

Baby Bundles Scheme

SECTION 1. WHAT ACTION IS THE WELSH GOVERNMENT CONSIDERING AND WHY?

In order to improve long-term outcomes for the whole population, there is a need to ensure that every child has the best possible start in life, with a focus on ensuring that children who are the most vulnerable and at risk are identified and supported. The Welsh Government wants to ensure that all children, irrespective of their background, are supported in this aspiration. This commitment is enshrined in the national strategy document *Prosperity for All*, particularly in the key themes *Healthy and Active* and *Prosperous and Secure*. The Early Years is also listed as a Priority Area in *Prosperity for All*.

There is increasing evidence to show that the very start of a child's life can have a profound and long lasting impact on their cognitive, physical and social and emotional development, so it is important that Welsh Government supports children as best it can. The work being undertaken as part of Flying Start, the Healthy Child Wales Programme and the First 1000 Days Programme demonstrates the value that is already being put on ensuring children have the best possible start in life.

The offer of a baby bundle will not only demonstrate the value Welsh Government places on children, but will provide a tangible manifestation of Welsh Government support to both parents and children at a vital stage of life. It will also provide a bundle of useful goods that will go some way towards reducing the need for financial outlay on the part of the parents, in order to ensure that the new-born is appropriately clothed and looked after. Through the provision of key items and information leaflets, the baby bundles are intended to increase parents' understanding and practice of positive behaviours such as safe sleeping, attachment, and breastfeeding. The bundles as well as the registration process also provide health professionals with an opportunity to engage families with a wide range of health services, and to initiate conversations around positive behaviours such as adopting healthy eating and lifestyle habits, smoking cessation and carbon monoxide monitoring as well as 'no alcohol' messaging. However, messaging will need to be carefully selected so as not to be overwhelming; the intention is that the bundle is a gift – with no strings attached.

The proposal for a baby bundles pilot project as a "welcome to the world" gift from Welsh Government first appeared in the current First Minister's election manifesto commitments and has subsequently been allocated to the Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services to champion. The Deputy Minister has given a clear steer that any Welsh Government baby bundles scheme should apply universally, rather than being targeted to specific areas or demographics. Officials have met with individuals who were responsible for first suggesting the idea of the scheme to the First Minister and the Deputy Minister and are content that this proposal reflects those discussions.

It seems appropriate that any Welsh Government baby bundle scheme should be provided within the context of *Prosperity for All*, particularly the key themes *Healthy and Active* and *Prosperous and Secure* and the Priority Area *Early Years*.

It should also be considered an integral part of Welsh Government's commitment to support children and families, alongside the work that is already being done in Wales to improve health and inequality outcomes for children, for example:

- Healthy Child Wales Programme
- Flying Start
- First1000 Days
- Cross-portfolio Early Years agenda
- Parenting – Give It Time
- Families First
- Healthy Start
- Designed 2 Smile
- Parental Information work being produced by Public Health Wales.

The Well-being of Future Generations Act (WFG Act) gives Wales the ambition, permission and legal obligation to improve our social, cultural, environmental and economic well-being.

At the heart of the WFG Act are the seven Well-being Goals. The Act makes it clear the listed public bodies must work to achieve all of the Goals, not just one or two. Officials have produced a high level analysis of the ways in which the baby bundle could contribute to the Goals, whilst supporting our objectives in terms of both social welfare and health improvement outcomes; the list is as follows:

A Prosperous Wales – reducing inequalities in access to newborn essentials; developing parenting support and skills.

A Resilient Wales – promoting access to wider support services for parents; supporting infant attachment and mental development.

A more Equal Wales – reducing inequalities in access to newborn essentials.

A Healthier Wales – supporting immunisation and baby checks/ Healthy Child Wales Programme; promotion of breastfeeding and safe-sleeping messaging.

A Wales of Cohesive Communities – encouraging community and home safety; promoting knowledge and access to wider support services for parents.

A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Welsh Language – provision of and support for twf, baby books, meithrin, nursery rhymes; information for prospective parents on Welsh medium education.

A Globally Responsible Wales – provision of re-useable nappies (or a voucher for the same) or nursing pads rather than disposable ones, which can frequently end up in landfill.

The costs of introducing a pilot scheme are still being considered and are dependent on procurement. As an example of potential costs for a pilot exercise, the pilot run by Scottish Government cost in the region of £100k to supply approximately 200 baby boxes. Subsequent costs per box reduced as larger orders for goods could be placed once a universal scheme with a clearly defined range of contents was agreed.

Following discussion at Ministerial level, the funding for the pilot will be met from within the existing HSS MEG budget.

No legislation will be required to pilot, or subsequently introduce, a Welsh Government Baby Bundle Scheme.

A. CHILDREN'S RIGHTS IMPACT ASSESSMENT

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

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

The universal offer of a baby bundle will not only demonstrate the value Welsh Government places on all children, but will provide a tangible manifestation of Welsh Government support to both parents and children at a vital stage of life. It will also provide a useful bundle of goods that will go some way towards reducing the need for financial outlay on the part of the parents, in order to ensure that the new-born is appropriately clothed and looked after. Through the provision of key items and information leaflets, the baby bundles are intended to increase parents' understanding and practice of positive behaviours such as safe sleeping, attachment, and breastfeeding. The bundles as well as the registration process also provide health professionals with an opportunity to engage families with a wide range of health services, and to initiate conversations around positive and risk behaviours such as adopting healthy eating and lifestyle habits, smoking cessation and carbon monoxide monitoring as well as 'no alcohol' messaging. However, messaging will need to be carefully selected so as not to be overwhelming; the intention is that the bundle is a gift – with no strings attached.

The pilot will be small scale – approximately 200 bundles distributed. There may be a negative impact on families living in the pilot area who are not part of the pilot. This will need to be managed through the delivery process and by careful communications.

- ♦ ***How will the proposal affect different groups of children (e.g. children who have experienced adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), children living in poverty, children with a disability, children living in Welsh speaking households and children in Welsh medium education etc.)***

Bundles will be distributed universally.

The pilot area is very likely to include a range of recipients from different backgrounds so there may be a positive impact.

Focus group findings have been very supportive of scheme. Focus groups have included individuals from a range of backgrounds.

The scheme has the potential for a small positive impact on existing children through reducing need for financial outlay on newborn goods and thereby leaving families with increased disposable income.

- ♦ ***What evidence have you used to inform your assessment, including evidence from children or their representatives?***

Officials have engaged with the Health Visitor Forum and Heads of Midwifery Group to establish their collective views on the goods currently being offered by Scottish Government under their baby box scheme (which we are using as a baseline) to offer advice on whether those are appropriate in Wales and whether there is anything we might wish to change or add. In general the groups were supportive of the provision of baby bundles.

Over the summer and into September additional on-line survey activity and focus group work has been carried out with new parents and with healthcare professionals so that officials can gather the widest possible range of views (in the time available) to inform the bundle and its contents. Focus groups have been undertaken in a range of locations across Wales with at least one focus group conducted in Welsh.

- ♦ ***How have you consulted with children and young people? If you haven't, please explain why.***

Focus group work has been carried out with parents of young children in order to gather the widest possible range of views to inform the bundle contents. Since the bundles will be distributed to parents and are aimed at providing goods for newborn babies, no specific consultation has taken place with children and young people.

♦ ***What other evidence would inform the assessment?***

In the time available officials have considered a wide range of evidence including evaluation findings from the delivery of similar schemes elsewhere.

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

This section requires an assessment, using informed judgement, of the likely impact of the proposal on children's UNCRC rights. It is vital you avoid the assumption that the intended outcomes identified above are the same as the predicted impact on children's rights.

You will need to carefully consider how the intended outcomes relate to children's rights and what impact they will have. There may be predicted impacts which are not intended outcomes from the proposal.

You should:

♦ ***Identify which UNCRC articles are most relevant to the proposal.***

Article 6: All children have the right of life. Government should ensure that children survive and develop healthily.

Article 19: Governments should ensure that children are properly cared for and protect them from violence, abuse and neglect by their parents or anyone else who looks after them.

Article 24: Children have the right to good quality healthcare and to clean water, nutritious food and a clean environment so that they will stay healthy.

Article 26: Government should provide extra money for the children of families in need.

Article 27: Children have a right to a standard of living that meets their physical and mental needs. The Government should help families who cannot afford to provide this.

♦ ***Explain if, and if so – how the proposal maximises, supports or promotes children's UNCRC rights, making connections between the outcomes identified at question 1. and the rights you have identified.***

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wide range of health services, and to initiate conversations around positive and risk behaviours such as adopting healthy eating and lifestyle habits, smoking cessation and carbon monoxide monitoring as well as 'no alcohol' messaging. However, messaging will need to be carefully selected so as not to be overwhelming; the intention is that the bundle is a gift – with no strings attached.

- ♦ ***Remember that promoting children's rights includes: increasing children's access to their rights, or to services and/or resources that give access to rights, or enabling children to participate and take advantage of their rights. You should explain how the proposal achieves these objectives, if at all.***

Bundles will be distributed universally. However there is no compulsion on parents to accept the bundle and some may choose not to. Their reasons for not accepting the bundle will be collected.

Pilot area is very likely to include a range of recipients from different backgrounds so there may be a positive impact.

Focus group findings have been very supportive of scheme. Focus groups have included individuals from a range of backgrounds.

- ♦ ***Explain any negative impact on children's rights arising from the proposal, including any reduction in resources available to support policies or programmes.***

The pilot will be small scale – approximately 200 bundles distributed. There may be a negative impact on families living in the pilot area who are not part of the pilot. This will need to be managed through the delivery process and by careful communications.

- ♦ ***When considering each of the above ensure you take account of how the proposal will impact on the rights of different groups of children (e.g. children living in poverty, children with disability etc.).***

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Focus group findings have been very supportive of scheme. Focus groups have included individuals from a range of backgrounds.

- ♦ *Refer to any information or evidence that has informed your assessment, including from children or their representatives.*

Focus group work has been carried out with parents of young children in order to gather the widest possible range of views to inform the bundle contents. Since the bundles will be distributed to parents and are aimed at providing goods for newborn babies, no specific consultation has taken place with children and young people.

