

Girlguiding policy briefings: the Queen's speech 2022

This briefing provides Girlguiding's policy, evidence and suggested PQs for the Queen's speech 2022.

- The Queen will open parliament on 10 May 2022. HM government will introduce new Bills, to become new laws.
- A new parliamentary term provides a good opportunity to promote girls' and young women's skills, confidence and wellbeing.
- Girlguiding, the UK's largest youth organisation for girls and young women, would like the government to prioritise mental health, online safety, access to nature and youth services in the next parliamentary term.

1. The Online Safety Bill must keep girls and young women safe online

What we believe:

- The Online Safety Bill needs to be amended so that girls and young women and the disproportionate online abuse they face is mentioned on the face of the Bill.
- We also want to see the Bill tackle the relentless appearance pressures girls and young women face every day on social media.

What we know:

- Our research¹ shows 79% of 13 to 21-year-old girls and young women have experienced online harms in the last year. This includes sexist comments (35%), cyberflashing (22%), sexual harassment (20%), catfishing (20%), pressure to share nude pictures (16%) and cyberstalking (13%).
- 94% said they experienced negative emotions as a result with 76% saying it made them feel anxious, angry, scared, depressed or less confident in themselves.
- Only 15% think social media a safe place for them.
- The majority (93%) of girls and young women said there should be laws to protect against online abuse and 67% don't think the government is doing enough to stop online violence.
- In addition, 40% of girls and young women aged 11-16 and 50% aged 17-21 have seen images online in the last year that made them feel insecure or less confident about themselves².

Suggested parliamentary questions (PQs):

- Can the Secretary of State say how the Online Safety Bill will protect girls and young women from online abuse?
- What steps is the Secretary of State taking to tackle body image related online harms?

What we're doing:

- The [Media critic](#) interest badge for Guides allows them to develop media literacy.
- [Free Being Me](#), part of our Peer Education programme, helps girls increase their body confidence and challenges unhealthy beauty ideals. It encourages girls in Brownies and Guides to challenge myths and reframe the ways they think about the way they look.
- The [Breaking Free peer education resource](#) empowers young people to enjoy their hobbies, gain the skills they're interested in and help bring about a world where nobody feels trapped by gender stereotypes. Through this resource, they can develop assertiveness, cultural awareness and media literacy.
- Our [Safe the World peer education](#) resource helps our members to understand, identify and take action against unsafe behaviours.

¹ [girlguiding-policy-briefing---online-harms.pdf](#)

² [Girls' Attitudes Survey 2021](#)

2. The Mental Health Act (Reform) Bill must improve girls' and young women's wellbeing

What we believe:

- We want children's and young people's mental health to be seen as priority for recovery after the pandemic, and for mental health policy to include a gendered lens and understanding that recognises the pressures and barriers that impact girls' and young women's mental health and wellbeing, such as appearance pressures, sexism, gender stereotypes and sexual harassment.

What we know:

- Our research shows girls' and young women's happiness has been in decline over the last decade, with 63% aged 7-21 saying they are happy in 2021 compared to 81% in 2018. The pandemic has also had an impact as 67% of girls and young women are more sad, anxious, and worried than before the pandemic.

Suggested PQs:

- What steps is the Secretary of State taking to ensure children and young people's mental health is made a priority?
- Can the Secretary of State say how the 10-year mental health plan will improve girls' and young women's mental health?
- How is the Department for Health and Social Care working with other departments and organisations to ensure girls and young women's mental health is improved?

What we're doing:

- As part of our programme, members can engage in activities to help with their wellbeing through the [Healthy Mind](#), [Mindfulness](#), [Meditation](#) and [Self-care](#) badges
- The [Think Resilient](#) peer education resource helps our members to build resilience and give them the tools to improve their mental wellbeing.
- The Feel good skills builder allows girls to develop body confidence, self-esteem and resilience.

3. The Levelling Up Bill must include levelling up youth services

What we believe:

- The government's Youth Investment Fund as part of the National Youth Guarantee is a good starting point but, after the pandemic, youth services are in desperate need of revenue funding which is centrally available. This would enable us to deliver levelling up for young people across the UK.

What we know:

- Youth services give young people skills, confidence, opportunities and improve their wellbeing. They have an essential role to play in levelling up and ensuring every young person has equal opportunities.
- Girlguiding's Girls' Attitudes Survey³ found that 61% of girls and young women aged 11 to 21 say being part of a youth group or club makes them feel accepted, 60% feel connected to others and 58% say they learn new skills. And 85% of girls and young women aged 11-21 want children's and young people's concerns to be central to government decisions about the future⁴.
- Research from the University of Edinburgh and Glasgow showed that children who participate in Guiding or Scouting are likely to have better mental health in later life⁵. It shows that our programmes that help children develop skills such as self-reliance and

³ [Girls' Attitudes Survey 2020](#)

⁴ [Girls' Attitudes Survey 2021](#)

⁵ [Scouts and guides have better mental health in later life | The University of Edinburgh](#)

teamwork, and encourage being active outdoors, may have lifelong benefits for health and wellbeing (especially for those from poorer backgrounds).

Suggested PQs:

- What steps is the Secretary of State taking in this Bill to ensure that youth services are levelled up?
- Can the Secretary of State say how this Bill will support the National Youth Guarantee ambitions to ensure every young person in England will have access to regular clubs and activities, adventures away from home and volunteering opportunities by 2025?
- Can the Secretary of State say what steps she is taking to ensure levelling up youth services includes capital and revenue funding?

4. The Nature Bill must guarantee outdoor access for every young person

What we believe:

- The pandemic brought the importance of access to nature and outdoors into sharp relief. Girlguiding is glad to see the government take forward the recommendations of the Glover Review and we support the creation of the National Landscapes Partnership.
- We hope this will include a focus on access and inclusion as well as the National Youth Guarantee focus on residential and adventure for all young people. As part of the Access Unlimited Generation Green pilot, Girlguiding would like to see further funding opportunities in the Nature Bill so that we can continue to deliver these outdoor opportunities to young people in disadvantaged areas.

What we know:

- 67% of girls and young women aged 7-21 surveyed feel more sad, anxious or worried than they did before the pandemic. 71% of girls and young women aged 7-21 said being outdoors in nature has helped them to feel better.
- 48% of girls and young women aged 11-21 are hopeful there will be more appreciation for nature following the pandemic.

Suggested PQs:

- The Girlguiding Girls' Attitudes Survey in 2020 found that 67% of girls and young women aged 7-21 feel more sad, anxious or worried than they did before the pandemic but that 71% aged 7-21 said that being outdoors in nature helped them to feel better. Can the Secretary of State comment on how the Nature Bill will improve young people's access to nature and the outdoors?
- The Access Unlimited Generation Green pilot project has given 100,000 opportunities to young people to access nature and the outdoors, focusing on the most disadvantaged of whom many will never have visited the countryside or coast. What steps will the Nature Bill take to replicate projects like these?

What we're doing:

- The Generation Green project has enabled the Access Unlimited coalition to give 100,000 nature and the outdoor opportunities to young people across the country, focusing on the most disadvantaged of whom many will have never visited the countryside or coast before. This has included over 16,000 day visits or residentials and 783 pathways to work (over 700 volunteering opportunities and c50 jobs) - making a real contribution to levelling up.
- As part of our programme, girls can gain badges in [Agility](#), [Nature](#), and [Sport](#).

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