



PARENTS' PERSPECTIVE ON THE DRAFT GUIDELINES ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF WHOLE-SCHOOL GUIDANCE IN POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS



NPC

SUPPORTING PARENTS
SUPPORTING CHILDREN

NPC Vision

The National Parents Council want to see an Ireland where every child has the opportunity to reach their full potential

NPC Mission

The National Parents Council exists to ensure that all parents are supported and empowered to become effective partners in their children’s education. NPC will work to increase the capacity and capability of the education sector, to achieve true partnership and deliver better outcomes for all children and young people.

Values

NPC knows that when parents and schools work together, children do better. Therefore, NPC believes that in order to achieve this parents must feel:

Engaged: Parents must be actively engaged in the education of their children.

Supported: Parents’ involvement in children’s education must be supported by the attitudes, beliefs and practices of all members of the school and broader education community.

Partners: Parents must be viewed as partners in facilitating children’s learning and be supported in this role by the school and broader education community.

Valued: Parents should be viewed as full partners in the decisions that affect their children and their family.

Welcomed: Parents should be welcome in the school, and their support and assistance sought as a valuable resource to support children’s education in the school.

Connected: All communication and dialogue with parents must be regular, open, two-way and meaningful.

National Parents Council

Key Activities

SERVICE DELIVERY

NPC's services are developed to empower parents so that they can support their children in all aspects of education.

HELPLINE

The NPC helpline is a national confidential service for parents. The helpline staff listen and give information and support to parents to help them make the best possible decisions for and with their children.

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

The NPC Training and Development programme is a national programme of training, development and support for parents. The purpose is to empower parents to play an active part in their child's education at every level.

WEBSITE

The NPC's website www.npc.ie aims to provide parents with information regarding education at early years, primary and post primary levels.

ADVOCACY

NPC engages in awareness-raising activities and campaigning and lobbying at a national level on the objectives of its Strategic Plan.

REPRESENTING PARENTS

NPC represents the voice of parents through representation on external bodies and other mediums. NPC consults with parents and brings parents' views to bear on education policy.

BUILDING PARTICIPATION

NPC builds participation strategies and activities to ensure parents and children are an integral part of the work of NPC.

Introduction

The National Parents Council (NPC) understands how important Whole-School Guidance (WSG) is in helping students throughout their time in post-primary. WSG is designed to make schools more supportive, ensuring that every student gets the help they need in their education, personal life, social development, and career planning.

The WSG aims to ensure students have better access to counselling, career advice, and important life skills. This helps students feel more prepared to make informed decisions about their future. Schools provide different types of guidance, including one-on-one counselling, group sessions, and career planning activities to meet the needs of all students and help them navigate their school journey with confidence.

As part of the WSG development, the NPC gathered feedback from parents to understand their awareness of existing guidance services, their opinions on the proposed changes to the draft guidelines for WSG in post-primary schools, and how these changes could affect students' education and well-being.

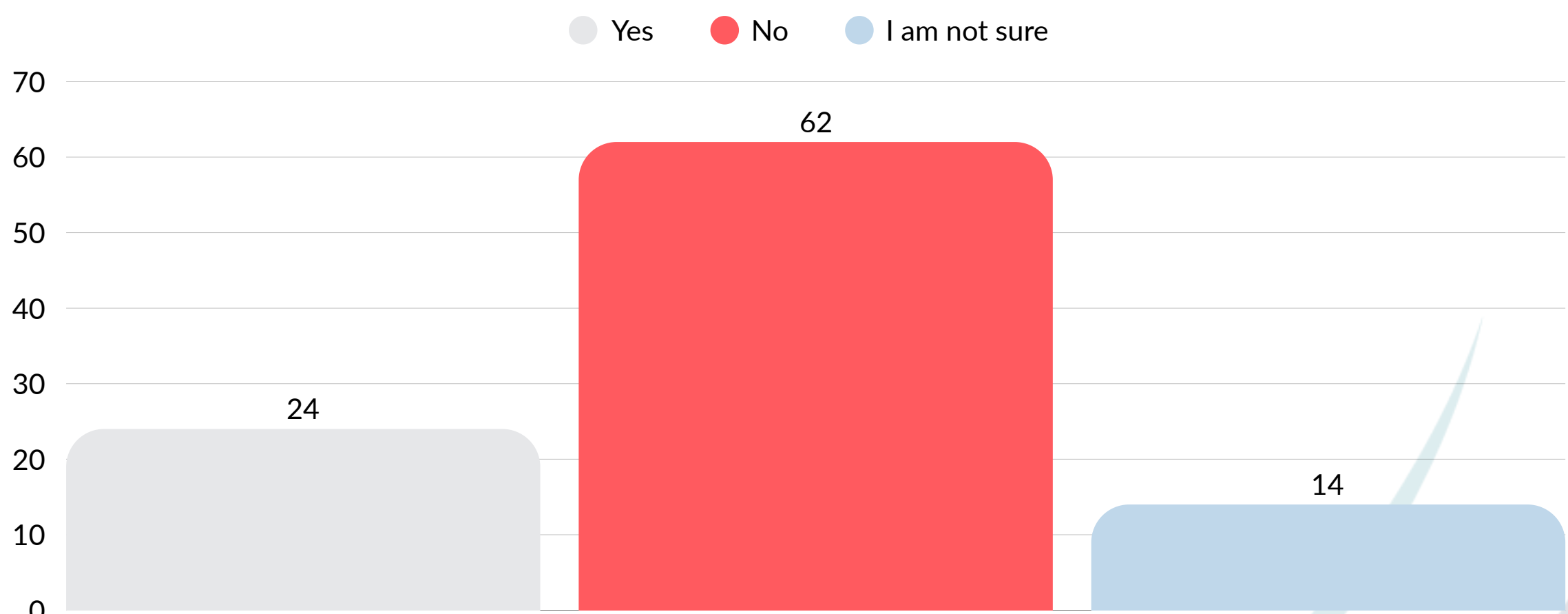
The NPC collected this feedback through surveys, focusing on key areas such as parents' awareness of school guidance programmes, their understanding of available support services, and how these services affect students' academic, personal, social, and career growth. The input from parents is part of the consultation process to improve guidance services.

This report is based on a survey conducted by the NPC in March 2025. It was sent to all parents on the NPC mailing list who agreed to participate in NPC surveys. The survey was open from 20th March 2025 to 28th March 2025, and during this period, 100 responses were received. This report will present the views of all the parents who took part in the survey.



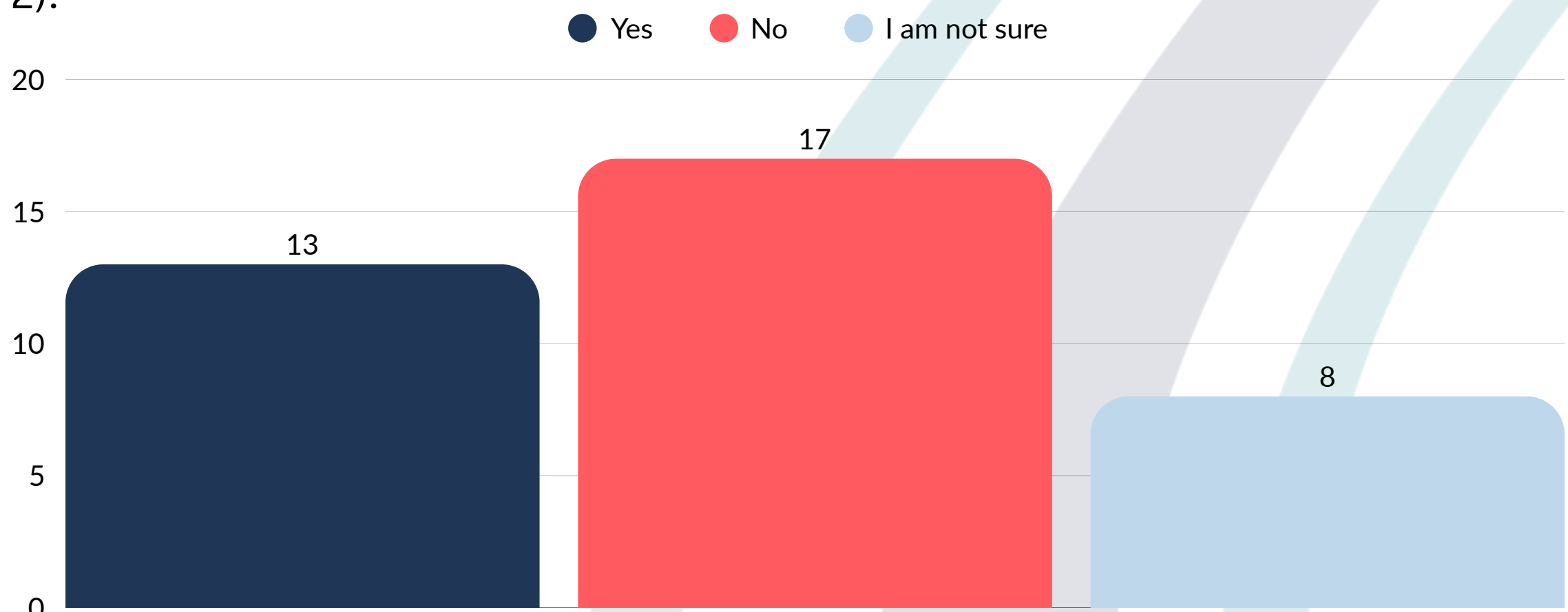
Survey Findings

When parents were asked if they knew about the school's guidance programme, most said they were not aware of it, while a smaller group said they were familiar with it. Some parents were unsure (see Figure 1).



(Figure 1)
Are you aware of the school's guidance programme?

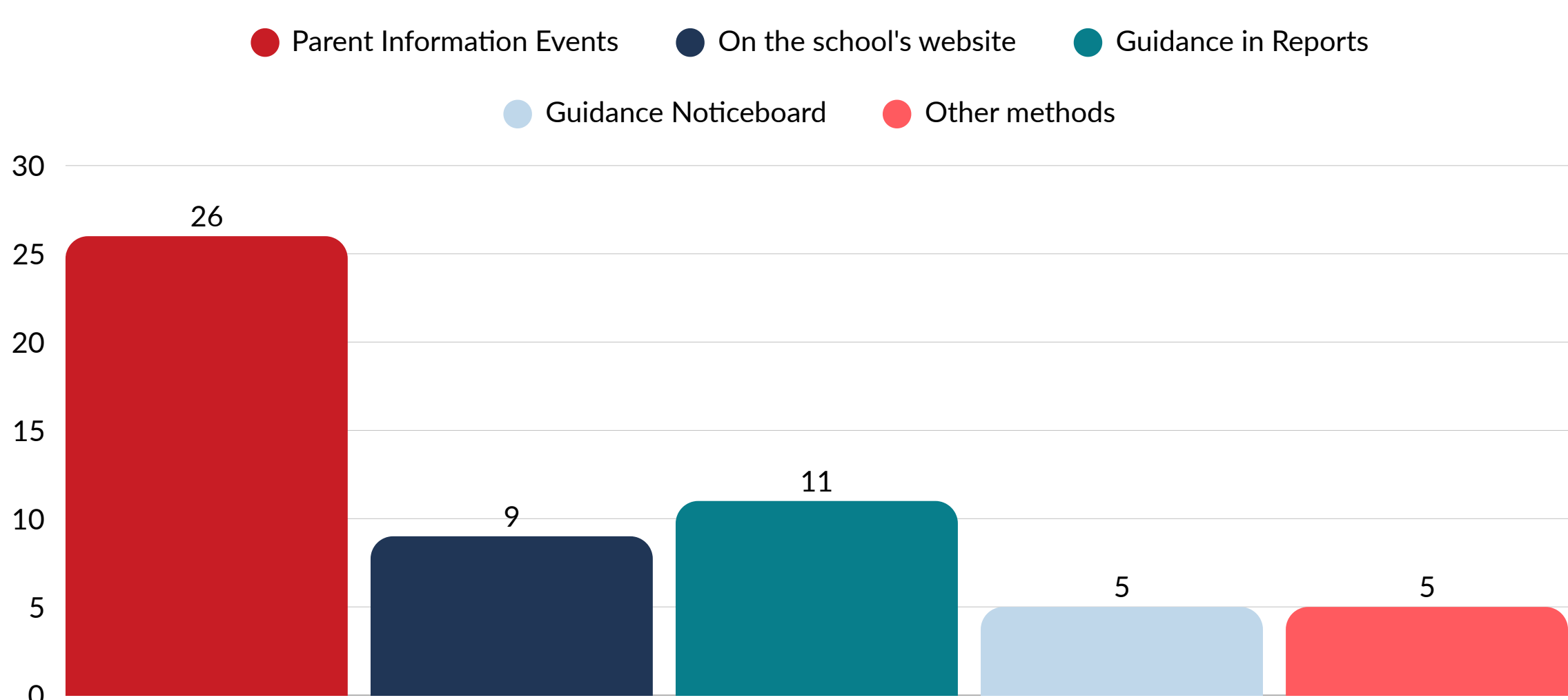
Parents who said they knew about the Whole-School Guidance programme in question one were asked if they had been invited to take part in or help with the programme at their child's school. Almost half of parents said they had not been asked, while a few said they had. Some were unsure (see Figure 2).



(Figure 2)
Have you been asked to take a part in or contribute to the Whole-School Guidance (WSG) programme in your child's school?



When parents were asked how the school shared information about guidance services, the most common response was at "parent information events", such as open nights and parent evenings. The next most common method was "guidance included in school reports", with personalised feedback from the guidance team. A smaller group of parents mentioned the "school's website", which features a Whole-School Guidance page with the guidance plan, event schedules, and videos. Some parents noted the "guidance noticeboard" in the entrance hall, and a few mentioned "other methods" (see Figure 3).



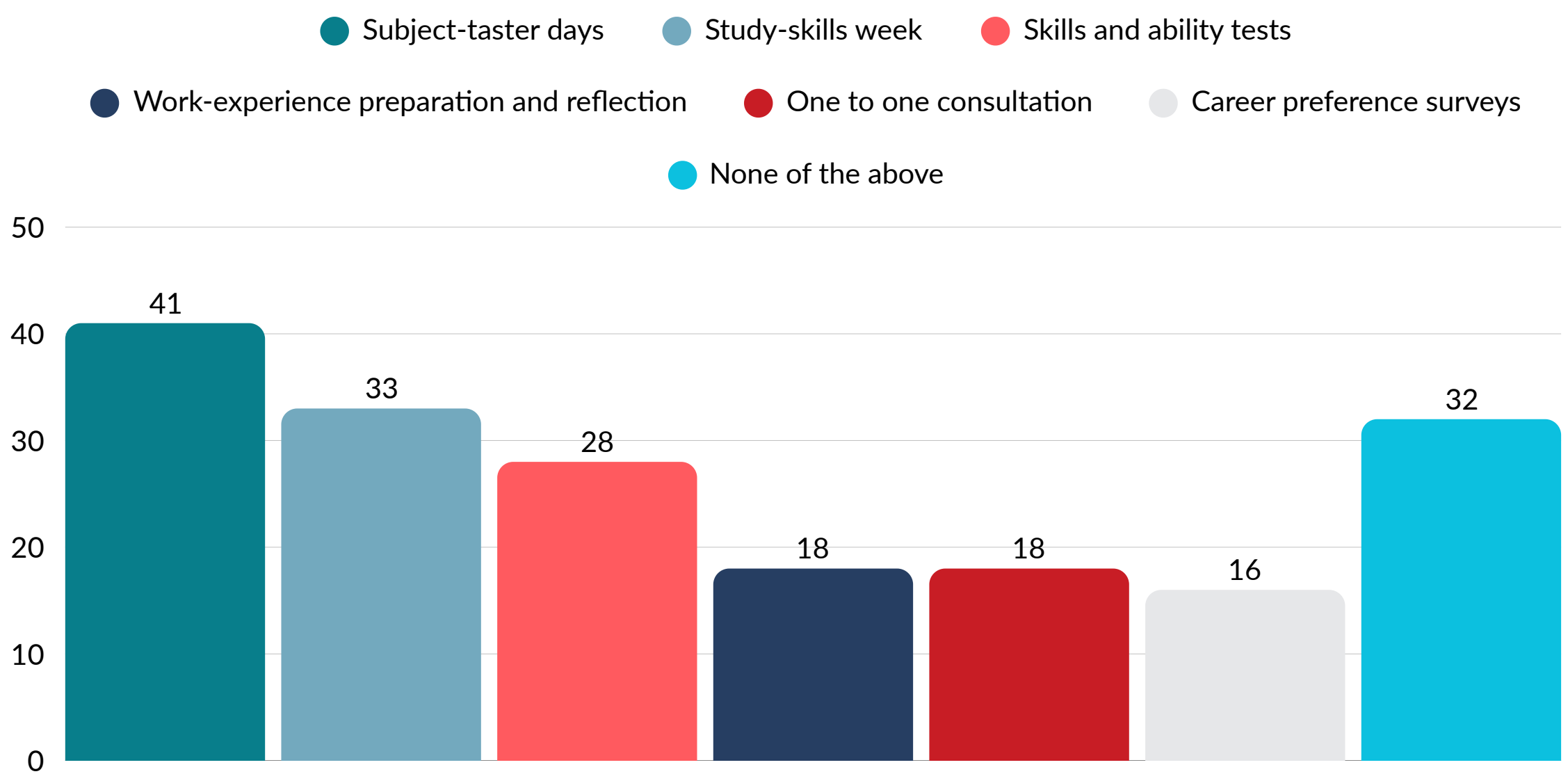
(Figure 3)
Has your child's school shared information about guidance services and resources with you using any of the following methods?

Parents who selected other methods mentioned different ways of communication. Some noted that the guidance department made individual contact via phone or the school student journal. Other parents mentioned their child's timetabled guidance lesson in the first year, email, or meeting with the guidance teacher.

*This is a summary of the parents voices; please refer to the appendix for full answers.

Parents were asked to choose which activities their child had participated in. The most commonly selected activity was subject-taster days, followed by study-skills week. Skills and ability tests also had considerable participation, while one-to-one consultation and work-experience preparation and reflection saw moderate involvement. Career preference surveys had the lowest participation, and almost a third of parents reported that their child did not take part in any of the listed activities (see Figure 4).





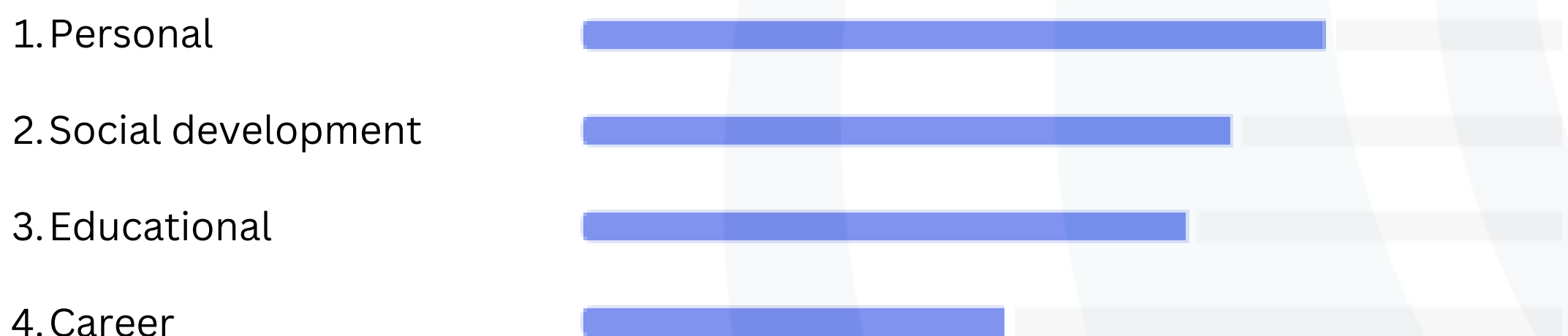
(Figure 4)
Which of these activities has your child participated in?

Parents were asked to rank How helpful were each of those experiences? Rank them from 1 (most helpful) to 6 (least helpful). Please see below figure (5) for the results:



(Figure 5)
How helpful were each of those experiences? Rank them from 1 (most helpful) to 6 (least helpful):

Parents were asked to rank which of the following guidance services they think would be most helpful for their child's needs, ranking them from 1 (most helpful) to 4 (least helpful). Figure (6) below shows the results:



(Figure 6)
Which of the following guidance services do you think would be most helpful for your child's needs? Please rank them from 1 (most helpful) to 4 (least helpful):



The guidance counsellor's time is split between three learning opportunities. Parents were asked to rank which one they think should receive more time and focus, from 1 (most important) to 3 (least important). One-to-one support was considered the most helpful, followed by classroom guidance, and then group guidance. Figure (7) below shows the results:

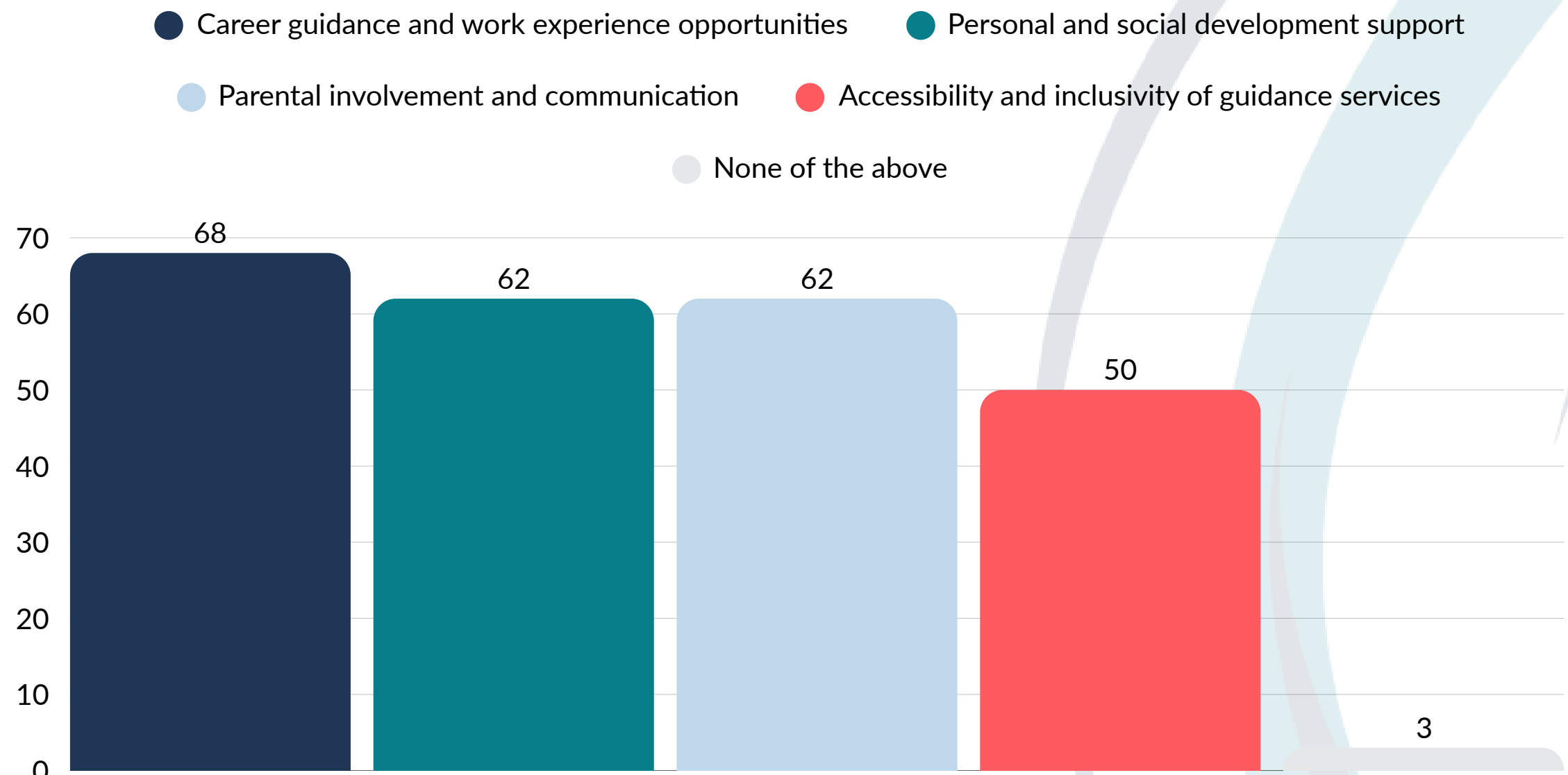


(Figure 7)

The guidance counsellor's time is split between three learning opportunities. Which one do you think should receive more time and focus? Please rank them from 1 (most important) to 3 (least important):

Parents were asked to identify areas of the Whole-School Guidance (WSG) programme that need improvement to better support students. Responses were fairly evenly spread, with career guidance and work experience opportunities being the most common. Accessibility and inclusivity were mentioned slightly less frequently. Additionally, one parent who selected "None of the above" suggested that anti-bullying and racism should be a focus for improvement (see Figure 8).

*This is a summary of the parents voices; please refer to the appendix for full answers.



(Figure 8)

What areas of the Whole-School Guidance (WSG) programme do you believe need improvement to better support students? (Select all that apply)



Thoughts, Suggestions, and Opinions

Parents were given the opportunity to share their thoughts, suggestions, and opinions through a free text question on the draft guidelines on the implementation of a whole-school guidance programme in post-primary schools. Below is a summary of their feedback:

*The below is a summary of the parents voices; please feel free to refer to the appendix for full answers.

The feedback showed that students need more chances to share their opinions, express themselves, and get the right support in school. Some concerns were raised about whether their voices are heard and if they get enough help with important things like choosing a career, learning life skills, and studying effectively. Many responses said that career advice should start earlier in post-primary school and be more personalised to each student's needs.

There was also a call for clearer information about what support is available. Instead of large group sessions, more one-on-one guidance was suggested. Ideas included holding more career fairs, giving students tests to help them understand their interests, and making sure they know about all career options—not just university, but also traineeships and other training opportunities.

A shortage of guidance counsellors was seen as a problem, with concerns that schools are moving away from one-on-one support and focusing more on general classroom sessions. It was suggested that more professional support, such as school-based counsellors or therapists, should be available to help students with personal challenges.

Study skills were also mentioned as an area that needs improvement. One parent thought students should be taught effective study methods in a clear and interesting way, instead of just getting general advice that might not be helpful for real-life learning.

Other areas for improvement included teaching students more about important issues like bullying, racism, mental health, and substance misuse. Building students' confidence, helping them recognise their strengths, and encouraging their interests were also seen as key priorities.



There was a call for better support for students moving into post-primary school, along with clearer guidance when choosing subjects. To help with career preparation, it was suggested that schools work more closely with local businesses to offer better work experience opportunities. Finally, better and more open communication between schools and families was seen as essential to make sure parents and students know what support services are available.



Conclusion

This report presents parents' insights on the implementation of Whole-School Guidance (WSG) in post-primary education, emphasising both its successes and areas that require further development. The findings highlight the necessity of a well-structured, inclusive, and accessible guidance framework that effectively supports students with diverse learning needs, particularly those requiring special educational support.

Strengthening career guidance, fostering greater parental engagement, and ensuring equitable access to resources will be essential in enhancing the effectiveness of WSG. By promoting collaboration between educators, parents, and support services, the education system can create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment. Continuous evaluation and adaptation will be crucial to empowering all students with the skills and confidence needed for their personal, academic, and professional growth.



Appendix

Q4. If other methods, what are they?

- Guidance Dept makes individual contact via phone or school student journal.
- Their timetabled guidance lesson in first year
- Email
- Through KARE
- Met with the Guidance Teacher

Q10. If none of the above, please tell us why:

- Anti bullying and Racism
- I haven't experienced senior cycle to comment

Q11. Please feel free to share any thoughts, suggestions, or opinions you may have:

- I feel in general students opinions are not asked for and valued enough and there's not enough space for self expression.
- More support services are needed to help guide and support students towards the careers
- Neurodiversity and disability training needed for staff, doing more harm than good
- Guidance in Life skills such as financial literacy, project management. Career skills such as CV clinics, interview techniques. Personal and social such as communication skills and talent management advice
- On the questions where I ranked ideas, they are all important; students need classes on study skills but they also need one to one sessions in TY but also in 5th and/ or 6th year. I find it hard to comment on most parts as my son is only in First Year.
- Very little support for the very academic students
- I genuinely am unsure as to what my child's school offers in this area, it hasn't been made clear to me nor have I received any formal or informal information about it prior to attending and since attending
- Mum of 5 going thru second and 3rd level...found in all cases and 2 secondary schools guidance counselling was very poor and of no benefit to our children. Parents participation is needed

- I answered question 3, however as stated in question 2, my daughter has not had exposure to anything listed in question 3 to date therefore I based my answers on what I think would work best for her but I should have an option to select N/A based on question 2. This is the first that I have heard, as a parent of a child in second level school and another child who will be starting second level in September, of WSG. My daughter is entering Transition year in Sept and is expected to know what she "wants to be or do" and arrange work experience (without assistance from the school) for transition year. This is daunting for her (and the parents) and confusing. Support from the school guidance is necessary. Addressing an entire cohort (e.g. all third year classes) on this is not achieving the goals set out for the WSG, nor benefiting the students. There are 6 x transition year classes in my daughters school so she is lost amongst the crowd..
- Target incoming first years to help guidance them with subject choice. More guidance in senior cycle about labour market developments. Robust interest testing in transition year for senior cycle options. Plenty of career fairs and outings.
- I think teaching students confidence and self belief is most important, along with respect and kindness towards themselves and others. Focusing more on what they are good at and what they enjoy, and encouraging that.
- More guidance councillors needed
- Zoom meeting to discuss this and explain to a lot of us what all this means
- Haven't had experiences, so can't rank for q3 and can't skip either
- There is a huge huge lack of GC teachers. Cuts years ago were never reversed
- None of my kids have ever received quality study skills. They have not been taught evidence based skills and it always seems valid and empty in the way it is taught too. The study methods discussed are usually an overview, and the skills focused on are not evidence based. All that stuff about what type of learner are you?! No. They need to be taught what actually works, and it needs to be actively shown. Like actively practice studying in class (eg get them to pick something they learned earlier and get a blank page and write as much as they can on the topic) and then the next class, do it again. What type of techniques work for different types of information. How to study English paper 1 v English p2 etc.. *Actively* showing how this works in real time, with the teacher checking in with each student individually at least once per class. Honestly I think this is so important that maybe it requires it's own class. I am yet to find a kid that knows how to study effectively and efficiently, for long term learning. In 2025 it is ridiculous how poorly this is being taught. Both at primary and post primary. It p much doesn't even exist in primary, and then *bam* secondary school and they are suddenly supposed to study without any actual support or knowledge.

- I feel children also need to be learning about life after school the emotions and hardship life can bring and I feel in a child friendly way suicidal/drug/drink/smoke should be raised
- I think students need more career guidance on their future job prospects as they are not aware of the abundance of apprenticeship opportunities and Plc courses available to them. I feel currently it is very focused on applying for university studies, and more needs to be done to promote and inform them of other courses etc
- My child is in first year so hasn't yet availed of many of the services. Study skills including time management are key for him at the moment.
- Please gave education or guidance about Anti bullying and Racism in each classroom. thanks.
- There needs to be much more engagement with all students, starting in 1st year. At least two people are needed for the role, in average sized schools.
- There seems to be a move to have the Guidance Counsellors doing more classroom guidance and less 1-2-1 appointments
- Schools also need counsellors/psychotherapist onsite to help students manage more personal issues
- Career guidance doesn't seem to have improved any bit since I was in school. Lots of free classes & then rushing near the cao deadline to have one to ones when it's too rushed and too late. More work should be done in TY and 5th year - more site visits, more presentations. Better TY work experience opportunities and school should forge links with local industries to get work placements for students
- NA