**Law in Children's Lives**

- Funded by the ESRC under its transformative grant scheme.
- This project investigates how far, if at all, children perceive themselves to be empowered by law in their everyday lives.
- An unusual and innovative feature of this study is the use of digital gaming as a research tool.
- We worked with 634 children (aged 8 to 11) in 8 different Leicestershire schools in the 2015 summer term.

**Why use a game?**

- It allows for the deliberate removal of adult interviewers from the data gathering element of the research.
- We know that many children are familiar with digital gaming. 60% of 6-11 year olds use tablets each week,1 and 99% of 8-15 year olds play games – on average 20 hours per week.2
- ‘Gamification’ brings elements of games, such as structure, aesthetics, characters, or rewards, to non-game situations: in our case, a survey.
- It enables research to be carried out with children in groups in their familiar classroom setting, rather than individually.

**Which Children?**

- From a range of schools identified using the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) and other data.
- Years 4, 5 and 6 invited to participate.
- Subject to parent/carer and child’s consent.

**The game: Adventures with Lex**

- We designed a tablet-based game with the help of 48 children from 3 local schools, and adult experts, designers, and consultants.
- A ‘naive’ alien, Lex, asks the child to show him around their world. In different scenarios, Lex asks the child what they would do and why.
- Children navigate everyday settings: a school, park, shop, and friend’s house, which present a series of linked dilemmas. The choices that they make are tracked and captured by the game.
- Each child wears a headset, so that they can speak their answers to Lex’s questions. These are recorded by the game.

**What went well?**

- The game was highly appealing to schools and to children.
- It made use of children’s existing skills and interests – they found it intuitive, engaging and fun.
- Effective use of online and print communications and meetings in person.
- Interdisciplinary approach: law, childhood studies, information science and computer science.

**Early observations**

- Schools and parents/carers act as ‘gatekeepers’ to children’s access to resources.
- The game provides robust quantitative and qualitative data.
- We are gaining valuable insights into children’s everyday legal competencies.
- Children frequently default to adults, whom they assume to understand the law.

**What next?**

- Complete the analysis of data from this project.
- Child and adult friendly dissemination of findings.
- Further research: a deeper, richer study, with smaller groups of vulnerable children.
- Develop a game that children can download and play themselves, to become more legally empowered.
- Influence policy and curriculum development regarding children, the law, and their rights.

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2. UKIE. “UK Video Games Fact Sheet.” UKIE, 2015.