

Law in Children's Lives

Researcher name and institution:	Dr Dawn Watkins, Leicester Law School, University of Leicester	
Funding mode/funder:	ESRC and The Legal Education Foundation	
Start and End date:	September 2014. Funding ended March 2017 but the project is ongoing.	
1. Brief summary of what the research is about.	The Law in Children's Lives project (LICL) has sought to investigate and explore children's understanding of law in the context of their everyday lives. An unusual and pioneering feature of this study has been the creation and use of a digital game as a means of gathering research data from 634 children aged 8-11 years, from 8 primary schools in Leicester and Leicestershire.	
2. What are the research questions?	Adopting a 'child-first' approach, a particular concern of this study has been to examine how far, if at all, children understand law as a positive and empowering force in their lives as opposed to just a constraining one. When encountering problems or difficulties, how far might children recognise that there are legal	

	dimensions to such problems? And to what extent do they perceive that 'the law' in terms of its systems, rules, principles and actors can assist them in dealing with these problems effectively? Do they recognise the legal responsibilities that arise in everyday situations, both for themselves and others, and to what extent do they recognise the relevance of human rights in an everyday context?
3. What, if any, outputs so far?	D Watkins, E Lai-Chong Law, J Barwick and E Kirk, 'If you are 10 you go to prison: Children's Understanding of the Age of Criminal Responsibility' (2016) <i>Northern Ireland Legal Quarterly</i>, Vol. 67. No.3, 311-26 D Watkins 'Where do I stand? Assessing Children's capabilities under English law' (2016) <i>Child and Family Law Quarterly</i> Vol. 28, Issue 1, 25-44 J Barwick, D Watkins, E Kirk and E Lai-Chong Law, 'Adventures with Lex: the gamification of research' <i>Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies</i>, published online: November 23, 2016. DOI: 10.1177/1354856516677682 E Lai-Chong Law, D Watkins, J P Barwick and E S, 'An experiential approach to the design and evaluation of a gamified research tool for Law in Children's Lives.' In <i>Proceedings of the 15th Conference on Interaction Design and Children</i> (Association for Computing

	Machinery, 2016), 322-333 DOI: 10.1145/2930674.2930722
4. What outputs are planned?	D Watkins, E Lai-Chong Law, J Barwick and E Kirk, 'Exploring children's understanding of law in their everyday lives' Accepted for publication in <i>Legal Studies</i>, subject to final amendments. Following this publication, a full project report – designed for a non-academic audience – will be published via the project website.
5. What is the anticipated impact?	The LICL project takes place within a wider theory of change that has as one of its final aims the development of a digital game that children and young people can play in order to assess and improve their levels of legal understanding. It is intended that this game will be openly available and accessible to all children and designed to be compatible with multiple UK and non-UK platforms. As such it has the potential to empower and positively impact thousands of children both nationally and internationally. The research findings from this study will contribute to the much-needed evidence base in the field of public legal education (PLE) as well as serving as a platform for the development and testing of further PLE interventions.
6. Comments / additional information / requests for data or input from the broader administrative justice community	A film that provides an overview of the project is available at www.le.ac.uk/licl