



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Children's Rights Assessment: Programme to transform planned care and reduce waiting times, April 2022

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FULL IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

A. CHILDREN'S RIGHTS IMPACT ASSESSMENT

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.

Our programme for transforming and modernising planned care and reducing waiting lists in Wales document does address children and young people as a discrete group in a number of places.

The document refers to an analysis of children's rights impact assessments, undertaken on a range of policies during 2020, which highlighted that it is often the same groups of vulnerable children that are negatively affected when these policies are implemented. The impact from COVID-19 is no different, for example those most affected are:

- Vulnerable and young children
- Children with additional learning needs
- Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic children
- Welsh medium learners where Welsh is not the language of the home
- Those who are digitally excluded
- Disadvantaged children – including those with no outdoor space
- Those who may suffer developmental delay.

Similarly, the document acknowledges work undertaken by the Children's Commissioner which looked at how children and young people were experiencing lockdown. The things that most impacted on how children and young people feel were not being able to spend time with friends, not being able to see family and school or college closing. Children and young people of all ages have also had their education and studies interrupted in a way not seen for generations. This is particularly concerning for children from disadvantaged backgrounds, who already achieve less well on average than their better-off classmates.

When schools shut down, children and young people are unable to find a safe place away from violence in the home, both direct and seeing violence against others, with calls to help lines in Wales increasing by over 50% in some areas. The United Nations have reported that: "children are not the face of this pandemic. But they risk being among its biggest victims. While they have thankfully been largely spared from the direct health effects of COVID-19 - at least to date – the crisis is having a profound effect on their well-being"¹.

Research by the University of Oxford indicates that the impact of the pandemic on children and young people's mental health and well-being could be significant.

¹ (https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/policy_brief_on_covid_impact_on_children_16_april_2020.pdf)

More information on the impact on children and young people can be found at [Coronavirus and me results](#).

Our programme for transforming and modernising planned care and reducing waiting lists in Wales re-emphasises the need for health and social care organisations to consider the needs of children and young people as they build back better the services that they will need.

Our programme for transforming and modernising planned care and reducing waiting lists in Wales does address the whole population and therefore children are included in the requirements but are specially referenced when this is applicable.

It is recognised that children and young people have been significantly affected and more needs to be done to ensure their mental health concerns are addressed promptly. The values, principles and actions in *A Healthier Wales* will provide the context as we move through the next stage of the pandemic response and into recovery.

We have taken the opportunity to review and create new *A Healthier Wales* actions to reflect lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic and our challenges ahead in terms of recovery. One of the new actions include a focus on children and young people.

We recognise that children and young people are part of wider families and will have been, and continue to be, affected by the impact of COVID-19 on their parents, grandparents, carers, and wider society. However, a number of actions in terms of the response needed to address the issues impacting on children and young people specifically has been identified such as:

- A clear multi agency pathway for Crisis Care, including for Children and Young People
- Ensuring the roll out of the Together for Children and Young People Programme's Early Help and Enhanced Support Framework via Regional Partnership Boards
- The proportion of funding spent on children and young people with mental health issues must increase, as it is understood that 80% of mental health issues start at this time of life
- Waiting times for children's services have been identified as a separate source of data to ensure waits are not disproportionate and equal across all communities in Wales.

Operating essential services for children of all ages remain a priority. *Our programme for transforming and modernising planned care and reducing waiting lists in Wales* provides a clear strategic direction which supports:

- Services being designed around the individual and around groups of people, based on their unique needs and what matters to them, as well as quality and safety outcomes.
- People should only go to a general hospital when it is essential, with hospital services designed to reduce the time spent in hospital.

- A shift in resources to the community that enable hospital-based care (when needed) to be accessed more quickly); and
- Using technology to support high quality services.

This will include services for children and young people as well as their parents and carers. Children and young people will have access to support closer to home and through services which they find easier to access.

Health and social care organisations are expected to engage and work closely with their service users to achieve the best possible health and well-being outcomes for children and young people.

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

Our programme for transforming and modernising planned care and reducing waiting lists in Wales is intended to have a positive impact on a number of the UNCRC articles, in particular:

Article 6: The right to life and to grow up to be healthy

Article 19: The right not to be harmed and to be looked after and kept safe

Article 20: The right to be looked after properly if the child can't live with his/her own family

Article 23: The right to special care and support if the child has a disability so he/she can lead a full and independent life

Article 24: The right to good food, water and to see a doctor if ill

Article 25: The right of a child who is not living with their family to be checked on to make sure they are safe

Article 39: The right to get special help if being abused

For context, it is important that we are clear that this document sets high level direction for overall recovery for the health and social care system and is not intended to replicate or negate the specific policies and Ministerial directions already in place. Part of the function for *Our programme for transforming and modernising planned care and reducing waiting lists in Wales* is to provide assurance to the public that we are working together across the country to keep Wales safe, this includes children and young people.

Our programme for transforming and modernising planned care and reducing waiting lists in Wales reinforces the need to maintain essential services and build back services as part of recovery and rebuild. For children and young people in particular this is vital to ensure they are able to access the support and treatment they need, whether for their physical or mental well-being.

People should be able to access services in new ways more digitally and closer to home starting in the community. For many children and young people, the interactions they have received through digital means over the last 24 months has been more supportive than traditional methods. This approach needs to be adopted and strengthened. However, there will be a need to support those who are digitally excluded, be it just for the COVID-19 outbreaks or more widely in society. There will be a need to ensure that children, young people, their families, and carers have access to, and the skills needed to use digital services. Consequently, in the initial stages, some children, and young people, who either live in poverty or in rural areas that do not have access to broadband, may be negatively impacted in regard to accessing information.

Our programme for transforming and modernising planned care and reducing waiting lists in Wales sets out a range of areas that NHS organisations, and their social care, need to be cognisant of in their planning. While there is not a specific section for children, there is an expectation that partner organisations plan and delivery appropriate services for children and young people in accordance with their statutory duties.

Our programme for transforming and modernising planned care and reducing waiting lists in Wales document acknowledges the importance of keeping everyone well informed, through a variety of means (including press conferences, use of television, radio, newspapers, and social media) about how planned care services are to be developed and accessed throughout Wales. This will include children friendly media outlets and support which is managed through schools and educational establishments (e.g., nurseries and further education). The document is also an opportunity for Ministers to communicate and provide assurance to the public on the work being done to support a sustainable recovery for our health services in Wales.