

Protecting Children's Rights

Our response to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government



Hello



➡ All children have rights, no matter who they are. These rights are in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

The Welsh Government is committed to the UNCRC. We passed the Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011. This law means Welsh Government Ministers:

- must consider children's rights in everything they do
- must promote the UNCRC to everyone in Wales.

Checking children's rights

There is a Committee on the Rights of the Child. It's a group of 18 people from all over the world. They check up on how countries around the world respect children's rights. ➡



📅 Every 5 years the UK including the Welsh Government talk to the Committee about the progress we are making on children's rights.

📋 The Committee also listens to children and looks at reports from them. A group of children and young people from Young Wales produced a report and visited the Committee in Geneva back in February 2023. They talked to them about important issues that matter to children and young people in Wales. You can read the [Young Wales Report to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child](#) here ➡



i **Young Wales** — a group of children and young people who help Welsh Government by telling them what matters to them.

📋 The Committee then wrote a report with a list of things they think we could do to improve, protect and promote children's rights — **their Concluding Observations Report**. You can read the report here. ➡



This is our response to the report and how we will continue to protect children's rights.





The six priority areas

The UN Committee said there were 6 priority areas that the UK need to focus on:



Stopping discrimination

i **Discrimination** — when someone's treated unfairly because of who they are.



Stopping abuse, neglect, and sexual exploitation and abuse



Supporting children deprived of a family environment



Supporting mental health



Supporting asylum-seeking, refugee and migrant children



Child justice

i **Justice** — to be treated fairly.

The **Young Wales Report** said that some of the most important areas for children across Wales are:

Cost of living



Mental Health and Wellbeing



Addiction and Substance Misuse



Equality, Diversity and Inclusion



We have lots of laws and policies that focus on these priorities, including:

- The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015
- The Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011
- The Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Wales
- 'Rights, Respect, Equality' guidance
- Raising Awareness of Children's Rights Plan
- Corporate Parenting Charter – to make sure care experienced children have their rights
- Anti-racist Wales Action Plan
- Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015
- LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales
- Child Poverty Strategy
- Nation of Sanctuary
- Youth Justice Blueprint
- Additional learning Needs and education Tribunal Wales Act 2018.





1. Steps for Governments

We should do as much as we can to promote and protect children's rights.



What we're doing: 

Our work and laws

We will:

- make sure we pay 'due regard' to the UNCRC when making decisions that affect children and young people
- make sure we think about how decisions will affect children's rights (We'll publish Children's Rights Impact Assessments to show how)
- make sure children's rights are included in all our work
- work with all the governments in the UK to make sure children's rights are protected.

Money and resources

We will:

- make sure we think about children's rights when making spending decisions
- continue to involve and listen to children.

Protecting all children

We will make sure everyone under 18 is treated as a child.

Information

We will:

- collect information on how things like poverty affect children's lives and use it to make decisions
- develop ways for schools to collect information about children's health and wellbeing
- share information and reports so it can be used to protect children's rights.

Raising awareness and training

We will:

- continue to make sure everyone knows about children's rights
- promote children's rights through campaigns and events
- promote and support professional learning for everyone who works with children like teachers and practitioners.

Justice and making things fair

We will:

- continue to make sure children are treated fairly and have their rights
- make sure all services protect children's rights
- make sure children have an advocate to help them be heard
- make sure children are listened to and involved in decisions.

Links to UNCRC:

Article 4 The Government should make sure your rights are respected.

Article 42 Everyone should know about the UNCRC.

Article 44 The Government must report on how they protect your rights.



2. Steps to support the 4 general principles



The general principles help us understand all the other rights in the UNCRC.

What we're doing: 

Stopping discrimination

We will:

- raise awareness and make it clear that discrimination is never okay
- make sure children can get help if they're treated unfairly
- make sure everyone works together to stop discrimination
- make Wales a safe place for everyone — Anti-racist Wales Action Plan
- make sure everyone is safe, has support and gets their rights including:
 - Minority Ethnic, Gypsy, Roma Traveller children
 - asylum-seeking, refugee and migrant children
 - children with disabilities
 - care experienced children
 - LGBTQ+ children friendly nation in Europe — LGBTQ+ Action Plan
 - children with a parent in prison
- use the Curriculum for Wales to teach discrimination is wrong and help learners respect others
- prevent bullying and make sure schools are safe places for everyone
- do everything we can to stop hate crime in Wales
- make sure no one is held back because of their period and can get free period products
- make sure all children are listened to.

Links to UNCRC:

- Article 2** All children have these rights.
- Article 3** Adults must do what is best for me.
- Article 6** I should be supported to live and grow.
- Article 12** I have the right to be listened to and taken seriously.



Doing what's best for the child

We will:

- make sure we put the best interest of children first when we do things that affect them for including in safeguarding, youth justice, education and children's services
- make sure we (and other professionals) check how decisions affect children's lives and rights.

Supporting families so fewer children go into care

We will do everything we can to support children to stay with their family, as long as it's safe.

Stopping domestic violence

We will:

- work to reduce Violence Against Women and girls
- make sure professionals have training and know how to support children and families
- promote the importance of safe, equal and healthy relationships.

Keeping children safe from trafficking

We will work with others to keep children safe from modern slavery and trafficking.

Wales — A Nation of Sanctuary

We will:

- make Wales a safe home for everyone coming to live here
- work with the UK Government to make sure the best interests of children are put first for those who come to Wales.

Right to life, survival and development

Youth justice — keeping young people safe

We will:

- find ways to stop children being held in police custody overnight
- make sure if children are placed in secure accommodation, it's as close to their family and community as possible.

Stopping Suicide and self-harm

We will:

- make sure children get all the mental health support they need
- make sure children at risk of suicide or self-harm get support, at the right time.

Respect for the views of the child

We will:

- make sure children have the information and support they need to participate
- make sure all children have opportunities to get involved in decisions
- promote online children's rights training
- make sure all services listen to children
- make sure children can have support from an advocate to help them be heard.






3. Steps to support children's rights and freedoms



All children have rights and freedoms that belong to them from birth. They don't have to do anything to get them.

What we're doing: 

Right to an identity

We will:

- make sure all children have freedom to express who they are and the identity they choose
- prevent discrimination and bullying
- make sure all children are listened to and involved in decisions.

i Identity — the things that make you, you, and how you see yourself — family life, culture, beliefs, ability, ethnicity, gender and lots more.

Freedom of expression and religion

We will:

- make sure children are free to choose and express their religion or beliefs
- make sure laws and policies in Wales don't treat some children unfairly because of their beliefs
- work with the UK Government to protect children's freedom of expression and religion.

Worship

We will make sure children aren't made to join school worship if they don't want to. But children have the right to learn about Religion, Values and Ethics (RVE), parents can't stop this.

Joining groups and peaceful protesting

The UK Government is responsible for policing. We will work with them to make sure laws and police policies don't take away these freedoms.

We will make sure children have the freedom to join groups and speak up about things that matter to them like climate change.

Privacy

We will make sure police follow stop-and-search rules for children.

Getting online information

We will:

- continue to support children to get online and use information
- make sure children aren't held back because of poverty
- make sure children know how to stay safe online.

Links to UNCRC:

Article 7 I have a right to a name and to belong to a country.

Article 8 I have a right to an identity, nationality and family relationships.

Article 13 I have the right to find out and share information.

Article 14 I have the right to have my own thoughts and beliefs and to choose my religion with my parents' guidance.

Article 15 I have the right to meet with friends and to join groups.


Article 16 I have the right to keep some things private.

Article 17 I have the right to get information in lots of ways, so long as it's safe.



4. Steps to keep children safe from violence and harm



What we're doing: 

Harming children

We will:

- make sure adults cannot restrain children unless there's no other way to keep them safe
- raise awareness of the rules and talk to children when we change them.

i Restraining — holding a child in ways that stop them moving.

Smacking

We will:

- make sure everyone is following the law on physical punishment
- raise awareness of the law including with children and young people
- make sure parents get support to develop their parenting skills.

Abuse, neglect, sexual exploitation and abuse

We will:

- do everything we can to keep children safe
- make sure professionals know how to spot when a child is at risk, and take action
- make sure everyone has child protection training
- raise awareness of the effects of trauma on children's lives
- make sure children who've been a treated badly get support to recover.

Safe from domestic abuse and violence

We will do everything we can to make sure women are safe from violence and harm.

Harmful practices

We will raise awareness that harmful practices are against the law. This includes:

- harmful practices that hurt girls—forced marriages, female genital mutilation, and violence against women and girls
- harmful practices that hurt LGBTQIA+ people—conversion therapies.

i LGBTQIA+ — lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, or asexual.

Links to UNCRC:

Article 19 I have the right to be protected from being hurt or badly treated.

Article 24 I have the right to good quality health care, to clean water and good food.

Article 28 I have the right to an education.

Article 34 Nobody should touch me in ways that make me feel uncomfortable, unsafe or sad.


Article 37 I have the right not to be punished in a cruel or hurtful way.

Article 39 I have the right to get help if I have been hurt, neglected or badly treated.



5. Steps to support family and other carers



What we're doing: 

Supporting families


We will:

- continue to find ways to help families
- fund childcare services so places are free or more affordable
- make sure families know about all support they can have
- help families with younger children, with programmes like Flying start.

Young carers

We will:

- continue to raise awareness of young carers so they get the support they need
- promote the Young Carer ID card.

 Young carers — look after someone in their family who is ill or disabled.

Children with additional learning needs

We will:

- make sure children with additional learning needs get support to thrive
- make sure children are involved in decisions.

Children with disabilities

We will:

- make sure children with disabilities get support to thrive
- continue to improve services and increase training
- make sure children are involved in decisions.



Links to UNCRC:

Article 5 The Government should respect the right of your family to help you know about your rights.

Article 9 I have a right to live with a family who cares for me.

Article 10 I have the right to see my family if they live in another country.

Article 11 I have the right not to be taken out of the country illegally.

Article 18 I have the right to be brought up by both parents if possible.

Article 20 I have the right to special protection and help if I can't live with my own family.

Article 21 I have the right to have the best care if I am adopted.

Article 23 If I am disabled, I have the right to special care and education.

Article 25 If I am not living with my family, people should keep checking I am safe and happy.

Article 27 I have the right to have a proper house, food and clothing.



Supporting children in care

Sometimes a child can't live with their family because it's not safe or they can't meet their needs. We will:

- invest in services that step in early and support families so fewer children need to go into care — as long as it's safe
- make sure children in care get the right support
- make sure professionals work as a team and give children the right support, at the right time
- make sure children are at the centre of all decisions
- make sure unaccompanied asylum-seeking children have their rights and get support
- make sure children with complex needs don't have to leave Wales to get the help they need
- promote our Corporate Parenting Charter and the UNCRC
- listen to children and involve them in plans and decisions about their lives.

Supporting foster families

We will:

- continue the When I'm Ready Scheme so young people can stay in foster families until they're 21
- look at ways to improve the When I'm Ready Scheme
- make sure foster children get mental health and wellbeing support
- make sure foster carers have training so they know how to support children in the best ways
- continue to listen and involve foster children and carers in decisions.

Supporting care leavers

We will:

- see if the Basic Income Pilot made a difference in young people's lives.



Children with a parent in prison

We will:

- make sure children with a parent in prison get the support they need
- work with the justice system put the child's needs first when a parent is sentenced
- make sure children have contact with their parent — as long as it's safe.



6. Steps to support health and welfare



What we're doing: 

Health and health services

We will:

- work to reduce health inequalities so life is fairer
- make sure all families with young children have contact with a health visitor
- make sure no one faces discrimination
- make sure asylum-seeking children get support from health services, including mental health services
- make sure everyone knows about trauma and how it affects children's lives
- make sure children get support for their mental health
- promote the right to have information in Welsh or other languages if needed
- make sure gender identity services are available for young people
- work with the NHS to reduce waiting times
- check health services support young people when they move to adult services
- make sure health services involve children and listen to them when making decisions.

Diet and nutrition

We will:

- promote healthy diets and lifestyle
- support families on low incomes so they can buy healthy foods
- support campaigns like the Veg Power
- look at changing laws so we promote healthy choices
- provide free school meals and free breakfasts.

Breastfeeding

We will:

- deliver on the First 1000 days health improvement programme
- promote the benefits of breastfeeding and support mothers.

Climate change

We will:

- protect the environment so children have healthy lives
- reduce carbon and be net-zero by 2050
- reduce air pollution
- develop new laws to reduce noise around communities
- work with the UK Government to tackle climate change
- continue to involve and listen to children so we know what matters to them.

Links to UNCRC:

Article 6 I should be supported to live and grow.

Article 18 I have the right to be brought up by both parents if possible.

Article 24 I have the right to good quality health care, to clean water and good food.

Article 26 My family should get the money they need to help bring me up.

Article 27 I have the right to have a proper house, food and clothing.

Article 33 I should be protected from dangerous drugs (including any effects of a parent's drug use).



Mental health

We will:

- invest in services that step in early to support children with the right help, at the right time
- work with the NHS to reduce waiting time for mental health services
- make sure everyone has support for their mental health including:
 - Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic children
 - Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children
 - asylum-seeking, refugee and migrant children
 - children with disabilities
 - care experienced children
 - Trans children
 - LGBTQIA+
- make sure people can get services in Welsh or the language they use
- continue to fund services in the community
- make sure schools have a whole-school approach to emotional and mental well-being
- make sure children are offered support from advocacy services
- continue to listen to the experiences of children and their views.

Support children with poor mental health, eating disorders and self-harm.

We will:

- make sure there are services to support children with poor mental health, including specialist services
- continue to support people who self-harm and improve support for those bereaved by suicide.

Becoming an adult – adolescent health

We will make sure young people can get the right information to:

- understand the risks of drugs vaping, tobacco and alcohol
- learn about sex and relationships in the right ways for their age
- understand family planning, contraception
- abortion and safe sex options.

We will also make sure professionals treat young people with respect, give the right advice and support.

Substance Abuse

We will make sure children have all the support they need to stop using drugs, tobacco, vaping or alcohol.

Standard of living


Some decisions that would help reduce poverty are the responsibility of the UK Government. We will work with them to help families.

We will:

- do everything we can to end child poverty
- make sure children have a safe place to call home and don't become homeless
- give emergency financial support through the Discretionary Assistance Fund
- make sure children are not held back in life because of lack of money.

7. Steps to support education and other activities



What we're doing: 

Education

We will:

- make sure all children have the same opportunities to learn whatever their background
- make sure the costs of school life — uniforms, trips and other things — don't stop children from learning or finishing school
- make sure families on low incomes get the grants and the support they are entitled to
- support Community Focused Schools to work with other services in the community
- invest in more school family engagement officers to improve learners' wellbeing
- improve school life and reduce bullying
- make sure young carers know about Young Carers ID card, and have support for learning
- reduce absences and support learners to stay in school.

We will also make sure:

- all children learn about their rights
- all children are treated fairly and with respect
- no child is placed in isolation unless it's the only way to keep them safe
- no child is excluded from school unless it's absolutely necessary.

Rest, leisure, and activities

We will:

- make sure all children have opportunities to play and enjoy activities
- make sure local authorities follow the 'Wales - a Play Friendly Country' guidance
- aim 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.

Links to UNCRC:

Article 28 I have the right to an education.

Article 29 I have the right to an education which develops my personality, respect for others' rights and the environment.

Article 30 I have a right to speak my own language and to follow my family's way of life.


Article 31 I have a right to relax and play.





8. Steps to support special protection measures



What we're doing: 



Children coming from other countries

Immigration is the responsibility of the UK Government. We will work with them so laws and policies don't treat children unfairly and stop them coming here to live.

We will:

- make sure all asylum-seeking children have their rights and support to thrive
- make sure unaccompanied children have support from services
- take a 'child first, migrant second' approach to supporting unaccompanied asylum-seeking children
- make sure children have easy-to-understand information, in the language they use
- fund forums and groups that help children have a say and be heard.



Child justice

The UK Government is responsible for justice, including youth justice.

We will:

- make sure children get support to stop them getting involved in crime
- make sure professionals understand that children have rights, no matter what they do
- make sure secure accommodation is as close to a child's home community as possible
- make sure children are involved in decisions about their lives.



Child trafficking

We will:

- keep children safe from trafficking
- make sure children who've experienced trafficking get support to recover.

i Child trafficking — when people take children away and force them to do something.



Links to UNCRC:

Article 22 If I am a refugee, I have the same rights as children born in that country.

Article 30 I have a right to speak my own language and to follow my family's way of life.

Article 32 I should not be made to do dangerous work.

Article 33 I should be protected from dangerous drugs (including a parent's drug use).

Article 35 I should not be abducted (taken away), sold or trafficked.

Article 36 I have the right to be kept safe from things that could harm my development.

Article 37 I have the right not to be punished in a cruel or hurtful way.

Article 39 I have the right to get help if I have been hurt, neglected or badly treated.

Article 40 I have the right to get legal help and to be treated fairly if I have been accused of breaking the law.



9. Steps to support the Optional Protocols



Since the UNCRC was written, the world has changed and children face different risks. The Committee has an extra set of rules called Optional Protocols.

What we're doing: 

Protecting children from being sold, child prostitution and child pornography

We will:

- work with the UK Government to make sure children are safe from these crimes
- make sure children who are victims of these crimes get support to recover.

Keeping children safe online

We will:

- work with the UK Government to stop harmful online content and keep children safe
- make sure all children know how to stay safe when they are online
- promote the Keeping Safe Online advice and resources for schools and families
- continue to work the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) and keep children safe
- make sure children who are victims of online crimes get support to recover.



Next steps

The next time the UK will report back to the Committee is 2030. Until then, we will keep doing everything we can to protect children's rights in Wales.

Thanks for getting involved

Thank you to all the departments, organisations, partners, Young Wales and other groups that got involved and contributed to this process.