A fifth of children had taken drugs by age 11

OVER 20 per cent of Ceredigion youngsters have admitted they took an illegal drug by the age of eleven, a survey has found.

Youngsters between the age of 11 and 18 were asked about their experience of drugs and alcohol as part of a survey for Ceredigion Council's Children and Young People's Team.

And the surprising results from the survey of 352 youngsters found that 73 had taken an illegal drug by the age of 11 or younger, a total of 23.9 per cent of those surveyed.

Thirty-six children in the survey said they first used an illegal drug before their 11th birthday, with 32 saying they were 11 when they first used a drug.

The age at which most of those surveyed said they first experienced drugs was 13, with 26.2 per cent of all 86 people. That is followed by 58 youngsters, 17.3 per cent, aged 14, and 69.3 per cent, 47 youngsters, aged 15-year-olds.

Cannabis was the drug most likely to have been tried first. Almost 60 per cent said cannabis was the first drug they had tried. That was followed at 16.1 per cent by glue and solvents.

Cannabis was also the drug that youngsters were most likely to have tried. A total of 739 children had tried cannabis, 15% had tried glue or solvents, the second most tried drug, followed by nitrates, which 62 youngsters had tried, with 51 children having tried magic mushrooms.

Sixty-nine youngsters said they had tried Class A drugs, in other words, ecstasy or heroin. Twenty-seven children had tried cocaine, 26 had tried ecstasy and 28 had tried heroin.

Girls were more likely to have tried Class A drugs than boys.

Glue was most likely to be offered to youngsters at parties or on the streets.

Ceredigion's youngsters were also asked about their use of alcohol. Almost 1,880 youngsters between 11 and 18 were asked about drinking habits.

Of the 1,799 children surveyed, 618

said they had drunk alcohol during the last week before the survey. Of those numbers, the majority were aged 15, with 377 15-year-olds saying they had.

There were 127 14-year-olds and 123 aged 13 who had drunk during the week before the survey.

Alcopops and wine were the most popular drinks, followed by cider, beer and烈酒.

But the vast majority of youngsters, 610, said they only drank on special occasions. A total of 471 said they drank occasionally. There were 318 youngsters who said they only drank at weekends.

However, 14% of children said they drank every day, and 77 said they drunk alcohol two or three times a week.

The majority of the alcohol was obtained at home, but youngsters also managed to get alcohol from local shops and off-licences, as well as pubs and clubs.

Good news for Welsh language

OTHER findings from the Children and Young People's Plan highlight the continuing success of education in Ceredigion.

Education results and achievement in Ceredigion is consistently above the Welsh average, with the council being one of the top performing areas in Wales.

There is also good news for the Welsh language, with statistics showing that the proportion of youngsters in the county who speak Welsh is around three-quarters.

Statistics show that of Ceredigion youngsters born in Wales, 87% per cent can speak Welsh.

In Aberystwyth, 78 per cent of Welsh youngsters speak Welsh.

In Aberaeron and Llandysul that figure is 93 per cent. The figure for Cardigan is 89 per cent and in Tregaron 95 per cent.

Even children not born in Wales have some knowledge of Welsh in most areas. Although 75 per cent of those born outside Wales in the Aberystwyth area have no knowledge of Welsh, that figure drops elsewhere.

In Aberaeron 36 per cent of those to 26-year-olds have no Welsh skills.

In Llandysul there are 32 per cent of youngsters aged three to 14, born outside of Wales that have no Welsh knowledge.

In Cardigan, 37 per cent of children from outside Wales have no knowledge of Welsh, with the figure a third in the Tregaron area.