

A. CHILDREN'S RIGHTS IMPACT ASSESSMENT

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

- ◆ *How will the proposal affect the lives of children, positively and negatively?*

The framework is a collection of priorities and policies already published and agreed by the Welsh Government and as such does not impact any more or less than the existing stance already taken.

The framework is framed around the eight Ministerial priorities that were issued by the Minister for Health and Social Services in July 2021:

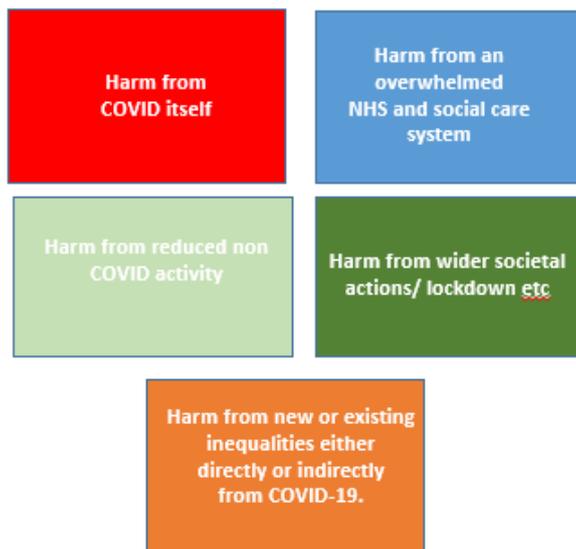
- MAINTAIN OUR RESPONSE TO COVID-19
- NHS RECOVERY
- WORKING ALONGSIDE SOCIAL CARE
- A HEALTHIER WALES – STRATEGY FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE
- FINANCIAL DISCIPLINE FOR NHS WALES
- MENTAL HEALTH – CLINICAL AND BROADER SOCIETY
- SUPPORTING THE HEALTH AND CARE WORKFORCE
- POPULATION HEALTH AND HEALTH EQUITY

These priorities should be read in the context of wider Welsh Government commitments, particularly in relation to climate change, social partnerships and the foundational economy.

The framework reinforces the need to maintain essential services to continue as well as for the backlog of those waiting for diagnosis and/or treatment to be address through the recovery work.

Policy colleagues working across health, communities and education have been involved to understand how support can be given to children with perinatal mental health and better understand of how children are impacted through a children's panel.

The five levels of harm underpin the framework and children's services are part of this.



Health boards are required to address children's services against these harms to ensure the harms are reduced or eliminated. 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 well-being.

Agreement has been given to establish a Wales Children's Panel. This presents an opportunity to extend the evidence base around the harms to children and young people as a result of the Covid-19 restrictions and to monitor their ongoing impact. Funding is to be fund in 21-22 to begin this work.

An established Children's Panel will offer policy areas across Welsh Government the opportunity to capture the views of children and young people on an on-going basis and would be a further means of meeting national obligations under the UNCRC and Children's Rights agenda.

Research by the University of Oxford indicates that the impact of the pandemic on children and young people's mental health and well-being could be significant. Parents and carers of children aged 4-10 years are reporting an increase in their child's emotional difficulties – feeling unhappy and worried and experiencing physical symptoms associated with worry*, whilst 39% of children and young people aged 11-18 years who responded to the Children's Commissioner for Wales survey 'Coronavirus and Me'*** reported that they have been worried most or some of the time during the pandemic.

The Children's Commissioner for Wales conducted a survey of children and young people in Wales to share their views and experiences of the latest Coronavirus lockdown through a survey. Almost 20,000 took part aged between 3 -18.

[Coronavirus and Me - Results of our January 2021 survey - Children's Commissioner for Wales \(childcomwales.org.uk\)](https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/coronavirus-and-me)

Loneliness rates are high and not being able to see friends is having the biggest impact on children's lives, followed by not being able to see other family members and the

impact of school and college closures. 3 Over half enjoy learning at their own pace from home, but many are worried about falling behind with learning – levels of confidence and motivation with education are seen to be decreasing with age.

A large majority of 15-18 year olds are concerned about falling behind, their qualifications and are reporting low motivation to do school work. When comparing results of our surveys it can be seen that 12-18 year olds responding in January 2021 report that they are happy 'most of the time' markedly less than those who responded in May 2020 and rates of feeling worried 'most of the time' are notably higher.

As we found in the May survey, children who often face more barriers to accessing their rights even when there is no global pandemic, have also faced more struggles on average than their peers. Disabled children and young people are more likely to be worried about coronavirus, more likely to feel sad, more likely to feel unsafe.

Children and young people of Black, Asian and other ethnic minority ethnicities are more likely to feel lonely and less likely to say they feel safe. Despite the worries and concerns that children and young people are reporting, many are also reporting positive experiences, as they did in May 2020, including enjoying spending time at home and receiving good support from schools and youth workers.

The framework recognises the need to reintroduce services and support for children and young people both for physical and mental health.

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

By developing the framework 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 framework 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.

The framework itself is not creating new policies but rather bringing together existing policies and priorities into a coherent document to assist planners in understanding the requirements. The policies themselves will have been built around promoting the children's rights and therefore the framework will enhance them equally.

There is additional funding for recovery that has already been announced and intended to invest in additional diagnostic and treatments to mitigate the backlogs

that have developed because of COVID. Over £248m has been provided in 2021 by Welsh Government to support the recovery programme, which includes children's services.

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, be it just for the COVID-19 outbreak or more widely in society.

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.

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, there is an expectation that partner organisations plan and deliver appropriate services for children and young people in accordance with their statutory duties.

The framework acknowledges the importance of keeping everyone well informed, through a variety of means (including press conferences, use of television, radio, newspapers and social media) about how COVID-19 is tracking and spreading throughout Wales this winter. This will include children friendly media outlets and support which is managed through schools and educational establishments (e.g. nurseries and further education).