

A. CHILDREN'S RIGHTS IMPACT ASSESSMENT

All completed Children's Rights Impact Assessments must be sent to the CRIA@gov.wales mailbox

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

The Health and Social Care (H&SC) Winter Plan is being developed in order to set out the high level responsibilities and commitments of both the Welsh Government and its partner organisations to meet the demands of winter 2021/22. It also confirms the priorities for Regional Partnership Boards, Health Boards and NHS Trusts to maintain our key services for the people of Wales during the winter, and to keep Wales safe.

It sets out the requirements of stakeholders, about the range of actions and contingencies that are expected to be put in place across the health and care system, and with wider partners, to provide services over the coming challenging winter period. It provides assurance to the public that we are working together across the country to keep Wales safe.

Various research activity (including children's surveys) has been undertaken and will continue to be undertaken across Wales and UK to understand the impact of Covid-19 on children and young people and on children's health and care services. The results from these studies will inform the principles and approaches that are adopted by the Welsh Government as we continue to learn and understand the way in which Covid-19 works.

It is currently acknowledged that younger children are less at risk from Covid-19. This is depicted through a lower risk of younger children catching the disease, as well as a lower risk of them developing serious symptoms as a result of contracting Covid-19. However, children's contacts have increased as restrictions have eased and therefore we have seen an increase in cases. The H&SC Winter Plan addresses the whole population and therefore children are included in the requirements. A study by Swansea University found that although children may be less susceptible to contracting Covid-19, they are likely to be less resilient to the wider contextual impacts. As a result, children are more likely to experience significant stress, anxiety, behavioural problems and fear related to the pandemic.

It is important to ensure parity between physical and mental health conditions, and mental health services for children must remain accessible to those in need of support. We are also working with the NHS and wider partners to increase service capacity so that we can meet current and expected increases in mental health demand. The Health and Social Care Winter Plan sets out our priorities and the actions we are undertaking to support children and young people's mental health.

Operating essential services over winter 2021/22 is important for children of all ages. The Winter Plan acknowledges the need for essential services to be maintained and states the need for:

- Services to be designed around the individual and around groups of people, based on their unique needs and what matters to them, as well as quality and safety outcomes;
- People only going to a general hospital when it is essential, with hospital services designed to reduce the time spent in hospital;
- A shift in resources to the community that enable hospital-based care (when needed) to be accessed more quickly); and
- Using technology to support high quality services.

This will include services for children and young people as well as adults. The plan also highlights the need to prepare for higher rates of infection of young children respiratory syncytial virus this year and the need for NHS organisations to ensure there is sufficient paediatric acute and critical care capacity.

Vaccination

The four UK chief medical officers recommended 12 to 15-year-olds are offered the Covid-19 vaccine after carefully considering the evidence and taking further advice from independent senior clinicians and public health experts. The Joint Committee for Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) also advised that the benefits from vaccination are marginally greater than the potential known harms in this age group.

Vaccination of children and teenagers in this age group is underway in Wales – we expect everyone in this age group will have been offered an appointment by the end of October half-term.

Young people aged 16 and 17 have also been offered vaccination – more than 70% have taken up their offer. When they are three months from their 18th birthday, they will be offered their second dose.

The decision to have a Covid-19 vaccine is a choice for each individual to make.

The JCVI will be considering whether children and young people who are currently only eligible for one dose, should be offered a second dose, when further trial findings are available.

More information about vaccination of children and young people in Wales can be found on the Welsh Government website at: <https://gov.wales/covid-19-vaccination-12-15-year-olds>

Alongside the Covid-19 vaccination programme our healthcare teams are delivering the seasonal influenza (flu) vaccination programme. The priority groups for 2021-22 are as follows:

- children aged two or three years on 31 August 2021
- children in primary school from reception class to Year 6 (inclusive)
- children in secondary school Year 7 to Year 11 (inclusive)

2. Explain how the proposal is likely to impact on children’s rights.

By developing the H&SC Winter Plan it is intended to have a positive impact on a number of the UNCRC articles, in particular:

Article 6: The right to life and to grow up to be healthy

Article 19: The right not to be harmed and to be looked after and kept safe

Article 20: The right to be looked after properly if the child can't live with his/her own family

Article 23: The right to special care and support if the child has a disability so he/she can lead a full and independent life

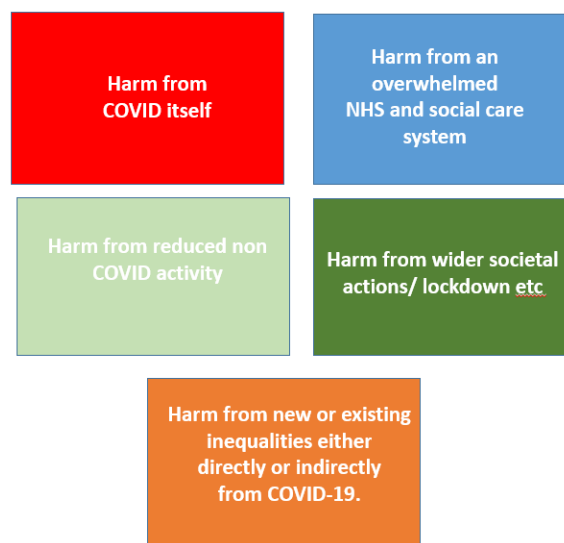
Article 24: The right to good food, water and to see a doctor if ill

Article 25: The right of a child who is not living with their family to be checked on to make sure they are safe

Article 39: The right to get special help if being abused

Part of the function for the Winter Plan is to provide assurance to the public that we are working together across the country to keep Wales safe, this includes children and young people.

Our focus has been on managing and mitigating against the five harms associated with Coronavirus, both direct and indirect:



The Winter Plan reinforces the need to maintain essential services during winter 2021/22 and beyond. For children and young people in particular this is vital to ensure they are able to access the support and treatment they need, whether for their physical or mental wellbeing.

Due to the introduction of a number of digital solutions to address children and young people's support needs (for example, the young person's mental health toolkit and an information hub for care experienced young children), there will be a need to support those who are digitally excluded.

There will be a need to ensure that children, young people, their families and carers have access to and the skills needed to use digital services. Consequently, in the initial stages, some children and young people, who are either live in poverty or in rural areas that do not have access to broadband, may be negatively impacted in regards to accessing information.

The plan sets out a range of areas that NHS organisations and their social care partners need to be cognisant of in their planning for winter. While there is not a specific section for children, specific requirements for children's services are noted and there is an expectation that partner organisations plan and deliver appropriate services for children and young people in accordance with their statutory duties.

The Winter Plan acknowledges the importance of keeping everyone well informed, through a variety of means (including press conferences, use of television, radio, newspapers and social media) to reach as many people as possible using their preferred means. This will include children friendly media outlets and support which is managed through schools and educational establishments (e.g. nurseries and further education).