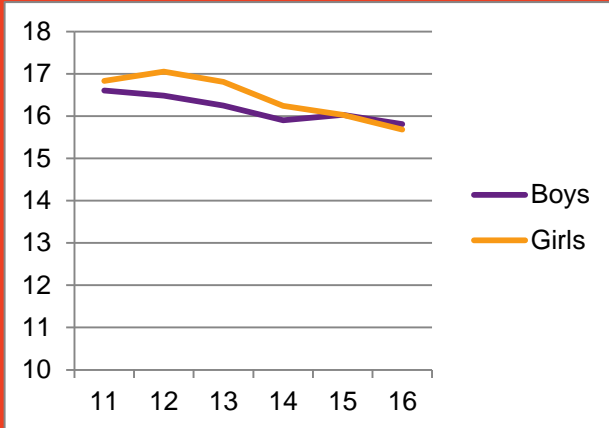
¹ See the website for the Well-being Measure, <http://www.well-beingmeasure.com/about>; our report *Measure what you treasure* (2014) <http://www.thinknpc.org/publications/measure-what-you-treasure/>; and our report *Feelings count* (2009) on the development of the tool <http://www.thinknpc.org/publications/feelings-count/>

The NPC Well-being Measure

6. Data on almost 7,000 young people provides the basis of analysis of the well-being of young people in the UK. A combination of charities, schools and local authority projects have used the Well-being Measure with participants across a variety of interventions, including residential trips, mentoring, and transition into exam-taking school years.
7. The data was collected by more than 50 charities, schools and local authorities. They surveyed a total of 6,603 11-16 year olds, consisting of 3,047 girls and 3,556 boys, between 2011 and 2014. Please note that our findings cannot be applied to the population as a whole due to the sampling.
8. The most common trend throughout the analysis is that the scores for girls across all aspects of well-being decreased more sharply with age compared to boys. Overall, girls started with lower scores than boys.
9. The Well-being Measure gathered data on eight criteria of well-being. Each of these is shown below:

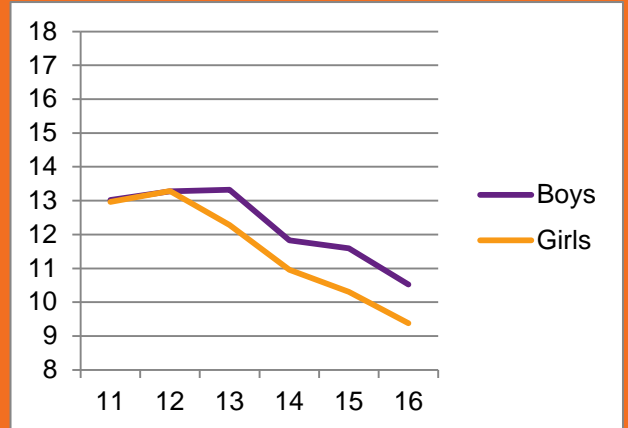


SATISFACTION WITH FRIENDS



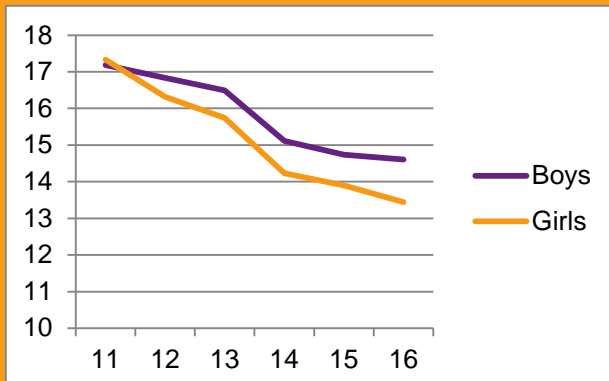
Girls started with a higher score, with a sharp decrease between the ages of 12-16. Boys showed a decline between 11-14, with an increase to the age of 15.

SATISFACTION WITH COMMUNITY



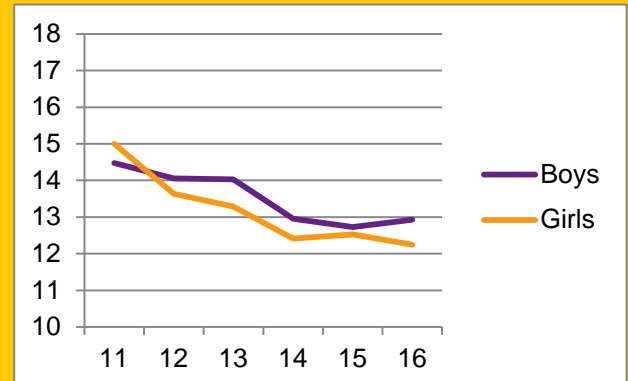
Both boys and girls showed an increase between the age of 11-12, but follow a downward trend towards the age of 16.

SATISFACTION WITH FAMILY



Both boys and girls showed an increase between 11-12, but follow a downwards trend towards the age of 16.

SATISFACTION WITH SCHOOL



Whilst girls saw an increase between the ages of 14-15, boys satisfaction improved from the age of 15.

Whether the current accountability system is sufficient to ensure that schools focus on PSHE

10. NPC is very worried that the systems for keeping schools accountable on the quality and effectiveness of their PSHE have weakened since 2010.

11. Our data shows levels of well-being falling consistently among school-age children. Education expert Dr Anthony Seldon, founder of Action for Happiness and Head of Wellington College, explained in 2013 that the education system now:

*'focuses too heavily on academic learning and attainment and not enough on education for life. And too often it fails to adequately support the many children who are struggling to cope with anxiety, stress and depression'*²

12. Given concerns of this kind, a robust regulatory procedure is crucial to ensuring that children's well-being is not overlooked. However, reflecting on changes to the Ofsted inspection framework, *Measure what you treasure* noted that:

*'The Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove, forging ahead with education reforms that included free schools, increased independence and parental choice, promised "much more rigorous exams" so that children can better compete with young people around the world, whom he feared were "better equipped to succeed than our own children". This thinking is reflected in changes to the Ofsted inspection framework, which the Minister said would enable inspectors to concentrate on academic excellence and forget what he dismissed as "peripherals". The new framework requires inspectors to check on the behaviour and safety of pupils, but gone are the references to health, emotions and relations with the wider community. Indeed, the word "well-being" has entirely disappeared.'*³

13. At a time when data shows children's well-being falling during their teens, the government should be strengthening the mechanisms which ensure that schools teach appropriate, effective PSHE, and which allow corrective action if this is not happening. Given the scale of the pressures impacting on girls in particular, which have been extremely well-documented (see paragraphs 14-17), the decision to remove from Ofsted any mandate to guide and advise schools on well-being is worrying. It also removes a 'feedback loop' between schools, inspectors and the Secretary of State, which will make it harder for the government to co-ordinate responses to well-being crises in the future.

² Seldon, A. 'Happiness isn't superficial, it's vitally important', in *Huffington Post*, 3 April 2013. http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/dr-anthony-seldon/happiness-isnt-superficial_b_3004653.html

³ *Measure what you treasure*, pp. 3-4

Whether recent Government steps to supplement the guidance on teaching about sex and relationships, including consent, abuse between teenagers and cyber-bullying, are adequate.

14. NPC has grave concerns that unhealthy attitudes towards sex and relationships are increasingly prevalent among young people. Despite the good work carried out by many teachers, our data showed worrying patterns in the way girls' well-being falls as they go through school, and the way it decreased more sharply compared with boys. NPC believes that effective SRE, focused on encouraging healthy and equal relationships between boys and girls at all times, can play a crucial role in addressing this trend.
15. The government should not under-estimate the risks posed by cyber-bullying and the harmful potential of other new technology. NPC concluded in *Measure what you treasure*:

*'[Our findings] could also reflect recent concerns about the insidiousness of sexism to which girls are now subject: the profusion of sexualised imagery in everyday life; readier access to pornography; and, again, new technology, and specifically the ease with which images and videos can be shared among peers.'*⁴

In media coverage of NPC's data, the *Daily Mail* referred to 'the march of technology' as a factor influencing falling levels of well-being.⁵ The *Sunday Times*' coverage listed contributory factors including 'cyberbullying, the prevalence of internet pornography and the phenomenon of "sexting"'.⁶ The recent *BBC* programme "Blurred lines" highlighted concerns around the glorified violence against women common in video games, and the online sexual harassment experienced by female gamers.⁷

16. It is essential that supplementary guidance to teachers on these issues keeps pace with changing technology and, above all, recognises the disproportionate affect of this technology on girls and boys. While childhood introduces challenges for boys and girls alike, there is strong anecdotal evidence from sources such as the Everyday Sexism project that these pressures disproportionately affect girls.⁸
17. It is also worth noting that government ministers have recently recognised the economic impact of gender stereotyping and undermining girls' confidence from an early age.⁹ These trends are likely to have a lasting impact not just on the girls involved but on the economic health of the nation.

⁴ *Measure what you treasure*, p. 9

⁵ <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2619935/Children-happy-age-11-cyberbullying-online-porn-sexting-affects-girls-worse-boys.html>

⁶ <http://www.thesundaytimes.co.uk/sto/news/article1406964.ece>

⁷ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0436qlw>

⁸ <http://everydaysexism.com/>

⁹ See <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-26064302>

How the effectiveness of SRE should be measured

18. NPC would recommend a robust system for formally measuring and comparing the well-being of children as they go through school. This could involve a comparison group approach, comparing schools with different approaches to SRE. The data could be shared between schools and charities to decide which approaches to SRE are proving most effective in maintaining children’s confidence and emotional health, and which are not. This would provide a clear evidence base from which to make future policy and funding decisions with well-being at their centre. Based on NPC’s experience, the well-being of children can be measured through self-completion of a paper or online questionnaire (with adaptation for children with special educational needs – NPC is currently developing a well-being questionnaire aimed at children with special educational needs for the West London Triborough). A measurement system would also benefit from capturing teachers’ views on changes in pupils’ attitudes and behaviour. The questions in NPC’s Well-being Measure could be used as part of the children’s questionnaire. The approach taken by schools and charities using the Well-being Measure could also act as a template for what can work, and for the sort of measurement approaches which could be developed and refined for wider use.

19. There is evidently interest from schools, children’s charities and local authorities in recording and acting on the well-being of young people. From NPC’s own experience, we know that there is growing interest from schools and local authorities who see the potential for adopting well-being measures that will help them better understand the needs of their pupils. SRE is at the heart of protecting their emotional health, and NPC hopes that rigorous ways to measure of well-being can be used to develop the most effective SRE into the future.

Recommendations

20. The Secretary of State should re-instate well-being as a criteria for Ofsted reporting at the first possible opportunity.
21. Supplementary guidance to teachers responsible for PSHE and SRE should recognise the disproportionate pressures on girls, and this guidance must keep pace with changing technology.
22. The government should work with schools and local authorities on using a well-being measure to track the emotional health of school children, and use this data to inform decisions about future funding and policy decisions.