

Hawliau Plant
Cymru

Children's Rights
Wales

UNCRC



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

An introduction to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child



**We want a Wales
where children's rights
are a reality for each
and every child.**

What is the UNCRC?

The UNCRC is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. It's a list of rights for all children and young people, no matter who you are, where you live or what you believe in. They apply to you up to the age of 18.

The UNCRC lists 54 articles – rights that children and young people have to be safe, to play, to have an education, to be healthy, and be happy. We took all the rights in the UNCRC and sorted them into 7 different areas, called [The Seven Core Aims](#).



Early years

I have everything I need to give me the best start in life!



Participation and respect

I am listened to and treated with respect.



Education and learning

I can take part, enjoy learning and have the best education possible.



A safe home and community

My home is a safe place to live and I have lots of things to do close to where I live.



Health, freedom from abuse and bullying

I have a healthy life in all areas including emotional health and I'm kept safe from harm or abuse.



Freedom from poverty

I don't have to live in poverty and we have enough money for what we need.



Play, sport, leisure and culture

I enjoy playing and have opportunities to enjoy sport and cultural activities with my friends.



The UNCRC in Wales

In 2011, we decided to take an extra step and make the UNCRC law in Wales. This law is called the Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011. The Measure has changed the way we work. It means we have to consider children's rights in everything we do.

Who are the Welsh Government and what do they do?

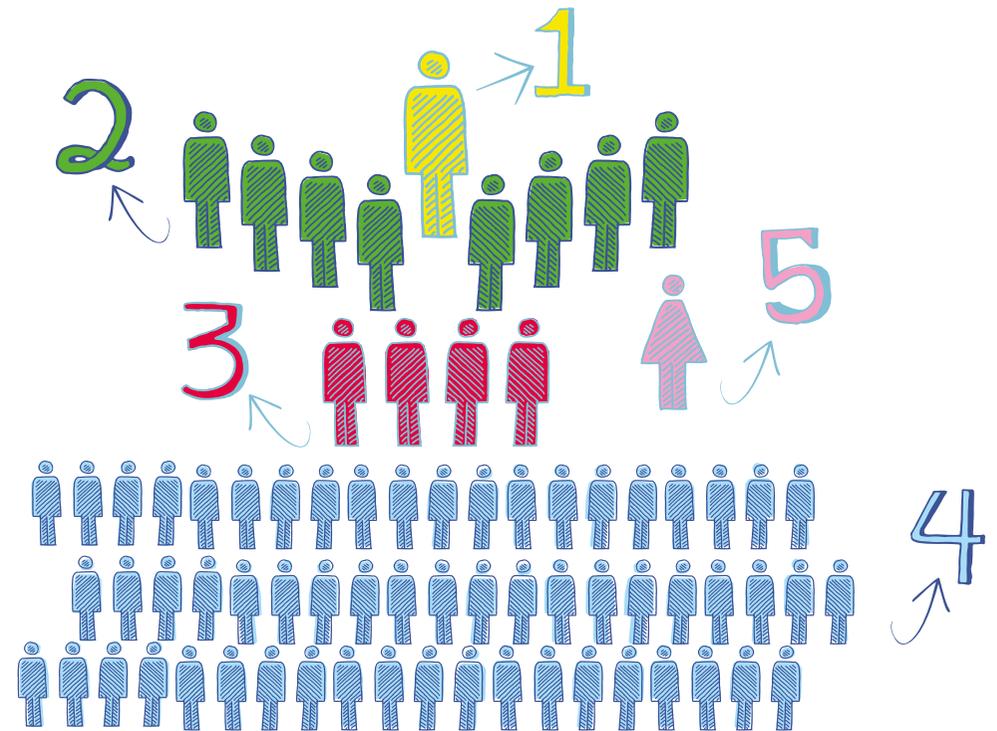
Wales has its own government that works to improve the lives of people in Wales and make our nation a better place to live and work. We aim to be open and responsive to the needs of citizens and communities. We have responsibility for most key areas of public life including:

- Education
- Local Councils
- Welsh Language
- Planning
- Culture
- Environment
- Transport
- Health

With offices all across Wales including Merthyr Tydfil, Aberystwyth, Llandudno Junction and Cardiff.

We want children and young people to be able to get involved, to participate and have their say.

The Welsh Government is made up of:



- 1 The First Minister**
who is the head of the Welsh Government
- 2 Welsh Ministers**
appointed by the First Minister, each with a different area of responsibility
- 3 Deputy Ministers**
who carry out particular areas of work on behalf of the Minister
- 4 Lots of staff**
working to support Ministers
- 5 The Counsel General**
provides legal advice for the Government



How does the Welsh Government help children and young people have a voice and get involved?

Children and young people told us they want to get involved in different ways, sometimes face-to-face, sometimes online, sometimes on their own and sometimes in groups. It's important everyone can choose what suits them best and we are working to give you these options.

We provide opportunities to participate

For example by having:

- Clear and easy to understand information
- Consultation events
- Forums
- Online questionnaires
- Websites
- Workshops
- Twitter

We make laws

This helps children and young people have their right to participate. For example:

- The Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011 which says all Welsh Ministers in the Welsh Government must think about children's rights, including their right to have a voice, when making decisions that affect them.
- The Children and Families (Wales) 2010 Measure which tells Local Authorities they must give opportunities for children and young people to participate.

We work with others

We make sure what we do adds to but doesn't copy, the participation activities of:

- Welsh Parliament
www.senedd.wales
- Voluntary organisations
- School Councils and Local Youth Forums
- Children's Commissioner for Wales

We fund and support participation in different ways

For example we provide funding for:

- 'Young Wales'
- 'Meic'
- Children's Commissioner for Wales

We let people know about children's rights

We do this by telling:

- Children and young people across Wales
- Parents and carers
- People who work with and for children and young people
- People who work for the Welsh Government



Rights: All rights, all children and young people, all of the time

Rights are something everyone has as a result of being born. No one has power to give them to you or take them away from you. There are no conditions attached to them.

Children and young people have rights under the Human Rights Act 1998. They also have rights under the UNCRC, which is an international human rights convention which the UK Government agreed to in 1991.

The UNCRC is an international agreement which protects the human rights of children up to the age of 18. It recognises not only their basic human rights but gives them additional rights to protect them from harm as one of the most vulnerable groups in society.

It covers everything from having a name and nationality to clean drinking water. Simply, these are things children and young people need to be happy, healthy and safe.

The UNCRC is a list of rights that all children and young people, everywhere in the world have, no matter who they are, where they live or what they believe in.

UNCRC = United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

All Governments who have signed up to the UNCRC, including the Welsh Government, have to make sure that children, young people and adults know about and understand the UNCRC.

As well as talking about children and young people's rights, the UNCRC sets out quite a lot of things that Governments across the world need to do to support children and young people to enjoy their rights. These include making sure that as many people as possible know and understand about rights and support children and young people to participate and have their voices heard when decisions are being made that affect them.

Rights are what children and young people are entitled to, needs are what you require. Governments should respect children and young people's rights and help them to know about and claim them.

Rights are associated with **being**,
whereas **needs** are associated with **having**.

UNCRC

When we learn about rights we learn that not only do we have them ourselves but everyone else has them too. Therefore, when we are enjoying our own rights, we have a duty to make sure that we do so in a way that doesn't deny other people theirs.

So for example, if you are enjoying your right to participate in decision-making on issues that affect you (Article 12) by getting involved in a discussion with 6 other people, all 7 have the right to have their voices heard, even if their views are fundamentally different to yours.



In 2011 the Welsh Government decided to take an extra step and make the UNCRC law in Wales. This law is called the Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011.

The Measure has changed the way the Welsh Government works. It means the Welsh Ministers have to consider children's rights in everything they do.

The UNCRC has 54 articles:

It protects the rights of children and young people up to 18 years of age across the world.

Articles 1-41 set out rights about how children and young people should be treated so they are safe, healthy and happy.

The other 13 articles are all about how Governments and adults should work together to make sure children and young people can access and enjoy these rights (42-54).

These rights are the things that are important to make sure children and young people:

- are safe**
- are not discriminated against**
- have their best interests protected**
- have the things they need to survive and develop**
- and have a say in decisions that affect their lives.**

There are **4** main principles of the UNCRC:

Special emphasis is given to four articles, known as 'general principles', because they are basic to applying all of the other rights.

1

Non-discrimination (Article 2)

All the rights guaranteed by the UNCRC must be available to all children without discrimination of any kind.

2

Best Interests of the Child (Article 3)

The best interests of the child must be a primary consideration in all actions concerning children.

3

The Right to Life, Survival and Development (Article 6)

Every child has the right to life, survival and development.

4

The Views of the Child (Article 12)

Every child has the right to be involved in making decisions, planning and reviewing any action that might affect them.

All of the articles cover 3 main themes.
Sometimes they're called the 3 P's.



Participation

These articles are based on the idea of the child or young person as someone who actively contributes to society as a citizen in the here and now – not just someone on the receiving end of good or bad treatment from others.

Provision

These articles cover the basic rights of children and young people to survive and develop. These range from health care, food and clean water to education and an environment which allows children to develop. The UNCRC is clear that the best place for a child is normally with their family, and that the Government has a duty to support and assist parents.



Protection

These articles deal with exploitation of children and young people at work; physical, sexual and psychological abuse; discrimination and other mistreatment which many still suffer, including in the UK. The UNCRC asks Governments to protect children and young people and, where necessary, to provide rehabilitation for them.



Why listen to children and young people?

Ministers make a lot of decisions that affect the people of Wales. Children and young people make up about a third of the population of Wales. So it's important that you can take part (participate) in how decisions are made.

Participation means that it is your right to be involved in making decisions, planning and reviewing any action that might affect you.

Having a Voice, Having a Choice.

One of these rights is about having a voice and being listened to.

“Children have the right to say what they think should happen, when adults are making decisions that affect them, and to have their opinions taken into account.” Article 12 of the UNCRC

All children and young people have rights. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is a list of rights you have.



Protected



Educated



Healthy



Equal



Heard



Safe

What does good participation look like?

In Wales there are 7 National Participation Standards to help organisations and individuals make sure that the process, quality and experience of any participation is good for children and young people.

Good participation can happen anywhere and will have:

- **activities** – that give everyone a chance to learn more about each other and how to get involved in decision making.
- **a balance of power** – between young people and adults even if it's school staff and pupils; councillors and youth forum members; or Government and young people.
- **opportunities** – to change attitudes, develop new skills and learn how to respect others.



Information
should be easy to understand.



It's Your Choice
there should be enough information and time to make a choice.



No Discrimination
every child and young person should have the same chance to take part.



Respect
your opinion should be taken seriously



You get something out of it
you should enjoy the experience



Feedback
you should be told the difference your opinion has made



Improving how we work
adults should ask you how they can improve how they work for the future.

What this means for children

We want everyone to enjoy their rights so we have put in place things like:



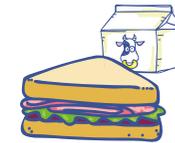
School Councils

Every school must have a school council so pupils have a voice in running their school



Free Swimming

If you are aged 16 or under, you can swim for free at your Local Authority swimming pool.



Free Breakfast in Primary Schools

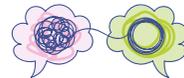
Every child attending a primary school in Wales can enjoy a free, healthy breakfast at school each day.



A Children's Commissioner for Wales

The Commissioner champions children and young people. The Commissioner is independent of Welsh Government.

Find more information here:
www.childcomwales.org.uk



Counsellors

All secondary schools must have counsellors to help pupils have good mental health.



Discounted Travel

Our discounted bus travel scheme for young people helps them access services anywhere in Wales



School nurses

All secondary schools in Wales must have a nurse.



Child Poverty Strategy

This helps to make sure we're doing all we can to support children and families living in poverty.



Children (Abolition of Defence of Reasonable Punishment) (Wales) Act 2020

Abolition of common law defence of reasonable punishment



Play areas

All councils in Wales must make sure there are enough spaces to play.



Welsh Language Education

Supporting the use of Welsh in Schools helps give you access to education in the language of your choice.



16-17 year old votes can vote

In 2019 the Welsh Parliament passed a law to give 16 and 17-year-olds the right to vote in Welsh elections



Frequently Asked questions

Why do we need the UNCRC?



- Children and young people have the same human rights as everyone else. However because of their youth and vulnerability the Convention provides them with additional rights to protect them and ensure they are not discriminated against.
- Children and young people are especially susceptible to the environment and prevailing conditions in which they live and are more vulnerable than other groups in society.
- They can be 'invisible' if adults do not provide the pathways through which they can be heard.
- Children and young people have not always been accepted as the holders of rights – they and their rights are often seen as the 'possessions' of their parents.

Why is the UNCRC so important?



- It gives children and young people additional human rights. These rights should be at the heart of governance.
- It applies to everyone. All of the rights are considered to be equally important and cannot be taken away.
- It emphasises that children and young people require protection and should also be empowered as citizens now.
- It is applicable all of the time for all children and young people in all situations.

What is a right?



A right is something that children and young people are entitled to, they do not have to be earned, and they belong to all children and young people from the time they are born.

What are Human Rights?



Human Rights are universal guarantees protecting individuals and groups against actions (violations) and omissions (failures) that affect their freedom and human dignity.

What does this mean for children and young people in Wales?



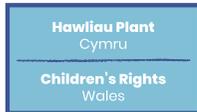
- There is a law which says all Welsh Ministers must think about children's rights.
- The Welsh Government must try to make everyone in Wales aware of the UNCRC.
- The Welsh Government has a Children's Rights Scheme which explains how they are thinking about children's rights.

To find out more read our **Children's Rights in Wales** leaflet.



Go on!

Explore children's rights!



Children's Rights Wales

This website is all about the UNCRC. It brings together different opportunities to get involved. It also has information, training, resources and contacts to help children, young people and organisations across Wales.

www.gov.wales/childrens-rights

In your local area

Local Authorities must give opportunities for children and young people to participate and have a voice. They must also let them know where and how to get involved. You can contact your Local Council and ask them how you can get involved.



Senedd Cymru

The Senedd is made up of Members of the Senedd (MS) who are voted in from all over Wales from different political parties. They check and question the Welsh Government on how we are thinking about rights and looking after all children and young people.

www.senedd.wales

Young Wales

Young Wales makes sure there are different ways for children and young people to have their say on issues that are important to them, and be heard by the government and others.

www.youngwales.wales/



Meic

Meic is an advocacy and information service for children and young people up to age 25. The service is free, confidential and can be contacted 24/7 by telephone, instant message or text. Meic is there to listen, provide information and support

www.meiccymru.org.

Children's Commissioner for Wales

Sally Holland works for every child and young person in Wales. She and her team support them to find out about children's rights, listen to find out what's important to them, provide advice and support if they think they've been treated unfairly, and speak up for them on important issues.

www.childcomwales.org.uk/



To find out about your rights visit:
gov.wales/childrens-rights

To contact us:

email: childrensrights@gov.wales



@C_R_Wales