

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Changes for schools and settings from 1 September 2021 as part of the removal of certain restrictions in connection with COVID-19

All completed Children's Rights Impact Assessments must be sent to the CRIA@gov.wales mailbox

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

With regards to changes in our Operational guidance for schools and settings from September 2021.

It builds on the face-to-face learning that learners have been able to undertake in schools and settings since all schools in Wales fully reopened in April 2021 following the Easter end of term, and is set in context of the continuing improvement in the public health situation in Wales.

The general proposals are outlined in brief below. We fully accept that any change to education arrangements has a varied and broad impact on different groups including learners, staff, families and communities.

Proposal

Schools fully reopened to learners in April 2021 albeit with certain restrictions which have impacted schools' ability to operate a normal school day with a full and complete range of support and services. These restrictions included the use of face coverings by staff and secondary learners across school buildings and in classrooms, maintaining strict contact groups (and staggered start and finish times to help facilitate this), aiming to ensure social distancing is maintained wherever possible, and enhanced cleaning regimes.

The changes from the start of the 2021-22 school year are summarised below.

- From the start of the new term we will no longer be recommending the routine wearing of face coverings in the classroom for staff or learners. Schools and settings may however wish to encourage their use in areas where there is likely to be more social mixing, such as in communal areas. Face coverings should continue to be worn by learners in secondary schools and settings when travelling on dedicated school transport. As part of a school's risk assessment process, supported by public health officials, and in discussion with local authorities, schools and settings will be able to decide whether the wearing of face coverings is appropriate anywhere on the school site based on the school's own circumstances and local context. If however an individual wishes to wear a face covering this should not be prevented.

- Schools and settings will return to their normal session times for the new term, following temporary disapplication of The Changing of School Session Times Regulations 2009 from summer 2020 until summer 2021.
- Schools and settings need to plan on the basis that contact groups will no longer have a role to play at the start of the autumn term, this is consistent with the approach being taken in child care.

Contact groups/bubbles are no longer required. Test, Trace, Protect (TTP) will lead on identifying the close contacts of staff and learners who have tested positive, supported by discussions with schools and settings with any further intelligence the setting may have available. The TTP contact tracer will gather information from those that test positive within a setting and who they were in close contact with. For learners they will focus on community contacts and individuals the child reports they have had a close interaction with. The majority of learners in the class/setting will not be identified as close contacts. Instead the school may be advised to take a warn and inform approach to update parents and staff on the situation and what they need to do, based on TTP advice.

- Cleaning regimes need to be proportionate and in line with any other communicable disease. There will no longer be a need for schools and settings to set aside specific days for deep cleaning. If however there is a confirmed case in the school/setting a deep clean of the immediate area will continue to be helpful in reducing transmission.

In addition to the changes above, the [First Minister announced on 29 July](#) that, from 7 August, all adults who have been fully vaccinated and children under the age of 18 will no longer have to self-isolate if they are identified as close contacts of someone who has tested positive for Covid -19. This Children's Rights Impact Assessment does not consider these changes as they are included within the Impact Assessments undertaken for the 21 day review periods and these can be found [here](#).

The Welsh Government's [Operational guidance for schools and settings](#) will reflect these changes. In addition, we will be publishing a framework and supporting guidance from the start of the autumn term. *The Local Covid-19 Infection Control Decision Framework* will enable schools and settings' to tailor some intervention measures to reflect the level of risk identified locally. This work is currently developing at pace.

In making this assessment we would like to reference the Children's Commissioner for Wales *Coronavirus and Me* consultations with children and young people and latest [report](#). The second consultation and report (January 2021) presents the views and experiences of 19,737 children and young people aged 3-18 in the COVID restrictions.

The report outlines in its summary findings that life has generally been difficult for all age groups with many expressing frustration and sometimes anger about the impact of the pandemic on their lives. Many spoke about missing their friends, teachers, schools and families. 30 per cent of 17 and 18 year olds reported being worried 'most of the time'; older

learners reported feeling less confident about learning. Over half enjoyed learning at their own pace from home, but many were worried about falling behind with their learning. Levels of confidence and motivation with education are shown to be decreasing with age.

In both consultations we see that children who often face more barriers to accessing their rights have also faced more struggles on average than their peers. Many children and young people also reported positive experiences in both consultations, including enjoying spending time at home and receiving good support from schools and youth workers.

A series of meetings were organised by Children in Wales and the office of the Children's Commissioner for Wales, in July 2021, with children and young people to obtain their feedback on how schools have operated since reopening to all pupils. Most pupils stated that the wearing of face coverings throughout the school day, particularly whilst sat in a classroom for a large majority of their time, was making them feel tired, sick and impacted on their ability to properly concentrate for extended periods of time. Some did add that face coverings did make them feel safer generally, but they were not always being worn properly and there appears to be an inconsistent approach to their use across schools and settings in Wales.

With regards to self-isolation, most pupils felt that the current rules of year group sized bubbles or contact groups are not working. This is because schools are, in the main, taking a very cautious approach when a pupil tests positive and children are having to self-isolate despite not knowing or not having come into contact with the affected pupil. Learning has been severely disrupted with pupils having to switch from school based to online learning at home, sometimes the same year groups in the same schools being affected on multiple occasions. Pupils have stated the learning experience online is not as effective as within the classroom setting and teachers have often had to balance classroom and online learning at the same time, depending on which groups were self-isolating at any given time.

The majority of pupils believe that staggered starts in schools and settings do not work as this practice disrupts the start and finish times of the school day, breakfast clubs are adversely affected, lunchtimes are often shortened and pupils are let of lessons early only to have to sit on school transport for extended periods of time. Some young people did add that they did feel safer as staggered starts and finish times had reduced the overall number of pupils moving around the school at the same time.

Estyn has published the findings of its engagement work with [primary schools](#) and [secondary schools](#) in June 2021. In summary, school leaders reported that the most recent period of distanced learning had a detrimental effect on pupils' wellbeing. Moving away from school contact groups is therefore likely to improve overall wellbeing and mental health as pupils will not need to self-isolate on the same frequency or basis as they currently are.

Overarching principles in this assessment

1. Children and young people should be safe, seen, heard, nurtured and developing
2. Children should be able to go to school and childcare (including Flying Start)
3. Children should be able to go out to play and exercise
4. Younger children, under the age of 12, should be allowed to mix freely
5. Services that support families should continue to operate and be able to offer face to face services where the child/family need warrants it. Disadvantaged families may need support to access online services – including IT kit and/or 'data'.
6. Children with additional needs should receive the assessments and support they need. This may include a wider family/services support bubble to ensure no family is left to struggle on their own; it may mean a larger group going out to exercise to support the child
7. No child should go hungry
8. Support for parents and carers, including new mothers and parents, should be available through a range of mechanisms
9. Routine early years development assessments should be undertaken (where needed face to face with COVID-19 protections in place) and interventions put in place (e.g. speech and language, sight and hearing)
10. All of the above should be communicated clearly, including with children and young people
11. In circumstances where level 4 is instigated with remote learning as a key element:
 - Children who have vulnerabilities should be prioritised via a multi-agency approach.
 - Children with specific learning/additional needs should have a support plan in place.
 - Children should have the IT kit and enough data available to access lessons and online school resources as well as be able to contact their friends.
 - Third sector, school based and online mental health services should be scaled up. Risk based approach taken to ensure young people who are most vulnerable continue to be supported by NHS Mental health services.
 - Children from families where English or Welsh are not the first language should be offered additional support alongside their parents.
 - Everyone should be reminded to ensure children and young people are safe and know where to go to for help or to talk about concerns.
 - Communications with children and young people should be in a language they can clearly understand, be reassuring and explain clearly what is happening and why

A report published by [BBC Children in Need](#) at the earlier stages of the pandemic identified a series of themes that show how Covid-19 was affecting children and young people who face challenges in their lives, which would be prevalent in educational settings:

1. Isolation – children and families were missing personal connections, relationships and support from trusted adults and peers outside the home.
2. Increased emotional wellbeing and mental health challenges - the pandemic was impacting on existing mental health and new issues were emerging for children and their parents. Anxiety, fear and stress are particular concerns.

3. Pressure on family relationships - families were under pressure, from difficulties coping with stress and worry to crisis. Conflict and difficult relationships were increasing, whilst respite for children and parents was reducing.
4. Increased exposure to harm - children faced increased risks both within families and outside the home, e.g. with increased time online and being unable to access safe spaces.
5. Basis needs are harder to meet - children and families faced hunger and increased financial hardship. Digital access became a basic need in lockdown.
6. Risks to physical wellbeing - children's physical wellbeing was at risk through reduced nutrition or physical activity for fitness, for those with health conditions, from the pandemic itself.

The Childrens Society [published a report](#) which stated that school closures, while an important way to stave the spread of COVID-19, could result in increased social isolation for young people. Although many schools are providing online learning, children whose families cannot afford access to laptops, phones or adequate internet or phone connections are likely to miss out on vital learning. For children who cannot access any such e-learning that schools are providing, there is also an added risk of stigma or shame. Costs of living will increase for families as more children are at home, while earnings for parents are likely to decrease, meaning families will struggle with the cost of food and other essentials. Increased childcare responsibilities for parents while children are not in school, and without the possibility of help from family networks (such as grandparents), are also likely to put additional financial strain on families. It states that keeping schools open, and therefore reducing the need to self-isolate, will help to protect children and their families from facing financial insecurity as a result of the crisis and to prevent child poverty reaching a record high.

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

Article Number	Description	Links to decisions
2	The Convention applies to every child without discrimination, whatever their ethnicity, sex, religion, language, abilities or any other status, whatever they think or say, whatever their family background.	Children and young people may be adversely impacted by a loss of access to onsite provision, routine and social contact. One of the core aims of the changes introduced from September is to minimise the number of children required to self-isolate. However, we recognise that some learners will still be required to self-isolate, if tested positive, in order to limit transmission of coronavirus.
3	The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all decisions and actions that affect children.	This article can be seen in the principles set out in the decision framework for the education sector, which are:

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The safety and mental, emotional and physical well-being of learners and staff. • Continuing our contribution to the national effort and strategy to fight the spread of COVID-19. • The confidence of parents and carers, staff and learners – based on evidence and information – so that they can plan ahead. • Consistency with the Welsh Government's framework for decision-making, to have guidance in place to support measures such as distancing, managing attendance and wider protective actions. <p>While UNCRC is not explicitly referenced in the published decision framework document, the influence of children's rights is implicit in the approach being taken. Placing learner well-being front and centre of all decision making regarding the education response to COVID-19 is central to that. This alongside the development of arrangements which seek to start a process of mitigating the negative impacts of 'lockdown' on children and young people, while recognising the specific needs of particular groups of learners. The changes introduced from September will aim to minimise the number of children required to self-isolate.</p> <p>Measures are informed by Operational guidance, advice from the HSE, PHW and local government and based on scientific and technical advice to the Welsh and UK Governments. Whilst face coverings will not be routinely recommended for use in the classroom from September, schools may encourage their use in areas where there is likely to be greater social mixing/communal areas. Individuals may also continue to use face coverings, for example if this helps reduce anxiety.</p> <p>A report by NBC News found schools in the USA are struggling to teach students remotely. One national testing organization reported that the average student in grades 3-8 who took a math assessment this fall scored 5 to 10 percentile points behind students who took the same test</p>
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		<p>last year, with Black, Hispanic and poor students falling even further behind. Eliminating contact groups in Welsh schools will work to ensure more pupils are in school and not at home.</p>
4	<p>(implementation of the Convention)</p> <p>Governments must do all they can to make sure every child can enjoy their rights by creating systems and passing laws that promote and protect children's rights.</p>	<p>FACE COVERINGS: The latest TAC report published on face coverings recognised we need to consider steps towards a localised and risk based, co-produced approach to the use of non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPIs) such as face coverings, looking to balance the harms associated with prolonged use in classrooms against the perceived benefits of protecting from virus transmission.</p> <p>As part of the removal of the recommendation on wearing of face coverings in the classroom for staff or learners, schools and settings may however wish to encourage their use in areas where there is likely to be more social mixing, such as in communal areas and on dedicated school transport. As part of a school's risk assessment process, supported by public health officials, and in discussion with local authorities, schools you will be able to decide whether the wearing of face coverings is appropriate based on their your school's own circumstances and local context. If however an individual wishes to wear a face covering this should not be prevented.</p> <p>As part of our engagement sessions with young people, we received comments that face coverings have stigmatised and highlighted hidden disabilities as pupils will be pulled out by staff, and sometimes other pupils, to explain why they are not wearing a face covering, or are exempt, and are having to do this on a very frequent and regular basis, adding to their stress and mental awareness. We were told that these pupils would often wear a face covering just 'for a quiet life' and not to stand out or be questioned, even though they had legitimate reasons for not wearing them, adding to their discomfort and distress.</p> <p>STAGGERED START/FINISH TIMES: Staggered starts and finish times were originally</p>

		<p>recommended as part of the control measures to help manage contact groups more effectively. To enable temporary staggered/altered start and finish times, we disapplied the changing of school session times regulations through temporary disapplication notices issued under the Coronavirus Act 2020. We understand in some schools and settings, lunch times have been significantly condensed and break times have been reduced or removed. Early finish times are also seeing children mixing outside the school environment.</p> <p>We advise local authorities that schools should now start planning to return to their usual session times in preparation for the new school year in September, and that it is not our intention to issue further notices of this kind for the new school year, though of course this will be reviewed should the public health situation at the time warrant it.</p> <p>Staggered start and finish times can have a detrimental effect on pupils mental health and wellbeing with reduced lunch times, haphazard start and finish times to the school day and, as explained by one pupil in the engagement sessions with young people (as described earlier), lessons have been finishing early (and therefore missing valuable learning experience in the classroom) only for pupils to sit on school transport waiting for others to join for the bus ride home.</p> <p>There will also be additional strains and stress put upon staff in schools with arranging and adhering to shortened lunchbreaks and lesson times whilst still having to cover the curriculum fully and as best they can.</p> <p>SCHOOL CONTACT GROUPS: Progress continues to be made with the vaccination rollout programme and by the end of September everyone working in our education system will have been offered both vaccinations, growing our defences against the virus. This coupled with emerging data suggests that by the time schools return after the summer holidays, we can move</p>
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		<p>beyond the very restrictive approach to dealing with COVID that has been necessary to date.</p> <p>We know that schools are taking decisions to self-isolate whole bubbles rather than identifying immediate contacts and we know that self-isolation has had and is having a materially damaging impact on schooling. In the publication of pupils present in school in Wales¹, an average of 5% of all pupils were absent due to a known COVID-19 related reason between 28 June and 2 July. From 2/11/21 – 2/7/21, there were on average 23,166 children per week remote learning due to COVID-19 reasons in Wales.</p> <p>In June 2021 the Children’s Commissioner wrote to the Minister for Education, outlining a number of issues for children in schools, including the harms associated with self-isolation for children and also challenged the ‘disproportionate’ way that measures are being applied to young people in schools, and the perceived inequities for them compared to the relative freedoms being granted to the adult population simultaneously.</p> <p>In addition to the public health considerations, the impact of existing control measures on the wellbeing of children and young people also needs to be considered. The school environment can provide a range of benefits and opportunities in addition to learning, something that has been disrupted by the COVID-19 control measures. This includes mixing with a wider cohort of children than their bubble, the use of breakfast and after schools clubs for more informal interaction and learning, more normal outdoor playtimes and lunch breaks. The measures we establish next have to demonstrably benefit to the learner, especially when the restrictions (face coverings, isolation, restricted contact groups, closures) can clearly impact adversely on their learning as well as their wellbeing. In our next steps we therefore need to demonstrate we have</p>
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¹ publication of pupils present in school in Wales on Wednesday 7 July at 9:30am

		<p>balanced the benefits and burdens to the individual as well as the population.</p> <p>As a way of mitigating some of these issues and in balancing the harms to children, the expectation will be to move away from contact groups/bubbles at the start of the autumn term replacing this with a smarter approach to contact tracing.</p> <p>This should not place an additional burden on schools and settings, roles and responsibilities are clearly set out in the Welsh Government's operational guidance. There would continue to be an expectation that seating plans and attendance records play an important role in providing intelligence to support contact tracing.</p> <p>The change in approach to contact groups/bubbles has also been discussed with the Chief Medical Officer who has agreed this is a sensible way forward given the current context and balance of harms.</p>
6	Every child has the right to life. Governments must do all they can to ensure that children survive and develop to their full potential.	<p>The key principle putting the safety and mental, emotional and physical well-being of learners and staff at the heart of decision making directly addresses these rights. It is more than staying safe and healthy, but also about providing a considered and measured approach to start to address the negative learning and developmental impacts experienced by 'lockdown'.</p> <p>Both guidance for operations and learning in support of increasing operations in schools and other education settings cover a comprehensive and safe approach to ensure the health and well-being of learners and practitioners in the school environment. The removal of staggered start/finish times and that face coverings are no longer recommended for use in the classroom will be a positive net gain for the proportion of learners attending school on a daily basis.</p>

		<p>Routine lateral flow testing (LFT) for learners in Years 7 and above are still being made available, along with a dedicated young person's guide to the use of LFT tests, to give learners confidence and assurance that they are safe and that they can quickly identify risk of asymptomatic transmission and take necessary steps to keep themselves and others safe.</p> <p>The removal of contact groups (also referred to as 'bubbles') will aim to minimise the numbers of people required to self-isolate and this in turn will mean that practitioners will see a significant reduction in the need for remote learning and the challenges to the workforce of managing both remote and onsite provision in tandem. Practitioners will consider the needs of all their learners, how those are best addressed, and will have regard to the purposes of learning and weigh up their priorities, flexibly drawing on a wide range of curriculum guidance to support them in this work.</p>
12	Every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously	<p>The two 'Coronavirus and me' consultations, alongside engagement with the Youth Parliament, the engagement sessions held directly with learners (facilitated by Children In Wales (x2) and the Children's Commissioner for Wales), consideration of learner correspondence / questions, and inputs from those able to represent learner's views (e.g. parents, practitioners and the Children's Commissioner for Wales) have helped ensure children's views have been taken into account in the process of increasing operations in schools and settings to date.</p> <p>The learning guidance to schools and settings is clear that well-being should be at the heart of work to reengage learners. Within this it emphasizes the importance of giving time for learners to discuss and express their experiences, and ensuring they feel valued, listened to and heard.</p>

<p>14</p>	<p>(freedom of thought, belief and religion)</p> <p>Every child has the right to think and believe what they choose and also to practise their religion, as long as they are not stopping other people from enjoying their rights.</p> <p>Governments must respect the rights and responsibilities of parents to guide their child as they grow up.</p>	<p>None of the policy decisions set out above and in Section 1 will have an explicit impact in relation to freedom of thought, belief and religion.</p> <p>The learning guidance outlines that practitioners need to consider how to support all learners. This includes those who may be anxious about returning following a period of isolation, those who may have experienced extended time in a home environment unsupportive of their beliefs, or who find the prospect of returning threatening; and to support them with the process of integrating into a physical setting for education. Conversations about how learners are feeling are critical throughout this period and staff in schools and settings are being guided to encourage learners to discuss their questions and concerns.</p>
<p>17</p>	<p>Every child has the right to reliable information from a variety of sources, and governments should encourage the media to provide information that children can understand.</p>	<p>The results of the latest ‘Coronavirus and me’ survey asked how children and young people chose to access information sources; it reported for children aged 7-11 years old: - via family (82%), followed by TV (58%). Only 4% of respondents noted they were not getting any information. Young people taking the 12-18 survey have similar sources of information (73% and 61% respectively) but are more likely to be getting information online from news websites, apps and accounts.</p> <p>Some aspects of the operational arrangements for schools (for example, use of face coverings and contact groups) are high profile and are being covered extensively via a range of media outlets. Steps are being taken to ensure ongoing access to reliable and accessible information including social media posts specifically targeted at children and young people as well as their parents / carers; reassurance campaign messaging targeted at education communities and an ‘end of term’ letter from the Minister for Education and Welsh Language to headteachers of all primary and secondary schools, special schools and independent schools about the arrangements from September.</p>

		<p>We continue to publish on our website up to date information on the response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the actions that have been taken in the education sector. This is informed by correspondence and enquiries through the first point of contact centre, some of which are from children.</p>
18	<p>Both parents share responsibility for bringing up their child and should always consider what is best for the child. Governments must support parents by creating support services for children and giving parents the help they need to raise their children.</p>	<p>We recognise that communications between Government, schools and settings, and parents and carers and their children has been critical throughout the process in informing the approach in relation to increasing operations in schools and settings.</p> <p>Targeted communications for parents and carers is ongoing, including through social media and specific dedicated webpages and campaign messaging.</p>
19	<p>(protection from violence, abuse and neglect)</p> <p>Governments must do all they can to ensure that children are protected from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect and bad treatment by their parents or anyone else who looks after them.</p>	<p>For some children, not being in their school or setting can be particularly detrimental due to the nature of their home environment. Children will have encountered different experiences and home environments during 'lockdown' and periods of isolation, and we believe the removal of contact groups, which aim to reduce the amount of time spent out of school, will help identify and start to mitigate negative impacts. It is expected, therefore, that the policies set out above and in Section 1 of this impact assessment will specifically address this article.</p> <p>In taking this forward, guidance reminds staff in schools and settings of their safeguarding duties Keeping learners safe and with the Wales Safeguarding Procedures. The role of the designated safeguarding person (DSP) is be vital and all staff and learners should be informed of who the DSP is and how to contact them. Accessing a trusted adult, or the DSP, may be more difficult with social distancing so schools and settings have been asked to consider how learners can talk privately.</p>

		<p>At the early stages schools, settings and children's services should continue to work closely together to ensure every child and family has the support needed. Local authorities already have a range of working practices in place to ensure that safeguarding partners can work together to keep children safe. There is an opportunity now for these working practices to be further consolidated.</p> <p>Schools have remained open to vulnerable children throughout the latest restrictions.</p>
23	<p>A child with a disability has the right to live a full and decent life with dignity and, as far as possible, independence and to play an active part in the community. Governments must do all they can to support disabled children and their families.</p>	<p>We have ensured that schools remain open to vulnerable children and this includes those with a statement of special educational needs. Local Authorities continue to prioritise those most in need of accessing this provision as we increase the number of learners accessing onsite provision.</p> <p>A Welsh Government commissioned report about how the pandemic has affected the lives of disabled people in Wales considered evidence from the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) and Third Sector Additional Learning Needs Alliance. This suggested disabled pupils in schools required additional support and were not always receiving this during the pandemic. Now that schools are routinely open it is envisaged that the necessary additional support will enable pupils to catch up, however the continued use of contact groups in its existing format will only exaggerate matters for instances when vulnerable pupils will need to be sent home from school to self-isolate.</p>
24	<p>Every child has the right to the best possible health. Governments must provide good quality health care, clean water, nutritious food, and a clean environment and</p>	<p>Our Operational Guidance acknowledges that when we refer to health and well-being, it goes beyond the physical risks of infection of COVID-19. For learners the wider physical, mental, emotional and relationship implications of social distancing, lockdown and potentially bereavement will be much more relevant.</p>

	education on health and well-being so that children can stay healthy.	
28	Every child has the right to an education.	<p>This right has been one of the fundamental drivers, being the decision to increase operations in schools and settings.</p> <p>The learning guidance clarifies expectations on practitioners. In addition to the emphasis on well-being, schools and settings were asked, as appropriate, to begin to widen learning and teaching and support transition so that (as far as possible) learners are ready for the next academic year and are able to engage with a blended learning approach. Schools and settings are expected to develop new learning and approaches to meet the needs of all their learners in response to the pandemic, having particular regard to those unable to attend onsite provision in specific circumstances. The guidance is clear that all learners have a right to support for their learning from trusted professionals at this time and we believe that is best provided through onsite teaching and learning.</p>
29	<p>Goals of education</p> <p>Education must develop every child's personality, talents and abilities to the full. It must encourage the child's respect for human rights, as well as respect for their parents, their own and other cultures, and the environment.</p>	<p>This article is at the heart of education in Wales, and the 4 purposes of the Curriculum for Wales which underpins our programme of education reforms. Schools and settings have developed new learning and approaches to meet the needs of their learners in response to the pandemic. In so doing, practitioners are being directed to the full range of curriculum guidance now available to them, including how the Curriculum for Wales can support learners at this time. The Curriculum for Wales Implementation Plan was published on 26 January 2021 and the Curriculum and Assessment Bill is expected to receive Royal Assent in April 2021.</p> <p>Recognising specific challenges faced by secondary schools during the pandemic, the Minister for Education and Welsh Language announced in July that secondary schools would</p>

		have the option to continue with their existing plans for the introduction of the new Curriculum for Wales, to start in 2022 with Year 7, or start in 2023 with Years 7 and 8 together.
30	<p>Children from minority or indigenous groups</p> <p>Every child has the right to learn and use the language, customs and religion of their family, whether or not these are shared by the majority of the people in the country where they live.</p>	<p>The policy decisions set out in this CRIA are not intended to have either a positive or negative impact in relation to this article. However, it is recognised that there may be some differential impacts for certain groups of people arising from the operational arrangements in schools and settings.</p> <p>The learning guidance outlines that practitioners will need to consider how to support <u>all</u> learners. Conversations about how they are feeling with regards to the changed requirements from September will be critical throughout this period and staff should encourage learners to discuss their questions and concerns. We will monitor closely the situation regarding Welsh language learning and learning through the medium of Welsh. We also recognise there are groups of learners for whom their home language is different to their main language of education (English and Welsh) and a full return to onsite teaching will be a significant benefit.</p>
31	<p>Leisure, play and culture</p> <p>Every child has the right to relax, play and take part in a wide range of cultural and artistic activities.</p>	<p>The negative impact on cultural well-being as seen through the latest period of restrictions should begin to ease as face to face teaching increases. There has also been reduced opportunities for learners to participate in cultural activities, arts, sports, recreation and most other activities due to restrictions such as contacts groups and staggered starts and we expect the easements in these regards from September will create more community mobility and opportunities to access such activities. Both play and outdoor learning provide wide ranging opportunities to support learning as well to enhance learners' relationships, physical, mental and emotional well-being. They should therefore be considered central to any approach to planning considerations for schools.</p>

