



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

POLICY AND STRATEGY

# Children and young people's plan

What we will do to support children and young people who are growing up, living and working in Wales.

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## A message from the Deputy Minister

“ In Wales, we all want the best for our children – all our children, no matter what their backgrounds are, where they come from or where they live. We want them all to have the best start in life and go on to lead the kind of lives they want to live.

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This plan sets out the part that Welsh Government can play in making Wales a wonderful place for children and young people to grow up, live and work, where everyone feels valued.

After the Senedd election in 2021, in which many young people aged 16 and over voted, we published our [Programme for Government](#).

This is a document that explains to everyone in Wales what we will do during the 5 years we are in government, to deliver on the promises we made in the election. It contains many ideas and commitments to support children and young people.

The plan you are now reading, explains the complex work that ministers in Welsh Government will need to do together to turn these ideas and commitments into actions. It also shows some of the work we've done before and what we plan to do in 2022-2023.

I am particularly grateful to the children and young people who gave their views on the priorities while we were writing this plan. Your involvement, not just in writing the plan, but in helping us deliver it, will be critical to its success. ”

Julie Morgan, Deputy Minister for Social Services

## Our ambition

We want Wales to be a wonderful place to grow up, live and to work, [now and in the future](#).

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# What we believe

The Welsh Government is committed to the principles of the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) and to having regard to it in all of the decisions we make.

We believe all our children and young people have the right to:

- Have the best start in life
- Take part in and enjoy learning, and have the best education possible to expand their knowledge, develop their creativity and fulfil their potential
- Enjoy healthy lifestyles and be protected from harm, abuse, neglect and discrimination
- Be able to play and have fun
- Be listened to and be treated with respect
- Have a home and a community that is a nice place to grow up
- Have enough financial and material support for what they need

# Our priorities for children and young people in Wales

Welsh ministers published their [Programme for Government](#) after they were elected in 2021. It includes a list of some the important things they will do for children and young people (as well as adults) before the next election in 2026.

Guided by our beliefs, we are doing a lot of work to support children and young people, in order to achieve our ambition and our commitments in the [Programme for Government](#).

Some of this work can be done by one minister. Other work is more complicated and needs two or more ministers to work together. Some work is so complex that it can only be done if all ministers work together, as one Welsh Government, and in partnership with other organisations like local authorities, the NHS and the voluntary sector.

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The next few pages tell you about the work we are doing and some of the things that children and young people told us when we asked their views.

**For the next 4 years, all Welsh ministers will work together to fulfil the following priorities:**

**Priority: All children should have the best start in life, including good early years services and support for parents or carers. They should be supported at home, in childcare and in schools, and when they move between these places.**

What this means:

- We will continue to improve early years services
- We will offer early years services to more children and families
- We will offer more Welsh medium early years services
- We will support children at home, in childcare and in schools and help them when they move between these places
- We will offer help and support to parents and carers
- We will continue play-based learning in childcare and schools

Children and young people said:

“ We want more and better places where we can play safely. ”

“ More should be done to spot and help families in need. ”

**Priority: All children and young people should be treated fairly in education. They should be supported to overcome barriers and fulfil their potential.**

What this means:

- We will make education a positive experience for all children and young people
- We will give all children and young people the additional help that they need

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to overcome barriers and fulfil their potential

- We will ensure that Welsh medium education is more accessible and fair for all children and young people
- We will better prepare and support young people when they move from school into (self-)employment, training or continued education

Children and young people said:

“ Children and young people should be encouraged and supported regardless of their (family) income. ”

“ No one should be left out of education because of how they look, their ability, culture or ethnic background. ”

“ All children and young people need a safe space to learn. ”

**Priority: All young people should be supported in their journey through education, training and (self-) employment, and when they move between these places.**

What this means:

- We will make sure that each young person over 16 has at least one option open to them at all times: education, training or (self-)employment
- We will support young people in their choice
- We will improve support for young people when they change between these options
- We will encourage using and learning Welsh in schools, colleges, universities and workplaces
- We will improve education and training so that more young people can get a (higher) qualification

Children and young people said:

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“ We need more support at school and college to help us choose career pathways and find jobs. ”

**Priority: All children and young people should be supported to help them feel mentally and emotionally strong.**

What this means:

- We will take into account the mental health and emotional wellbeing of children and young people in everything we do
- We will support initiatives to improve the wellbeing of all children and young people
- We will improve access to low level support for children and young people’s mental health as well as specialised services when needed

Children and young people said:

“ Emotional wellbeing and mental health is important as it can have a huge impact on the choices we make and thus on the rest of our life. ”

“ We need more accessible low level mental health support now so that we do not need mental health doctors and nurses later. ”

**Priority: All children and young people should be supported to have a fair chance in life**

What this means:

- We will leave no-one behind as we move towards a cleaner, stronger and fairer Wales
- We will work to prevent poverty and to support children and young people in low income households
- We will improve support for children and young people who need additional help to overcome barriers and fulfil their potential
- We will work to end all forms of discrimination, **bullying**, harassment and

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violence

Children and young people said:

“ Children and young people with low (family) income often are not able to participate in activities outside school. We need support so we are not left out of these opportunities. ”

“ There is support in schools for learners with more severe additional learning needs, but those with less additional learning needs and children from minority ethnic communities do not get the support they need. ”

**Priority: All children and young people should have a good and secure home to live in.**

What this means:

- We will do all we can so that children, young people and families do not experience homelessness
- We will do all we can so that children, young people and families experiencing homelessness are provided with a good and secure home

Children and young people said:

“ Young people who come out of care should be guaranteed a flat or home instead of a hostel. ”

**Priority: All children and young people should receive the support they need to stay together or come back together with their family, if possible**

What this means:

- We will support families who are going through a difficult time
- We will protect children and young people from harm and help families to stay together, if possible

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- We will improve our care and support for children and young people who cannot stay with their family for a short or a longer time
- We will help families who cannot live together, to stay connected and get back together, if safe to do so

Children and young people said:

“ If our home situation is difficult, we want decisions to be made with us, not for us. ”

## Our work for children and young people

The next few pages tell you about some of the work we have done before and what we plan to do in the next 12 months.

This is not a list of everything we have done or will do to support children and young people. We will take forward other work.

We will update this list each year, so you can see what we have achieved and what we will focus on next.

Each year we will talk with children and young people before we update this plan.

### Best start in life

What we have done:

- Provided support from health visitors for all families with a child under 7 - **Healthy Child Wales**
- Helped families with children under 4 in disadvantaged areas - **Flying Start**
- Supported families who need help - **Families First**
- Funded 30 hours of childcare and early education per week for 3-4 year olds with working parents - **Childcare offer for Wales**

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- Provided help and advice for parents - **Parenting. Give it Time**

What we are planning to do in 2022-2023:

- Take steps to create a single system of **early childhood education and care**
- Pay for more children to receive childcare
- Encourage families to speak Welsh with their children – **National policy on Welsh language transmission and use in families**
- Increase the availability of Welsh medium childcare and parent and toddler groups – **Cymraeg 2050**
- Make entry to the **Urdd Eisteddfod 2022** free
- Help more children with their speech through **Talk With Me**
- Gift **Baby Bundles** to more families
- Provide advocacy support for parents whose children are at risk of going into care

## School and college

What we have done:

- Made infant classes smaller
- Helped low income families to buy school uniforms and sports equipment - **Pupil development Grant – Access**
- Provided free period products in schools and colleges – **Period dignity strategic action plan**
- Ensured additional learning needs will be identified and addressed faster - **Additional Learning Needs Code for Wales 2021**

What we are planning to do in 2022-2023:

- Start the new **Curriculum for Wales** in September 2022
- Start exploring reform of the school day and school year
- Support the use of Welsh in schools and colleges as well as at home and within communities – **Cymraeg 2050**
- Encourage schools to teach more Welsh – **Cymraeg 2050**

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- Ensure that Welsh medium education is more accessible and fair for all children and young people – [Cymraeg 2050](#)
- Pay for more children to receive free school meals
- Continue to remove barriers for children and young people with additional learning needs or impairments – [Additional learning needs transformation programme](#).
- Support all children and young people to stay in education longer, get better results and achieve a qualification
- Give better support to young people who finish school to get into employment, training or continued education

## Developing skills and getting a job

What we have done:

- Created 100,000 high-quality apprenticeships – [Apprenticeships skills policy plan](#)
- Provided better careers advice - [Working Wales](#)
- Given help to gain new skills - [Personal Learning Account](#)
- Supported unemployed people with complex needs, who are in or at risk of poverty - [Communities for Work Plus](#)
- Paid for childcare support for parents in training or looking for work – [Parents, Childcare and Employment \(PaCE\)](#)

What we are planning to do in 2022-2023:

- Provide an offer of work, education, training or (self-)employment for everyone under 25 - [Young Person's Guarantee](#)
- Support 16-18 year olds to gain skills for work - [Jobs Growth Wales Plus](#)
- Work towards creating 125,000 more apprenticeships – [Apprenticeships skills policy plan](#)
- Give young people improved access to job matching services
- Encourage learning and using Welsh in the workplace – [Cymraeg 2050](#)
- Help young people through the [Youth Engagement and Progression Framework](#)

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# Physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

What we have done:

- **Changed the law to end physical punishment of children**
- Helped increase healthy and active lifestyles across Wales - **Healthy and Active Fund**
- Provided sport and leisure activities for children and young people up to 25 - **Summer of Fun** and Winter of Wellbeing
- Published an online emotional and mental health support for children and young people - **Young Person's Mental Health Toolkit**
- Written health and wellbeing into the school curriculum
- Increased access to school counselling and specialised mental health support in schools across Wales
- Worked with children and young people to create a new **NYTH/NEST** model to support a 'no wrong door' to services, and provide earlier help and support for young people's mental and emotional health

What we are planning to do in 2022-2023:

- Work with schools and other partners to give childhood vaccines
- Help children and families live healthier and more active lives - **Healthy Weight: Healthy Wales**
- Improve youth work so more young people can access a safe space to make friends, learn and talk about their problems
- Continue our work on the **whole school approach to mental health and emotional wellbeing**
- Deliver the **NYTH/NEST** model across the regions of Wales to improve earlier help and support for young people's mental and emotional health
- Improve wellbeing support in colleges and universities
- Provide **"in reach" specialised mental health support to schools**
- Test how community sanctuary type facilities can help support young people in crisis

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## A fair society, a kind nation

What we have done:

- Given 16-17 year olds the right to vote in Senedd and local government elections in Wales
- Introduced the **Statutory Code of Practice for the delivery of autism services**
- Improved the identification of young people at risk of homelessness and provided them with support – **Youth Engagement and Progression Framework**
- Improved support for unaccompanied asylum seeking children

What we are planning to do in 2022-2023:

- Build residential homes for children with complex needs in Wales, so they can be close to their home area
- Continue our work and engagement with private providers of children's residential and foster care, about the move to a not-for-profit system of care in Wales
- Continue to test new housing approaches for vulnerable young people through the Youth Homelessness Innovation Fund
- Improve the lives of those with protected characteristics through a series of action plans looking at race, impairment, gender and LGBTQ+
- Develop plans to help protect young girls from domestic abuse, harassment and sexual violence
- Continue to deliver the **Youth Justice Blueprint for Wales** ensuring there is family-focussed resettlement ahead of release

## The climate and nature emergency

What we have done:

- Opposed fossil fuel extraction in Wales – **Coal policy**
- Introduced a **charge for single use plastic carrier bags**

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- Helped low income families buy fuel in winter - [Winter fuel support scheme](#)
- Reduced the cost of public transport for 16-21 year olds - [MyTravelPass](#)
- Worked to improve walking and cycling routes in Wales
- Published a plan explaining how we will reach our target of net zero carbon emissions in 2050 - [Net Zero Wales](#)

What we are planning to do in 2022-2023:

- [Ban single use plastics](#)
- Deliver our [Nature Networks](#) scheme
- Continue our environment education programmes [Size of Wales](#) and [Eco Schools](#) to give children and young people the opportunity to influence what happens next
- Start creating a [National Forest for Wales](#)
- Work with schools to promote active travel and road safety
- Make 20 mph the default speed limit in residential areas
- Publish a document about using collective action to tackle the climate emergency

## How we will behave

We will:

- Respect children's rights, [take a children's rights approach](#) and fulfil our obligations under the Equality Act 2010
- Work hard to fulfil our ambition and priorities for all children and young people in Wales, in a way that is reflective and inclusive of:
  - who they are
  - where in Wales they live
  - socio-economic status
  - race, ethnicity and culture
  - sexual orientation
  - first language
  - faith and belief
  - impairments, additional learning needs and neurodiversity

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- gender identity and gender expression
- whether they live with their parents, carers, in a home or on their own
- whether they are parents or carers themselves
- whether they are in contact with the youth justice system
- Make fairness, equality, inclusion, anti-racism and anti-discrimination part of all our work. This means that we will do our best to offer different and/or more support to those children and young people who need different and/or more help to overcome barriers and fulfil their potential.
- Promote the use of the Welsh language in all our work to **achieve a million Welsh speakers and double the daily use of Welsh by 2050**
- Focus on the child and young person as a whole human being, not just on parts of their lives or their circumstances (holistic)
- Work from the belief that every person, every family and every community has strengths to build on (asset based)
- Work together with people and organisations that help and support children and young people (collaborative)

## How you will know we are making progress

**Welsh ministers have set 9 milestones they want Wales to achieve.**

By 2050:

- The percentage of children with 2 or more healthy behaviours will be more than 99%
- 75% of working age adults will be qualified to level 3 or higher
- The percentage of working age adults with no qualifications will be 5% or below
- Wales will only use its fair share of the world's resources
- The pay gap for gender, disability and ethnicity will be eliminated
- The gap between the employment rate in Wales and the UK will be eradicated, with a focus on fair work and raising labour market participation of under-represented groups
- At least 90% of 16-24 year olds will be in education, employment or training
- Wales will have a million Welsh speakers

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- Wales will achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions

Each year we will measure and report how the actions in this plan are helping us reach these 9 national milestones.

## How you can help

We know children and young people are helping each other and their communities across Wales. Working together we can do more.

There are many things the Welsh Government and ministers can do to support children and young people.

Many other people work with, help and support children and young people every day, like parents, carers, friends, teachers, youth workers, sports coaches, doctors, nurses, health visitors, ... far too many to list here!

We would like to ask everyone to:

- Join us in our ambition to make Wales a wonderful place to grow up, live and work
- Decide how you will turn that ambition into action
- Work together to improve local services and outcomes for children, young people and families

Children and young people said:

“ Everyone should feel responsible and contribute if Welsh ministers want to be successful and achieve change. ”

## How we will involve you

We will:

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- Listen to children, young people and families when we make decisions that affect their lives
- Talk with children, young people and families to check that we are making progress towards our ambition and priorities
- Respond to feedback from children and young people. See [our contact details](#).

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