

## **Guide for teachers completing *The Big Future* with their pupils**

The Children's Commissioner, Dame Rachel de Souza, has a statutory and independent role to promote and protect the rights of children, and to make sure that their voices are heard by those who make decisions about their lives.

To help her do this, Dame Rachel has launched her biggest survey yet. *The Big Future* is open to all children in England and asks about childhood today. About the things that worry them, the things they love, the ways they have fun, and the changes they want for a better future.

At a time when there is a mood of doubt across Westminster and the nation at large about how we raise our children today – from screentime to schooling, from future jobs to AI – we will be granting many of those same children the right to vote for the first time. Yet, children consistently say they're not heard and excluded from the debate.

That's why *The Big Future* offers a new and comprehensive look at what children have to say about childhood today, and what they think needs to change for a better future.

### **Tell us about completing *The Big Future* in your school**

We'd love to hear more about how your school has engaged with *The Big Future*. We will be sharing posts from schools, individuals, and other groups.

The Children's Commissioner will formally recognise schools and multi-academy trusts (MATs) that achieve high participation rates for their contribution to amplifying children's voices and encouraging civic engagement.

# THE BIG FUTURE

## Completing the survey

How children can answer the survey:

- The survey can be completed on a wide range of devices (tablets, laptops, smartphones, etc).
- It is open to anyone aged 0-18, or an adult on their behalf if they need help to fill it out. See **Resources & FAQs** for *Guide for adults completing The Big Future on behalf of children*.
- It takes about 5 minutes to complete the survey. The survey has been designed to be easy to read and accessible for all children, but some children may take longer and need more help.
- The survey is open until 23 October 2026, with findings published in February 2027.
- There are questions about school, your local area, online safety and space for you to tell us what you think is important. Children aged 12 to 18 are asked two extra questions, on voting and any worries about the future.

*What should the government do to make your future better?*

## Take part now



**Survey:** [childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/thebigfuture](https://childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/thebigfuture)

**Resources & FAQs:** [childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/the-big-future](https://childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/the-big-future)

**Socials:** #TheBigFuture

@ChildrensCommissioner X @ChildrensComm

## *The Big Future* lesson plans

We have created lesson plans to support teachers to complete *The Big Future* with their pupils. See **Resources & FAQs** for *The Big Future lesson plan (primary aged children)* and *The Big Future lesson plan (secondary aged children)*.

These slides can be included in lessons, form time, school council meetings, or other sessions. They will align particularly well with lessons focused on children's understanding of democracy and the role of government, or as part of a school focus on civic engagement.

These lesson plans will help you explain to students who the Children's Commissioner is, and why it is important for them to take part in the survey.

Several of the questions in the survey are multiple choice, but there are also two open text questions:

- What would make your local area better?
- What should the government do to make your future better?

The lesson plan encourages you to facilitate discussions about what children would like to change – with prompts to make them think about what might make life better for their future, what change they would like to see in their communities and local area.

At the end of the lesson, we encourage you to allow time for your pupils to individually complete the survey online, drawing on the class discussions if they choose.

**Overview:** *The Big Future lesson plan (primary aged children)*

See **Resources & FAQs:** [childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/the-big-future](http://childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/the-big-future) for *The Big Future lesson plan (primary aged children)*.

- Approximately 45 minutes to complete.

Slides	Task	Time	Suggested delivery
2	<b>Who is the Commissioner?</b>	2 mins	Use this slide to ask students who they think the person in the photograph might be, what her job might be, and why she is important to children.
3 - 4	<b>The Children's Commissioner</b>	5 mins	Use this slide to explain that it is the Children's Commissioner's job to listen to children. She speaks to many children right across the county to understand their views, interests and difficulties.  She then tells people in power what you want to change. It's her job to make sure that adults in charge listen to children when they make decisions.
5 - 6	<b>Introducing the Children's Commissioner and the survey</b>	5 mins	Watch the video on slide 5 using the embedded link to introduce <i>The Big Future</i> survey. The video is 2 ½ minutes long.

# THE BIG FUTURE

7 – 9	<b>Thinking about questions in the survey</b>	15 mins	These slides encourage students to consider their answers to questions that are coming up in the survey. Take feedback as a class.
10	<b>Main task: <i>The Big Future</i> survey</b>	15 mins	<p>Read through the survey information on this slide with students. Emphasise that it is not a test and there are no right or wrong answers and they do not have to answer any question if they don't want to. The survey is anonymous, and their responses are kept private.</p> <p>To access the survey, the web link shown on the slides should be copied into the web browser by students.</p> <p>Staff should help individual students to complete the survey, as needed. If a staff member is completing the survey on behalf of a student, there is an option at the beginning of the survey to state this.</p>
11	<b>Thank you for taking part</b>	3 mins	This slide outlines what we will do with the survey responses and links to the Children's Commissioner's previous work.

# THE BIG FUTURE

**Overview:** *The Big Future lesson plan (secondary aged children)*

See **Resources & FAQs:** [childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/the-big-future](http://childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/the-big-future) for *The Big Future lesson plan (secondary aged children)*.

- Approximately 45 minutes to complete.

Slide	Task	Time	Suggested delivery
2	<b>Do now</b>	5 mins	<p>While students enter the lesson and registers are taken, ask students to note down their thoughts for the two questions on the slide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What does the government do for children and young people?</i></li> <li>• <i>What should the government do to make your future better?</i></li> </ul> <p>Discuss their answers to the first question as a class. You might prompt them to think about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education &amp; future careers</li> <li>• Health and mental health</li> <li>• Safety online and in the community</li> <li>• Youth clubs &amp; local facilities</li> <li>• Financial and family support</li> </ul>

# THE BIG FUTURE

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Social care</li> </ul> <p>Discuss their answers to the second question as a class.</p>
3	<b>Key terms</b>	5 mins	Read through key terms, address any misconceptions.
4 - 8	<b>Introducing the Children's Commissioner and the survey</b>	10 mins	<p>Use slides 4 and 5 to ask students who they think the person in the photograph is, what her job might be and why she is important to young people. Read through the information with students.</p> <p>Use slide 6 to share an example of how change is happening based on what young people have told the Children's Commissioner.</p> <p>Watch the video on slide 5 using the embedded link to introduce The Big Future survey. The video is 2 ½ minutes long.</p> <p>You can also use slide 8 to explain why the Children's Commissioner is asking young people to complete <i>The Big Future</i> survey.</p>
9	<b>Thinking about questions in the survey</b>	10 mins	This slide encourages students to consider their answers to questions that are coming up in the survey.

# THE BIG FUTURE

			<p>In pairs, ask students to share their answers to the questions on the slide. Either structure the task around each question or put all the questions up at once for a more extended independent discussion.</p> <p>Take feedback as a class.</p>
10	<p><b>Main task:</b> <b>The Big Future survey</b></p>	10 mins	<p>Read through the survey information on this slide with students. Emphasise that the survey is anonymous, and that the personal data collected is solely to gather information on groups and to ensure fairness of results.</p> <p>To access the survey, the web link shown on the slides (<a href="http://childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/thebigfuture">childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/thebigfuture</a>) should be copied into the web browser by students.</p> <p>Staff should help individual students complete the survey, as needed. If a staff member is completing the survey on behalf of a student, there is an option at the beginning of the survey to state this.</p> <p>As part of the survey children are asked for the full name, address and postcode of their school, and for the name of the local authority they live in.</p>

11	<b>Thank you for taking part</b>	5 mins	<p>This slide outlines what we will do with the survey responses and links for young people to find out more about the Children's Commissioner's work.</p> <p><u>Optional:</u> The Children's Commissioner's office run's a Youth Voices Forum for those aged 13 and above, remove if the students are below 13. You can also sign up and share with your students as you feel appropriate.</p>
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