



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

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# Increasing operations in schools and settings in response to COVID-19: children's rights impact assessment

We assessed the impact of the initial policy decisions taken in response to COVID-19 on children's rights

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# 1. Describe and explain the impact of the proposal on children and young people?

As outlined in Section 1, this IIA focusses on assessing the impacts relating to increasing operations in schools and settings in Wales from 29 June following lockdown measures in March. It follows on from the IIA published alongside this IIA on 28 September [covering the initial education response to the COVID-19 pandemic](#).

The decision to increase operations in schools and settings and provide the opportunity for face to face provision for most learners was guided by a rights-based approach to equality of access and consideration of learners' rights. Whilst this approach has the consequence of lower levels of teacher contact time for learners at their school or setting for those groups that may have been targeted for such support, it nevertheless provides the more equitable opportunity for most learners to access face to face support from trusted educational professionals before the summer break. As set out below in this CRIA, consideration has also been given to addressing the needs of those who do not attend their school or setting before the summer break.

## How will the proposal affect the lives of children, positively and negatively?

Increasing operations in schools and settings from 29 June will in due course impact on all children and young people. The approach is designed to start a phased approach to mitigating the negative impacts on learners caused by COVID-19 requiring emergency measures in March (explored in greater depth in the IIA [covering the initial education response to the COVID-19 pandemic](#)).

The decision framework for the next phase of education and childcare:

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considerations, planning and challenges referred to in Section 1, sets out the approach to changing the operations of schools and settings. It is clear that any increase in operations would only be considered when certain scientific or medical criteria were met. Other factors include any adverse effects on well-being or access to learning for children and young people arising from not going to school, with due regard to the UNCRC.

As confirmed earlier, increasing operations in schools and settings was guided by an approach that is based on equality of access, as all learners have a right to education and to be supported in their learning. As more learners return to the physical school environment, practitioners will be operating in a very different context. This will continue for the foreseeable future; providing a combination of face-to-face learning with remote learning, a blended learning approach. However, individual experiences are likely to vary (at least initially) as the return to operations evolve. Not all learners will have the opportunity for on-site 'check-in, catch-up, prepare' time with practitioners this term and, potentially into the autumn term. That is why we are already guiding our education professionals to have particular regard for learners who, for whatever reason, are unable to attend a school or setting to receive contact time and how they can be supported remotely.

The negative impacts of lockdown on children and young people are unlikely to be fully addressed for some time after a full return to operations in schools and settings. Consequently, while decisions to increase operations in schools and settings have been taken with concern for the health and well-being of all learners and their rights to education as key considerations, it is likely that further actions will be necessary as the COVID-19 response evolves and our understanding of the implications of the pandemic on learners increases.

It has long been recognised that schools and settings do far more than teach children; good mental and physical well-being are essential to good learning. As a result of COVID-19 and the subsequent lockdown we anticipate a negative impact on children's health and well-being.

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Whilst it is recognised that the majority of the impacts for children and young people arising from 'lockdown' are likely to be negative, there have also been some positives highlighted in feedback from learners during the period; these include:

- extra time to spend with their close family
- relief from previous social and health pressures such as acting as a carer to wider family members, mental health difficulties and bullying at school
- more time to focus on learning new skills, hobbies, interests and play
- reductions in anxiety due to not having to take high stakes exams in the summer

However, learners also reported:

- only a relatively low proportion felt happy that exams have been cancelled
- they were more likely to feel uncertain or worried, with some young people also reporting feeling angry and sad

For some learners not being in their school or setting environment can be particularly detrimental due to negativity in their home environment. Learners will have encountered different experiences and home environments during lockdown, and starting the process of increasing operations in schools and settings will help identify and mitigate any negative impacts.

- Not being in school can impact routine and social interaction leading to feelings of loneliness and mental health issues. This has been recognised in the Welsh Government's decision to allocate £1.25 million to provide additional mental health support for children who may be experiencing increased stress or anxiety as a result of the international COVID-19 pandemic.
- Well-being is both vital in its own right and a key enabler of learning: physical, mental and emotional well-being can all support learning or act as barriers to learning.

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- Relationships are particularly important in difficult times and engagement in learning alongside classmates will make a vital contribution to the mental health and well-being of young people. Practitioners have been asked to focus on supporting well-being as a foundation for learning, with this being the starting point for schools and settings engagement with learners during the summer term.

The negative impact on cultural well-being being seen through lockdown will likely ease as COVID-19 response measures ease and the introduction of 'check-in, catch-up, prepare' sessions in schools and settings from 29 June.

- Reduced opportunities for learners to participate in cultural activities, arts, sports and recreation will likely continue for some time. This could be mitigated to some extent through the role of play and outdoor learning; which practitioners have been asked to consider through guidance. Both play and outdoor learning provide wide ranging opportunities to support learning as well to enhance learners' relationships, physical, mental and emotional well-being. They should therefore be central to any approach to phased return.
- Learning 'in' the outdoors has been shown to support both physical and mental health and well-being. Also evidence indicates that the risk of infection is reduced outdoors as the virus suffers in sunlight.

The pandemic is likely to have negatively affected well-being in some way, particularly for learners who may find it difficult to place issues and concerns into perspective. This could reinforce inequalities between learners, and months away from schools and settings could mean that emerging learning problems are missed or addressed later by educational psychologists.

- Assessments of learner development undertaken remotely are more limited.

This means that increasing operations in schools and settings can be an important measure to mitigate risks in this regard, and help ensure earlier interventions.

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- There have been challenges affecting groups of learners regarding access to electronic devices and pressures in the home environment, so limiting access to learning remotely.
- There were also specific challenges raised for those with additional learning needs, and many learners calling for more contact and support from their school or setting, with additional online provision.

In responding to the issues being raised, including through real time feedback on the learner survey, through the decision making process and development of learning and operational guidance, schools and settings have been asked for the summer term to consider:

- an increased focus on well-being, play and outdoor learning
- a focus on learners becoming 'learning fit': learning should have a clear focus on preparing learners to learn again, on their progression and next steps, rather than focusing on level attainment
- where forms of assessment are used, this should be used to help learners progress in a supportive way
- as learning is reintroduced, learning experiences are developed in response to learners' needs: learners will have a variety of needs, across physical and remote learning and practitioners will need to design learning to support these, rather than carry on with 'business as usual'

Guidance to schools and settings also sets out that as they begin to think about learning and teaching for the next school year, they should also consider the following principles:

- a focus on the purposes and principles of the new curriculum to support learning: many of the answers on the focus, flexibility, autonomy and challenges of this academic year can be found in the Curriculum for Wales guidance.
- a blend of 'in school' and 'out of school' learning driven by a single curriculum: learners should not expect or experience two parallel

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curriculums, but practitioners will need to think how learning outside classroom supports valuable and finite contact time

## 1.2 How will the proposal affect different groups of children?

The policies set out in Section 1 to increase operations in schools and settings for children and young people, through a more equitable approach, aims to enable a positive impact on all groups of learners over time. None of the potential options targeting particular groups of learners for earliest return to operations in schools or settings (by age, year or learner type) would have addressed the range of inequalities of provision being highlighted during lockdown. Prioritising one group of learners over another at this stage could well result in some in greatest need not being able to have direct contact with their teachers until September; a significant period of time.

It is recognised that having a broad rights-based approach to equity does not necessarily translate to equality of opportunity, or equality of access for all learners. Further measures are required in specific situations to enable the realisation of such an approach. A key principle of the decision framework was to allow schools and settings the flexibility to prioritise certain learners at key points if deemed necessary. Appropriate and regular communication with parents or carers will also be important to ensuring that as many learners as possible are able to engage with this provision.

Many learners will adapt to educational disruptions and cope well. As noted in paragraph 1.1 above, there will be opportunities for families to bond more closely and to undertake a range of activities together. The **Effective Pre-School, Primary and Secondary Education** (EPPSE) project shows what types of child-adult interactions help learning and demonstrates the importance of learners' home learning environments. Education is far broader than the

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classroom and the curriculum.

However, some of the impacts being experienced by the restrictions put in place as a consequence of COVID-19 will disproportionately affect specific groups of learners at particular points. In addition, the evolving situation may give rise to specific needs and issues as the return to operations in schools and settings progresses.

The disruption to education as a consequence of COVID-19 has been particularly challenging for learners with special educational needs (SEN) or a disability. It is also likely to have impacted their families and carers, as the respite care and facilities they normally depend on may continue to be unavailable or their provision restricted. Those requiring more intensive or specialist support should have this available in an appropriate and timely fashion. Local authorities and services across the NHS and social care should work with schools and other education settings to identify and support learners' needs.

The flexibility in local arrangements, and the encouragement to local authorities to consider providing multiple forms of support in parallel with increasing operations in schools and settings, is intended to allow support to be responsive to the needs of particular individuals. For those with disabilities, this is likely to include considerations about accessibility of support provided and whether any additional support is needed.

Risk assessments are essential tools, and should already exist for learners with more complex needs. At the start of the response to COVID-19, schools and settings were asked to continue to provide care for a limited number of vulnerable children and young people, including some with a statement of SEN. To identify those with statements who needed a childcare placement, local authorities were asked to undertake SEN risk assessments. In the case of special schools, their personalised knowledge and existing risk assessments will inform decisions as to whether a child can attend the setting safely and what

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safety arrangements need to be put in place.

Risk assessments should involve parents or carers and the views of the learner; should adopt a multi-agency approach where appropriate and should focus on determining whether the learner would be able to have their needs met at home with support provided remotely. Local authorities work with schools and settings to decide together who is best placed to undertake the risk assessment.

Staying at home can be more disruptive to the lives and routines of those with additional educational needs and disabilities, particularly due to their specialist educational needs. The impact is also likely to be more significant on their families and carers, as the respite care and facilities they depend on are unavailable or their provision severely limited. The **'Coronavirus and me'** survey reported a sample of the challenges encountered by those with SEN during the lockdown:

*“ I am finding the school work really difficult to do as I am dyslexic and it all come in written text, which I find hard to read’ (Boy, 12, Ceredigion)*

*“ ‘Really struggling with school work the Hwb isn’t set up for dyslexics’ (Girl, 15, Ceredigion)*

*“ ‘It needs to be clearer what extra support is available for children with special needs...because I go to mainstream, no one has offered me a place or additional support as a special needs pupil, despite having a statement of educational needs.’ (Boy, 10, Rhondda Cynon Taf)*

*“ ‘I have ASD so I have struggled with suddenly no school and a different routine. I'm worried about going back to school. I don't know when. I don't know who will be there.’ (Boy, 10, Rhondda Cynon Taf)*

*“ ‘No support for my schoolwork. No contact with friends in the Asd base at school. No contact with specialist clubs I was part of’ (Boy, 16,*

Bridgend) ”

The operation of ‘check in, catch up and prepare’ sessions from 29 June on a rotational / part-time basis may prove more challenging for those with SEN. For example, learners with autism have a greater need for routine / consistency, which rotational attendance does not provide. Also those with complex needs will have equipment from their school or setting at home, such a physiotherapy /specialist learning equipment. This brings practical challenges if required equipment also needs to be transported between the home and school or setting. In some instances, consideration should be given to offering a learner with SEN a full-time placement.

These issues are being addressed through additional guidance on SEN risk assessments.

We are aware that the take up of the hub provision for vulnerable and disadvantaged learners fell short of the 40% provision identified. Vulnerable and disadvantaged learners should be able to return to their own school or setting as soon as possible. Access to teachers they know and trust, and who are more familiar with the individual challenges they may have faced during lockdown, is essential in helping identify specific needs. Therefore, as operations increase from 29 June we expect learners attending ‘hubs’ provision to move to their own school or setting. For learners who have used ‘hubs’ provision, the expectation is that schools and settings will continue to make additional provision for those learners, alongside the learning support they are entitled to.

For those receiving free school meals the closure of schools and settings has meant they have been home more often and more exposed to possible resultant stresses. This will likely require specific actions to address individual and group needs through the school or setting over a sustained period of time. The guidance to schools and settings highlights these issues for their consideration. In addition, to enable local authorities to continue free school meal provision until

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schools re-open to all learners (or up to the end of August if necessary) £40.4 million has been allocated.

In line with our expectations that numbers would increase as a result of COVID-19, as at the 20 May, Data Cymru monitoring has confirmed that around 5,000 learners have become eligible since the start of lockdown, and 37% more are being supported than in January. Over 90,000 learners are now provided with free school meal provision.

Through increasing operations in schools and settings it is recognised that there may be some differential impacts for certain groups based on race. For example there is growing evidence that COVID-19 is having a disproportionate impact on people from Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities.

The underlying socioeconomic causes of poorer COVID-19 health outcomes in BAME groups are likely to be varied and complex. Factors include housing issues, multi-generational households and overcrowding, access to digital services and information, occupations leading to greater health risk, self-employment and zero- hours contracts, an embedded culture of racism and promoting a culture of recording ethnicity. These issues in many instances are long standing, and continue to impact on children and young people living in these households. However, they are being exacerbated by the pandemic and resulting restrictions.

The First Minister convened a BAME COVID-19 Advisory Group to advise on necessary measures to protect those (BAME) communities in Wales whose health is being disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 and also to recommend longer-term work that would be needed to address any inequalities.

Consequently the Socio-economic Sub Group undertook research and published a **report** on 22 June. The report highlights avenues for further research and makes recommendations for addressing each of the factors identified that position race equality concerns at the heart of decision-making in government. It

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concludes that cross-sectional monitoring and evaluation systems are required to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty, and embed anti-oppressive practices across all health, social care and other services in Wales. The report will inform a Race Equality Action Plan for Wales which will be developed by the autumn.

Additionally, the All Wales COVID-19 Workforce Risk Assessment Tool has been designed for use for all health and social care staff thought to be vulnerable or at risk, regardless of ethnicity. The tool addresses individual risk factors. Work is underway to adapt this tool to support the education workplace, but it is available for use in its current form now.

Learners from the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities are also likely to be particularly affected as they can experience multiple types of disadvantage. This often includes lack of access to digital equipment and connectivity at home and parents or carers who may be less able to provide educational support. Schools, settings and local authorities need to be mindful of the specific challenges in communicating arrangements to parents; particularly to those living on private sites or on roadside encampments where broadband and mobile data may be limited or unavailable. Up to £3 million is being provided to local authorities to support 'digitally excluded' learners, ensuring they are equipped as we move into the next phase with a focus on blended learning.

The Welsh language raises impacts in respect of those being able to access the support they need to develop their skills and knowledge of the language; but also those requiring greater support from the school or setting to access their learning through the medium of Welsh.

Many of the issues surrounding the development of Welsh in schools and settings have been exacerbated by the pandemic. There is a risk that Welsh medium schools could find re-engaging some learners after this period more challenging, particularly as time has been lost for more immersive approaches with younger learners. Or more learners struggle to access the breadth of learning through the medium of Welsh without direct access to support from

teachers and peers. There are fewer resources available to support remote and blended learning through the medium of Welsh (for example, online lessons in English are readily available, but there is less availability and choice through the Welsh language).

Impacts are likely to vary dependent upon age group and on complexity of need. Those in transition and exam years, such as year 6 moving into secondary school, and those at the top end of secondary, may be affected more from disruptions in their education routines. No formal 'ending' of their schooling, no exams, prom etc. may give rise to feelings of loss or disconnection. The 'Coronavirus and me' survey reported year 6 children's view on what would help them most to move to secondary school; 76% said to be able to say goodbye to the primary school and 75% said visiting their secondary school before school starts.

Distance might be a barrier for some learners returning to their schools or settings; particularly if some want to return but the necessary school or public transport was not available. This could impact more on those attending Welsh-medium education, special schools, faith schools, PRUs receiving EOTAS and those in rural areas.

There are also likely wider impacts on learners where existing high levels of deprivation and poverty exist including access to services.

Local authorities are required to assess the travel needs of learners who are aged under 19 in their area. This includes those who they are legally required to provide transport for and those for whom they may wish to provide discretionary transport when assessing travel needs. An authority is also required to have regard to:

- the needs of disabled learners and learners with learning difficulties
- any particular needs of learners who are 'looked after' or formerly looked after by a local authority

- the age of a learner
- the nature of the route that the learner is expected to take between home and the places where they receive education or training

In assessing the travel needs of learners, local authorities must take into account the fact that travel arrangements they make in light of the assessment must not cause unreasonable levels of stress, take an unreasonable amount of time or be unsafe.

The guidance being provided to support increasing operations of schools and settings recognises that they are best placed to ascertain the most appropriate ways of working in order to support learners during the transition process. Fully considering and ensuring the well-being of all learners is integral to this process, recognising the needs of individuals and supporting continuity in their learning and progression.

### **1.3 What evidence have you used to inform your assessment, including evidence from children or their representatives?**

In line with the expectations set out in the Minister for Education's **decision framework** we have worked closely with a wide range of partners to help shape and inform the policies and proposals set out in Section 1 of this IIA. These include ADEW, the middle tier and head teachers group, the trades unions, the Chief Scientific Advisor, Chief Medical Officer, Public Health Wales and the Technical Advisory Cell (TAC). We have also undertaken work with parents, children and young people. Consequently a range of information has been used to inform this assessment, including:

- scientific and health advice from COBR, SAGE, TAC, as well as information and advice from Public Health Wales
- information from and associated evidence relating to the IIA **covering the**

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### **initial education response to the COVID-19 pandemic.**

- data collected and published by the Welsh Government and its key partners
- previous research used to draw conclusions from
- discussions with practitioners and other representatives, providing feedback from professional and children's perspectives
- feedback on key issues being raised with the Children's Commissioner, the Future Generations' Commissioner and the Welsh Language Commissioner
- daily internal Welsh Government social listening reports that have highlighted the key trends on social media and summaries of the key issues being raised through correspondence, the First Point of Contact Centre and the Complaints Unit
- tracking and analysis on the experience and actions of education jurisdictions internationally some of whom have been at a more advanced stage of the pandemic response or who have taken different policy choices
- feedback from key stakeholders and representative bodies
- a range of publically available national and international research reports and information on impacts of COVID-19 and similar pandemics, including via WHO and UNESCO

While there has been no direct testing of options for increasing operations in schools and settings with learners due to the nature and pace of the decision process, information from children and young people has been collected from a range of channels and where possible this has fed into impact assessment and decision making. This includes:

- daily social media listening reports
- the Minister for Education undertaking Q&As on social media with young people
- the Minister for Education attending the Youth Parliament
- the response to video messages aimed at certain groups of learners or their parents
- feedback from the 'Coronavirus and me' survey of children and young people

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- daily monitoring of topics raised in correspondence, enquiries to the First Point of Contact centre or to the Complaints Unit – these have also been used to refine and update the Frequently Asked Questions section of the Welsh Government’s Coronavirus website

In addition to the above, it is worth noting:

- At the start of the lockdown period there was a marked decrease in safeguarding reports to Children’s Social Services, these are steadily increasing to expected levels but have not totally recovered in all local authorities.
- Practitioners working across agencies in the statutory and third sector have had to adapt quickly to new ways of working, continuing to make sure that children and families get support. For some this has involved finding new ways of providing services via virtual platforms, for others face-to-face contact has continued in line with **Public Health Wales advice** on social distancing and PPE.
- Children’s Social Services have maintained face-to-face contact for children identified as at risk throughout the pandemic. However, the majority of children not already identified as at risk will have only had virtual contact via video, telephone or online with services from their home with family members present. This is likely to have impacted on the opportunities for practitioners to identify abuse and for children to disclose harm. Services have done everything they can under difficult circumstances but we know that sadly some children will have come to harm without us knowing. As lockdown eases increased contact between children and universal and preventative services is likely to identify unmet need.
- Work to mitigate this has commenced by supporting practitioners to spot and report harm, abuse and neglect; encouraging the public to report concerns and developing information for families and for children and young people on seeking help and support. This work is supported by the Office of the Children’s Commissioner for Wales and the National Independent Safeguarding and is being developed in consultation with external

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stakeholders from across the statutory and third sector.

- This information highlights the very real concerns of under-reporting and the increased exposure to harm for some which may lead to a substantial increase in support needs in the future as children return to school.
- Educational outcomes are seriously at risk with a direct impact on the attainment gap, especially for vulnerable and disadvantaged learners. Some schools and settings struggle to adjust their teaching patterns to engage learners in distance learning, especially in deprived areas. Teachers are reporting that they expect learners' studies to be impacted significantly, suggesting the assumption should be that no learning has taken place for some learners during this phase.
- The '**Coronavirus and me**' survey did not reflect a wholly negative picture of the impact on children and young people as a result of repurposing schools to respond to COVID-19. While only a sample response, of those who engaged through the survey 51% reported they felt confident or very confident, 25% lacked confidence, with 10% stating they felt 'not at all confident'. There was a neutral option from 24%.

## **1.4 How have you consulted with children and young people? If you haven't, please explain why.**

It has been acknowledged that due to the unprecedented nature of the public health emergency and the speed within which some of the initial policy decisions had to be taken and implemented, it was not possible to consult with children and young people prior to the decisions to repurpose schools in March. This highlighted the need to ensure some form of engagement with children and young people to understand how those decisions had impacted on them to enable us to consider further mitigating action.

This resulted in the Children's Commissioner for Wales, Children in Wales and with the support of the Youth Parliament, the Welsh Government launching an

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online survey. The survey provided an opportunity for children and young people to share the impact of the initial education response to COVID-19 had on their well-being and learning. The survey received 23,700 responses from children and young people.

This information has enabled us to hear their views and experiences when considering what next steps to take.

Despite work on the development of the decision framework and review of possible approaches building over a 2 month period, the nature of responding to an evolving health emergency is such that actual decision making necessarily takes place within very short timeframes as the scientific and health advice becomes available. As summarised above, however, the Minister for Education is engaged in a range of activities which seeks to consider and respond to the views of children and young people, including ongoing engagement through social media and through the Youth Parliament. Stakeholder engagement also continues to include those able to represent the views of children and young people, including parents, practitioners and the Children's Commissioner for Wales.

## 1.5 What other evidence would inform the assessment?

The Senedd's Children, Young People and Education Committee is **scrutinising the Welsh Government's response** and has identified emerging issues regarding the impact on vulnerable children and the disproportionate effect of lockdown. Evidence from these findings help to contribute to information being considered when taking forward the increasing operations in schools and settings.

The operational guidance published on 10 June calls for schools and settings to keep a record of attendance and families should notify their school if their child is unable to attend, to help local authorities plan for and understand any barriers to

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learners returning to school and identify any further support needed. Wider data capture requirements are being agreed, while being mindful of not placing too much burden on schools and settings, and reporting arrangements are being put in place with the support of local authorities and regional consortia.

The Welsh Government is initiating and drawing on an increasing range of research and surveys to monitor impacts on children and young people and their families.

These include particular emphasis on health and well-being implications, as well as issues the capacity of schools and settings.

We have established a resource to pull together 'equalities and quality assessment' work as an ongoing base of evidence, as well as routine analysis of international approaches, and sources of information being drawn on by other education jurisdictions internationally. The sources for these reviews include Foreign and Commonwealth Office 'diptels', the Welsh Government overseas network, the UK Government's Department for Education international summaries, and our own desk review.

We continue to work with Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) and Data Cymru colleagues to monitor free school meal take-up. Additionally we have launched a joint media campaign with the WLGA to raise awareness of free school meal provision available. Specifically the campaign encourages parents to contact their local authority to find out if they are eligible for free school meal provision.

## **2. Explain how the proposal is likely to impact on children's rights.**

Below is a table of the UNCRC articles that are considered the most relevant to

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policies set out above, and in Section 1 of this IIA

## UNCRC articles relevant to policies set out above

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Article number	Description	Links to decisions
2	The Convention applies to every child without discrimination, whatever their ethnicity, sex, religion, language, abilities or any other status, whatever they think or say, whatever their family background.	<p>Increasing operations in schools and settings from 29 June follows an approach based on equity in providing for most learners (irrespective of age or background) the opportunity for contact time with trusted educational professionals before the summer break. Within this, it is recognised that some learners will not be able to attend these sessions, and guidance is being provided to schools and settings highlighting that particular regard should be given to meeting their needs remotely.</p> <p>For some learners additional factors will need to be considered in order for them to benefit from provision. An approach based on equity does not in itself guarantee equality of opportunity or provision for all learners, especially those with particular needs. For those learners who are SEN, vulnerable, disadvantaged or in need of specialist support, additional and/or alternative arrangements will likely be required. We know that provision will look very different for some learners, to ensure that their specific needs are met.</p>
3	The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all decisions and actions that affect children	<p>This article can be seen in the principles set out in the decision framework for the education sector, which are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• the safety and mental, emotional and physical well-being of learners and staff</li><li>• continuing our contribution to the national effort and strategy to fight the spread of COVID-19</li></ul>

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4	<p>(implementation of the Convention)</p> <p>Governments must do all they can to make sure every child can enjoy their rights by creating systems and passing laws that</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the confidence of parents and carers, staff and learners, based on evidence and information, so that they can plan ahead.</li> <li>• ability to prioritise learners at key points, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds.</li> <li>• consistency with the Welsh Government’s framework for decision-making, to have guidance in place to support measures such as distancing, managing attendance and wider protective actions</li> </ul> <p>While UNCRC is not explicitly referenced in the published decision framework document, the influence of children’s rights is implicit in the approach being taken. Placing learner well-being front and centre of all decision making regarding the education response to COVID-19 is central to that. This alongside the development of arrangements which seek to start a process of mitigating the negative impacts of ‘lockdown’ on children and young people, while recognising the specific needs of particular groups of learners.</p> <p>The Minister for Education has consistently said that increasing operations in schools and settings would only take place when the health context allows.</p> <p>Allowing most learners the opportunity of contact time with their teachers before the summer holiday will mitigate some of the adverse impacts of lockdown measures by providing important social, learning and attainment gap benefits. It supports practitioners to better understand learning needs of individuals and therefore help them better target learning provision from September.</p>

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	promote and protect children's rights.	<p>The application of a more equitable approach in allowing a greater number of learners of all ages, stages and needs (who are not subject to shielding) to experience 'check in, catch up, prepare' sessions in advance of the summer break facilitates better protection of their right to education. Given capacity issues in schools and settings during a period of social distancing requirements, targeting particular learner groups for early return would result in others having to miss out. In seeking to address the needs of one group, challenges in meeting the needs and rights of other children would be exacerbated.</p> <p>Despite the more equitable approach adopted, as explored earlier, specific measures are necessary to meet the needs of some learners unable to access provision. Guidance has been provided to schools and settings regarding this, and more specific guidance is in train (regarding SEN risk assessments, for example). Additional resources are also being made available to address digital accessibility issues learners are experiencing. £3 million additional funding from Welsh Government is specifically addressing the issue of access to hardware and/or internet connectivity. We are aware that considerable efforts are being made by local authorities and schools to address these needs but this work remains ongoing into the period of 'check in, catch up, prepare;' sessions.</p>
6	Every child has the right to life. Governments must do all they can to ensure that children survive	The key principle putting the safety and mental, emotional and physical well-being of learners and staff at the heart of decision making directly addresses these rights. It is more than staying safe and healthy, but also about providing a considered and measured approach to start to address the

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	and develop to their full potential.	<p>negative learning and developmental impacts experienced by 'lockdown'.</p> <p>Both guidance for operations and learning in support of increasing operations in schools and other education settings cover a comprehensive and safe approach to ensure the health and well-being of learners and practitioners when returning to the school environment. This includes specific advice on safe capacity, social distancing and hygiene measures and proportion of learners attending school on a daily basis.</p> <p>With the return of more learners to the physical school environment, practitioners will provide a combination of face to face and remote learning – a blended approach. In developing this practitioners will consider the needs of all their learners, how those are best addressed, and will have regard to the purposes of learning and weigh up their priorities, flexibly drawing on a wide range of curriculum guidance to support them in this work.</p>
12	Every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously	<p>The 'Coronavirus and me' survey, alongside engagement with the Youth Parliament, consideration of learner correspondence / questions, and inputs from those able to represent learner's views (eg parents, practitioners and the Children's Commissioner) have helped ensure children's views Have been taken into account in the process of increasing operations in schools and settings to date.</p> <p>The learning guidance to schools and settings is clear that well-being should be at the heart of work to reengage learners. Within this it emphasizes the importance of giving time for learners to discuss and express their experiences,</p>



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		and ensuring they feel valued, listened to and heard.
14	(freedom of thought, belief and religion)  Every child has the right to think and believe what they choose and also to practise their religion, as long as they are not stopping other people from enjoying their rights.  Governments must respect the rights and responsibilities of parents to guide their child as they grow up.	None of the policy decisions set out above and in Section 1 will have an explicit impact in relation to freedom of thought, belief and religion.  The learning guidance outlines that practitioners need to consider how to support all learners. This includes those who may be anxious about returning, those who may have experienced extended time in a home environment unsupportive of their beliefs, or who find the prospect of returning threatening; and to support them with the process of integrating into a physical setting for education. Conversations about how learners are feeling are critical throughout this period and staff in schools and settings are being guided to encourage learners to discuss their questions and concerns.  While parents or carers are being strongly advised (where possible) to support their children's return to their school or setting, at least initially for this period of 'check in, catch up, prepare' sessions they will have that choice.
17	Every child has the right to reliable information from a variety of sources, and governments should encourage	The 'Coronavirus and me' survey asked how children and young people chose to access information sources; it reported: via family (76%), TV (65%) and school (20%). 3% of respondents noted they were not getting any information. Young people taking the 12- 18 survey have similar sources of information but are more likely to be getting

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	the media to provide information that children can understand.	<p>information online from news websites and accounts.</p> <p>The approach to increasing operations in schools and settings is high profile and is being covered extensively via a range of media outlets. Steps being taken to ensure ongoing access to reliable and accessible information include the Minister for Education participating in Q&amp;As with children and young people. We are also releasing regular press statements, written and video messages aimed at particular groups of learners or their parents / carers, and reports relating to decisions and factual information about our response to the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>We continue to publish FAQs on the response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the actions that have been taken in the education sector. This is informed by correspondence and enquiries through the first point of contact centre, some of which are from children.</p> <p>Guidance to schools and settings regarding the ‘check in, catch up, prepare’ sessions includes communications with learners, parents and carers.</p>
18	Both parents share responsibility for bringing up their child and should always consider what is best for the child. Governments must support	<p>We recognise that communications between Government, schools and settings, and parents / carers and their children has been critical throughout the process in informing the approach in relation to increasing operations in schools and settings.</p> <p>To inform thinking, a Parent and Carer Advisory Panel has been established, providing feedback on the strength of feeling towards the guiding principles underscoring the</p>

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	parents by creating support services for children and giving parents the help they need to raise their children.	<p>decision framework, and their views across a range of related issues. This approach also helps inform guidance for schools and settings regarding their communication with parents / carers etc.</p> <p>Targeted communications for parents or carers is ongoing, including through social media and specific dedicated webpages.</p>
19	<p>(protection from violence, abuse and neglect)</p> <p>Governments must do all they can to ensure that children are protected from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect and bad treatment by their parents or anyone else who looks after them.</p>	<p>For some children, not being in their school or setting can be particularly detrimental due to the nature of their home environment. Children will have encountered different experiences and home environments during ‘lockdown’, and starting the process of increasing operations in schools and settings will help identify and start to mitigate negative impacts. It is expected, therefore, that the policies set out above and in Section 1 of this IIA will specifically address this article.</p> <p>In taking this forward, guidance reminds staff in schools and settings of their safeguarding duties <b>Keeping learners safe</b> and with the <b>Wales</b> Safeguarding Procedures. The role of the designated safeguarding person (DSP) is be vital and all staff and learners should be informed of who the DSP is and how to contact them. Accessing a trusted adult, or the DSP, may be more difficult with social distancing so schools and settings have been asked to consider how learners can talk privately.</p> <p>At the early stages schools, settings and children’s services should continue to work closely together to ensure every child and family has the support needed. Local authorities</p>

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		<p>already have a range of working practices in place to ensure that safeguarding partners can work together to keep children safe.</p> <p>There is an opportunity now for these working practices to be further consolidated.</p>
23	<p>A child with a disability has the right to live a full and decent life with dignity and, as far as possible, independence and to play an active part in the community. Governments must do all they can to support disabled children and their families.</p>	<p>We have ensured that schools remain open to vulnerable children and this includes those with a statement of special educational needs. Local authorities continue to prioritise those most in need of accessing this provision.</p> <p>We have considered the needs of children with a disability in terms of equality of access, when planning the ‘check in, catch up, prepare’ approach on a rotational/part-time basis to be implemented in schools and settings. We have anticipated this may prove challenging for those individuals, and have provided guidance to ensure their needs are met.</p> <p>Further guidance in train will provide support for undertaking SEN risk assessments at this time.</p>
24	<p>Every child has the right to the best possible health.</p> <p>Governments must provide good quality health care, clean water, nutritious</p>	<p>This article has been recognised and evidenced through the emphasis being placed on health and well-being in the ‘check in, catch up, prepare’ sessions. Guidance for schools and settings acknowledges that when we refer to health and well-being, it doesn’t only refer to the physical risks of infection of COVID-19. For learners the wider physical, mental, emotional and relationship implications of social distancing, lockdown and potentially bereavement will be much more relevant.</p>

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	<p>food, and a clean environment and education on health and well-being so that children can stay healthy.</p>	
28	<p>Every child has the right to an education.</p>	<p>This right has been one of the fundamental drivers being the decision to increase operations in schools and settings.</p> <p>The learning guidance clarifies expectations on practitioners for the summer term. In addition to the emphasis on well-being, schools and settings should, as appropriate, begin to widen learning and teaching. This should include supporting transition so that (as far as possible) learners are ready for the next academic year and are prepared to engage with a blended learning approach. Schools and settings are expected to develop new learning and approaches to meet the needs of all their learners in response to the pandemic, having particular regard to those unable to attend ‘check in, catch up, prepare’ sessions this term for whatever reason. The guidance is clear that all learners have a right to support for their learning from trusted professionals at this time.</p> <p>As noted above, resources are being made available to address issues relating to remote access to learning. Moving into the autumn, further considerations are underway with regard to how we support and meet the needs of specific groups of learners to ensure that all are able to progress in their learning. These considerations (which will be covered in an update to the IIA) include the</p>

Article number	Description	Links to decisions
		allocation of additional targeted funding.
29	<p>goals of education)</p> <p>Education must develop every child's personality, talents and abilities to the full. It must encourage the child's respect for human rights, as well as respect for their parents, their own and other cultures, and the environment.</p>	<p>This article is at the heart of education in Wales, and the 4 purposes of the curriculum which underpins our programme of education reforms. With the return of more learners to the physical school environment, practitioners will provide a combination of face to face learning with remote learning, a blended learning approach. Schools and settings will have to develop new learning and approaches to meet the needs of their learners in response to the pandemic. In so doing, practitioners are being directed to the full range of curriculum guidance now available to them, including how the Curriculum for Wales can support learners at this time.</p>
30	<p>(children from minority or indigenous groups)</p> <p>Every child has the right to learn and use the language, customs and religion of their family, whether or</p>	<p>The policy decisions set out in this CRIA above and in Section 1 of this IIA are not intended to have either a positive or negative impact in relation to this article.</p> <p>However, it is recognised that there may be some differential impacts for certain groups of people arising from 'lockdown', that will require specific measures as increasing operations in schools and settings move forward.</p> <p>The learning guidance outlines that practitioners will need to consider how to support all learners; and to support them with the process of integrating into a physical setting for</p>

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	not these are shared by the majority of the people in the country where they live.	education. Conversations about how they are feeling will be critical throughout this period and staff should encourage learners to discuss their questions and concerns. We will monitor closely the situation regarding Welsh language learning and learning through the medium of Welsh.
31	(leisure, play and culture)  Every child has the right to relax, play and take part in a wide range of cultural and artistic activities.	The negative impact on cultural well-being being seen through lockdown should ease as COVID-19 response measures ease and the introduction of 'check-in, catch-up, prepare' sessions in schools and settings from 29 June. However, reduced opportunities for learners to participate in cultural activities, arts, sports and recreation will likely continue for some time. This could be mitigated to some extent through the role of play and outdoor learning; which practitioners have been asked to consider through guidance. Both play and outdoor learning provide wide ranging opportunities to support learning as well to enhance learners' relationships, physical, mental and emotional well-being. They should therefore be considered central to any approach to phased return.

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