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Children's Rights
Wales



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) report

Welsh Government Response to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child's Concluding Observations Report 2023



July 2024



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Minister for Mental Health
and Early Years

Foreword

The Welsh Government has a long-standing commitment to children's rights. By publishing our response to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child's [Concluding Observations Report 2023](#), we are reaffirming that commitment.

As a government, we are very aware that the UN Committee's report is set against the background of a very difficult period for our children and young people in Wales. They have had to weather an unprecedented set of circumstances in the last five years, with the COVID-19 pandemic, Brexit, and the cost-of-living crisis that reaches across and impacts so many areas of their lives.

The UN Committee commended us for our achievements in protecting children's rights. Prohibiting all physical punishment, through the [Children \(Abolition of Defence of Reasonable Punishment\) \(Wales\) Act 2020](#), and extending voting rights to 16 and 17 year olds in Senedd and local government elections, were both cited as examples of good practice.

We are grateful to our Wales Children's Civil Society organisations, children and young people across Wales, and our brilliant Young Wales researchers for their part in the review process. They all contributed valuable evidence reports to the UN Committee in the lead up to the Constructive Dialogue. The Young Wales research group also travelled to Geneva,

alongside other children and young people from the UK, to give evidence in person to the UN Committee.

Their evidence has informed the recommendations within the UN Committee's report and they should be rightly proud of their contributions.

The voices of children and young people, and their lived experience, is a strong theme across the UN Committee's report that was echoed in the feedback we received from both young people themselves and stakeholder workshops we have conducted. The Welsh Government is committed to engaging with children and young people about what matters to them, across all the policies that affect them. This response contains examples of that good work, but there is always more we can do.

We greatly value the expertise of our partners and stakeholders across Wales and we look forward to working with them as we embed our response to the recommendations within our core work.

We are grateful to the UN Committee for their Concluding Observations Report. The UN Committee, through their report, have challenged us to do more to promote and secure the rights of children and young people. We are firmly committed to doing so.



Introduction

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child published their [Concluding Observations report](#) in June 2023. The publication was the culmination of their 6th and 7th Periodic review of the United Kingdom as a state party and followed the Constructive Dialogue stage of the review which took place in Geneva in May 2023.

The Welsh Government was fully involved in the periodic review. We published our own [Wales response](#) to the UN List of issues Prior to Reporting Report back in September 2022, we also took part in the Constructive Dialogue in Geneva as part of the wider UK Delegation.

The UN Concluding Observations Report is important advice to help governments identify ways to implement the Convention. This document sets out the Welsh Government's response to the Report.

The Concluding Observations are addressed to the United Kingdom as a State Party signatory to the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#). The report is wide ranging and makes around 200 recommendations. Most of these are aimed generally at the UK, with many relating to Wales. This report addresses recommendations that substantively fall within the responsibilities of the Welsh Government.

The Welsh Government welcomes the opportunity to respond to the recommendations and provide an update on our progress in the areas that are the responsibility of the Welsh Government, or where we have a position on those recommendations.

Our approach set out in this response has been informed by engagement with our partners. We would like to express our gratitude to the Children's Rights Advisory Group who have provided us with invaluable support, advice, and guidance in this process.

The UN Committee outlined six priority areas where they felt urgent measures should be taken by the UK State Party. These areas are:

- non-discrimination;
- abuse, neglect, and sexual exploitation and abuse;
- children deprived of a family environment;
- mental health;
- asylum-seeking, refugee and migrant children; and
- Administration of child justice.

As part of our commitment to engage with children's civil society, stakeholders and children and young people we have run workshops on the priority areas and invited specific feedback on the recommendations through the consultations on the draft strategies for Mental Health and Well-being and Preventing Suicide and Self Harm. The feedback we have received from this engagement has been vital in informing our response and how we will consider taking forward the recommendations in the report over the next eight-year reporting period.

We have also engaged the views of children and young people through the Young Wales programme which is our participation model funded by Welsh Government and administered by Children in Wales. Two age-based sessions were conducted on the priority areas at the Young Wales residential in February. Of particular importance to them were the areas of mental health, the impacts of the cost-of-living crisis and equity diversity and inclusion.

4 United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) report

We are grateful to all those who have taken part and provided us with invaluable feedback on the recommendations in those areas. The Welsh Government have considered all their views and comments, and these have helped to inform our response to the Concluding Observations Report.

The structure of this response follows the layout of the Concluding Observations Report.

Those areas are:

- General Measures of Implementation
- Definition of the child
- General Principles
- Civil Rights and Freedoms
- Violence Against Children
- Family Environment and Alternative Care
- Basic Health and Wellbeing
- Education, Leisure, and Cultural Activities
- Special Protections and,
- Optional Protocols

The overriding principle for Welsh Government going forward is for the recommendations in the Concluding Observations Report to inform and be embedded into the ongoing core work of Welsh Government.



Contents

Main areas of concern and recommendations	7
General Measures of Implementation	9
Definition of the child	19
General Principles	21
Civil Rights and Freedoms	31
Violence Against Children	35
Family Environment and Alternative Care	43
Children with Disabilities	51
Basic Health and Wellbeing	55
Education, Leisure, and Cultural Activities	72
Special Protections	79
Optional Protocols	85



Main areas of concern and recommendations

In response to the UN Committee's recommendations to take urgent measures in the areas of non-discrimination, abuse, neglect and sexual exploitation and abuse, children deprived of a family environment, mental health, asylum-seeking, refugee and migrant children and administration of child justice; The Welsh Government has prioritised these areas and facilitated cross sector discussions and engagement with stakeholders on our approach in Wales, which have informed our response.

Childrens Rights and the Sustainable Development Goals

In Wales, the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#) provides a comprehensive approach to sustainable development that mirrors the Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals framework and supports the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) commitment to involve children and young people in decisions that affect them.

The measurement framework for the well-being of Wales consists of 50 well-being indicators and we publish an [annual Well-being of Wales Report](#) which includes data on children and related aspects. In [2018](#) and in [2022](#) a separate report on children's wellbeing was published alongside the main well-being report.

We will continue to report annually against the Welsh Government's Wellbeing goals.

Children and young people will remain vital in shaping our laws, policies, and programs. Our funding for Young Wales, a representative group of children and young people, ensures their voices are heard in decisions that impact on them.

In 2022, Young Wales members met with the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child as part of their reporting process to discuss their [Young People's UN report](#).

In the last year, young people have influenced key policies such as our [Child Poverty Strategy for Wales](#), and School Year Reform. They have also helped to develop professional learning resources to support the children Wales Act 2020. They have co-produced an animation for the [Budget Improvement Plan](#).

In 2024-25, Young Wales will advise the Welsh Government on issues such as education, climate, social justice, and mental health.



General Measures of Implementation (arts. 4, 42 and 44 (6))

Legislation

Incorporation of the UNCRC

Wales was the first country in the UK to enshrine children's rights in law. Under [The Rights of Children and Young Persons \(Wales\) Measure 2011](#) Welsh Ministers must pay 'due regard' to the UNCRC when exercising any of their functions. This means they must consider the impact on children and young people.

We published the [Strengthening and advancing equality and human rights in Wales research report](#), in 2021. The report points the way in relation to safeguarding and promoting equality and human rights of individuals and communities in Wales and will inform our future work.

The Welsh Government has established a Human Rights Advisory Group to ensure strong stakeholder engagement as the work progresses.

We also have also established a specific working group, the Legislative Options Working Group, to advise on the next steps to progressing the incorporation of Rights in Wales.

The working group is looking at two treaties the Convention on the Rights of Persons with disabilities (UNCRPD) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) that are Programme for Government Commitments.

Currently, there are no plans to expand the work of the groups to look into incorporation of other treaties within the current Programme for Government, including the UNCRC.

Children's Rights Impact Assessments

Children's Rights Impact Assessments (CRIAs) are the mechanism used to demonstrate we have met the statutory duty to give due regard to the UNCRC. They inform advice to Ministers and must be completed prior to a ministerial decision being made. They are part of the Integrated Impact Assessment which helps us to undertake a rounded assessment of the impacts of proposed policies. All CRIAs are [published on the Welsh Government website](#).

CRIAs are required in the development of any new policy proposal, or a change of an existing policy, where that policy will impact on children and young people. The Children's Rights Advisory Group (CRAG) consider draft CRIAs that are brought to them and offer specialist advice to policy teams. CRAG is made up of representatives from the office of Children's Commissioner for Wales, UNICEF UK, the Observatory of Human Rights in Wales, and Children in Wales.

Comprehensive policy and strategy

Implementation of the Convention

Our current approach, as set out in our [Children’s Rights Scheme](#), provides a strong framework based on the five principles set out in the [Right Way](#) to ensure the UNCRC is considered across all policy, legislation and programme development. We consider this approach embeds the UNCRC across all our work and a stand alone action plan would undermine that approach.

We publish our [compliance report](#) every two and half years, demonstrating how we have met our duty as set out in the scheme. The report includes action we have taken to embed equality and non-discrimination into our work.

Our [Children and Young People’s Plan](#) draws together major Welsh Government policies and programmes that impact on children and young people. The plan sets out what actions we have taken and what action we will take in this Senedd.

Coordination

In Wales, the Minister for Mental Health and Early Years has responsibility for children’s rights in Wales. However, the ‘[due regard](#)’ duty applies to and is the responsibility of all Welsh Ministers.

We will maintain contact across the UK State party throughout the next reporting period.

The Welsh Government has a dedicated Children and Young People’s Rights Branch that provides on-going advice and guidance on CRIAs and supports policy teams to engage with children and young people in policy making and decisions that affect them.

We have developed a [children’s rights manual](#) for officials to support high quality policy making and to support officials in providing meaningful opportunities for children and young people to exercise their right to be heard in decisions that affect them.

Allocation of resources

Tracking and monitoring resources for children

The Welsh Government remains committed to children’s rights in our budgeting processes and to exploring ways in which we can improve those processes.

We believe our Strategic Integrated Impact Assessment (SIIA) approach, which we established in 2015-16 and publish as part of our [Draft Budget](#) process, best meets our legal duty to give due regard to the UNCRC. We will review the SIIA in 2024 including consideration of our approach to assessing Children’s Rights.

This integrated approach enables us to better understand the intersectional and unintended impacts of spending decisions, and to maximise the impact of available funding, reducing the disproportionate effect on any one specific group or area. We developed this approach based on our prior experiences of Children’s Budgeting to reflect that a quantitative approach does not always reflect the way funding is spent. Defining the outcomes of spending from a monitoring perspective is complex, particularly where there are multiple beneficiaries of spending occurring within a single investment.

The role of the budget is to outline financial plans; the monitoring and delivery of outcomes falls to Programme for Government reporting mechanisms.

Allocations and regressive measures

We continue to act in a way that maximises the impacts of our available funding. In the current fiscal climate, while action has been taken to mitigate impacts as far as possible, the reality is that difficult decisions cannot always be avoided.

For example, within our 2024-25 Draft Budget we have:

- Protected the core local government settlement, which - along with Council Tax – funds schools, social services, social care, refuse and recycling collections and local leisure services which have a benefit to children.

11 United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) report

- Ensured funding that goes directly to schools has been prioritised – including protecting both our Covid Recovery programme, 'Recruit, Recover and Raise Standards', and the Pupil Development Grant that funds schools to support learners from low-income households.

Budget Participation

Engagement on the Welsh Government Budget starts early and is maintained throughout the process. This includes sessions with partners representing children and young people. These sessions allow us to understand which priorities matter most to children and young people in Wales.

Our [Budget Improvement Plan](#) (BIP), published alongside the 2024-25 [Draft Budget](#), is developed with our Budget Impact and Improvement Advisory Group (BIAG) to reform budget and tax processes to improve outcomes. This includes consideration of how we engage and collaborate with children and young people, raising awareness of public spending and taxation.

With Children in Wales, we have co-produced and launched a Young Person's version of the [Budget Improvement Plan](#). The same group have developed an [animated version](#) to help young people understand how the Welsh Government works and what the Welsh Treasury does.

Data Collection

Strengthening data collection

The Welsh Government continues to strengthen our data collection systems around children to understand their characteristics and the experiences of their lives and the services and interventions that we and others put in place. We do this through research and statistics activity in areas such as children, families, education, childcare, social justice, social services, housing, and health.

We analyse and publish data on [child poverty](#) with information on relative income poverty and disaggregation by age, disability, and ethnicity. We continue to provide funding towards an increased sample for the [Family Resources Survey](#) to provide improved insight on children in poverty.

We continue to collect data at an individual level including protected characteristics for:

- [children looked after by local authority social services](#)
- [children receiving care and support from local authority social services](#)
- [children in maintained schools](#)

This collected data is analysed, published and made available securely for linking through the [SAIL Databank](#).

Requirements for the individual collections for children looked after and children receiving care and support have been reviewed recently. The children receiving care and support collection has moved from a snapshot of those children with a care and support plan for three months or more on 31 March to a full-year collection in 2023-24. This will offer additional intelligence and capture individual level data for all children who receive care and support during the year.

Working with Cardiff University (DECIPHer) and Public Health Wales (PHW), we have continued to develop the [School Health Research Network](#) (SHRN) in secondary schools, and following a feasibility study in 2022/23, primary schools are now fully integrated. The SHRN is the largest national network of its kind in the world and much of the content is relevant to the aims of the Convention. A [School Health Research Network data dashboard](#) was launched in 2023, providing data on key health and wellbeing variables.

Data for the [childcare offer](#) is collected through an online application portal input by parents at the point of application and covers earnings, age and location.

Following recommendations from the [2019 Commission on Justice in Wales](#) report to disaggregate more justice data for Wales, we published the [Youth Justice Interactive Dashboard](#) in July 2023. The data includes the numbers of children interacting with the justice system broken down by age group, sex and high-level ethnic group, as well as outcomes and performance indicators.

We will continue to collect and publish annual social services data on children receiving care and support to support understanding of care and support provided in relation to requirements under the [Social Services and Well-being \(Wales\) Act 2014](#).

We continue to collect and publish data on [counselling services provided for children and young people](#), waiting times for Specialist Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services and [Primary Mental Healthcare](#).

We reinstated the All Wales Core Data Sets in 2023 having suspended them at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Each maintained school has its own data pack with static analysis of their own outcomes in the context of members of their family of schools, Local Authority and national averages.

A school's family is calculated using a range of pupil characteristics such as free school meal entitlement, ethnic background and additional learning needs and aims to group schools together who have pupils from similar socio-economic backgrounds.

Improve the collection and analysis of data

Our research and evaluation activity involves collection of data on children in care; their experiences and views about education provision; and mental health programmes. Examples of recent and forthcoming publications of research involving collection and analysis of child data look at:

- the oversight of care-experienced children's education
- [practices to prevent exclusion](#)
- [the ALN system](#), and Welsh Language additional learning provision
- the effectiveness of counselling
- the pandemic, its impacts and support for schools including surveys of post-16 learners' experiences – a report on the Winter of Wellbeing programme for learners was [published in January 2023](#). A report on the impact of Recruit, Recover and Raise Standards funding for schools to support learners during the pandemic was also [published in May 2023](#). Findings from a survey on the effects of COVID-19 on post-16 learners was [published in March 2021](#)

and a further survey of learners in post-16 education, which explores ongoing effects of the pandemic upon their learning is in progress.

- [Post-16 COVID-19 recovery funding evaluation: April 2022 to March 2023](#)
- [Outcomes for learners in post-16 education affected by the coronavirus](#)

We have published an [evaluation plan for the new Curriculum for Wales](#) and our findings on the [early implementation of Curriculum for Wales on schools and learners](#) and published post-16 education statistics covering [learners achievement](#) and [learners destinations](#) for further education institutions and schools sixth forms with data including learning difficulty/impairment status, detailed ethnic background and Free School Meals eligibility. With similar information available about [learner outcomes for apprenticeships](#) also available.

For schools we have expanded our range of published analysis and now publish regular data on attainment, outcomes and exclusions disaggregated by free school meal entitlement. Additional learning needs and ethnic background. This includes [attainment in reading and numeracy for pupils aged under 16](#) and [public examination results](#). Since September 2020 we have been collecting and publishing [weekly attendance data from schools](#), and this also includes analysis of attendance patterns by free school meal

entitlement. This has facilitated a real time view of attendance patterns across Wales and was part of the evidence base that led to the creation of a new [National Attendance Task Force](#) for Wales.

We are reforming the information ecosystem for our school system to better support delivery of sustainable school improvement, driving the behaviours and practices that are required by the Curriculum for Wales through a sophisticated use of existing data and information.

The information ecosystem will set out our expectations and requirements for the appropriate use of data in a proportionate way across the school system, where it can be impactful in driving improvements for our learners, supporting our policy aspirations. There will be a focus on all aspects of improving learning and with a particular lens on well-being, equity, and mental health.

During 2022-23 we conducted a 'Young Person's Guarantee' – National Conversation (series of focus groups and surveys with young people aged 16-24). The [first phase report](#) has been published and a report on phases two and three will be published in Spring 2024.

Using interviews, survey and desk reviews we published our evaluation of [Covid-19 recovery funding for further education](#).

In 2024 we will undertake a range of new evaluations, including for the universal primary free school meals reform.

We will also initiate qualitative research including for challenging or disruptive behaviour in school settings; developmental delay to speech, language and communication and socio-emotional skills amongst learners ages 3-8, and follow-up research on implementation of the framework of the whole school approach to emotional and mental well-being.

A formative evaluation of Curriculum for Wales has begun. Several areas of the evaluation will focus on equity and inclusion, understanding implementation in Pupil Referral Units including and qualitative research with learners with vulnerabilities and/or from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Outcomes of consultation on Children Missing Education Guidance and Children Missing Education Database (Wales) Regulations 2025, are due for publication later in 2024. We aim to soon provide data to local authorities to assist them in identifying, and supporting children not currently known to them,

As noted above, a funding bid for a fully integrated SHRN (primary and secondary sector) was recently approved for the period 2024 to 2026, with an option to extend to 2028. Discussions will continue with Welsh Government colleagues, and partners, around priority areas for inclusion in the surveys in both primary and secondary schools.

The Basic Income for Care Leavers in Wales Pilot Evaluation runs until 2027. The evaluation aims to investigate the impact of the basic income pilot on the lives of care leavers. A longer-term evaluation framework using linked administrative data will be established as part of the evaluation [Some management information about the participants in the pilot by protected characteristic has been published.](#)

Data sharing

We share data through Government Social Research reports and SHRN data and analyses, including publications in [scientific journals](#). SHRN data is increasingly being shared via a [publicly available dashboard](#) for organisations, including schools, to use for evaluative purposes as they see fit. School level dashboards are also being piloted. These school level dashboards will replace the current system of bespoke data reports being provided to each participating school. The school level data is a key tool for school self-evaluation as part of implementation of the whole school approach to mental health and well-being and the Welsh Network of Healthy School Schemes. It is also embedded in local public health monitoring.

Children, families, and childcare research reports are published on the Welsh Government website and are used to evaluate the impact of the policy and shared with interested parties.

Disaggregated data

We are currently exploring options on how to improve our disaggregation of data to add value and impact our policies to the areas set out in the recommendations in the UN Report.

Independent Monitoring

Children's Commissioner for Wales

The [Children's Commissioner for Wales](#) (CCfW) is an independent children's human rights institution. The Commissioner's remit is laid down in the [Children's Commissioner for Wales Act 2001](#), which amended the [Care Standards Act 2000](#).

The principal aim of the Commissioner's office is to safeguard and promote the rights and welfare of children.

Appointment of Commissioners is through fair and open competition. Young people were involved throughout the entire recruitment process for the current Commissioner.

Although appointed by the First Minister of Wales and funded by the Welsh Government, the CCfW has corporation sole status. The CCfW's work programme is set by her and no areas of the work plan require the approval of Ministers. The CCfW's remit covers all areas of the devolved powers of the Senedd insofar as they affect children's rights and welfare.

While funding rests with the Welsh Government, the role of scrutiny and accountability rests with the Senedd Cymru and the Welsh Government. The Commissioner, like others in public life, is accountable to the public via the Senedd's subject and Public Accounts Committees.

Dissemination, awareness-raising and training

Raising awareness of children's rights

The primary means of measuring awareness of the UNCRC amongst children is through the SHRN survey. The latest data reports that over half of children surveyed had moderate to high levels of knowledge of their rights. However, when asked, 'How much do you know about the UNCRC?', only 36% of young people reported having heard of the UNCRC.

An overview of actions taken across Welsh Government to raise awareness can be found in our most recent [Children's Rights Compliance Report](#).

We fund [Children in Wales](#) to promote and raise awareness of children's rights and the UNCRC in Wales. Their work includes running the Young Wales project, which provides a representative participation model for children and young people to have their voices heard in the policy/legislation and decision-making process; and operating professional networks related to children and young people.

The Welsh Government published a [Raising Awareness of Children's Rights Plan](#) in November 2021, which aims to empower children and young people to exercise their rights as citizens of Wales and the world. The Plan is aimed at children, young people and their parents and carers, as well as professionals working with children and young people.

Since the publication of the plan, we have developed the [Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care Plan](#) which included the development of accompanying information on children's rights.

We have expanded the Young Wales model, growing the membership and the participation of children and young people in the issues that matter to them most.

We have expanded the support we offer through [Parenting. Give it time](#) to provide advice for parents of children from the ages of 0-18. With Children in Wales we have established a Parenting Network, making sure parents views are heard and that they are aware of, and can support their children to access their rights.

Extensive engagement and communications work has also been undertaken through the [Ending Physical Punishment](#) campaign, making it clear that children have the same protection in law from assault as adults. This year we will roll out professional guidance and training on our law ending of physical punishment of children.

We will continue to deliver the Raising Awareness Plan, in particular to raise awareness of children's rights in the wider public sector.

Professional learning

The Welsh Government has worked with education consortia and regional partnerships, and local authority participation workers, with support from Children's Commissioner for Wales and Disability Wales, to create an online [professional learning package](#) on the UNCRC and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).

This national professional learning resource supports practitioners, head teachers, governing bodies and local authorities to develop an awareness and understanding of the UNCRC and UNCRPD. A consistent professional learning offer was required to support schools to meet the requirements of Section 64 of the [Curriculum and Assessment \(Wales\) Act 2021](#). The first two modules were made available during the summer term 2023 via the Welsh Government's online learning platform [Hwb](#).

Module 1 provides a universal introduction to children's human rights, providing a useful tool for all public sector organisations to widen their understanding of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, UNCRC and UNCRPD and how they link together, and to practice.

Module 2 provides a more in-depth exploration of how headteachers, governing bodies and local authorities can embed the UNCRC and UNCRPD in their new curricula.

A third module is currently under development and will support practitioners to understand ways to plan, design and review their school curriculum in relation to the UNCRC and UNCRPD, by providing practical case study exemplars. This new module will be published later this year.

Our funding to Children in Wales includes developing and delivering training on participation for professionals working with children and young people. The sessions focus on participation in the early years, with children, and working with young people.

We recognise the need for Welsh Government officials to have access to a strong body of knowledge about children's rights to enable them to provide comprehensive advice to Welsh Ministers and meet our due regard duty. We provide guidance and training on children's rights and CRAs; one-to-one support to complete CRAs and access to children's rights experts through our Children's Rights Advisory Group.

The [NYTH/NEST framework](#) was co-produced with stakeholders including young people to create a whole system approach to mental health and well-being. The framework has a children's rights-based approach as one of its underpinning values.

Welsh Government have co-produced, with the Children's Commissioner's office, practitioners and young people, children's rights and NYTH/NEST training. This online training takes the form of two 30-minute modules. The training gives an introduction to the UNCRC, duty bearing and the NYTH/NEST principles. It will be promoted through Regional Partnership Boards.

Progress made on implementing a rights-based approach in mental health and well-being services will be tracked in annual NYTH/NEST reporting.

International cooperation

Wales and Africa programme

International Development is the responsibility of the UK Government. However, the Welsh Government, through the [Wales and Africa programme](#) and the Well-being of [Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#) supports the UN Sustainable Development Goals and universal free primary education.

The Welsh Government's Wales and Africa programme has provided a number of grants to support those in education in sub-Saharan Africa and Uganda in particular providing water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities at schools and supporting schoolgirls back into education where high rates of absenteeism occur among girls. This was achieved by supporting education on menstrual hygiene and taboos, sexual and reproductive health rights.

Access to justice and remedies

Legal Aid is reserved to the UK Government which has responsibility for the rules governing eligibility for Legal Aid and for exceptional case funding.

Education

[Under Section 29 of the Education Act 2002](#)

School Governing bodies must establish procedures for dealing with all complaints relating to the school or to the provision of facilities or services.

The Welsh Government published [Guidance for governing bodies on how to deal with complaints](#). We also created a [Model Policy for schools](#) to use if they wish when writing their own procedures as well as resources to assist them including a [model leaflets for schools](#) and a [guide to working with the law](#) and a [model complaint form](#).

All learners need to be aware of their right to complain if they are dissatisfied or unhappy. In the [model leaflets for schools](#) we provide suggested text for use in primary and secondary schools which schools can use to raise learners' awareness about complaints.

'[Rights, Respect, Equality](#)' sets out guidance for education settings and local authorities to prevent and respond to bullying and harassment. This includes reporting mechanisms. The suite also includes advisory guidance for children, young people and their parents/carers to help those affected by bullying.

We will be updating '[Rights, Respect, Equality](#)', and the accompanying guidance to strengthen approaches to preventing and responding to prejudice-related bullying.

[The Children's Commissioner for Wales](#)

published a report on racism in secondary schools.

[The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal \(Wales\) Act 2018](#)

places a duty on schools, Further Education Institutions, and local authorities to support children and young people to contribute to the planning of additional learning needs. Children and young people must be supported to understand and participate in the decisions that affect them, provided with appropriate reassurance and information, and offered opportunities to raise concerns, have their questions answered and if necessary, make an appeal. This also includes considering how to support them through this process.

Children's social services – fostering

Under [The Local Authority Fostering Services \(Wales\) Regulations 2018](#) all local authority fostering services in Wales must put arrangements in place to ensure children have the information they need, in an appropriate format, to make and participate in day-to-day decisions about their care and support.

Local authorities produce Children's Guides to Fostering, presented in an age-appropriate way, and shared with children when they become looked after. The guide contains the local authority's complaints policy which will provide information on how to contact the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales and the Children's Commissioner for Wales should further independence be required.

The Independent Reviewing Officer will also meet with the child before their Child Looked After Review to discuss their views on the placement and their Care Plan. This provides another opportunity for the child to discuss if they have concerns or complaints with an independent professional whose role is to ensure that the needs of the child are being met. In addition, through the [Social Services & Well-being \(Wales\) Act 2014](#), all looked after children will be allocated an independent advocate who they can share their views with and who will support them to represent their views during a complaint's procedure.

Health

We've recently completed a [consultation on proposed changes to the Putting Things Rights Process](#). Responses are being considered. The Welsh Government has a legal duty to consider the UNCRC when developing or reviewing policy, so we are seeking input on how to better reflect the needs of children and young people in the Putting Things Rights process.

[Llais](#) is the national, independent body set up by the Welsh Government to give the people of Wales a stronger voice in their health and social care services.

Children's Rights and Meic

The Welsh Government introduced a [complaints process](#) for children and young people in November 2021. A complaints leaflet for children has been produced to support them through this process. They can complain using an online form, by email or telephone.

We provide annual funding to [Meic Cymru](#) which is an Advocacy and Advice helpline for children and young people in Wales. MEIC is also available to advise and provide information to children and young people.



Definition of the child (art. 1)

The Rights of the [Children and Young Persons \(Wales\) Measure 2011](#) requires Welsh Ministers to have due regard to the UNCRC Articles and its optional protocols when exercising any of their functions. The measure embeds consideration of children's rights into Welsh law and defines a child as someone who has not attained the age of 18.

The [Equality Act 2010](#) which is UK Government legislation sets out that it is against the law to discriminate against anyone because of age, which is one of the nine protected characteristics.

The Welsh Government is currently developing the Welsh Government's Strategic Equality Plan 2024 to 2028 (SEP 2024 to 2028). It is intended the SEP 2024 to 2028 will enable a clear, coordinated, approach to policy and intervention development and delivery, and enhance support provided by Welsh Government across the protected characteristics detailed in the Equality Act 2010, which includes Age.

There are no commitments in the current Programme for Government to a review of all age based legislation.



General principles (arts. 2-3, 6 and 12)

Non-discrimination

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child have designated their recommendations for non-discrimination as a priority area for action by the State Party. For all designated priority areas, we have facilitated cross sector discussions on our approach in Wales, which have informed our response.

Equality

The [Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024](#) set out eight long term aims, each with an equality objective, several of which directly relate to the recommendations in the concluding observations including the aim of *Elimination of discrimination, victimisation, abuse, harassment, hate-crime and bullying based on protected characteristics* with a commitment to do all that we can to help prevent discrimination, victimisation, harassment, abuse, hate crime and/or bullying against people as a result of them having one or more protected characteristics and harassment. The Welsh Government recently consulted on the National Equality Objectives for the next four years to 2028, with the continued commitment to eliminating discrimination.

The [Advancing Gender Equality in Wales Plan](#) was launched in March 2020 and was the first of the Welsh Government's single protected characteristic equality plans. It set out the first phase of work to deliver on the recommendations in the Deeds Not Words and the Roadmap reports and is a long-term plan for change. This includes a range of medium-term actions for Welsh Government to take across policy areas including health, education and skills, poverty and welfare reform, employment, childcare, transport and violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence. Work in all these areas is ongoing and will continue to be so.

The Welsh Government's [Anti-racist Wales Action Plan](#) (ArWAP) launched in June 2022 is built on the values of anti-racism and calls for zero tolerance of all racial inequality. The Welsh Government has committed to implementing and funding all the commitments set out in the plan in our [Programme for Government](#). We published the [Welsh Government's anti-racist Wales annual report](#) in December 2023 which covers the first year of the Plan and sets out the progress made to date.

The report reflects our commitment to being open and transparent about progress in tackling systemic, institutional, and structural racism.

Discrimination and disadvantages are not solely based on one identity but result from a cumulative impact of disadvantage such as age, gender, socio-economic status, disability, sexual orientation, and nationality. The importance of intersectionality has therefore been crucial in formulating the ArWAP and in the implementation of its goals and actions across all the policy areas covered by the plan.

ArWAP Regional Forums will facilitate the understanding of lived experience and establish direct engagement with Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic people including young people, across Wales.

The next iteration of ArWAP will take the form of a 'refresh and extension'. The next iteration will cover 2024-2026. The focus is on refining existing goals and actions across policy areas to strengthen implementation and measurement. The External Accountability Group will approve the refreshed plan.

Diversity is a cross-cutting theme within the new [Curriculum for Wales](#) which we introduced in September 2022. It is mandatory to teach Black, Asian, and ethnic minority histories, contributions, and experiences, including those of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, as part of the story of Wales. The Anti-racist Wales Action Plan includes actions around reducing instances of prejudice related bullying, discrimination and racism experienced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners in school.

The Minority Ethnic, Gypsy, Roma Traveller grant funds local educational support services, with funding used by local authorities to promote and ensure inclusion and integration of learners into education, equity of education and opportunity by removing barriers to accessing the curriculum and improving school attendance, plus engaging with learners, their families and communities.

Bullying

Challenging bullying in schools is a key priority for the Welsh Government. We are committed to ensuring all our learners feel safe, secure, and supported to achieve their full potential. All young people have a right to an education and to be treated equally. In 2019 we published our statutory anti-bullying guidance [Rights, Respect, Equality](#). This sets out our expectation that prejudice-related bullying and racism is addressed by all schools and education settings within a prevention strategy, that expressly considers the needs of all learners

with protected characteristics. We are updating this guidance for school governing bodies and local authorities to strengthen approaches to preventing and responding to prejudice-related bullying.

Nation of Sanctuary

Our [Nation of Sanctuary: Refugee and Asylum Seeker Plan](#) identifies cross-Government approaches to support positive inclusion for children and young people to have the opportunities to learn, thrive and contribute to the economic, environmental, social and cultural life of Wales. A key commitment within the Welsh Government's [Programme for Government](#) is to continue to support and uphold the rights of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people, with funding provided to [TGP Cymru](#) to support unaccompanied asylum seeking children as part of the Wales Sanctuary Service. The nation of Sanctuary is one of a goal within the ArWAP.

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children

The Welsh Government is committed to tackling inequality experienced by Gypsy Roma and Traveller children and young people. Our goal within the ArWAP is "To recognise that safe, culturally appropriate accommodation is necessary in order for individuals to flourish in other parts of their lives and to address the lack of site provision and poor quality of Gypsy and Traveller accommodation in Wales." There are

specific actions that sit underneath that goal that focus on training, awareness raising and improving living conditions that support nomadic lifestyles in a culturally appropriate way.

We will commission a national training scheme for Welsh local authority housing options teams, and other relevant professionals, to improve the approach taken and support offered to community members seeking help for homelessness and accommodation issues by creating Gypsy and Traveller "champions" or "leads" in each local authority.

Welsh Government funds the [Travelling Ahead](#) project at TGP Cymru to deliver advice and advocacy support to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families. The Travelling Ahead project seeks to have a positive impact on people's lives through supporting community members to ensure accommodation security, access services and benefits and engage with decision makers and public services.

Within the ArWAP we have a goal "To reduce the negative experience of racism by Gypsies, Roma and Traveller' negative experience of schooling." In December 2023 the Welsh Government published [Celebrate and Participate: education guidance to support Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and young people](#). The objective is to help teachers, practitioners and senior leaders ensure Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller learners access education, fully develop their talents and skills, and achieve their full potential.

We will provide learning and development support to Local Authority Elected Members on Gypsy and Traveller communities' culture, needs and strengths, we will ensure the support will go beyond awareness-raising and will include anti-racism.

Children who have disabilities

The Welsh Government is fully committed in supporting all disabled people in Wales. The [Disability Rights Taskforce](#), which included a Children and Young People working group, will contribute to an overall understanding of how to remove barriers and set out actions which can be taken to improve outcomes for disabled children and adults which the Welsh Government, wider public services and disabled people will work together to deliver on. We will ensure participation by children and young people and include their voices in the key recommendations.

Care experienced children and young people

The Welsh Government understands the stigma which can be felt by care-experienced children and young people (children in alternative care) in their day to day lives. In December 2022, the inaugural Care Experienced Summit took place in Wales between Welsh Government Ministers and children and young people in alternative care. One of the [key outcomes from the summit was a declaration](#), signed by the previous First Minister of Wales and representatives of the children and young people, which includes a joint vision for services in Wales. The second summit took place on [2 March 2024](#) to update children and young people on progress.

In Wales unaccompanied asylum-seeking children have the same rights and entitlements as looked after children who are born in Wales and the UK, regardless of their immigration status. They are inclusive within any policy that is implemented to support looked after children.

Children of incarcerated parents

The Welsh Government recognises that children who are affected by the imprisonment of a parent often require specific support to help them deal with the process. Children can feel isolated and ashamed, which can have a devastating impact on their general health, mental health, and well-being.

We work in collaboration with key partners to reduce reoffending and support families to build strong and resilient communities in Wales. Work in this area is being taken forward by the Wales Family Connect Group, which brings together leads from across the Welsh justice system, as a 'one stop shop' to share best practice and knowledge across agencies to support families and significant others of individuals who find themselves encountering the criminal justice system.

The Visiting Mums Service, run by the Prison Advice and Care Trust (Pact) and established in HMP Eastwood Park and HMP Stygal, is vital in helping pave the way for Welsh mothers to maintain positive relationships with their children throughout their prison sentence.

We are working with partners to define further activity which will build on the achievements made through the Women's Justice Blueprints, putting diversion and early intervention at the heart of the approach to women's justice. This includes continued support for the Visting Mums service and the Wales Whole System Pathfinder Approach that provides a bespoke package of support for women who are at risk of entering or are involved in the criminal justice system.

LGBTQ+

The Welsh Government is committed to making Wales the most LGBTQ+ friendly nation in Europe. We have developed a robust and cross-cutting [LGBTQ+ Action Plan](#) to strengthen protections for LGBTQ+ people, promote equality for all and help coordinate actions across government and beyond. The Plan acts as the framework for LGBTQ+ policy development across government and with the Welsh Government's partners. It sets out the concrete steps that the Welsh Government will take to strengthen equality for LGBTQ+ people, including young people. Since its publication in February 2023, the Welsh Government has focused efforts on putting the plan into practice. We have created an [LGBTQ+ Action Plan Tracker](#) allows interested stakeholders to monitor updates and progress against each action and activity in the Plan.

Period Dignity

The Period Dignity Grant funds free period products in schools and community settings. This funding aimed to ensure that, in addition to ensuring products are in every school and college in Wales, products are widely available across a range of community venues. The [period dignity grant](#) has been recently evaluated and officials are currently considering recommendations.

We published the [Period Proud Wales action plan](#) in February 2023. The Plan sets out our approach to ensuring period dignity in Wales. The Plan outlines a series of wide-ranging, holistically intersecting actions and aims to tackle period poverty and achieve period dignity in Wales.

The Welsh Government will continue to provide funding to local authorities to provide free period products within schools and communities. Funding is also provided to Further Education colleges for the same purpose. There is also significant cross governmental work on education and health and collaboration with the [NHS Bloody Brilliant web resource](#).

Hate Crime

In 2019, [Welsh Government commissioned research](#) to assess the level of support available for children and young people who experience hate crime. The report, published in March 2020, identified a number of gaps in provision across

Wales. A second report "[It's soul destroying](#)" conversations with children and young people affected by hate crime in Wales' captured conversations with children and young people affected by hate crime in Wales, which again highlighted gaps in provision.

Based on these findings, the Welsh Government has funded the [Wales Hate Support Centre](#) since April 2022 to deliver a tailored support service for children and young people in Wales.

Part of this contract includes the delivery of awareness-raising and engagement activities to encourage children and young people to report hate crime. We will continue to evaluate and refine the children and young people service until the end of the contract in 2025, informed by feedback from the Wales Hate Support Centre's Lived Experience Advocacy Forum, which consists of service users and those with lived experience of hate crime.

The Welsh Government's anti-hate crime campaign [Hate Hurts Wales](#) aims to encourage victims and bystanders to report hate crime and to build confidence by highlighting the positive outcomes that can come from reporting a hate crime and the support available.

Best interests of the child

The principle of acting in the best interest of the child is embedded across a range

of Welsh Government policies, for e.g. safeguarding, youth justice and children's services.

The Welsh Government uses an Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process to undertake a rounded assessment of the impact of proposed decisions, including the social, economic, cultural, and environmental effects. The Children Rights Impact Assessment forms a key part of the IIA. Welsh Government officials are expected to use Children's Rights Impact Assessment to support Welsh Ministers in meeting their due regard duty.

We revised our [Children's Rights Scheme](#) in 2021 and included a revised Children's Rights Impact Assessment template and [manual for Welsh Government](#) officials to support the embedding of children rights in policy.

Youth Justice

The Welsh Government's [Youth Justice Blueprint for Wales](#), sets out our vision for youth justice in Wales, taking a 'children first' rights approach. This means working in a child-centred rather than service-focused way, meeting the individual needs of children in the justice system or at risk of coming into contact it. The whole-system approach takes account of the relevant articles of the UNCRC in the design of youth justice services for Wales. It sets out the ambition for a rights-based and trauma-informed system, which will support services to deliver positive outcomes for children in Wales.

Since October 2023 we have focussed the [Youth Justice Blueprint](#) on three priority areas: [prevention, pre-court diversion and custody](#). This will include publishing a Prevention Framework, which for the first time will create a single view of what works to prevent offending and how Welsh Government work can support children at risk of coming into contact with the justice system towards fulfilling, crime-free lives.

Placement in alternative care

Our vision for children's services in Wales is clear – we want more children supported to remain with their families with fewer children and young people entering care. We want the time that young people stay in care to be as short as possible, consistent with meeting the needs of the young person. The Welsh Government is currently taking forward a [Transformation Programme for Children's Social Services](#) in Wales which is based around eight Programme for Government commitments with the voice and best interests of children and young people at the heart of all we do.

Domestic Violence

The Violence Against Women, [Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence \(Wales\) Act 2015](#), places a statutory duty on all professionals in the public and specialist sector across Wales to be trained in VAWDASV issues. Guidance on this duty is provided in the [National Training Framework](#).

The [National VAWDASV Strategy](#) was published in May 2022. Objective 2 of the national strategy is to increase awareness in children, young people and adults of the importance of safe, equal and healthy relationships and empowering them to positive personal choices, and a Children and Young people's Workstream has been established as part of the [Blueprint approach](#) for delivering against the objectives of the Strategy. A [progress update](#) was published in October 2023.

We have also created a practice guide on [Safeguarding children affected by domestic abuse](#), on the [Wales Safeguarding Procedures](#) app and website.

We will also continue to support the implementation of the [Peer on Peer Sexual Harassment Action Plan](#).

Trafficking

Child trafficking is within a reserved policy area and is the responsibility of the UK Government. The Welsh Government does however work with multi-agency partners on tackling modern slavery, including child trafficking. This includes producing the [Wales Safeguarding Procedures](#) and the [All Wales Practice Guide on safeguarding children who may be trafficked](#). The practice guides clearly set out that the safeguarding arrangements in every local authority area should be underpinned by a child centred approach where the child's best interest should always be paramount.

The Welsh Government will continue to work with multi-agency partners on tackling modern slavery, including child trafficking. This will include continued collaboration through the [Anti-Slavery Wales Forum](#) and its thematic working groups.

Nation of Sanctuary

Our work to support refugees and asylum seekers follows established principles, including taking a person-centred human rights approach. In the context of children, the best interests of children are of paramount importance in our policy development.

Where the UK Government introduces new policies, we consider the best interests of children and advocate for changes accordingly. During the development of the recent UK legislation ([Nationality and Borders Act 2022](#) and [Illegal Migration Act 2023](#)) we advised [Senedd Cymru](#) (the Welsh Parliament) to withhold consent for the UK Parliament to pass legislation because we considered proposals to act against the best interests of children.

The UK Government National Transfer Scheme (NTS) is a non-devolved function which places unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in local authority care across the UK on a rota basis. Working alongside the Wales Strategic Migration Partnership, Welsh Government officials have provided feedback to the Home Office on the operation of the NTS, in the best interests of young people, as laid out in the NTS Protocol.

The UK Government has launched a review of the NTS, and we will ensure that Welsh Government, alongside our statutory and third sector partners, feed into this so we can continue to represent the best interests of children who are being placed into the care of Welsh local authorities.

Right to life, survival, and development

Youth Justice

The [Youth Justice Blueprint](#) includes a specific focus on taking a trauma-informed approach throughout the various stages of the youth justice system, from prevention and early intervention to resettlement from custody, recognising and responding to Adverse Childhood Experiences.

The Welsh Government will continue to explore and address the longstanding issue with children being held in police custody overnight. In January 2024, a Children in Police Custody round table event took place where knowledge and information on the challenges and barriers in this area were shared. The Welsh Government, Police and Local Authorities continue to work together to stop the inappropriate use of police custody for children.

The refreshed Youth Justice Blueprint re-committed the Welsh Government and Ministry of Justice to explore options for all Welsh-resident children to be placed in secure accommodation

in Wales and near to their home communities. Additionally, in 2021 Welsh Ministers agreed eight principles to deliver consistent services for all Welsh children in the secure estate, which we are committed to collaborating with partners to realise.

Suicide Prevention

We will publish a new Suicide and Self-harm Prevention Strategy for Wales. The draft strategy has specific focus on children and young people in terms of self-harm prevention particularly, and the draft strategy was informed by engagement with children and young people. The draft strategy sets out our commitment to deliver a reduction in the number and rates of suicide deaths that have endured over recent years. It also aims to establish a pathway to support people who self-harm and to improve support for those bereaved by suicide.

Respect for the views of the child

Supporting participation

Ensuring the participation of children and young people in decisions that affect them is a shared responsibility in Wales. The Welsh Government, the children's third sector, our Local Authorities, the [Youth Parliament](#) and [Children's Commissioner](#) all make an essential contribution. Together we are ensuring the voice of children and young people is heard and that

their views and experiences play a central role in shaping policy and services.

Participation is evidenced in our Children's Rights Impact Assessments and can range from one off discussions to longer term coproduction. Our [Children's Rights Compliance Report](#) provides examples of participation for our last reporting cycle.

We produce age-appropriate materials across a wide range of policy areas to aid participation. Where children's versions of consultation or final policy documents are produced, these will be published on our website, alongside other versions.

Through our grant funding to [Children in Wales](#) the Welsh Government funds [Young Wales](#) a robust participation model to take the views of children and young people meaningfully into account in our decision and policy making process.

Young Wales has recruited over 175 children and young people to its National Forum and engaged over 2000 children and young people in consultations relating to Welsh Government policy. Young Wales has eight advisory boards to represent the diverse interests of children and young people in Wales. The boards work closely with Welsh Government officials to inform key government policy areas and commitments.

The advisory boards have a diverse representation including children and young people from young carers, those with Additional

Learning Needs, LGBTQ+, young people not in employment or training, those at risk of being harmed online, refugees and asylum seekers, and those with lived experience in relation to mental health and well-being. We collect and monitor equality, diversity, and inclusion data of volunteers to ensure the Young Wales model is representative and informs further targeted recruitment.

We also recognise that some children and young people require additional support and resource to be able to engage. We provide funding to [Children in Wales](#) to undertake specific consultation work where targeted provision is required, for example in a particular setting (in schools), with a particular age group (younger children) or with a particular demographic of young people (trans and non-binary people).

The Welsh Government also funds Children in Wales to operate the [National Participation Standards](#), the associated Kitemark Scheme and the All Wales Participation Workers Network. The aim is to support and enable a Wales where children's rights are a fundamental entitlement, embedding children's rights and wellbeing within policy and practice across the public children's sector of Wales to empower all children and young people to exercise their rights.

The Participation Standards and the Kitemark are currently under review.

Duties on local authorities

Under [Section 12 of The Children and Families \(Wales\) Measure 2010](#), local authorities must make arrangements to promote and facilitate participation by children in decisions which might affect them and make that information publicly available.

The [Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal \(Wales\) Act 2018](#), places duties on local authorities and NHS bodies to have regard to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).

The participation of children and young people in decision making about their ALN is an essential part of the rights-based approach [set out in Section 6 of the Act](#).

The [Additional Learning Needs Code for Wales 2021](#) sets out a rights-based approach as a key underpinning principle of the ALN system. It sets out how the Code is informed by the UNCRC and the UNCRPD and references the principles of the [Children's Commissioner's Right Way approach](#).

The Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Act 2021 sets out a duty to promote knowledge and understanding of UNCRC and UNCRPD and a duty to have regard to mental health and emotional well-being of children and young persons. This is aligned to Article 24 of the UNCRC, and the aims of education set out in General Comment Number 1.

Human rights education is a cross-cutting theme of the curriculum in Wales, and the principles of a human rights education, informed by the UNCRC and the UNCRPD, are part of the wider requirements settings must consider when designing their curriculum.

[Curriculum guidance](#) sets out that learners must participate in curriculum design in their setting.

Youth Parliament

In October 2016, Members of the Senedd voted to set up a dedicated [Youth Parliament for Wales](#). The Senedd consulted over 5,000 young people across Wales to help decide what the Welsh Youth Parliament's aim, membership, and work should be.

The First Welsh Youth Parliament was elected in December 2018, and they highlight and debate issues that are important to children and young people across Wales, working with Members of the Senedd to make change.

Children's Commissioner for Wales

During the first year of appointment, the current Children's Commissioner for Wales undertook an extensive listening exercise, engaging with over 10,000 children, parents and carers, and professionals to understand what matters most to the children of Wales and what areas of work should be prioritised. This informed the development of their [three year strategy 'Making Life Better for Children'](#) which will run

until 2026. One of the four purposes identified is to be 'Here for all children', pledging to 'listen and be accessible to all children in Wales to ensure they can effectively speak out on their behalf and represent them in the most impactful way'.

The Commissioner's participation team deliver work across Wales, listening to children, working with those who work with children, and supporting children and adults to find out more and understand about children's rights. To do this effectively, the Commissioner supports schools and community groups through her [Ambassador schemes](#), a network of over 700 schools and groups across Wales. The primary schools, secondary schools, special schools, and youth groups who take part in the free scheme receive children's rights resources, attend events, and are supported to deliver their children's rights obligations under the new curriculum.

In 2024, the Commissioner [launched her 'Monthly Matters' initiative](#), seeking the views of the children of Wales on topics such as school dinners, play and online safety. This initiative enables the Commissioner to establish the opinions of children on topical issues and, to date, has secured over 8,000 views which have featured in consultation responses and secured high-profile media coverage. The outcomes from Monthly Matters are shared on the Commissioner's website as a valuable insight on the views of children in Wales.

Rights training

We have developed online open access training for professionals on promoting knowledge and [understanding of children's rights, the UNCRC and the UNRPD](#). This training is aligned to the curriculum and will support those providing teaching and learning to fulfil their duty to promote knowledge and understanding of the Conventions under the [Curriculum and Assessment \(Wales\) Act 2021](#).

We fund [Children in Wales](#) to deliver participation training and to run the All Wales Participation Network for Local Authorities. Children in Wales have developed a suite of resources on our behalf, raising awareness of what rights-based practice looks specifically for [babies, infant and toddlers](#).

Youth Justice

The Welsh Government takes a 'children first' rights approach, working in a child-centred rather than service-focused way, meeting the individual needs of children in the justice system or at risk of coming into contact with it.

This approach means the individual is placed at the centre of a service and treated as a person first. This involves taking a co-productive, collaborative cross-sector approach to identifying, understanding and supporting the person's needs. It also promotes psychological and physical safety by promoting choice, collaboration, and transparency.

We listened to the voices of children and young people during the development of the Youth Justice Blueprint. Moving forward Welsh Government and other key stakeholders will continue to consider the voices of children and young people in the three priorities of the Youth Justice Blueprint which of prevention, pre-court diversion and custody.

NYTH/NEST Framework

The Welsh Government co-produced the [NYTH/NEST framework](#) with stakeholders including young people to create a whole system approach to mental health and well-being. The framework has a children's rights-based approach as one of its underpinning values. One of the core principles is co-production and the accompanying training and self-assessment focuses on the importance of Article 12 and co-producing services and solutions with babies, children, and young people.

Young People co-produced the NYTH/NEST framework, and we will continue to involve them in the implementation. The National Youth Stakeholder Group, a group of young people with lived experience of mental health continue to inform the implementation of the framework.

Welsh Government have co-produced a NYTH/NEST [self-assessment tool](#) which asks services to assess their implementation of the NEST principles including how they co-produce their service with young people and listen to the voice of the babies, children, and young people they work with.

The NYTH/NEST framework has been embedded as a core component to the delivery of the draft Mental health and Well-being Strategy which was co-produced with children and young people and includes a commitment to an ongoing focus on the individual articles of the UNCRC, the recommendations in the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child Concluding Observations 2023 Report.

National Approach to Statutory Advocacy

The [Social Services and Well-Being \(Wales\) Act 2014](#) makes clear that putting people at the centre of their care and support is key to supporting people to achieve what matters to them. Local authorities and others exercising functions under the Act must have regard to promoting and respecting the dignity of an individual – children, adults, and carers.

As part of our [National Approach to Statutory Advocacy](#), there is a clear entitlement to an 'active offer' of advocacy support from an Independent Professional Advocate (IPA) for children who become looked after or are the subject of child protection enquiries. The National Approach sets out expectations on access and availability of IPA and helps to secure a consistent offer and experience for children and young people across Wales.

The Welsh Government provides funding on an annual basis to help deliver this. Welsh Government also chair regular National Providers Forum meetings which bring together the key stakeholders to monitor the National Approach, ensuring that these rights are put

into practice, and addressing barriers to good practice as they arise.

Safeguarding

The [Wales Safeguarding Procedures](#) contain a section called [Pointers for Practice: Taking a Child-centred Approach](#). This is designed to assist practitioners to see and speak to the child; find out about their daily lived experiences; and establish what the child would like to see change in their daily lives, but also reminds practitioners that the wishes and feelings of the child do not override best safeguarding interests. All Practice Guides under the procedures remind and support practitioners to take a child-centred approach.

Corporate parenting charter

One of the principles within the Corporate Parenting Charter is Togetherness and says we "Will work alongside care-experienced children and young people to ensure their views, feelings and ideas are integral to, influence and inform the services they receive and the way they receive those services." This principle aligns to Article 12 of the UNCRC on the Rights of the Child.

In Wales unaccompanied asylum-seeking children have the same rights and entitlements as looked after children who are born in Wales and the UK, regardless of their immigration status. They are inclusive within any policy that is implemented to support children looked after.

The Welsh Government will continue to engage with public sector and private sector organisations across Wales to encourage sign up to the Corporate Parenting Charter. Welsh Government will also be working to strengthen statutory guidance on Corporate Parenting. The first stage of this work will be to include a dedicated section on corporate parenting into the [Part 6 Code of Practice under the Social Services Well-being \(Wales\) Act 2014](#).

Additional Learning Needs

In 2021 the Welsh Government began a four-year phased implementation of the [Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal \(Wales\) Act 2018](#) (ALNET Act) and [ALN Code for Wales](#).

A rights-based approach underpins the ALNET Act and ALN Code where the views, wishes and feelings of the child, child's parent or young person are central to the planning and provision of support; and the child, child's parent or young person is enabled to participate as fully as possible in the decision making processes and has effective rights to challenge decisions about ALN, Additional Learning Provision (ALP) and related matters.

The ALNET Act and ALN Code support a person-centred approach (PCP) to meeting learners needs. PCP training has been provided to [practitioners together with guidance](#). Guidance has been published on rights under the ALN system and an ALN professional learning programme has been developed which includes information on communicating with children, parents, and young people.

To support implementation of the ALNET Act and Code the Welsh Government has funded the delivery of parent and carer sessions on the new ALN system, and the establishment of a participation programme, ALN Ambassadors, to help ensure the voice and rights of children are at the core of planning and policy. This programme began in December 2023 and will run until 2026.

A four-year formative evaluation of the ALN system began in January 2023. Surveys and field work will include children and young people. The research will assess implementation of the ALN system and the realisation of policy objectives.

Curriculum for Wales

The [Curriculum for Wales Framework statutory guidance](#) noted that schools should be developing their curriculum through [co-construction, including learner involvement](#). [Section 64 of the Curriculum and Assessment \(Wales\) Act 2021](#) places a duty on schools, settings, and providers of education other than at school (EOTAS) to promote knowledge and understanding of Part 1 of the UNCRC, and of the UNCRPD, among those that provide teaching and learning.

[Online Professional learning modules](#) are available to practitioners for free to support them in fulfilling this duty. [Disability Wales's Rights here, rights now](#) resources have been developed and piloted in schools in Wales and are available for free on [Hwb](#), the All Wales learning platform.

In addition to the Hwb module to raise awareness of the UNCRC and the UNCRPD, to support the new curriculum, an additional module is in development highlighting best practice and practical tools for embedding a principled approach to children's human rights in education.

As part of our work to raise awareness of children's rights, work will be undertaken to establish a systematic communications approach to the promotion and awareness raising of children's rights resources, including professional learning, that meets the needs the public sector.



Civil rights and freedoms (arts. 7-8 and 13-17)

Right to identity

LGBTQ+

The Welsh Government is committed to making Wales the most LGBTQ+ friendly nation in Europe. The [LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales](#) is the framework for LGBTQ+ policy development across government and with Welsh Government's partners.

The [LGBTQ+ Advisory Group](#), which reflects the varied groups within LGBTQ+ communities, will make recommendations to Ministers and policy officials to inform the Welsh Government's approach to implementing the Action Plan.

Supporting Trans Learners - guidance for schools

The [LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales](#) contains a range of commitments to ensure LGBTQ+ inclusive education, including a commitment to publish national guidance to support trans children and young people in education.

The Welsh Government is working closely with school leaders, practitioners, learners, and a range of wider stakeholders on the development of guidance.

Through the Young Wales initiative, the Welsh Government has undertaken participation sessions with over 200 children and young people in a range of schools and education sessions across Wales. Information about this engagement and the key messages shared by young people will be published when the draft guidance is brought forward for consultation. As part of the public consultation, there will be specific online resources to support young people to take part, and opportunities for young people to participate in engagement sessions specifically for learners.

A public consultation was planned for this academic year. However, we have decided to take more time to develop the guidance so that it's informed by the best available evidence, including the findings of the [Independent Review](#)

[of gender identity services for children and young people](#) (Cass Review) and the views of stakeholders, including learners themselves and parents.

The Welsh Government has committed to 'use all available powers to ban all aspects of LGBTQ+ conversion therapy and seek the devolution of any necessary additional powers. The [Welsh Government working group](#) on banning conversion therapy [developed a non-legal definition for policy and campaign purposes](#).

Freedom of expression and religion

Prevent

Counter terrorism is a reserved matter and as such is responsibility of the UK Government. We support delivery of the UK CONTEST Strategy (encompassing Prevent) in devolved

areas to keep the citizens of Wales safe in the context of the [seven Well-being of Future Generations Act goals](#).

Prevent, and the duties placed on the education sector in Wales are highlighted in [Keeping Learners Safe](#). It is mandatory for teachers to undertake a level of PREVENT training. The Home Office [Prevent Duty Training](#) is available via Hwb, the National Digital Learning Platform, which hosts a national collection of digital tools and resources to support learning and teaching in Wales.

As Prevent is a UK Government policy, Welsh Government will use intergovernmental boards to highlight Welsh Government views on Prevent and the recommendation in the UN Concluding Observations Report. As outlined in [Safeguarding Wales](#) safeguarding and protection is everybody's responsibility, and a child centred approach is paramount. This means that agencies must work together to provide a joined-up response to safeguarding issues and the rights of the child should be central to the approach and their best interests should always be paramount.

Collective worship

The Welsh Government takes the position that the current legislation in relation to Collective Worship appropriately balances the rights of parents and children. Parents may wholly or partly withdraw their children from collective worship and are not required to give a reason for doing so.

In relation to Religion, Values and Ethics (RVE) the Welsh Government have removed the right to withdraw as part of the introduction of Curriculum for Wales. We continue to liaise with Estyn who have raised no issues as part of their school inspections.

The Welsh Government has no plans to amend the Collective Worship legislation at the present time, we will carefully consider the recommendations in the report as part of our internal policy reviews.

Welsh Government will continue to work closely with a range of stakeholders including Church in Wales, Catholic Education Service, Humanists, and the Wales Advisory Standing Advisory Council Religious Education, on a range of aspects around the delivery of RVE and Collective Worship.

Freedom of association and peaceful assembly

The Committee recommended that children are not threatened for exercising their right to freedom of association and peaceful assembly, including for their involvement in climate activism.

Policing

Policing is a reserved matter for the UK Government. However, we have made clear our approach to the [Public Order Act and our commitment to fundamental democratic rights in this area](#).

Right to privacy

Policing

The Welsh Government works closely with the Police through the Policing Partnership Board for Wales, and the Police Liaison Unit which provides a vital link between Policing in Wales and the Welsh Government. The Police are also a partner in delivering the [Youth Justice Blueprint](#).

These forums allow Welsh Government to raise any concerns in terms of the practical delivery of policing by forces in Wales. Welsh police forces have confirmed to us that they are committed to a child-centred policing approach. Child-centred policing in Wales, developed with children and young people will build better relationships between Police and children and young people. In doing so, we aim prevent children and young people from being drawn into crime and the criminal justice system; improve criminal justice outcomes for children and young people and enhance services for child victims of crime and those exposed to domestic abuse.

Stop and Search has been highlighted in [Welsh Government's Anti-racist Wales Action Plan](#).

Working with the police and other criminal justice partners we have published a [Criminal Justice Anti-Racism Action Plan](#) for Wales Welsh Government is a member of the Criminal Justice Board for Wales, which allows us to scrutinise and enable progress against the plan.

With the Wales Youth Justice Advisory Panel, we will regularly review statistics relating to the youth justice system and monitor data on stop and search to understand if action can be taken to improve practice and better support the rights of children.

Access to appropriate information

Most of the [Online Safety Act's](#) provisions are a reserved matter for the UK Government.

Digital learning

Through our [National Hwb Programme](#) we have supported maintained schools in Wales to transform and enhance their digital provision for learners. We have invested in user devices to enhance digital provision for disadvantaged and digitally excluded learners. The programme will continue to support a system-wide transformation to provide schools and learners with equitable and inclusive access to digital tools and technologies.

We have developed our national teaching and learning platform, [Hwb](#), providing a range of bilingual and accessible digital tools and resources to all maintained schools and their learners.

The [Welsh Government's National Digital Resilience in Education Action](#) plan reflects the importance of cyber resilience and data security and includes measures and indicators to enhance online safety provision, policy and practice across Wales. We will continue to engage with the implementation of the Online Safety Act to support and inform our policy direction.

[Keeping safe online](#) provides children and young people, families, education practitioners, professionals and governors with the latest resources, information, training and guidance to enhance their digital resilience.

Keeping safe online includes an evolving advice and guidance section. [Co-constructed with children and young people it specifically support them with any issues or worries](#) they experience online.

Digital Inclusion

The [Digital Strategy for Wales](#) is aimed at anyone creating, providing or using digital tools and services across Wales. It makes clear there are alternative ways to access public services in Wales for those who cannot or choose not to participate digitally. [Mission Two of the Strategy, Digital Inclusion](#), makes clear our aim to support everyone to gain the motivation, confidence and basic digital skills needed to make informed decisions and choose how they participate in our increasingly digital world.

Following the [minimum digital living standard for Wales report](#), Welsh Government are working to align policy, measurement, and intervention to the Minimum Digital Living Standard, which will replace the current digital inclusion measure of 'personal use of the internet'.

Digital Communities Wales

[Digital Communities Wales: Digital Confidence, Health and Well-being](#) works with organisations from all sectors that can help reach digitally excluded people. An estimated 162,000 citizens have been supported with the motivation and skills needed to use the internet safely and effectively.

Digital Heroes, is an intergenerational piece focused on upskilling primary, secondary and college students so that they can support friends, families, and older people within the community to use digital safely.



Violence against children (arts. 19, 24 (3), 28 (2), 34, 37 (a) and 39)

Torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment

Reducing restrictive practices

Our [Reducing restrictive practices framework](#) sets out a 'common framework of principles and expectations', on reducing restrictive practices in childcare, education, health and social care settings informed by a human rights approach. Restrictive practices should only ever be used as a last resort to prevent harm to an individual or others. It includes sections on 'secure transport', 'procurement' and 'recording the use of restrictive practices and using data to improve practice'.

A set of resources to raise awareness of the [Reducing restrictive practices framework](#) will be published and publicised in July 2024 via an open access webinar. The resources include an animation (written and produced by people with lived experience of restrictive practices), an explainer document and a poster.

We will support the implementation in primary and secondary education settings as well as Pupil Referral Units; we will also ensure that other related guidance documents align with its content and contain appropriate references as and when they are reviewed and updated. This will be done in line with our review cycle for guidance to education settings.

We have no plans to make guidance on restraint statutory but will continue to review our practices and engage with our stakeholders.

We will ensure that any guidance updated or developed for education settings reflects learner voice.

Corporal punishment

Abolition of the defence of reasonable punishment

Section 1 of [The Children \(Abolition of Defence of Reasonable Punishment\) \(Wales\) Act 2020](#) (Children Wales Act) came into force on 21 March 2022. The overarching aim of the Act is to help protect children's rights. Prohibiting the physical punishment of children is in accordance with article 19 of the UNCRC – the right to protection from all forms of violence. The legislative change also supports our aim of supporting parents to use more positive approaches to providing guidance and discipline to their children.

The UN Committee recognised Wales for progress made in implementing the convention regarding the removal of the defence of reasonable punishment.

Monitoring the implementation of the Children's Wales Act

We [monitor public attitudes towards physical punishment](#), including levels of awareness and changes in attitudes.

Our Out of Court Parenting Support Scheme provides tailored parenting support as a condition of an Out of Court Disposal and as a rehabilitative alternative to prosecution. We have been [monitoring referrals](#) to the scheme to understand levels of demand and to consider whether any adjustments need to be made. We also work with the Police and Crown Prosecution services to monitor referrals and caseload.

Raising awareness of the Children's Wales Act

[Section 2](#) of the Act required Welsh Ministers to promote public awareness of the law change before it came into force. We ran a multi-media public awareness campaign, which included advertising and public relations. [Our campaign website](#) includes a range of information for members of the public, parents and professionals .

A key part of our policy is to provide parents with knowledge and support to build alternatives to physical punishment into their parenting approach. [Parenting. Give it time](#) provides positive parenting information, advice and support to parents with children up to 18 years of age, through its bilingual website, TV, radio and digital advertising, and through social media channels.

Later in 2024, we will publish guidance and training to support practitioners to embed awareness and cascade relevant, positive, and empowering information to children and young people.

We will also publish statutory three year and five years post implementation reviews.

Abuse, neglect and sexual exploitation and abuse

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child have designated their recommendations for abuse, neglect and sexual exploitation and abuse as a priority area for action by the State Party. For all designated priority areas, we have facilitated cross sector discussions on our approach in Wales, which have informed our response.

Safeguarding

The [Social Services and Well-being \(Wales\) Act 2014](#), and associated '[Working Together](#)' statutory guidance, use a child rights-based approach to put the individual and their needs at the centre of their care. [Volume 1](#), covers the duty to report when children are experiencing or at risk of abuse, neglect or other kinds of harm. This duty is placed on 'relevant partners' of a local authority, including health boards, police, youth offending teams and other local authorities, to report when they have reasonable suspicion

that a child is at risk. [Volume 5](#) provides detail on handling individual cases to protect children at risk and [Volume 7](#) focusses on safeguarding children from child sexual exploitation.

As part of the [Wales Safeguarding Procedures](#), which align with and complement the statutory framework, we have co-produced a range of multi-agency [Practice Guides](#), for topics such as Safeguarding children from neglect and Safeguarding children affected by domestic abuse.

'[Check Your Thinking](#)' resources have been developed in partnership with young people, foster carers and social care professionals, to support people who work with, or care for, young people to enable them to better engage with those who have experienced exploitation or harm.

The [Delivery Report](#) for the first [National Action Plan for Preventing and Responding to Child Sexual Abuse](#) was published in November 2022.

With a wide range of public and third sector partners we are now leading development of a second-phase plan, mapping the short and longer-term goals necessary to ensure that all children in Wales can grow up free from child sexual abuse. There will be a period of consultation, later this year, with a view to publishing and delivery of the plan from early 2025.

We will consider how our national policies and strategies, designed to help prevent and protect people from suffering harms, are connected and delivered effectively.

Mandatory reporting of abuse

In April 2023, the Welsh Government [published its response](#) to the final report and concluding recommendations made by the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA), which including a recommendation for the UK and Welsh Governments to introduce a duty on 'mandated reporters' to inform the police or relevant local authority where they had received a disclosure; witnessed; or otherwise observed signs that a child was experiencing sexual abuse.

In light of our [existing duties on 'relevant partners'](#) of local authorities to report children and adults at risk of any abuse, neglect or harm; the breadth of views received from stakeholders in response to [our Autumn 2022 exploratory consultation](#); and wider findings of the Inquiry around prioritising the protection of children and creating a more protective environment, the Welsh Government accepted this recommendation in principle.

In doing so, we have committed to considering existing requirements, standards and guidance across regulated childcare, education, health and social care settings, to ensure these require proportionate safeguarding arrangements to be in place; implemented, operated, reviewed and inspected effectively. During this Senedd, we also intend to engage widely, and explore the implications of placing duties – or alternative measures – on others who work with children and adults who may be at risk.

For example, we have recently [strengthened safeguarding requirements for Independent Schools](#) and legislated to [regulate special school residential services](#) in a similar manner to care homes for children, both recommendations IICSA's Residential Schools Investigation Report. We have also issued a [revised NMS for regulated childcare](#) that strengthens the standard in relation safeguarding; and published [a draft quality framework for Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care](#), which includes a quality standard around safeguarding babies

and young children from harm, abuse and neglect. More broadly, work has started to scope and develop options for further engagement and analysis of safeguarding arrangements in wider settings and activities.

Single Unified Safeguarding Review (SUSR)

[Working Together to Safeguard People Volume 2](#), issued under section 139 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and laid down in the [Safeguarding Boards \(Functions and Procedures\) \(Wales\) Regulations 2015](#), sets out the purpose and function of Child Practice Reviews (formerly called Serious Case Reviews).

The overall purpose of the review system is to promote a positive culture of multi-agency child protection learning and reviewing in areas in which Regional Safeguarding Boards and partner agencies hold responsibility. To achieve this, it sets in place a foundation for learning together by professionals from different agencies and, in those circumstances where a more formal review is required when there are serious incidents resulting from abuse or neglect, there is a system of multi-agency, concise and extended child practice reviews. The outputs of these changes are expected to generate new learning which can support continuous improvement in inter-agency child protection practice.

In 2024 Welsh Government will be bringing all safeguarding related reviews (i.e. Adult/Child Practice Reviews, Domestic Homicide Reviews, Offensive Weapons Reviews and Mental Health Homicide reviews) together into a [Single Unified Safeguarding Review](#) (SUSR). The development involved Welsh Government officials, safeguarding practitioners, third sector partners and academia to ensure we create a process to learn from tragedies - child, adult, domestic violence, offensive weapon, and mental health homicides - which will help to safeguard future generations.

Once the Single Unified Safeguarding Review is implemented, for the first time we will be able to know how many reviews - including Child Practice Reviews i.e. serious case reviews - have been undertaken, are being undertaken and what recommendations and learning have arisen across Wales. All this information and intelligence was previously held locally, and learning was not necessarily shared as widely as possible. From September 2024, the Wales Safeguarding Repository will receive finalised SUSRs and it will utilise machine learning, social science, and computer science to identify and help practitioners to identify new ways to learn from reviews.

Victims of sexual abuse and violence

The [Sexual Assault Services Programme for Wales](#) is an improvement project led by the NHS Executive working with the Police, Police Crime Commissioners and in partnership with the specialist third sector. The programme is driving delivery of child/person centred services to ensure the best outcomes for victims of sexual abuse and violence, with the victim voice at the centre.

A service model has been agreed for the delivery of sexual assault referral services in South Wales, Dyfed Powys and Gwent. North Wales has also joined the programme and will be looking at the design of their services. The model will provide a more integrated service, driven by the needs of victims and patients. It will support services that meet clinical, forensic, quality and safety standards and guidance, and ensures robust governance arrangements. The programme has included the development of specific resources including [short films and an animation](#) that explains the role of Sexual Assault Referral Centres in Wales.

Advocacy

Support for children and young people who are looked after or on the Child Protection Register is provided as part of our [National Approach to Statutory Advocacy](#).

Trauma

Welsh Government funds [Traumatic Stress Wales](#), to improve the health and well-being of people of all ages living in Wales at risk of developing or with post-traumatic stress disorder or complex post-traumatic stress disorder. It includes a specific workstream focussing on sexual assault.

[ACE Hub Wales](#), work in collaboration with Traumatic Stress Wales, to support the implementation of the Trauma-Informed Wales Framework, towards its overarching aim of making Wales a trauma-informed nation. The Framework was co-produced to support consistent and best practice, in relation to the development and delivery of trauma-informed services in Wales and is used to by Welsh Government.

Domestic abuse and sexual violence

Crime and Justice, and Courts and Tribunals are reserved matters and the responsibility of the UK Government. However, our ground-breaking [Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence \(Wales\) Act 2015](#) places a duty on local health boards and local authorities to collaborate on local VAWDASV strategies.

The VAWDASV National Partnership in Wales demonstrates a strong partnership between reserved and devolved authorities in Wales. It provides leadership for the multi-agency approach to implementing the VAWDASV Strategy and Blueprint.

The [Children and Young People's Needs workstream](#) within the Blueprint was set up specifically to ensure the needs of children and young people are considered within policy development and delivery.

Welsh Government will continue to fund VAWDASV regions and specialist services to provide essential support to all victims of VAWDASV including children and young people. This includes early intervention, Independent Domestic Violence Advisors and Independent Sexual Violence Advisors and therapeutic support for those impacted by abuse and violence.

The [Equality and Social Justice Committee's report](#) on the public health approach to gender-based violence includes a recommendation for Welsh Government to ensure therapeutic services are available for children and young people. The [Welsh Government accepted this recommendation](#).

The Victims and Prisoners Bill includes a commitment to providing guidance on Independent Advisors such as Independent Domestic Abuse Advisors and Independent Sexual Violence Advisors. Whilst this commitment does not apply to Wales, the Welsh Government is working with UK Government to ensure a coordinated and joined-up approach.

Youth Justice

The [Youth Justice Blueprint for Wales](#), sets out our vision for youth justice in Wales, taking a 'children first' rights approach. The focus is on three priority areas: prevention, pre-court diversion and custody. The Blueprint will continue to have a specific focus on taking a trauma-informed approach throughout the various stages of the youth justice system, from prevention and early intervention to resettlement from custody, recognising and responding to Adverse Childhood Experiences. The Youth Justice Blueprint implementation plans highlights progress to date and the Welsh Government's continued commitment in delivering the [future work programme](#).

Childcare and play

Our [Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care in Wales Plan](#) brings together, for the first time, all our policies and programmes relating to early childhood play, learning and care, outlining our vision to give all babies and young children the best start in life.

The [National Minimum Standards for regulated childcare](#) for children under the age of 12 provide clarity on the requirements for safeguarding and identify the appropriate training for different roles in the sector. These will come into effect in November 2024.

In the [Welsh Government's response to the recommendations of the Ministerial Review of Play](#) we set out the actions we would take to address the recommendation to ensure there are adequate safeguarding arrangements in playwork settings. These include engaging with those who provide services or offer activities for children to ensure they have proportionate and effective safeguarding arrangements in place. We will also work with stakeholders to ensure that they are aware of the [Working Together to Safeguard People: Code of Safeguarding Practice](#) and encourage its adoption within their settings.

The [Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care Quality Framework](#) and accompanying resources, draws together key requirements for delivering the standard of provision we want in Wales. It includes links to the [Wales Safeguarding Procedures](#) and [Social Care Wales safeguarding awareness training](#).

The resources include two leaflets for practitioners introducing the UNCRC and providing advice on how to support babies and young children's rights at different ages.

The [Reflective Practice Toolkit](#), which accompanies the framework, includes a quality standard around safeguarding babies and young children from harm, abuse and neglect. The Framework and resources have been published in draft, with final versions to be published in Summer 2024.

Mental Health

Welsh Government has consulted on a new Mental Health and Well-being Strategy and a new Suicide and Self-Harm Prevention Strategy. Both strategies include a specific focus on taking a rights based approach – and also recognise the specific needs of the victims of sexual assault, domestic violence and abuse.

The new Mental Health and Well-being Strategy will support human rights and children's rights (for example by addressing inequalities in outcomes) in line with the [Equality Act 2010](#), the [Rights of Children and Young Persons \(Wales\) Measure 2011](#). Specifically – the new Mental Health and well-being strategy states: “An ongoing focus on the individual articles of the UNCRC, the recommendations in the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child Concluding Observations 2023 Report, and how policies can improve mental health and well-being is critical.”

Freedom of the child from all forms of violence

Youth Justice

The Welsh Government along with policing colleagues strive for a preventative approach to violent crime which keeps communities in Wales safe, addressing factors which drive serious violence to prevent offending, enabling people to live rewarding, crime-free lives.

We work alongside the Wales Safer Communities Network and Wales Violence Prevention Unit to support compliance with the [Serious Violence Duty](#) in Wales. The Duty requires partners including Police and Crime Commissioners, local authorities and Health Boards to work together to prevent serious violence in their communities.

The [Wales Safer Communities Network](#) host seminars including ‘*Understanding and Preventing Violence with Children and Young People*’. The Wales Violence Prevention Unit works to prevent all forms of violence including knife crime.

Welsh Government has been involved in the Wales Violence Prevention Unit's [Wales Without Violence Framework](#). The Framework brings together a range of evidence and experience on what works to prevent violence, helping partners in Wales invest in strategies and activities that prevent violence among children and young people.

Harmful Practices

Safeguarding and Advocacy

As part of the [Wales Safeguarding Procedures](#) Welsh Government has produced a range of Practice Guides including [Safeguarding children from harmful practices related to tradition, culture, religion or superstition and Safeguarding children who may be trafficked](#).

We have published an [awareness raising toolkit](#) for the public and professionals to ensure that more people are aware of the criminal nature of these intrusive and degrading practices. The Welsh Government also supported the Wales's first specialist Women's Well-being Clinic which opened in May 2019. Children who become looked after or are the subject of child protection enquiries are entitled to access advocacy support under the [National Approach to Statutory Advocacy](#).

Honour based abuse

An All Wales Honour-based Abuse (HBA) Leadership Group is jointly chaired by Welsh Government, [Bawso](#) and the Crown Prosecution Service. The group provides a framework for key partners to contribute to tackling this issue in Wales, whilst providing the best possible support to survivors. The focus is on all types of so-called honour-based abuse, including female genital mutilation, forced marriage, virginity testing and hymenoplasty.

The HBA Leadership group will continue to identify emerging trends and actions which can be put into place to prevent harms from occurring and support those who have been affected. This will require a whole system approach to tackling these harms. Work will be aligned where appropriate to the wider [VAWDASV Blueprint](#) delivery by implementing an ambitious delivery plan for the HBA Leadership group which encourages ownership of specific actions throughout the membership, including:

- Identifying and agreeing a minimum standard for handling HBA across all sectors
- Working towards efficient and timely data collection of HBA in Wales
- Aligning governance arrangements, sharing information and best practice including referral pathways, templates and useful information.
- Collaborating with regional boards, and representation on groups under the new Blueprint model for VAWDASV in Wales

Banning Conversion Therapies Practice

The Welsh Government is opposed to conversion practices in all forms. We want every LGBTQ+ person in Wales to be treated with equal value, to be safe, and to live authentically and openly as themselves.

As part of the LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales a [working group](#) has been established on Banning Conversion Practices in Wales.





Family environment and alternative care (arts. 5, 9-11, 18 (1)-(2), 20-21, 25 and 27 (4))

Family environment

Unpaid Carers

Welsh Government has funded the development of a national [Young Carer ID card](#), which has been available since April 2022. It is aimed at young carers aged up to 18 and is intended to be a key tool to help young carers identify themselves to teachers and staff in schools and colleges, as well as with their local health services such as a GP or pharmacist.

We fund a [short break scheme](#) for adults and, in most local authority areas, for young carers, which supports unpaid carers to take time out from their caring role to relax or pursue their own interests. The [Carers Support Fund](#) allows carers on low incomes to apply for a small grant to buy basic essential items.

We are working with local authorities, [Carers Trust Wales](#) and other key stakeholders to understand how young carers can be better recognised and supported in school and college settings. This includes a planned refresh of the Young Carers ID Card, to include good practice guidance examples of collaborative working and updated online materials. We are also providing financial support for a three-day festival for young carers in Summer 2024, as we have done for the last two years.

We will continue to hold monitoring and evaluation meetings with our delivery partners to ensure that the schemes we fund remain relevant and beneficial for unpaid carers.

Flying Start

Flying Start helps families with children under 4 years old in disadvantaged areas of Wales. The Welsh Government have committed to the expansion of [Flying Start](#) for all 2-year-olds in Wales. Phase 1 offering all four elements of Flying Start, is now complete. As at the end of March 2023, 3,178 children had been reached across Wales, exceeding our target. This included 772 children who have been offered a childcare place. Phase 2 has commenced and is focussing specifically on expansion of Flying Start childcare to more 2-year-olds.

Over 2023-25 we aim to expand the provision of high-quality Flying Start childcare to more than 9,500 additional children. We are well on track to deliver that.

Childcare Offer for Wales

The [Childcare Offer](#), which has been available across Wales since April 2019, provides 30 hours a week of government-funded early education and childcare for eligible parents of 3 and 4 year olds for up to 48 weeks a year.

In our [Programme for Government](#), we committed to fund childcare for more families where parents are in education and training or on the edge of work. This change in eligibility criteria was introduced in September 2022 and, as of November 2023, nearly 1,140 additional parents had been supported through the Offer as a result.

Since its launch, the Childcare Offer has been subject to an annual evaluation, engaging with local authorities and parents, to understand the impact, demographics and barriers. This includes the impact in enabling parents to rejoin or remain in the workforce. The last [annual evaluation](#) was unable to consider the impact of the expansion to parents in education and training as it was already underway when the changes were introduced. However, the next evaluation will begin to determine the impact of this work.

Within the Childcare Offer programme we are investing in our strategic communications plan with the aim of increasing the take-up rate among eligible parents.

Children deprived of a family environment

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child have designated their recommendations for children deprived of a family environment as a priority area for action by the State Party. For all designated priority areas, we have facilitated cross sector discussions on our approach in Wales, which have informed our response.

Children's Social Services prevention/ early Intervention

The Welsh Government is currently taking forward a [Transformation Programme for Children's Social Services](#) in Wales which is based around 8 Programme for Government commitments as well as aligning to the Welsh Government's [Children and Young People's Plan](#).

The Programme is considering the journey of support children, young people and their families receive from preventative services and statutory intervention including a child or young person's experience of care.

A key component of the Programme is the development of a National Practice Framework for social workers which will outline a set of national standards for children services in Wales and support a joined-up multi-disciplinary approach to practice.

Wales' early help programmes offer support to families in a timely way, with the aim of preventing problems escalating. Through [Parenting. Give it time](#), we are promoting the importance of positive parenting for parents with children up to age 18. We know such an approach is likely to ensure improved outcomes for children, and this is why it underpins our universal parenting support offer. Our [Families First](#) programme also places an emphasis on early help by supporting a multi-agency approach to working with the whole family to stop issues escalating towards crisis.

Through support for Family Information Services we are ensuring families and parents have access to free and impartial help, support, guidance and advice on a range of family issues including childcare, costs of childcare, family programmes, health and financial matters, which can all help support positive home environments in which children will be able to develop and thrive. These early help programmes help to avoid or mitigate the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences by working with families to build on their strengths and resilience.

In Wales unaccompanied asylum-seeking children have the same rights and entitlements as looked after children who are born in Wales and the UK, regardless of their immigration status. They are inclusive within any policy that is implemented to support children looked after.

The Transformation of Children's Services Delivery Group, which supports delivery of the Transformation Programme, is establishing a dedicated workstream on prevention/early intervention.

We will continue to invest in working models which have been put in place over the past couple of years to prevent children from entering the care system.

Children's Social Services – National Practice Framework

The Welsh Government, as part of its Transformation Programme for Children's Services, is developing a National Practice Framework. The Framework will be the first set of national standards for children's services in Wales, sitting alongside other all Wales procedures like the [All Wales safeguarding procedures](#). Its aim is to further strengthen and support the translation of policy intent into daily practice.

The Framework has been developed through working with partners to review and strengthen quality and practice to improve service delivery. The standards will reflect a multi-agency approach, as we recognise children who need help and protection often need the support of a number of professionals who work together as a team. The standards will better describe how services for children work driving greater transparency.

Following an engagement exercise early this year, work is now underway to develop a revised draft of the full Framework, to share for wider engagement and feedback. The final Framework will be published by the end of 2024.

Children's Social Services – eliminating profit from the care of Children Looked After

Eliminating profit from the care of looked after children is part of our wider vision for children's services in Wales. Our ambition is for whole system change and, at its heart, we want to see more children and young people being enabled to live with their families and in their home neighbourhoods with many fewer needing to enter care. We also want to ensure the period that young people are in care is as short as possible. Our Programme for Government commitment to remove profit from the care of children looked after is a key part of the [Health and Social Care \(Wales\) Bill](#). It will require new providers to register as a not-for-profit business from 1 April 2026. This requirement will then extend to all providers operating in Wales from April 2027.

The aim is to ensure that public money invested in the care of children does not profit individuals or corporate entities, but instead is entirely used to support these services: to deliver better experiences and outcomes for young people; to support service development and to develop sustainable and affordable children's care services into the future.

This is not about like for like replacement of one provider by another. The shape and scale of provision needs to be different, and we will look at the balance between residential, foster care, kinship care and special guardianship orders – this will include models of care, wrap-around support, and models of ownership.

Our vision is to redesign how we look after children and young people so we can do the best for our young people, their families, and communities by providing services that are locally based, locally designed and locally accountable.

Children's Social Services – residential provision and services for children with complex needs

We are committed to ensuring that where safe and appropriate, children and young people who cannot remain with their families are cared for as close to home as possible. When children are placed out of area, this can be down to lack of suitable local placements due to the complexity of the child's needs.

Between 2021 and 2023, we pump-prime funded Regional Partnership Boards to test regional approaches to developing accommodation for children with complex needs. This was tested through the completion of 15 projects across all regions in Wales, which resulted in:

- The creation of 26 new beds of regional provision for children with complex needs.
- Support provided to 62 children and young people with complex needs.

The [Health and Social Care Regional Integration Fund](#) (the RIF) is a 5 year fund to deliver a programme of change until March 2027, based on receipt and approval of investment proposals covering a range integrated care models. This includes supporting families to stay together safely and therapeutic support for care experienced children with complex needs.

Through the RIF, Regional Partnership Boards (RPB) are developing projects where 'Supporting families to stay together safely and therapeutic support for care experienced children' is the primary model of care benefiting from the expected outcomes of successful delivery.

The key components of the Model of Care will be agreed through projects that are funded through the RIF, in conjunction with sharing good practice and learning through a Community of Practice. The aim is to increase provision for children with complex needs on the edge of care to enable their needs to be fully met and families to stay together safely.

We have recently undertaken a review of regional provision for children and young people and implemented a more robust monitoring framework to capture developments. This work looks to strategically identify and link provision

from a capital stage through to operational via numerous funding streams which will enable Welsh Government to have better oversight of their investment and the capacity of local authorities to plan and work collaboratively and strategically.

We are also establishing a good practice Forum for the development of residential provision for children and young people with complex needs. This will be integral for sharing good practice and informing RPB's and local authorities of the challenges that have been encountered to inform planning and future placement commissioning strategies.

Children's Social Services – Corporate Parenting Charter

The Welsh Government launched the [Corporate Parenting Charter in September 2023](#).

This Charter is a set of promises that can be adopted by any public sector body when engaging with care-experienced children and young people (children in alternative care).

It also sets out shared principles that all bodies and their leaders should follow when providing services to care-experienced children and young people. The principles align with the UNCRC.

The Welsh Government's aim is for all public sector bodies and senior leaders to sign up to this Charter as a good Corporate Parent. This Charter is also open to voluntary organisations and the private sector to sign up

and become a Corporate Parent, to date 33 Corporate Parents have signed up.

There are two specific principles which relate to this recommendation and align to the UNCRC and these are:

- **Togetherness** – we will work alongside care-experienced children and young people to ensure their views, feelings and ideas are integral to, influence and inform the services they receive and the way they receive those services. This is because all children have a right to be listened to and taken seriously (UNCRC, Article 12).
- **Thrive** – we will ensure all care-experienced children and young people are prepared for the future and are able make positive choices for independent living and adulthood. This is because all children have a right to reach their potential (UNCRC, Article 3 and 29).

The Welsh Government will continue to engage with public sector and private sector organisations across Wales to encourage sign up to the Corporate Parenting Charter and awareness of all the principles within the Charter. The Welsh Government will also be working to strengthen statutory guidance on Corporate Parenting. The first stage of this work will be to include a dedicated on section on corporate parenting into the [Part 6 Code of Practice under the Social Services Well-being \(Wales\) Act 2014](#).

Independent visiting services

The Social Services Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014, [Part 6 Code of Practice for looked after and accommodated children](#) explains that a local authority looking after a child has a duty to provide access to an independent person to be the child's visitor where it appears to them to be in the child's best interests to do so, such as when the child has not lived with a parent (or a person with parental responsibility for the child) during the preceding 12 months or when contact between the child and a parent (or a person with parental responsibility) has not occurred or has been infrequent. The role of an independent visitor is to visit, befriend and advise the child.

We will work with the National Youth Advocacy Service Cymru to explore improving independent visiting services.

Disaggregated data on children in care

We will consider how to better disaggregate data as part of the work of the Transformation of Children's Services Delivery Group.

Listening to children in care – Part 6 Code of practice

As part of our work to review the Part 6 Code of Practice during the current Senedd term, we will consider the issues around ensuring children in care have clear entitlements to be involved and heard in decisions that affect their care.

When I'm Ready Scheme

From April 2016, young people in Wales have a right to stay with their foster families beyond the age of 18 and up to 21, or up to 25 if they are completing an agreed programme of education or training. The intention is for care leavers to be better equipped for adult life before they move on to independence.

The Welsh Government is aware there are challenges with the scheme and is committed to supporting the scheme as we move forward, and to working with stakeholders to overcome any barriers. During this Senedd term we will undertake a review of the When I'm Ready scheme, drawing upon the intelligence that has been gathered about what is working well and what isn't. As part of this review, we will consider whether there is a need to amend existing legislation to provide a firmer footing for When I'm Ready, alongside updating the existing guidance.

We will continue to tackle the need for consistency and care planning for the transition to post 18 services for young people who are looked after.

Foster carers advocacy

Welsh Government recognises that advocacy plays a crucial role for foster carers in ensuring the well-being and best interests of children in their care.

The Welsh Government continues to fund the Fostering Well-being programme which is delivered by The Fostering Network. It brings together all the professionals involved in supporting children who are looked after, including foster carers and promotes equality of status for everyone involved in the 'team around the child'.

We have listened to the views of our foster carers in Wales who felt that post-approval training needed to be consistent across Wales. We recognised that the needs of foster parents are diverse and a 'one size fits all' approach would not work. Working in partnership with our third sector partners, we have developed the [Post-approval Learning and Development Framework](#) for foster carers across Wales.

As part of this framework our third sector partner, [AFKA Cymru](#) has produced e-learning for each of the core titles identified by the Post Approval LDD Framework for Foster Carers.

Care experience as a protective characteristic and independent advocacy

The Welsh Government will continue to keep a watching brief on the issue of care experience becoming a protective characteristic and to the specific recommendation by the UN Committee that the independent advocacy offer for children should be based on the principle of opt out.

Basic Income for Care Leavers in Wales pilot

The [Basic Income for Care Leavers in Wales](#) pilot launched in June 2022 and provided more than 600 care leavers in Wales turning 18 between 1 July 2022 and 30 June 2023 with £1,600 per month (before tax) for two years. They are also offered individual advice and support to help them manage their finances and develop financial and budgeting skills. The pilot aims to provide independence and security to people who have faced immense challenges during their childhood, giving them greater control and empowering them to make decisions about their future. It is hoped the pilot will set care leavers on a path to live healthy, happy and fulfilling lives. The impact of receiving a basic income is expected to echo through a person's life, long after the payments stop.

The pilot is time limited and will need to be properly evaluated to determine the benefits of a basic income to this specific group of young people as they transition out of care into adulthood. We have commissioned an expert team, led by the Children's Social Care Research and Development Centre at Cardiff University to lead the wide-ranging evaluation of the pilot. We expect the evaluation will contribute to international evidence on basic income and interventions to support young people leaving care.

There are no current plans to extend the scheme and any future schemes would be determined by the evaluation which runs until 2027.

Mental Health Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards

The Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) is the procedure prescribed in law that ensures people who cannot consent to their care and treatment arrangements in a care home or hospital are protected if those arrangements deprive them of their liberty. The UK Government introduced the Mental Capacity (Amendment) Act 2019, with the view to repealing DoLS and replacing it with the Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS). The LPS would have applied in all settings and also to anyone aged 16 and over.

On 5 April 2023, the UK Government announced their intention to step away from the introduction of the LPS and the implementation of the Mental Capacity (Amendment) Act 2019. Welsh Government had been fully supportive of the reforms that the LPS would have introduced.

Funding for health boards and local authorities has since been made available on a recurring basis to support DoLS in Wales and to protect the rights of people where care, support and treatment amount to a deprivation of liberty.

We will give due consideration to the Concluding Observations in relation to any future developments regarding DoLS and the implementation of the LPS.

In line with the draft Mental health and Well-being Strategy for Wales we will continue to improve access to services, experience and outcomes for young people – and share information about where to look for mental health support and the mental health support available to them.

Also, in line with the draft Mental Health and Well-being Strategy, we will ensure access routes into support for mental health and well-being are timely, accessible to all, and joined-up between sectors, including improving the transition from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services to Adult Mental Health Services.

Children of incarcerated parents

Supporting children of incarcerated parents

Children who are affected by the imprisonment of a parent often require specific support to help them deal with the process. Children can feel isolated and ashamed, which can have a devastating impact on their general health, mental health and well-being.

We work with key partners to reduce reoffending and support families to build strong and resilient communities in Wales. Work in this area is being taken forward by the Wales Family Connect Group, jointly chaired by Welsh Government and His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service in Wales.

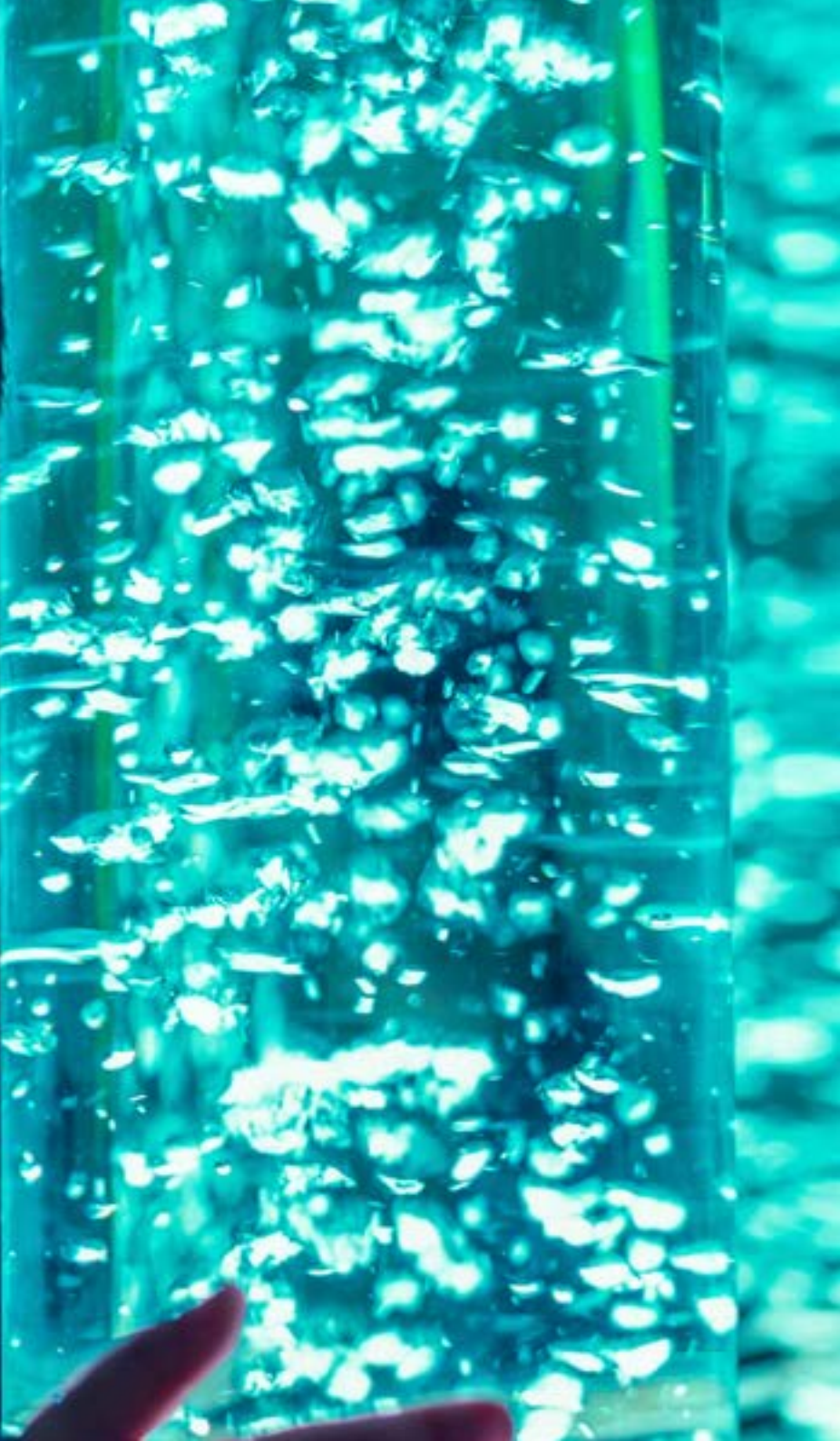
The Group brings together family leads from across the Welsh justice system, as a 'one stop shop' to share best practice and knowledge across agencies to support families and significant others of individuals who find themselves coming into contact with the criminal justice system.

The Visiting Mums Service, run by the Prison Advice and Care Trust (Pact) and established in HMP Eastwood Park and HMP Styal, is vital in helping pave the way for Welsh mothers to maintain positive relationships with their children throughout their prison sentence.

An independent evaluation of the Pact Visiting Mum Service was undertaken by Cardiff University and Cascade in 2017. The Evaluation highlighted a number of positive findings for both the women and for their children and carers.

Work is ongoing with partners to define further activity which will build on the achievements made through the [Women's Justice Blueprint](#), putting diversion and early intervention at the heart of the approach to women's justice.

As part of the development of the Blueprint, continued support will be provided for the Visting Mums service and the Wales Whole System Pathfinder Approach that provides a bespoke package of support for women who are at risk of entering or are involved in the criminal justice system.



Children with disabilities (art. 23)

Children who have disabilities

Neurodivergence services

A two stage evaluation of compliance with the [Statutory Code of Practice on the Delivery of Autism Services](#) has been commenced. Additional support has been provided for [Regional Partnership Boards](#), responsible for compliance, to understand and implement the requirements of the Code. We will continue to support awareness raising and compliance with the Code and take action on recommendations made through the evaluation process. We are working in partnership with stakeholders to expand the existing Code to include other neurodevelopmental conditions, to be published by 2026.

An exponential increase in the demand for neurodivergence services has resulted in current services becoming overwhelmed. To address this a neurodivergence improvement programme commenced in 2022, the main aims are to develop pre and post diagnostic support for families; improve diagnostic waiting times; develop a skilled workforce and improve digital

record keeping and data collection. We are also working to increase training for health and social care professionals, through initial training routes and post qualification training.

We have commissioned the NHS Executive in Wales to undertake a review of children's assessment services, each health board has its own report. Work to develop service re-redesign is underway and further scoping will address mechanisms to reduce waiting times and provide additional support for families whilst waiting.

The programme supports an integrated approach including education, health and social care, and follows the [NEST/NYTH](#) model of service development.

The Welsh Government also supports a [National Neurodivergence Team](#) which provides expertise, advice and resources on neurodevelopmental conditions and provides workforce training across sectors. Expert advice is also provided by a Ministerial Advisory Group on Neurodivergence which meets quarterly.

Additional Learning Needs

The [Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal \(Wales\) Act 2018](#) (ALNET) and [ALN Code](#) take a rights-based approach where the views, wishes and feelings of the child, young person and parent are central to the planning and provision of support. The child, young person and parent are enabled to participate as fully as possible in decision-making processes and have rights to challenge decisions about ALN, Additional Learning Provision and related matters. A four-year phased implementation of the ALN system is underway.

Since 2020 the Welsh Government has significantly increased its funding for ALN, to support implementation, increase resources in schools to implement the system and lead whole-school strategies to embed inclusive education. Capital investment has also been made.

Under the ALNET Act all schools and further education institutions in Wales must designate an ALN Co-ordinator (ALNCo) who at a strategic level ensures the needs of all learners with ALN within the education setting are met.

In addition to funding resources for the education sector via the National Neurodivergence Team, the Welsh Government has also worked with stakeholders to develop an online ALN professional learning pathway for ALNCoS and teachers. This will help them develop the skills they need to support all children and young people with ALN. We will continue to review our ALN professional learning offer as the ALN reforms progress.

We will continue the four-year formative [evaluation of implementation of the ALN system](#). This research began in January 2023.

Disability Rights Taskforce

The [Disability Rights Taskforce](#) aims to remove inequalities experienced by disabled people in society. Workstreams under the following priority areas have now reported:

- Embedding and Understanding of the Social Model of Disability (across Wales)
- Access to Services (including Communications and Technology)
- Independent Living: Health,
- Independent Living : Social Care
- Travel
- Employment and Income
- Affordable and Accessible Housing

- Children and Young People
- Access to Justice
- Well-being

The Working Groups have a range of stakeholders, which includes organisations that support disabled people, people with lived experience, parent's and carers and Welsh Government policy leads.

The Children and Young People working group has focused on areas such as children's mental health services, education, and participation in society. The Taskforce has worked with schools and [Children in Wales](#) to ensure children and young people's voices are heard.

The work of the Taskforce is at an exciting stage, and we continue to receive encouraging feedback from stakeholders. We will work with disabled people, disabled people's organisations and Welsh Government policy leads to transform Wales into a disability inclusive nation.

Curriculum For Wales – British Sign language

[British Sign Language](#) (BSL) is included alongside Welsh, English and other languages in the Curriculum for Wales Framework guidance. This includes guidance around progression in BSL for Deaf BSL users as well as guidance for schools choosing to introduce BSL as a second, third or subsequent language for other learners. [Awareness resources](#) as well as [language learning resources](#) and [Welsh stories in BSL](#) are available for free on Hwb, the all Wales learning platform.

Childcare Offer for Wales – Additional Support Grant

The [Childcare Offer for Wales](#) has been designed to take account of barriers that eligible parents may face in accessing the childcare element. This may include, for example, children with Additional Learning Needs or other disabilities or health needs which require additional support.

Help has been made available through the Childcare Offer for Wales Additional Support Grant (ASG). Local authorities can draw on this funding to help ensure that eligible children with additional needs are able to access the childcare element of the Offer in the same way as other eligible children.

The Childcare ASG is demand-led, but there is no upper cap. Across Wales the demand for ASG differs. In order to understand the different approaches and demand, an independent research project was commissioned. This work started in the 2023 and was published in May 2024. The Welsh Government is currently considering its recommendations to ensure improved support available to children who have disabilities accessing the Childcare Offer and the professionals delivering childcare

Childcare and Play Grant

Through the childcare and play element of the Children and Communities Grant, we fund local authorities annually to support childcare and play provision and address gaps identified in their Childcare Sufficiency Assessments. Part of the purpose of this grant is to ensure and give special consideration and support to the childcare and play needs of low-income families; families with children with additional needs; and families wishing to access provision through the medium of Welsh.

Play Policy

Wales was the first country to legislate, guaranteeing children's right to play by ensuring local authorities secure sufficient opportunities, via the Play Sufficiency Duty.

A statutory duty was placed on local authorities to assess and, as far as is reasonably practicable, secure sufficient opportunities for children to play in their areas. This has become known as the 'Play Sufficiency Duty'.

The Statutory Guidance to Local Authorities, '[Wales – a Play Friendly Country](#)' sets out what local authorities need to take into account in assessing for and securing sufficient play opportunities. Under Providing for Diverse needs, the local authority should aim to offer play opportunities that are inclusive and encourage all children to play and meet together if they wish to.

Playworks Holiday Project

The [Playworks Holiday Project](#) was established to tackle holiday hunger by providing free food / snacks at play schemes during the holiday periods. We provide funding to local authorities via the All Wales Play Opportunities grant for the continuation of the Playworks Holiday Project, with a return to funding food, as well as the all-important access to play opportunities.

Disability / Grant allocation – Whizz- Kidz Moving on Project.

The Moving On Wheelchair Skills Training project aims to ensure young wheelchair users are given the skills to use their wheelchair safely and confidently through sports and movement based skills programmes in health and education settings, thus ensuring they can be mobile, enabled and included.

The Whizz Kidz team have been working on building networks with delivery partners such as [Disability Sports Wales](#) and working to ensure there are enough skilled trainers in Wales.

We will continue working to improve the lives of disabled children. The importance of strengthening support for the social integration and individual development of disabled children and ensuring the right of disabled children to be heard in all decisions that affect them, will be a key consideration of our future plans.



Basic health and welfare (arts. 6, 18 (3), 24, 26, 27 (1-3) and 33)

Health and health services

Paediatric health care

In 2022 we developed [guidance on the management, handover and accountability of healthcare services for children and young people during their transition from children's to adults' services](#). The guidance aims to ensure young people have a better experience of transition by improving the way care is planned and carried out.

We will be reviewing health board arrangements for transition and handover from paediatric to adult services to ensure quality and consistency across the NHS in Wales.

The Welsh Government published [the national planned care recovery plan Transforming and modernising planned care and reducing NHS waiting lists](#) in April 2022 where we specifically recognised the need to prioritise children's waits (page 23) "Ensure that children's services are prioritised"

We have seen that recovery has been greater for children's long waits than adults (comparing April 2022 date to April 2024. Children's pathways (under 18 years) have reduced from just over 5,000 April 2022, to just over 1,220 April 2024, an improvement of over 75%. For the same period long waits over two years for adult pathways (over 18years) have improved by 68%. There is variation across health boards with Betsi Cadwaladr accounting for 62% of all children's pathways over two years predominantly in orthodontics, oral surgery.

Health inequalities

We will continue to address the underlying causes of health to positively influence how the wider determinants such as work, education and housing can improve health and equity.

The [Healthy Child Wales Programme](#) sets out when all families with children aged 0-7 will have contact with health visitors. These universal contact points cover screening, immunisation, and monitoring and supporting child development. By developing and delivering

services with a core set of All Wales, universal contacts, health boards will minimise the possibility of children and families missing out on the benefits of an early intervention and public health programme.

We will continue to monitor data quality and completeness of the Healthy Child Wales Programme. Over time, we see the programme contributing to reducing inequity by ensuring that there is a delivery of universal service and better targeting of enhanced services towards those who need support.

We support a cross-sector response on wider determinants through the [Building a Healthier Wales Coordination Group](#), which has explored how Welsh Government policies of free school meals and the early years and childcare offer can be delivered in a way that addresses health inequalities. They also supporting the development and evaluation of an income maximisation pilot and evaluation for young people in Cwm Taf Morgannwg.

Our [Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan](#) includes actions we intend to take to tackle the health inequalities experienced by Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people.

Our [LGBTQ+ Action Plan](#) acknowledges the health inequalities experienced by LGBTQ+ people and proposes a range of actions targeted at improving health outcomes of LGBTQ+ people.

Health services available to asylum-seeking and migrant children

Health support for asylum seekers and refugees arriving in Wales is provided in line with [Welsh Government 2018 Guidance for Health Boards on the Health and Well-being of Asylum Seekers and Refugees](#).

Traumatic Stress Wales is funded by Welsh Government and aims to improve the health and well-being of people of all ages living in Wales at risk of developing or with post-traumatic stress disorder or complex post-traumatic stress disorder. Traumatic Stress Wales are working with people with lived experience, as well as colleagues across the public and voluntary sectors, to improve access to effective and evidence-based therapies for people who have experienced traumatic events.

The Traumatic Stress Wales initiative includes a specific workstream on [people seeking sanctuary in Wales](#). This has been developed to improve access to high quality mental health support for forced migrants who have experienced traumatic events. A range of materials have been translated and shared with stakeholders via the Traumatic Stress Wales website to support mental health, well-being and initial stabilisation for people seeking sanctuary in Wales.

The [CALL Mental Health Helpline](#) is also available to support those arriving in Wales and their families. CALL has access to Language Line and can be used when someone would prefer to access help in a language other than English and Welsh. Posters sharing information on the CALL helpline have been translated into multiple languages.

We have continued to promote the importance of access to interpreting and translation services. The Wales Interpretation and Translation Service (WITS) has developed an E-Learning Learning module: [Working with interpreters and translators in the public sector](#). This module is intended for anyone who works with interpreters or translators. We are promoting the availability of the new training amongst partners.

The Migrant Integration Framework will also include information on how the use of interpretation services can play a part in the integration of Migrants in both public and third sector services.

Waiting times for gender identity services for young people

We commission gender identity services for young people from NHS England and NHS Wales is represented on the Gender Dysphoria Services Transformation Programme Board in England. The work of the Programme has already been shaped by the findings in the interim Cass report (published in February 2022), and the [final Cass report \(published in May 2024\)](#).

The Transformation Programme has already made good progress following the interim Cass Review. This includes two new children and young people's gender services which opened in April.

Up to 8 regional centres will be commissioned and the NHS Wales Joint Commissioning Committee will be working with NHS England to consider a regional centre in Wales.

Malnutrition, food insecurity and overweight and obesity in children

The Child Measurement Programme has shown that over one quarter of children in Wales aged four-to-five years old are either overweight or obese.

Healthy Start and the Nursery Milk Scheme help eligible young families to buy fruit, vegetables, milk and infant formula and free Healthy Start Vitamins. Take up of the Healthy Start Scheme in Wales is currently 78%, and it continues to grow steadily. We will continue to provide training, networking, and support materials to health professionals to increase take up of the Healthy Start vouchers.

We support the Veg Power school campaign to encourage children to eat more vegetables. In 2024, this will include support to create and deliver bilingual campaign resources into every maintained primary school in Wales.

The children and family pilots, branded PIPYN, are targeted at young children and their families. There are three pilots in Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil and Anglesey, areas chosen due to their high prevalence of childhood overweight and obesity. Families with young children can take part in local events delivered by their PIPYN team which provide free and fun opportunities to get active and learn about healthy eating. PIPYN also provide individual, tailored support for families to help young children achieve a healthy weight. We will fund the PIPYN pilot until March 2025;

we will evaluate the pilots to determine whether the approach should be expanded to further locations across Wales.

The intervention is based on PHWs [Every Child Wales](#) 10 Steps to a Healthy Weight providing advice for parents and carers to help their child reach a healthy weight by the time they start school. The family activities take place within a wider whole system approach which aims to engage and mobilise early years stakeholders in collective efforts to reduce health inequalities related to childhood obesity.

The Healthy Food Environment Programme will support our ambitions set out in Healthy Weight Healthy Wales to reduce the overweight and obesity in Wales. The two-phase programme will cover promotions and placement restrictions with a later phase potentially including age related energy drink restrictions, calorie labelling for the out of home sector and restrictions covering the proximity of hot food takeaways to schools.

We have also committed to develop and implement a Daily Active Offer for schools which encompasses the whole school day.

In response to the rising cost-of-living pressures on families and our ambitions to tackle child poverty and ensure no child goes hungry in school, the Welsh Government is rolling out [Universal Primary Free School Meals](#) to all children by September 2024. As of January 2024, approximately 149,000 learners are eligible for the offer. Over 15 million

additional free school meals have been served since the launch in September 2022.

We are the only nation in the UK that offers a [free breakfast scheme](#) for children in all primary schools, and our School Milk Scheme offers the highest level of subsidy across UK nations, providing over 9 million free or subsidised milk servings over the last year. Access to these schemes is not affected by a child's migration status, being available to all primary aged children.

Local authorities in Wales also have discretionary powers to be able to provide meals without charging. Our expectation is that no child should be denied an offer of a meal if they turn up to school hungry.

Welsh Government has formed a task and finish group to review the current [food- and nutrient –based school food standards](#) so that they are fit for purpose and reflect Government dietary recommendations. This will ensure that the free lunch (and breakfast where schools deliver the Welsh Government's free breakfast scheme) that primary aged children receive, provides them with the best nutrition and appropriate portion sizes to support good health and well-being. It will optimise the nutritional offer available to secondary aged pupils.

Breastfeeding

The [First 1000 Days](#) is a health improvement programme led by PHW. The First Minister of Wales Vaughan Gething MS recognised the importance of the First 1000 Days and appointed a Minister for Mental Health and early Years to ensure the Welsh Government delivers on this programme. The programme was established in response to strong evidence that suggests the period during pregnancy and up to the child's second birthday offers the greatest potential for impact in both improving outcomes and reducing inequalities. A key aim of the programme is to support the system to understand and act on the best available evidence. This allows professionals to support parents to give children the best start in life.

We are working collaboratively with PHW through the [Healthy Weight, Healthy Wales Strategy](#) to implement the [All Wales Breastfeeding Action Plan](#). This will ensure those families wishing to breastfeed receive the information and support they need, as well as support efforts to reduce broader health inequalities and ensure breastfeeding in Wales is a culturally accepted norm.

Mental Health

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child have designated their recommendations for mental health as a priority area for action by the State Party. For this priority area we have invited stakeholders to provide feedback through the consultations on the draft strategies on Mental Health and Well-being and Suicide and self-harm prevention.

Improving mental health services and addressing waiting times is a priority for Wales. [Together for Mental Health](#) is a cross government strategy, which recognises the importance of the wider determinants of mental health. Within our current [Delivery Plan](#), there is a key priority to improve mental health and well-being and reduce inequalities through a focus on strengthening protective factors.

We have ring fenced funding to support the Together for Mental Health Delivery Plan, including Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), crisis care, and perinatal mental health.

We launched the [Strategic Mental Health Workforce Plan](#) in November 2022. The plan includes NHS, local authorities, and the voluntary sector. The plan includes specific priorities for staff well-being, recruitment, retention, and training.

The Welsh Government have recently consulted on a new [Mental Health and Well-being Strategy](#) and a new [Suicide and Self-Harm Prevention Strategy](#) for Wales. As part of that process, we asked stakeholders to reflect on the UNCRC Concluding Observations and consider if the draft strategies addressed them.

The new Mental Health and Well-being Strategy sets out four vision statements, one of which is specifically focussed on cross-Government action to protect good mental health and well-being. The strategy and the four vision statements are underpinned by several core principles, which include: taking a rights-based approach (respecting, protecting and fulfilling the rights of individuals in the care they receive); being trauma-informed (making use of the [Trauma-Informed Wales Framework](#) to help everyone in Wales understand how trauma and adversity can impact people and their role in supporting those affected by trauma); and focussing on equity of access, experience and outcomes without discrimination, and ensuring services and support are accessible and appropriate for all.

By understanding the barriers people face and putting necessary systems in place, when people reach out for support there is equity in experiences and outcomes. To achieve this, support and services will need to be culturally and age appropriate, as well as meet the needs of Welsh speakers, ethnic minority people, LGBTQ+ communities, people with sensory loss, neurodivergent people and people who are experiencing poverty.

Actions in the strategy will support a focus on promoting equity, including a commitment to develop quality statements for CAMHS and adult mental health services, that set the standards for what health boards and local authorities in Wales are expected to deliver to ensure good quality mental health services. These quality statements will support a person-centred approach and enable equitable access to services for those with protected characteristics (as described in the [Equality Act 2010](#)) and preferred language.

The Welsh Government will also be publishing supporting Delivery Plans for both the Mental Health and Well-being Strategy and the Suicide and Self-Harm Prevention Strategy.

Mental Health Act Reform

The Welsh Government had agreed that UK Government legislation to reform the Mental Health Act 1983 should extend to Wales, with some exceptions such as in relation to Care and Treatment Plans where we already have measures in place. However, during the summer of 2023, the UK Government confirmed that this legislation will not be introduced. The Welsh Government has since given its support for the introduction of a Member Bill on the [Development of the Mental Health Standards of Care \(Wales\) Bill](#). We will be working with the Member to explore how this legislation can support the aims of the Government around improving the experience and care of people suffering with poor mental health.

Inpatient provision

Health boards continue to review all aspects of mental health bed space capacity and constantly review all placements based on clinical need. Where possible we aim for people to receive their care within the local community close to family and friends without the need for hospitalisation.

As part of the development of a new specialised Mental Health Services Strategy, the Welsh Health Specialised Services Committee commissioned demand and capacity inpatient modelling for in-patient provision. This strategy will be published in 2024 to inform future service planning.

Advocacy

We recognise the vital role of statutory advocacy services to support people to understand their rights and to participate in decisions around treatment and care.

Part 4 of the Mental Health (Wales) Measure

places a statutory duty on health boards to provide information about the right and availability of advocacy services and to record information on the provision of Independent Mental Health Advocacy (IMHA). Our ring-fenced mental health budget aims to ensure health boards can expand services to meet mental health needs, including the provision of advocacy services. In terms of Independent Mental Health Advocates, we have continued to increase our investment in mental health support.

We monitor compliance with the duty. For health boards that have reported data shows that they are meeting the standard that every person has contact with an IMHA within five working days of their request.

Major health conditions and mental health

The core contract for GPs requires them to record information about people with serious mental illness and have a record of high blood pressure and other physical health conditions / risks.

We expect people with a chronic physical health condition to be able to access psychological support according to their level of need and will continue to work with the NHS to support people with a physical health condition to manage their condition well.

We will include action to improve the physical health of individuals with mental health issues as part of the new Mental Health and Well-being Strategy for Wales

Community based therapeutic mental health services

As part of our [Together for Mental Health Delivery Plan](#), we have increased funding to improving access, quality and range of psychological therapies which remains a key priority.

In March 2021, the Welsh Government issued [embedding a whole-school approach to emotional and mental well-being](#) as statutory guidance to governing bodies and local authorities in Wales. The framework provides direction to address the emotional and mental well-being needs of all children and young people, as well as school staff as part of the whole-school community. It gives schools the opportunity, through a continuous improvement approach, to promote positive mental well-being, prevent mental ill health and to take action to support individuals where needed.

The [whole-school approach to emotional and mental well-being and the NYTH/NEST framework](#) are complimentary guidance to support the mental health and emotional well-being of children and young people across education, health and social care settings. The [whole-school approach to emotional and mental well-being](#) framework provides statutory guidance to meet the needs of children and young people in educational establishments, whilst the NYTH/NEST framework relates to health, social care and third sector.

Tailored mental health services

[Together for Mental Health](#) includes a specific focus on supporting vulnerable groups and reducing inequalities. In line with the commitment in the [Anti-racist Wales Action Plan](#), we are continuing to work with our Mental Health Ethnic Minorities Task and Finish Group to address the barriers faced by minority ethnic communities and to support better access to services.

Promoting cultural competency is a key priority in the [Mental Health Delivery Plan for Wales](#). Promoting cultural competency will remain key priority in the new Mental Health and Well-being Strategy for Wales – and this will also be supported by the Health Education and Improvement Wales [Strategic Mental Health Workforce Plan](#).

Other key areas of work include the development of guidance (by [Improvement Cymru](#)) to improve access to and the provision of psychological interventions to people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities in Wales. This work is due to be published shortly.

The Disability Rights Taskforce has been looking at embedding understanding of the Social Model of Disability (SMD) across Wales and access to services as part of its work. The Children and Young People working group is striving to identify the challenges experienced by disabled children in every aspect of their lives. The group's co-produced recommendations will seek to remove barriers and improve outcomes for disabled children in Wales.

The Taskforce has provided SMD training to [Care Inspectorate Wales](#) and [Health Inspectorate Wales](#), so that social and health care settings will be inspected through the lens of the SMD.

Recognising the needs of specific groups, Welsh Government also continues to fund [Traumatic Stress Wales](#), which aims to improve the health and well-being of people of all ages living in Wales at risk of developing, or with,

post-traumatic stress disorder or complex post-traumatic stress disorder. Traumatic Stress Wales has specific work streams (involving those with lived experience) focussing on the needs of asylum seekers, refugees and migrants; children and young people; sexual assault; and people in the criminal justice system. Welsh Government has also provided further funding to support the implementation of the Trauma Informed Wales Framework, with a specific focus on asylum seekers and refugees, and people experiencing substance misuse.

Overrepresentation of children belonging to minority groups, children with autism and children with learning disabilities in inpatient mental health care;

The draft Mental Health and Well-being Strategy is underpinned by a number of key supporting principles. One of these is equity of access, experience and outcomes without discrimination and ensuring services and support are accessible and appropriate for all. This means understanding the barriers people face and putting necessary systems in place so that when people get support, there is equity in terms of experiences and outcomes. To achieve this, support and services will need to be culturally and age appropriate and meet the needs of Welsh speakers, ethnic minority people, LGBTQ+ communities and people with sensory loss. The draft Strategy specifically highlights that services will need to meet the needs of under-served groups such as people with co-occurring

substance misuse, people who are care experienced, neurodivergent people and people who are experiencing poverty and people who are experiencing homelessness.

Underlying causes of poor mental health, eating disorders and self-harm.

There is a specific focus on these issues in the new draft Mental Health and Well-being Strategy for Wales and supporting impact assessments, which have been consulted on.

We fund [BEAT](#) to provide a Wales Helpline and peer support services for eating disorders. In addition to providing valuable early access and advice, they support many of those waiting to be seen by clinicians and are an important and integral part of the eating disorder services here in Wales.

We expect all health boards to provide specialist, multi-disciplinary support for people with eating disorders. With funding provided by Welsh Government, health boards have adapted and expanded services and recruited additional staff to respond to the unprecedented increases in demand. Our most recent review of services showed that all health boards have made progress in working towards achieving the NICE standards for eating disorders services, early intervention and to ensure no one is waiting longer than 4 weeks for an assessment.

Health boards also invest significantly in the third sector to provide mental health support. To bolster this provision in 2021/22 we provided additional funding for health boards to commission directly with the third sector. This amount is being made available to health boards on a recurring basis and has been included in their allocation from 2023/24.

Underlying causes and prevention

The [NYTH/NEST](#) framework was co-produced with stakeholders including young people to create a whole system approach to mental health and well-being. The framework focuses on services working together to take a holistic view of the wider determinants of mental health and well-being. This includes early intervention and prevention as well as services working together to direct children and their families to the right help, at the right time, in the right way through 'no wrong door' approaches such as improving pathways to support, increasing early access to expertise and co-producing services with service users.

Our [Whole School Approach](#) framework promotes positive mental well-being, prevent mental ill health and to take action to support individuals where needed. This is aligned with the NYTH/NEST framework to provide complimentary guidance to support the mental health and emotional well-being of children and young people across education, health, and social care settings.

Support for Care Experienced Children

The [Health and Social Care Regional Integration Fund](#) is a 5 year fund for our Regional Partnership Boards with a strong focus on prevention and early intervention through developing six national models of integrated care. One of the six models focuses on Supporting Families to stay together, and therapeutic support for care experienced children. The Regional Partnership Boards are required to develop activities which align to the NYTH/NEST framework and within a shared strategic context which comprises of and works across local authorities' children's services priorities.

The 'Model of Care' should work positively with families to help them stay safely together and prevent the need for children to enter care. This may include circumstances when children have complex health, behaviour, or care needs, where the model should provide an integrated health, care, and educational response.

Under 'Promoting Good Emotional Health and Well-being' the regions are asked to invest in services across all ages of the population including children and young people which complement the investment in acute mental health services such as children and adolescent mental health services.

Suicide and self-harm prevention

The new Suicide and Self-Harm Prevention Strategy for Wales is the successor to the Welsh Government's previous ten-year strategy for Suicide and Self-Harm Prevention in Wales – Talk to me 2.

This strategy is separate but connected to our new Mental Health Strategy. It is connected because having a mental health issue is a risk factor for suicide and self-harm. However, a separate strategy for suicide and self-harm in Wales recognises that the majority of those who die by suicide are not identified as having a diagnosed mental health condition.

The aim of the new 10-year strategy in Wales is to reduce the number and rates of suicide deaths that have endured over recent years. It includes a specific focus pathway to support people who self-harm and to improve support for those bereaved by suicide. This strategy has been separated in to 6 high level objectives.

The first objective is focussed on evidence and the need to better understand why people harm themselves and take their own lives.

In 2022, we introduced Real Time Suspected Suicide Surveillance (RTSSS) in Wales to provide information to help partners to target prevention, ensure support is made available, and to respond when needed. The first annual report was published on 11 January 2024, which we can share with you.

Whilst we have made progress, there is an identified need for more robust data, evidence and information in relation to suicide and self-harm in Wales to inform policies and services.

Objective two focusses on the need to bring leaders from across government and outside of Government together to tackle the drivers of suicide and reduce access to means to suicide.

We have targeted funding towards establishing a suicide and self-harm prevention team within the NHS Executive. With dedicated regional leads we have been able to strengthen partnership arrangements across Wales to deliver the changes required to prevent suicide and self-harm – and offer support to those affected by it.

We are working across Government looking at ways to tackle some of the main issue linked with emotional distress such as financial strain, poor mental health and substance misuse. We are also taking steps to enhance online safety and limit the encouragement and assistance of self-harm through the provision of legislation and new policy opportunities. This includes a specific focus on enhancing online safety for children and young people.

Our third objective is about taking a targeted approach to offering support to those who most need it and in the places within which they engage. We know that 8 per cent of 14- to 19-year-olds will self-harm and that it is the second leading cause of death in the 15- to 19-year-old population and certain children

are particularly vulnerable with ASD children experiencing over twice the risk of suicide than young people without ASD and the prevalence of self-harm being consistently higher in deprived communities. Our Children's Rights Impact Assessment accompanying the draft strategy includes more evidence about the risks linking children and young people with suicide and self-harm. For this reason, they have been included as a high-risk group allowing targeted action to be taken to support them.

Objective four builds on the targeted approach under objective 3 recognising that we all have a role to play in providing support to those who need it.

We will identify opportunities to enhance the universal offer of training and support and recently the NHS Wales Executive has developed a Suicide Awareness universal e-module which is available on the training platforms for all NHS and other sector staff in Wales.

Our fifth objective recognises the need to de-stigmatise suicide and self-harm which can often be a barrier to people reaching out for support. The ambition is to enhance the quality of support so that it is more compassionate. The objective also recognises that bereavement after suicide can be particularly devastating, and it is vital that people can access support.

This is why we have recently commissioned the [Jac Lewis Foundation](#) to deliver a new specialist advisory and liaison service to respond to those exposed, affected, or bereaved by sudden unexplained deaths that could be a possible suicide.

This National Liaison and Advice Service will ensure a consistent, timely, and proactive offer of support to people affected by sudden deaths that are unexplained or a suspected suicide.

Our sixth and final objective recognises the important role that our media has to play in reducing stigma and encouraging people to seek help. We will work with media outlets to encourage responsible communication, reporting, and social media use regarding self-harm, suicide and suicidal behaviour.

Adolescent Health

Family planning and abortion

Contraception services in Wales are provided free of charge through the NHS (GPs and sexual health clinics). For younger girls they can access support and emergency contraception through Community Pharmacies who will assess safeguarding and refer to specialist services. They can also provide 'bridging' contraception and information. Condom Card schemes across Wales also provide information, signpost, and refer to specialist services for contraception and abortion and provide services for 13-25 years.

The temporary arrangements introduced during the Covid-19 pandemic, which enabled women and girls to take both pills for Early Medical Abortion (EMA) up to 9 weeks and 6 days gestation in their own homes, following a telephone or e-consultation with a clinician, without the need to first attend a hospital or clinic, were made permanent in Wales in February 2022.

New guidance has been developed by clinicians working along with the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, the Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare and British Society of Abortion Care Providers to enable the NHS in Wales to implement the change as effectively as possible. The guidance includes steps to ensure women accessing the service are not subject to coercion or exploitation in line with Welsh safeguarding protocols. The guidance also emphasises the need to provide advice and support to women on contraception and reproductive health.

In 2020, the NHS published the Sexual Health Priority Areas 2020-2024. Unfortunately, the publication coincided with the emergence of the pandemic, impacting on the resources available to deliver them. The Sexual Health Programme Board is currently reviewing those priorities, which include a recommendation on contraception, and to improve local and timely access to abortions at all gestations. The outcome of that review will be shared with the Women's Health Network as they develop the NHS women's Health Plan.

Relationships and Sexuality Education

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is a statutory requirement within the Curriculum for Wales framework and it is mandatory for all learners from age 3-16. Learning is legally required to be developmentally appropriate for every child. It must also be pluralistic: meaning schools must provide factual information and LGBTQ+. Any resources that schools do use must be in line with these legal requirements. We have published the [Relationships and Sexuality Education \(RSE\) Statutory guidance](#).

The Welsh Government has implemented mandatory RSE in all primary schools and to learners in years 7 and 8 in all secondary schools in Wales. Complete rollout of the Curriculum for Wales up to year 11 will be implemented in September 2026. We will continue to work closely with schools, key stakeholders and professionals as we continue to support the implementation of the Curriculum for Wales with resources and professional learning.

Substance abuse

The new Health and Well-being of Area of Learning and experience is a statutory requirement within the Curriculum for Wales. This area of the curriculum is designed to support learners to understand that developing physical health has lifelong benefits, this includes health promoting and health harming behaviours. Within this area, schools can support their learners to

understand the harmful effects of a range of substances, including tobacco and alcohol.

Tackling substance misuse – drugs and alcohol – is rooted in a harm reduction approach, which recognises addiction as a health and care issue rather than one which is solely related to criminal justice. We want to ensure people in Wales are aware of the dangers and the impact of substance misuse and to know where they can seek information, help, and support.

We have protected and increased funding for frontline substance misuse services and we have ringfenced funding for children and young people through the Area Planning Boards Substance Misuse Action Fund. We are committed to ensuring that our services provide early intervention and prevention so that longer-term harms are prevented before they occur. This includes preventing exposure to Adverse Childhood Experiences.

The Welsh Government will soon publish a Substance Misuse Treatment Framework (SMTF) for Children and Young People. The Framework is a guidance document and is designed to inform and assist health, social care, and criminal justice planners to design and deliver high quality treatment services, working with those at risk of initiation, or experience of historic or current problematic drug and/or alcohol use. We will also publish child friendly versions of the SMTF.

Supporting children and young people to have a smoke-free childhood is a key part of our vision for a smoke-free Wales. [School Health Research Network](#) data shows that 4% of secondary school pupils in Wales aged 11-16 currently smoke at least once a week, with those from the most deprived backgrounds having around twice the smoking rates of those from the least deprived backgrounds. To support children and young people, we run the JustB Smoke Free programme which operates in socio-economically disadvantaged areas to prevent the uptake of smoking.

During the first year of our [Towards a Smoke-free Wales: Tobacco Control Delivery Plan 2022-2024](#), we focused efforts on reducing maternal smoking and supporting children and young people. PHW undertook a programme of work to assess the data available for surveillance and monitoring of tobacco use in Wales, which reviewed the routine data sources available for surveillance and monitoring to provide a clear picture of the current smoking population in Wales and identified data gaps and suggested solutions to guide action.

The rise in vaping among children and young people is also very concerning. These products have no place in the hands of children and young people however we know they are being actively targeted at them. Last year, PHW established a Vaping Among Children and Young People Incident Response Group (IRG) to fully understand the scale of the issue in Wales.

In addition to gathering evidence and data and investigating possible causes, the Group looked to establish control measures to reduce the risk of ongoing harm and develop multi agency actions in Wales. The IRG published their report, [Vaping amongst Children and Young People in Wales Incident Response Group](#), on 18 April and highlighted the need to support young people who are addicted to nicotine in vapes. This is an area that PHW are already looking at, including how we adapt our services to better support people, including young people to quit their nicotine addiction. The Welsh Government will consider the report's recommendations carefully in due course.

Vapes also present unique challenges for schools. In September 2023, PHW published '[Information and Guidance on Vaping for Secondary-aged learners in Wales](#)' to support schools with this issue. This guidance drew on the expertise of professionals from health, education and smoking cessation services and set out ten key actions for schools to address vaping, including those related to policies and practices, communication and support. Guidance was also provided on how to engage with young people who are using vapes as well as recommendations for appropriate actions and referrals. Building on this guidance, resources to support teachers to understand the issues and impact of vaping on learners and to incorporate that understanding into their teaching have been developed by the PHW and are currently being piloted with an expectation that they will

be available before the end of the school year. These resources are all aimed at supporting schools to take consistent and effective action to address vaping amongst the learners they support.

We are also taking action on single use (disposable) vapes. Not only do these products have significant environmental impacts, but they are also understood to be an important driver of the recent increases in youth vaping. The Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs recently announced the [Government's intention to ban these products from 1 April 2025](#). The ban in Wales will be aligned with similar bans in England and Scotland and will provide businesses with the necessary time to prepare for the changes, supported by the publication of guidance and communication materials which are being developed in collaboration with business representative groups.

In November 2023 the Chief Medical Officer for Wales published [recommendations as part of the "Shaping Our Health: Chief Medical Officer for Wales Annual Report 2023"](#), that alongside the new curriculum, schools should be provided with evidence based unbiased information, free from commercial influence that will support young people to make informed choices about their health and well-being. It also highlighted the importance of using the right strategic approaches to tackle alcohol harm and made

recommendations to strengthen messaging around alcohol to ensure people are provided with accurate unbiased information to support population health interventions.

The Welsh Government continues to support and work closely with Alcohol Change UK to reduce alcohol harm and in March 2024 we agreed additional funding to them to facilitate an alcohol harm reduction project, which already shows early signs of expansion in south Wales. "Feeding Recovery" addresses poor nutrition and social isolation for individuals with long-term alcohol problems, offering practical ways to reduce physical and psychological harms, build relationships, and improve quality of life.

Environmental health and the impact of climate change on the rights of the child

Climate change mitigation and adaptation

Wales has a legally binding target to deliver the goal of net-zero emissions by 2050 as set out in [The Environment \(Wales\) Act 2016](#) with a series of decadal interim targets and carbon budgets to guide us along the way, which has been set in supporting regulations. This is alongside an ambition for the public sector in Wales to be collectively net zero carbon by 2030 as set out in [The Net Zero Wales Carbon Budget 2](#).

[Net Zero Wales](#) is our current plan, which sets out the action we taking over this carbon budget across each emission sector (2021-2025).

Welsh Government's National approach to Adaptation Planning is set out within [Prosperity for All: A Climate Conscious Wales](#). This plan demonstrates that we understand, and take seriously, the impacts arising from climate change and are taking steps to prepare for, and adapt to, these changes.

In October 2023, PHW published their [Health Impact Assessment \(HIA\) for Climate Change](#), this report examines how using an HIA approach can be used to ensure that adaptations to mitigate the effects of climate change meet the needs of specific population groups and geographies, maximise benefits for health and well-being, prevent unintended risks to health, and avoid widening health inequalities. The [HIA](#) recognised babies, children and young people as a vulnerable group and sets out opportunities to mitigate risks of climate change impact on this group.

In addition, health officials have produced heat and cold weather health advice for the health and social care sector, this advice includes information on how these sectors should prepare and be prepared to act in instances of extreme weather which can cause physical and mental health harms to people, particularly vulnerable groups including babies, children and young people.

We are developing an updated approach for the Welsh Government's next National Adaptation Strategy, due to be published in autumn 2024. The strategy will include a series of 'systems-based' climate resilience plans and will include aims around protecting people from the health impacts of climate change; and ensuring quality and accessible health and social care delivery during extreme weather.

We will set our fourth carbon budget in legislation in 2025, taking into account advice and recommendation from our independent advisory body to ensure we are guided by the science.

Environmental protection

Air and noise pollution pose particular risks to the health and well-being of children, including in and around education settings. The [Environment \(Air Quality and Soundscapes\) \(Wales\) Act 2024](#) ("the Act") received Royal Assent and became law in Wales in February 2024. It modernises and improves legislation relating to the air environment in Wales, building upon existing air quality and noise laws and strengthening ties to the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#). It establishes a national air quality target setting framework; requires action to promote awareness; and strengthens the duties of local authorities in Wales to carry out local air quality management in their areas, putting greater emphasis on actions to improve air quality.

There are a number of priorities over the next 12 months relating to implementation of the Act. These are:

- Development of a delivery plan setting out how we will promote awareness of the risks associated with air pollution as well as ways in which it can be reduced or limited.
- Making regulations to set a penalty range for the offence of stationary vehicle idling. These regulations will be accompanied by guidance for local authorities and a broader communication campaign.
- Guidance for local authorities in relation to legislative changes to the existing smoke control which, when commenced, will move the regime from criminal to civil sanctions making it easier for local authorities to enforce.
- Guidance for local authorities in relation to legislative changes to the existing local air quality management regimes which, when commenced, will require local authorities to take a review of air quality annually and set compliance dates where an air quality management area is in place.

We expect to deliver these elements by spring 2025. Alongside this, work is ongoing to develop national air quality targets.

In line with the recommendations of the [United Nations Environment Programme's Frontiers 2022 report](#), the Welsh Government recognises that airborne sound, along with airborne substances, has an effect on human health and well-being. The Act therefore takes the opportunity to align the legislative foundation for Wales's [Noise and Soundscape Plan](#) with that of our Clean Air Plan / national air quality strategy, by establishing it in law as the national strategy on soundscapes. As far as we know, Wales is the first nation to embed soundscapes in primary legislation.

Over the last 6 years, PHW has worked with clinicians and laboratories in Wales to develop a robust notification system for children with raised blood lead levels. PHW then works directly with the patient's medical team, providing them, and their patient, with clear and understandable information on lead and supporting them to identify potential sources of lead exposure. PHW also has a similar notification system and actions for adults, which has important impacts on children's health by reducing wider exposure to lead in the home setting or when lead contamination may be brought home after occupational exposure.

Children and young people's awareness and participation

The Welsh Government funds [Eco Schools](#) and [Size of Wales](#) who work with schools and young people to raise awareness of climate change and the importance of protecting the natural world. These real world programmes empower learners to make positive environmental changes to their school and wider community whilst also providing opportunities to have their say and be part of the climate solution.

Hundreds of thousands of children and young people have been engaged via these programmes, empowering them to drive change, improve their environmental awareness, take action and learn about climate change and the importance of forests and protecting our ecosystems. Annual Youth Conferences are held on climate change, bringing together children and young people to directly meet with members of Welsh Government and Ministers to have their say and learn more about the work taking place in Wales and internationally.

The voices of children and young people were extremely important in the development of the [Net Zero Wales Plan](#). They provided detailed comments and illustrated the power of collective action, and they are continuing to inspire others to do more.

Learning about climate and nature is also mandatory across the Curriculum for Wales, particularly in the Health and Well-being,

Humanities, and Science and Technology Areas of Learning and Experience. Teaching must include specific climate focuses, and how these support learners to realise the [Four purposes](#) of the new curriculum.

We intend to hold annual Youth Conferences on climate change, bringing together children and young people to directly meet with members of Welsh Government and Ministers to have their say and learn more about the work taking place in Wales and internationally.

International cooperation

Wales was one of the first countries in the world to announce a Climate Emergency. We have a long-standing history of working at the international level and was a founding member of the [Under2Coalition](#), which is the largest global network of states and regions committed to achieving net zero emissions by 2050. Today, the coalition now brings together over 270 governments representing 50% of the global economy. Wales is an active member and on the steering group.

At COP26, the Welsh Government became a founding core member of the [Beyond Oil and Gas Alliance](#). This is an international alliance of governments and stakeholders working together to facilitate the managed phase-out of oil and gas production. The Alliance recognises the phase out of fossil fuels must be managed and be achieved equitably, but we must tackle the root cause of climate change.

Along with reducing emissions, we will take action to respond to the impacts from climate change that we already see and those we expect to see in the future. Under the [Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015](#), public bodies in Wales have to think about how the climate will affect our future health and how we can protect our health and social care systems.

Standard of Living

Child Poverty Strategy

The Welsh Government has published a new [Child Poverty Strategy](#) which sets out 5 cross government objectives and 5 priorities for addressing child poverty. These objectives and priorities were informed by evidence from people with lived experience of poverty, including 1,402 children and young people, including children and young people with protected characteristics. There are 19 aligned commitments in the strategy including the commitment to take a children's rights approach to the delivery of our Programme for Government, in line with the UNCRC, with tackling poverty and inequality as cross cutting policy drivers.

Objective 1 of the strategy is to reduce costs and maximise the incomes of families and Priority 1 is entitlement (putting money in people’s pockets). There are aligned commitments to:

- Put in place a Welsh benefits system underpinned by the Welsh Benefits Charter that is delivered with compassion and accelerate work with our partners to passport and streamline the application process for Welsh Benefits to make them more accessible.
- Work with partners to equip everyone who works with children, young people and families to make every contact count, so that people get face-to-face information and advice about getting support with claiming their full financial entitlements.
- Accelerate our work with Estyn and school improvement partners (local authorities, Consortia) to ensure education is a cost-neutral experience for children, young people and their families.

The objectives of the strategy will support the delivery of a Wales where children and young people can access their rights, have good well-being, and fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances (including their socio-economic circumstances). The next progress reporting date on delivery against these objectives is in 2025. A Monitoring Framework is being developed that provides indicators and measures of population level

data, a policy progress report will be completed and we will gather evidence from children, young people and families with lived experience of poverty.

Under the [Children and Families \(Wales\) Measure 2010](#), we have a duty to publish a report every three years on progress in achieving our child poverty objectives. [The last Progress Report was published](#) in December 2022, then next one will be published in 2025.

A monitoring framework based on a range of relevant measures of poverty is being developed which, alongside an assessment of progress in delivery of our policy commitments and evidence from children, young people and families with lived experience of poverty, will support us to accurately reflect the impact of our approach to this complex set of problems.

Homelessness

The [Ending Homelessness in Wales: A high level action plan](#) sets out the Welsh Governments vision to create a Wales where Welsh public services work together to prevent homelessness and, where it cannot be prevented, to ensure that the experience of homelessness is rare, brief, and unrepeatable.

We will be bringing forward a Bill to address the proposals in our [White Paper on ending homelessness in Wales](#) which aim to benefit people of all ages, by strengthening measures

which encourage services to intervene early to address and prevent the risk of homelessness. It also proposes wider duties on the wider public service centred on the needs of the person seeking assistance, alert to and informed by the trauma they may have experienced. Early intervention will help ensure children and young people have access to the support they need earlier and, where possible, do not reach crisis stage.

[Rapid rehousing](#) is based upon a systematic approach to understanding what type of housing is needed, how that housing will be funded, developed, and allocated to people who find themselves experiencing homelessness. This approach, when properly applied, means the need for many forms of temporary accommodation will diminish and where it is needed, will only be required for a shorter period.

Prevention of youth homelessness and addressing the root causes, is embedded in the refreshed [youth engagement and progression framework](#), published in September 2022. All local authorities have appointed a Youth Homelessness Coordinator to help identify young people at risk of homelessness and intervene earlier.

We will continue to invest in the Youth Support Grant and to support local authorities to build on their early identification systems to ensure young

people at risk of homelessness are identified and supported.

The Transitional Accommodation Capital Programme (TACP) seeks to create accommodation capacity. Through TACP, Welsh Government are supporting the acquisition of properties, remodelling existing accommodation, converting buildings into good quality accommodation, and the innovative use of modern methods of construction and modular accommodation on 'meanwhile' sites.

To support the delivery of 20,000 additional social homes we have allocated significant funds to the Social Housing Grant over the first four years of this Senedd term.

The Welsh Government recognises that living well in a quality home brings a wide range of benefits to health, learning and prosperity supporting the government's wider agenda for improving outcomes in health and well-being and educational attainment as well as on poverty and decarbonisation. The Welsh Government only award the Social Housing Grant for housing that meets the minimum standards set in the [Welsh Development Quality Requirements 2021](#). The standard sets out the minimum functional quality standards for new and rehabilitated general needs affordable homes. The Welsh Government encourages housing providers and their consultants to aim for standards beyond the minimum requirements specified here and to adopt a holistic view of

quality, recognising the benefit that quality and culturally suitable homes will have on both physical and mental well-being for all.

In Wales, we continue to work hard to prevent people from being evicted from their homes and becoming homeless. The cost-of living crisis together with high energy costs has left many social housing tenants struggling to make ends meet. In 2022 as part of the 2023-2024 social rent settlement, the former Minister for Climate Change secured a series of commitments from social landlords in Wales that there will be no evictions due to financial hardship as long as tenants engage with their landlords. Social landlords are further required to provide targeted support and assistance to tenants experiencing financial hardship to access additional support. It was agreed with social landlords in Wales that these commitments will continue into 2024-2025 as part of the wider [rent settlement agreement for that year](#).

[The Housing Support Grant](#) is the main homelessness prevention grant provided to local authorities. The purpose of the grant is to prevent homelessness and support people to have the capability, independence, skills, and confidence to access and/or maintain a stable and suitable home.

Children in disadvantaged situations

The [Child Poverty Strategy for Wales](#) includes a commitment to challenge discrimination and drive equality so that protected characteristics do not make it more difficult for children, young people and their families to do well. The strategy also sets out that each of the Action Plans below will need to consider the intersectionality between poverty and discrimination:

At the same time the delivery of each of the Action Plans below will need to consider the intersectionality between poverty and discrimination:

- [Anti-racist Wales Action Plan](#)
- [Advancing gender equality: action plan](#)
- [Action on disability: the right to independent living framework and action plan](#)
- [LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales](#)

The [Anti-racist Wales Action Plan](#) includes a goal of to provide safe, culturally appropriate accommodation for Gypsy and Travellers. Under the [Housing \(Wales\) Act 2014](#), local authorities are required to prepare Gypsy Traveller Accommodation Assessments. In this assessment, they report on the need for additional Gypsy and Traveller pitches in their area, both permanent residential and temporary transit. These assessments are submitted to Welsh Government for approval. Welsh Government has capital grant funding,

which can be used to fund residential sites or transit sites. These can fund projects to refurbish existing accommodation, construct new pitches and improve the sustainability of sites for residents.

We are reviewing the current funding policy for Gypsy and Traveller sites to assess its effectiveness, with a view to piloting additional or new ways of funding site provision, including support for private sites; and re-drafting the Sites Guidance to ensure that the design and location needs of communities are better reflected in this document. In reviewing site guidance, we will involve the lived experience of Gypsy Roma and Traveller community members.

We are commissioning a national training scheme for Welsh local authority housing options teams, and other relevant professionals, to improve the approach taken and support offered to community members seeking help for homelessness and accommodation issues by creating Gypsy and Traveller “champions” or “leads” in each local authority.

Welsh Government funds several initiatives to try to ensure children belonging to refugee or migrant families are able to access good quality accommodation and standard of living and local authorities are trained and provided with guidance to understand when and how they can provide assistance to those with *No Recourse to Public Funds*.

The [Discretionary Assistance Fund](#) provides emergency financial support to prevent destitution where other forms of support are unavailable to migrants. We urge schools to ensure children from families who have no recourse to public funds are provided with Free School Meals, where required. The Welsh Government advocates for improvements to asylum accommodation to ask that families are kept in good quality accommodation, are not forced to share with unrelated individuals, and defects are rectified quickly. All asylum seekers have access to free internet in asylum accommodation provided by the Welsh Government. Our Refugee Move On service aims to prevent homelessness where the UK Government asks newly granted refugees to leave asylum accommodation within 28 days.

Education

The [Welsh Government's national mission](#) in education is to achieve high standards and aspirations for all by tackling the impact of poverty on educational attainment and supporting every learner. The [Pupil Development Grant \(PDG\)](#) has a key part to play in achieving this.

PDG funding directly supports schools to mitigate the impact of poverty upon children by providing additional funding for learners from low-income households and care experienced children.



Education, leisure and cultural activities (arts. 28-31)

Education

Children's Rights Education

[Section 64 of the Curriculum and Assessment \(Wales\) Act 2021](#) sets out a duty to promote knowledge and understanding of UN Conventions on the rights of children and persons with disabilities.

Human rights (learning about rights and through rights) and Diversity are cross-cutting themes in the Curriculum for Wales.

We have developed [a suite of professional learning resources](#) to promote knowledge and understanding of the UNCRC and UNCRPD and support the new curriculum. This will have a long term, sustainable impact on children's awareness of their rights. The first two modules have been published with a third highlighting best practice and practical tools for embedding a principled approach to children's human rights in education to be available in Autumn 2024.

Equality in educational achievement

The [Welsh Government's National Mission](#) is to achieve high standards and aspirations for all by tackling the impact of poverty on educational attainment and supporting every learner.

The mission's six objectives will ensure all learners, whatever their background, are supported to be healthy, engaged, enterprising and ethical citizens, ready to play a full part in life and work.

Tackling the impact of poverty on attainment has always been a priority for education in Wales. We have adopted a systematic approach across education. [High Standards and Aspirations for All](#) sets out a roadmap of actions we will take. The Tackling the Impact of Poverty on Attainment Policy Steering Group meet quarterly, focussing on the identified actions and a wider cross-cutting co-construction approach to policy development within this area.

Curriculum for Wales

A truly excellent and equitable system is one where every learner and citizen benefits from a broad and balanced education. [Curriculum for Wales](#), implemented from September 2022, sets high standards for all, combining knowledge, skills and experiences.

The [four purposes of Curriculum for Wales](#) are the shared aspiration for every young person. All our children and young people will be supported to develop as:

- ambitious, capable learners
- enterprising, creative contributors
- ethical, informed citizens and
- healthy, confident individuals

The [Curriculum for Wales Framework](#) guidance helps schools design their own curriculum and includes specific sections supporting planning, designing and implementing curricula that are inclusive for all learners. This includes advice on a curriculum accessible to all and [enabling learning](#).

The Curriculum for Wales approach to progression is key to addressing inequalities and helping ensure all learners can reach their potential. The Progression code recognises that:

- The pace at which learners progress will be individual to each learner
- Pace of progression should be evaluated by the professionals working with learners with ALN.

While there may be threshold concepts that represent a significant shift in a learner's understanding, these are not linked to specific ages, nor will they happen at the same time in different areas for individual learners.

Tackling impacts of poverty

The [Pupil Development Grant](#) directly supports schools to mitigate the impact of poverty upon children by providing additional funding for learners from low-income households and care experienced children. It also supports the objectives of the Welsh Government's Child Poverty Strategy.

The [School Essentials Grant](#) has made a significant difference to many lower income households across Wales, helping to reduce the worry surrounding the purchase of school uniform and equipment, enabling children to attend school and take part in activities at the same level as their peers.

The [school uniform guidance](#) is aimed at school governing bodies and head teachers. Schools must have regard to this guidance when considering school uniform and appearance policies. One of the focuses of the guidance is cost and affordability.

Community Focused Schools

Community Focused Schools play a prominent role in tackling the impact of poverty and socio-economic disadvantage on educational attainment. High quality learning and teaching has a major impact on the outcomes of socio-economically disadvantaged learners, but the home environment and the wider community are also significant influences. By working collaboratively across school, home and the community we can support our children and young people more effectively.

For 2023-24, the Welsh Government invested in increasing the number of family engagement officers employed by schools, with a key part of their role to be focused on improving pupil attendance, attainment, and well-being. We are also continuing to fund to a trial of Community Focused Schools managers, who will work on

developing better engagement between schools and their communities.

In addition, we are providing capital funding, continuing to support schools to make adjustments to their premises to facilitate community use.

Alongside the funding we have published guidance on how to develop [Community Focused Schools](#), supplementary guidance on [Family Engagement](#) and [Community Engagement](#) and [case studies](#). We will be publishing further supplementary guidance on developing multi-agency engagement in Community Focused Schools. This will support schools to developing effective partnerships with specialist services to meet the needs of learners and their families.

We have also established several networks to engage with key stakeholders, which include: local authority leads, schools, Community Focused Schools Managers, Family Engagement Officers, to inform policy development and aid implementation.

Minority Ethnic, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities

The [Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan](#) sets out clear actions and objectives for addressing the needs of children, and the education workforce, to create a truly anti-racist Wales education system by 2030. Specific actions within the Plan include:

- to improve the experiences of Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic learners and teachers in schools.
- to promote and ensure the well-being of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic learners.
- to reduce instances of prejudice-related bullying, discrimination and racism experienced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners in school.

The Welsh Government provides funding to local authorities in Wales, via the Minority Ethnic, Gypsy, Roma Traveller grant, to fund key educational activity and support services for learners from ethnic minority communities who face barriers to education. Funding can also be used to support asylum seeker and refugee children.

In December 2023 the Welsh Government published [Celebrate and Participate: education guidance to support Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and young people](#). Developed with input from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners, schools, local authorities, Ethnic Minority Achievement Services and Traveller Education Services, policy makers and community representatives, the new guidance aims to help teachers, practitioners and senior leaders ensure Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners access education, fully develop their talents and skills and achieve their full potential.

Building on the 'Celebrate and Participate' guidance, we will be talking with stakeholders, including schools and local authorities, to see what additional resources can be developed to support schools and practitioners improve engagement and support for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners.

Children who have disabilities

All children have a right to an education. [Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010](#) places a duty on all local authorities to prepare an accessibility strategy. It also places a duty on the responsible bodies for schools to prepare accessibility plans.

Inclusion within mainstream schools is not sufficient in itself to ensure disability equality in schools. Pupils with a disability have the right to pursue their education without unfair discrimination.

The Equality Act gives the responsible body for a school a duty to make reasonable adjustments to prevent discrimination (see [section 85\(6\)](#) and [Schedule 13](#)). What constitutes a reasonable step, or steps will depend on all of the circumstances of the individual case. [The Equality Act Codes of Practice](#) published by the Equality and Human Rights Commission set out a number of examples that can be deemed to be reasonable adjustments of what would constitute disability discrimination.

The Welsh Government published guidance for [inclusion and pupil support](#) in 2016 which sets out more information for schools and local authorities on their responsibilities.

Young Carers

The Welsh Government recognises that a young person's caring responsibilities may impact on their experience in schools and colleges, including their well-being, punctuality, attendance, and attainment.

The [National Strategy for Unpaid Carers](#) includes commitments to improve the identification, help and support for young carers and young adult carers in Wales. Further detail was developed within the [Carers Delivery Plan](#) published in late 2021.

In partnership with Carers Trust Wales and all 22 local authorities across Wales, we co-produced the national Young Carers ID card. The card helps young carers to access their legal rights, as well as get support from teachers, pharmacists, and health professionals. We will be reviewing the scheme to understand good practice and barriers to rollout. An anticipated re-launch will include communications/ awareness raising requirements in schools and other settings.

We asked Estyn to conduct a [thematic review into provision for young carers in secondary schools, further education colleges and pupil referral units](#) which identified effective practice in schools. We also funded [Carers Trust Wales to develop resources](#) to support schools and young carers.

Additional Learning Needs

The [Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal \(Wales\) Act 2018](#) and [ALN Code](#) make up the ALN system in Wales. It is designed to help ensure learners aged 0-25 to participate fully in mainstream education and achieve their full potential. A four-year phased implementation of the ALN Act and Code will end in 2025. The Act created statutory roles. All mainstream schools have a designated ALN Co-ordinator (ALNCo) who is the first point of contact in the school for advice and guidance.

Awareness raising materials and an ALN professional learning pathway have been put in place. These will help develop the skills of the education workforce to use the new system and meet the needs of learners with ALN.

Since 2020, the Welsh Government has invested significantly to support ALN implementation.

The Welsh Government will work closely with providers, parents, learners, and other stakeholders to monitor implementation of the new ALN system. A four-year external evaluation of ALN implementation began in January 2023.

Attendance

In 2024-25 we provided funding to increase the existing capacity of Education Welfare Officers across the 22 Local Authorities to enhance the support provided to schools and learners, with a particular focus on children with persistent absence. The funding is used to cover the costs of additional welfare officers. to enable the service to provide earlier support, before issues escalate, as well as provide more intensive support to learners with high absence.

Following consultation, we have published new guidance for schools on attendance, [Belonging, engaging and participating](#) which focuses on learners' needs.

A [National Attendance Taskforce](#) was established in December 2023 with a cross sector membership to advise the Minister on the challenges they currently face regarding school attendance. Organisations that represent children's interests are members of the taskforce.

The Taskforce are providing evidence and identifying the issues which impede children's regular attendance at school and working with us to develop solutions to remove barriers and drive attendance up.

The Taskforce is providing strategic direction, setting priorities and identifying tangible actions through specific workstreams of youth engagement; the use of data and statistics to inform on attendance; development of a targeted and informed communications programme and an in-depth Peer to Peer Networking and Learning Cluster.

The Taskforce want to draw and build on the excellent examples already being seen and implemented in schools across Wales, by sharing best practice and supporting the network for early interventions. We will also be exploring research opportunities to have greater understanding of absence trends and developing projects to improve attendance. Following this work, we will be updating the [All Wales Attendance Framework](#) to assist the education workforce.

Exclusions

We publish data annually on [permanent and fixed term exclusions](#) and this includes data disaggregated by ethnic origin. This data can be matched to a wide range of other data related to a child, including educational outcomes, which informs policy related to exclusions.

Whilst it is not common for primary school age to be excluded, legislation does not restrict head teachers or teachers in charge of PRUs from excluding primary school age pupils.

We are currently revising our [exclusion guidance](#) in two stages. The [first stage](#), which has been published, focuses on protected characteristics and take a rights-based, trauma-informed approach. The guidance also now includes changes resulting from the [ALNET Act](#) and the [Curriculum and Assessment Wales Act 2021](#). The second phase will include more fundamental revisions. One of the areas being considered is restricting the powers of head teachers/teachers in charge of PRUs to exclude primary school aged children and further strengthening the guidance in relation to protected characteristics. We will consult on this version of the guidance during 2025.

'Informal exclusions' are unlawful in Wales. Unlawful, unofficial, or informal exclusion refers to:

- sending learners home for disciplinary reasons, but not following the procedures required for formal exclusion.
- learners being sent home for either short periods of time, or for longer indefinite periods which can sometimes result in the learner not returning to school at all.

The exclusion guidance provides advice on alternatives to excluding a pupil. In addition, we have commissioned guidance about initiatives which are effective in supporting schools, pupils, and their parents to avoid exclusion. The findings will be used to inform the development of guidance/good practice information for schools and PRUs.

[The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(Wales\) Regulations 2010](#) set out when a pupil can be removed from a register. Removing a pupil outside of the provisions set out in the regulations is unlawful. We have taken a number of actions to ensure that schools do not remove a child from the register unlawfully or place pressure on a parent to remove a child from the register. This includes:

- Requesting Estyn to carry out a short-term [thematic review into pupil registration practices](#) (which included the prevalence and impact of 'off-rolling').
- Putting in place robust data checking processes to reduce inaccuracies in the data schools provide regarding pupil registration.

The exclusion guidance is clear that influencing or encouraging parents to 'voluntarily' withdraw their child from school as a way of dealing with difficult or challenging behaviour is not appropriate.

[The Education \(Pupil Exclusions and Appeals\) \(Maintained Schools\) \(Wales\) Regulations 2003](#) provides for children to have their appeal reviewed and, in the case of permanent exclusions, appeal against their exclusion at an independent appeal panel and for them to be supported to do so. Independent advocacy services provide expert advice and assistance to children who have been excluded.

Restraint and Seclusion

We will develop guidance to support education settings to implement the Welsh Government [Reducing Restrictive Practice framework](#). The guidance will support the implementation in primary and secondary education settings as well as PRUs; we will also ensure that other related guidance documents align with its content and contain appropriate references as and when they are reviewed and updated. This will be done in line with our review cycle for guidance to education settings.

We are collaborating with our colleagues in the other UK Nations in reviewing our restraint and seclusion framework to ensure alignment and also reviewing the potential impact of statutory guidance for this area.

Anti-bullying

Our statutory anti-bullying guidance [Rights, Respect, Equality](#) requires education settings to consider prejudice-related bullying and racism, within a prevention strategy that considers the needs of learners with protected characteristics. Under the ArWAP there is an action strengthen the Welsh Government's 'Rights, respect, equality' anti-bullying guidance for schools.

We will be updating our suite of guidance resources, including documents for school governing bodies and local authorities. This update will strengthen the guidance on approaches for preventing and responding to prejudice-related bullying.

Supporting Trans Learners – guidance for schools

The [LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales](#) contains a range of commitments to ensure LGBTQ+ inclusive education, including a commitment to publish national guidance to support trans children and young people in education. The Welsh Government is working closely with school leaders, practitioners, learners and a range of wider stakeholders on the development of guidance.

Through the Young Wales Programme, the Welsh Government has undertaken participation sessions with over 200 children and young people in a range of schools and education sessions across Wales. Information about this engagement and the key messages shared by young people will be published when the draft guidance is brought forward for consultation. As part of the public consultation, there will be specific online resources to support young people to take part, and opportunities for young people to participate in engagement sessions specifically for learners.

Education materials

The Curriculum for Wales mandatory statements of what matters include learning about Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic histories and communities.

Wales is the first UK nation to make teaching of Black, Asian and minority ethnic histories and experiences mandatory in the school curriculum.

The Welsh Government has included learning about the diversity of communities, in particular the stories of Black, Asian and minority ethnic people, into the new Curriculum for Wales guidance.

The Curriculum includes six Areas of Learning and Experience. Each Area includes mandatory elements known as 'Statements of What Matters'.

One of the Humanities mandatory 'Statements of What Matters' makes explicit reference to ensuring learners "*can develop an understanding of the complex, pluralistic and diverse nature of societies, past and present. These stories are diverse, spanning different communities as well as in particular the stories of black, Asian and minority ethnic people.*"

[Diversity and Anti-racist Professional Learning \(DARPL\)](#) is crucial in supporting practitioners to implement the Curriculum for Wales and in realising the ambitions of the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan (ArWAP).

DARPL is led by Cardiff Metropolitan University, with a coalition of partners with lived and professional experience, including Show Racism the Red Card Wales, I'm Representing and the Black Curriculum among others.

DARPL launched in 2022 and provides a professional learning and resource hub. A wealth of resources to support those working in education and childcare to develop anti-racist practice including live webinars; asynchronous materials, blogs and toolkits and communities of practice are easily accessible via the [DARPL virtual campus](#).

DARPL inspires and enables education and childcare professionals to enrich and develop children and young people as culturally conscious, ethical, informed citizens.

Rest, leisure, recreation, and cultural and artistic activities

Play policy

All local authorities in Wales are under a statutory duty to assess and, as far as is reasonably practicable, secure sufficient opportunities for children to play in their areas. This has become known as the 'Play Sufficiency Duty'.

The Statutory Guidance to local authorities, '[Wales - a Play Friendly Country](#)' sets out what local authorities need to take into account in assessing and securing sufficient play opportunities. Under Providing for Diverse needs, the local authority should aim to offer play opportunities that are inclusive and encourage

all children to play and meet together if they wish to. We will be reviewing and updating the local authority guidance, templates, and the toolkit for Play Sufficiency Assessments this year.

In October 2023 we [published a response](#) to the [Ministerial Review of Play Report](#) which sets out short, medium, and long term actions the Welsh Government will take to promote children and young people's play opportunities.

The Welsh Government has provided funding through the All Wales Play Opportunities grant for the continuation of the [Playworks Holiday Project](#), with a return to funding food, as well as the all-important access to play opportunities.

The Welsh Government funded and supported the launch of the Play Wales film "[this is why play is so important](#)" which celebrates and highlights the importance of play.

Both the Welsh Government and the playwork sector in Wales favour inclusive play, where able-bodied and disabled children can play together. This is supported by the [Children's Play Policy Forum and UK Play Safety Forum](#) who released a joint [Position Statement](#) supporting inclusive play.

We will be reviewing and updating the [School Governor's guide to law](#) to explain health and safety responsibilities, and matters relevant to pupil health, safety and welfare. The updated guidance will be shared with the relevant governing bodies.

Transport

Transport for Wales (TfW) introduced a [Children and Young People's Charter](#) in 2022; this outlines important steps taken to ensure children and young people feel safe when using public transport and to illustrate how public transport can be incorporated into their everyday behaviour.

TfW hosted the Welsh Youth Parliament in May last year, as part of their focus on sustainable transport for the months of April-July 2023. 80 members attended from 10 schools and attendees mapped out issues and opportunities. The event also marked the beginning of TfW's longer-term work, including the establishment of a Children & Young People's Advisory Group, to ensure engagement with the future generations of public transport users.

One of the key aims of the [Welsh Government's Transport Strategy, Llwybr Newydd](#), is to reduce the cost of sustainable travel for everyone in Wales, including children and young people to facilitate access to leisure, play, cultural and educational opportunities.

This is underpinned by our plans for new bus legislation, as set out in the [white paper: One Network, One Timetable, One Ticket](#), which will end the deregulation of bus services in Wales and bring them under public control. Whilst this doesn't change the challenging fundamental economics of running buses, it will allow decisions over fare structures, networks

and timetables to be taken in the public interest, and subject to public sector human rights and equality obligations, to make sure the travel needs of people across Wales including children and young people to facilitate access to leisure, play, cultural and educational opportunities are taken into account.

The Welsh Government have committed, along with TfW, to take forward a piece of work to run a targeted campaign and develop relevant and accessible resources, to ensure that children and young people are aware of all the public transport assistance they can access including:

- Children up to the age of 5 years old travel free on bus services across Wales and then from the age of 5 and up to 16 years old, at the discretion of each operator, either at half fare or two thirds of the normal adult fare
- [The Welsh Government's MyTravelPass](#) is a discounted travel scheme, which is available for all young people aged 16 to 21 years. This discretionary scheme provides approximately 30% off the standard adult bus fare on local bus services across Wales.
- There are also various discounted bus tickets offered by the different bus operators across Wales.
- Under 11's can travel for free on TfW operated rail services and under 16's can travel for free on off-peak Transport for Wales services when accompanied by a fare paying adult.

- Additionally, the 16-17 Saver railcard is also available for use on all rail services across Wales and England offering 50% off most rail fares every day of the year with no time restrictions and no minimum fare for an annual cost of £30.

We are fully committed to collaborating with children and young people in developing any future interventions and schemes. As part of our Programme for Government commitments we have looked at a number of options to improve the offer for young people. We continue to work with bus operators, local authorities and TfW to look for opportunities to make travelling by bus and rail simpler, more affordable and more accessible for younger people.

In terms of learner travel, this is a cross-cutting complex area. [A review of the Learner Travel Measure was published](#) in 2022 and a further [Recommendations Report was published in March 2024](#). The Recommendations Report outlines a modest, practical pathway to improve learner travel provision in Wales including a comprehensive update to the statutory guidance. This update will amplify and align with legislative development that have taken place in the past decade in Wales ensuring all delivery partners are aware of their obligations across a range of policy areas including ALN, Welsh language as well as embedding a Children's Rights approach.

We are considering options to develop our Welcome Ticket free bus travel pilot scheme to support children from asylum seeking families to access funded transport. Such a scheme would support better integration and realisation of children's rights.



Special Protection Measures (arts. 22, 30, 32-33, 35-36, 37 (b)-(d) and 38-40)

Asylum-seeking, refugee and migrant children

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child have designated their recommendations for asylum-seeking, refugee and migrant children as a priority area for action by the State Party. For all designated priority areas, we have facilitated cross sector discussions on our approach in Wales, which have informed our response.

Nation of Sanctuary

Immigration and asylum is the responsibility of the UK Government. However, the Welsh Government has responsibilities for migrant integration and ensuring equitable access to services, within the Immigration Rules.

Our work to support refugees and asylum seekers follows established principles set out in our [Nation of Sanctuary Action Plan](#), including taking a person-centred human rights approach.

The Concluding Observations 2023 reference the joint general comments No. 3 and No. 4 of the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, as well as No. 22 and No. 23 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child in the context of international migration. The Committee urges the State Party to address 8 recommendations in relation to these children.

Part (a) seeks the amendment of the Illegal Migration Act. This legislation is not devolved to Wales, however, where here the UK Government introduces new legislation and policies, we consider the best interests of children and advocate for changes accordingly.

During the development of the recent Nationality and Borders Act 2022 and Illegal Migration Act 2023 Welsh Ministers recommended consent be withheld for the UK Parliament to pass legislation because we considered the proposals to act against the best interests of children. The Welsh Government recommended the designation of

Group 2 refugee status (recommendation part (b)) was removed, however, only the UK Government can implement this change. We were pleased to see UK Government decisions not to implement this status.

A key commitment within the Welsh Government's [Programme for Government 2021 - 2026](#) is to continue to support and uphold the rights of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people. The funding provided to TGP Cymru, to support these children as part of the Wales Sanctuary Service, feeds into meeting this commitment.

All receiving Welsh local authorities will continue to promote where they can and where it is appropriate, the establishment of family connections for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in their care. We will consider the current support available for unaccompanied children and young people in Wales, and exploring how a guardianship service could work in Wales, the resources needed to implement such a system

and how it could support unaccompanied children and young people in Wales.

We will explore updating guidance for local authorities to ensure age assessments are done in a child rights-based way.

We will continue to highlight to the UK Government the changes needed to the National Transfer Scheme for young people who want to be placed near family members.

Age-appropriate information and legal advice about their rights, asylum procedures and requirements for documentation

Part (c) of the Committee recommendation was to ensure children receive age-appropriate information and legal advice. We recognise the need for accurate and accessible information about the asylum process, and the support services children and young people need, when seeking asylum, especially if they are without a parent or guardian.

We provide a range of advice and guidance for practitioners to support these children and young people, and the capacity of the children and young people themselves to access their rights and entitlements.

We commissioned the Children's Legal Centre to [update child friendly guidance](#) and develop a video which outlines children and young people's rights and entitlements when seeking asylum in Wales. These are available in 14 different languages.

To support the guidance, the Children's Legal Centre delivered free training aimed at professionals and those working with unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

In creating the guidance, the Children's Legal Centre consulted widely with social workers who work with children in Wales, the Fostering Network, and with organisations which support asylum seeking children in Wales, to make sure the information included was relevant for the young people, and easy to understand. To produce the guidance videos the Children's Legal Centre collaborated with young asylum seekers and interpreters through TGP Cymru.

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children in Wales are also supported through the Welsh Government-funded Asylum Rights Programme, which includes funding for TGP Cymru's [Young Asylum Seekers and Refugees Programme](#). This is a partnership of organisations across Wales providing expert advice and support to people seeking asylum as they navigate the UK asylum system.

Welsh Government funded a series of focus groups carried out by the Wales Strategic Migration Partnership and Save the Children with asylum seeking children about their experiences of life in Wales. We also hear from TGP Cymru's asylum seeking children's Participation Group.

Equality of access to services

Part (d) of the Committee Recommendation was to strengthen measures to ensure all asylum seeking, refugee and migrant children have equal and prompt access to integration services. This recommendation aligns closely with our Nation of Sanctuary vision. The Welsh Government continues to take a 'child first, migrant second' approach to supporting unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and we expect Welsh partners to take the same approach. They receive looked after status in Wales and benefit from a range of services and entitlements, and corporate parenting duties.

Local authorities are required by the [Social Services and Well-being \(Wales\) Act 2014](#) to act in the best interests of and have due regard to the rights of the children they serve. [Part 6 of the Act](#) provides for looked after and accommodated children including Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children. Wales treats these children as having the same rights and entitlements as looked after children who are born in Wales and the UK; this includes access to health and education services.

When unaccompanied asylum-seeking children leave care, they are entitled to support from a Personal Adviser up to the age of 25 (provided they are in education, training, or employment). They are also entitled to an advocate, a further right conferred by the Social Services and well-being (Wales) Act 2014 [Part 10 Code of Practice](#) (Advocacy).

Recommendation part (e) asks State Parties to put an end to the use of unreliable and invasive procedures for determining age. Unfortunately, the Welsh Government is not able to determine how such determinations are made for immigration purposes. However, we produce guidance for local authorities to ensure children's care and support needs are met Welsh Government's [UASC Age Assessment Toolkit](#) is clear that young people should be treated as children first, migrant second and that the benefit of the doubt principle should be applied. This means that local authorities should accept young people as children (under 18), unless their appearance or general demeanour very strongly suggests they are over the age of 25.

We will explore updating guidance for local authorities to ensure age assessments are done in a child rights-based way.

Recommendation part (f) relates to immigration control which is the responsibility of the UK Government. We will continue to advocate for a compassionate child rights approach to these issues.

Family reunification involving unaccompanied children

Recommendation part (h) relates to the system for Family Reunification within the UK. Family reunification pathways for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children is a reserved matter and the responsibility of the UK Government.

However, the Welsh Government funds the British Red Cross to undertake their Family Reunion Integration Service in Wales. This seeks to reunite separated families where one member has 'Leave to Remain' and lives in Wales. This is an important project to ensure unaccompanied children can be reunited with their parents.

We have asked the UK Government to review the Family Reunion Scheme to maximise its use as a safe and legal route to the UK, building upon lessons from the Ukraine Family Scheme. Family Reunion supports the rights of children to be reunited with their parents and supports the well-being of the family unit.

The majority of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are referred to Wales through the National Transfer Scheme (NTS) on a rota basis. Some young people referred via the NTS have family members in other parts of the country. However, as these do not constitute close family (i.e. Siblings or parents), the Home Office can refer to Welsh councils, placing the onus on the receiving authority to establish family connections and place the young person near or with the family member if deemed appropriate. Local authorities promote where they can and where it is appropriate, the establishment of family connections.

Working alongside the Wales Strategic Migration Partnership and the Wales Local Government Association we have highlighted to the UK Government that the NTS scheme should

consider whether there are any family members already living in the UK so the young person could be placed nearby for example.

We will explore if guidance is required for local authorities regarding support for family reunification in the country of origin.

Unaccompanied Asylum-seeking Children – Guardianship Scheme

Welsh Government recognises that arriving alone within a foreign country can have a devastating and lasting impact on the lives of children and young people. It is vitally important that unaccompanied children who arrive in Wales are given access to the care and support they need to help them adjust to their new life here.

Recommendation part (g) asks State Parties to develop a consistent statutory system of independent guardianship for all unaccompanied children. In Wales, we have an [Independent Child Trafficking Guardianship \(ICTG\) service](#) operating nationally since 2017. This service is under a Home Office contract, but the Welsh Government is represented on the ICTG steering board. This service, which is run by Barnardo's, supports trafficked children, however recently, we have seen a significant rise in the numbers of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and there is therefore a greater need for the service.

The Welsh Government is committed to looking at the current support available for unaccompanied children and young people in Wales and during this Senedd term, will undertake some exploration around how a guardianship service could work, the resources needed to implement such a system and the intersection with our statutory services such as personal advisors and advocacy provision

Trafficking

Child trafficking is the responsibility of the UK Government. The Welsh Government does however work with multi-agency partners on tackling modern slavery, including child trafficking. This includes producing the [Wales Safeguarding Procedures](#) and the [All Wales Practice Guide on safeguarding children who may be trafficked](#).

The Welsh Government will continue to work with multi-agency partners including continued collaboration through the [Anti-Slavery Wales Forum](#) and its thematic working groups.

Administration of Child Justice

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child have designated their recommendations for administration of Child justice as a priority area for action by the State Party. For all designated priority areas, we have facilitated cross sector discussions on our approach in Wales, which have informed our response.

Youth Justice

The UK Government has responsibility for justice, including youth justice, but devolved Welsh services play an important role in supporting children who might be at risk of coming into contact with the justice system.

The [Youth Justice Blueprint for Wales](#), sets out our vision for youth justice in Wales, taking a 'children first' rights approach. This means working in a child-centred rather than service-focused way, meeting the individual needs of children in the justice system or at risk of coming into contact with it. As part of this work, we will publish a Prevention Framework 2024. The framework will set out a holistic, evidence-informed view of what works to prevent children coming into contact with the criminal justice system and how activity from across different sectors comes together to support this. This will be the first time we have provided this comprehensive, system-wide view of prevention.

The framework is being developed in partnership with devolved and non-devolved partners to ensure a joined-up approach. It reflects the strategic and operational landscape in Wales, and the unique position of youth justice and its overlap with justice systems and services concerned with children's welfare.

The Blueprint includes a specific focus on taking a trauma-informed approach throughout the various stages of the youth justice system, from prevention and early intervention to resettlement from custody, recognising and responding to Adverse Childhood Experiences.

The Welsh Government Children and Communities Grant includes the Promoting Positive Engagement fund for young people at risk of offending. This funding offers preventative and diversionary support for children at risk of entering and for those already within the youth justice system.

We will continue to work in partnership with key stakeholders to achieve a consistency of terminology across the justice system.

We will ensure appropriate governance and structures are in place to support the collective understanding with youth justice services.

In relation to the Small Homes Project, and the development of smaller regional residential units, work has been reframed to develop our future plans in this area. Our work is now focussed on Hillside to ensure that the service continues to operate at a high level, ensuring that Trauma Informed practice is in place and that the needs of the young people resident at Hillside are met. Further to this, we are working towards a longer term goal to reduce the numbers of young people requiring Secure Accommodation through working to improve the availability of regional residential support for

young people with complex needs, focussing on de-escalation, improving Edge of Care and Early Intervention support. This is encompassed within the Transformation Programme for Children's Services

We will ensure the voice of the child is heard and considered in future developing workstreams and policies.

Data

We have published a [Youth Justice interactive dashboard](#), pulling statistics from the Ministry of Justice statistical release and presenting them with a Welsh focus. We are considering other sources suitable for inclusion in future updates of this dashboard, while continuing to work with the Ministry of Justice to improve the availability of Youth Justice data for Wales.

Devolution of Youth Justice

In February 2024, we published our [Delivering Justice for Wales progress Rreport](#) which set out our priorities regarding the devolution of youth justice. Children in contact with the youth justice system will also very often have relationships with a number of devolved services, including significant overlap with the population of children who are looked after. Focusing on children first is also in keeping with the ethos of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act and the need to break intergenerational cycles.

The operation of the youth justice system requires close collaboration, with responsibilities for services to support children either involved in or at risk of becoming involved in the justice system shared between both the Welsh and UK Governments. This means that delivering positive outcomes requires collaboration across reserved and devolved agencies as well as the third sector. This collaboration is intrinsically made more complex by the current constitutional arrangements, especially where policies require agreement of two governments elected on differing mandates for different geographical areas.

Devolving youth justice services could make the system more coherent and transparent and would allow us to further embed best practice across Wales and build a more consistent approach within Wales as a whole.

We will continue to work with academics and those with operational expertise to build our understanding of how devolution of youth justice services might work in practice.



Optional Protocols to the Convention

Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography

Trafficking and modern slavery

Child trafficking is a reserved matter. The Welsh Government does however work with multi-agency partners on tackling modern slavery, including child trafficking. This includes producing the [Wales Safeguarding Procedures](#) and the [All Wales Practice Guide on safeguarding children who may be trafficked](#). We also collaborate through the [Anti-Slavery Wales Forum](#) and its thematic working groups.

Online Safety (Digital Resilience in Education)

Educating children and young people is vital to ensure that they understand the importance of respectful and considerate behaviour both online and offline. Through our [National Digital Resilience Action](#) plan we seek to collaborate across government, academia and industry to tackle abhorrent behaviour and abuse online.

The Welsh Government is working with the UK Government on the online harms agenda, which seeks to establish a new regulatory regime to address illegal and harmful content online. We continue to engage with key stakeholders and partners to learn more about emerging issues and develop a greater understanding of the impact and influence of AI. Furthermore, we will continue to engage with Ofcom, the regulators of the Online Safety Act in the preparation of emerging guidance to support the Act.

The [Keeping safe online](#) area on Hwb, advice, guidance and teaching resources on a breadth of online issues to support schools in Wales. The Keeping safe online area also provides advice and support for learners and their families to support them in navigating the online world. It includes information on emerging issues including AI for the education practitioners, learners, and families.

The Welsh Government is the first government body to become a member of the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF). We are continuing to work with the IWF to understand the emerging threat posed by Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) in keeping children and young people safe online. Guidance and resources to inform young people of the risks associated with sharing nudes and semi-nudes and who to approach for support in such instances is available. This guidance stresses that the sharing of nudes and semi-nudes of people under 18 with or by adults constitutes child sexual abuse and should be reported to the police as a matter of urgency.