

Child Poverty Strategy for Wales – Progress Report 2025

A version for young people



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government



Hello

Living in poverty makes life more difficult, especially for children and young people.

As the Welsh Government we want all children and young people in Wales to live healthy, happy lives. We want them to enjoy their rights and have everything they need.

But many children, young people and families in Wales are living in poverty.

i Poverty — when people don't have enough money to meet their basic needs and take part in everyday life. This can mean struggling to pay for food, clothes, heating, transport, school costs, or other things.

There are lots of challenges:



Food, fuel and housing all cost more.



Incomes and wages haven't gone up enough to cover these bigger costs.



Some things can only be changed by the UK Government. That includes the benefits people get, taxes and the money we get to help people.

This Report tells you about what the Welsh Government has done to deal with poverty over the last 3 years.

(From 2022 to 2025)

In 2024 we launched a new Child Poverty Strategy for Wales. This new strategy will help us fight poverty and create a stronger, better Wales for everyone. It sets out our objectives and actions to reduce poverty.



1,402

children and young people were involved in developing the Child Poverty Strategy for Wales.

31% of children in Wales are living in relative income poverty. (2024)
That's too many.

i Relative income poverty — when a family's income is less than 60% of the average income.



Our vision

Wales – a nation that helps all children and young people have their rights, have good wellbeing and fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances.

To help us write this Report

- We used the Monitoring Framework report. It helped us understand how well our goals under the Child Poverty Strategy are being achieved.
- We listened to the lived experiences of over 3,000 people across Wales.
- We looked at evidence gathered by other organisations.

People told us...



"Childcare funding kept us in work."

"Access to help with Council Tax has eased some of the financial pressure we face, making it easier to manage other essential costs."

"It would make a big difference if there was a simple, accessible way to check for different benefits in 1 place"

"School meals are really helpful – it reduces stress and money worries"

"Food banks have provided essential support during difficult times."

"Young people said they were worried about gaining employment as school leavers... They talked about the vicious circle of not having enough experience."

"Help young people with the cost and availability of public transport... so they can go to work or see friends."

"Over the last couple of years, children and young people said that they cannot afford to see their friends or family."

"I think the biggest difference would come from more affordable and accessible activities for children and young people."

"The warm hub they run here... I often pop in and have a cup of tea and a chat – it brings the community together."

68% of children and young people felt that being bullied or looked down on was most likely to affect children living in poverty.
Children in Wales survey





Objective 1: To reduce costs and make sure families have enough money for food, heat and meeting their needs.

What we've done to put more money in people's pockets

Helping people get all the benefits they have a right to

More than **256,000 households** got support with their Council Tax bills, with over **216,000** households paying no Council Tax at all (in March 2025).

The Single Advice Fund helped **over 388,000 people** get extra income and to write off debts (from January 2020 to March 2025).

Over 500,000 applications were approved through the Discretionary Assistance Fund. It gives emergency cash to pay for things like food, fuel or things like washing machines (from April 2023 to March 2025).

Building a new system

We've set out our plans for a **Welsh Benefit system** and will keep working to develop this. This will help more families get the benefits they have a right to.

Making sure people get help with health costs

We made sure people know about:

- free NHS prescriptions
- free dental check-ups for under-25s
- free sight tests for children under 16

From 2023 to 2024 we supported the toothbrushing programme:

- **1,176** schools and nurseries took part
- Over **59,000** children took part
- **203,000** tooth brushing packs were given out.

Helping young people leaving care

644 young people leaving care got help through the Basic Income for Care Leavers in Wales Pilot.



Helping with food cost:

21.3 million free school meals were served to primary school children in Wales (in 2024 to 2025).

We have free school breakfasts in primary schools.

The School Milk Scheme gave free or subsidised milk to **81,374 children** across schools (in 2024 to 2025).

We've given **£5.85 million** to support **over 300** schools taking part in School Holiday Provision: Food and Fun Programme (in 2025 to 2026).

We also funded projects to deal with food poverty and waste in the community:

- Community Food Support and Local Food Projects
- FareShare Cymru
- Food banks
- Warm hubs and advice services

Helping with heating and fuel costs

We support the Fuel Bank Foundation that helps people with heating costs. **Over 212,000** people have been supported since we started working with them.

Since 2011 we've also invested **£479 million** in the Warm Homes Programme to improve home energy efficiency. Over **82,000 households** benefitted from measures in their homes and **210,800** with free energy efficiency advice.

Helping with School Uniform and Equipment Costs

The School Essentials Grant supported **over 89,000 learners** with things like uniforms, classroom essentials, sports kit, and after-school activity equipment (in 2024 to 2025).

Helping learners in the future

6 school clusters in Wales took part in a new project (in 2024 to 2025). They looked at how poverty affects children's experience at school and found ways to make things fairer. It worked well and more schools will do this in the future.

Helping young families

We are providing **£2.5 million** so families can register for a Baby Bundle. The first Baby Bundles will be delivered in February 2026.





Objective 2: To help children, young people and families out of poverty.

What we've done to help children, young people and families out of poverty.

Supporting the Real Living Wage

The Real Living Wage is the amount people need to afford basics like food, rent and heating.

In 2024, **over 67%** of workers in Wales earned this or more – that's higher than 2023.

Helping early years

Flying Start helps families with children under 4 in Wales's most disadvantaged areas. In 2024 to 2025, we supported **40,943 children**.

The 'Talk With Me' project helps children aged 0 to 4 years 11 months who struggle with speaking and understanding words. We gave **£1.5 million** to Prosiect Pengwin to develop tools and resources to help practitioners support children with speech needs.

Helping children, young people and young adults

In 2025 to 2026:

- we gave **£128 million** to the Pupil Development Grant to help schools support pupils
- we gave **£11 million** to schools to give extra support to Ethnic Minority and Gypsy, Roma, Traveller learners
- we have a Learning Grant for Further Education. It gives **£1,919 to young adults** who want to study part-time or full time.

We also have a Young Person's Guarantee (YPG). It guarantees a place in education, training or work for everyone aged 16 to 24. In the last year it helped:

- **over 12,000** young people get skills
- **over 4,000** young people get a job.

Helping children and young people with Additional Learning Needs (ALN)

We've made big changes to help pupils with Additional Learning Needs (ALN). Since September 2025, all children and young people can get extra support through a personal learning plan. **Over 32,000 plans** have already been created.

Helping with travel costs

We're trying out £1 single fares and £3 unlimited day travel for 5 to 21-year-olds. We have a budget of **£22 million** for financial years 2025 to 2026 and 2026 to 2027.



Helping disabled people

We are consulting on a new **Disabled People's Rights Plan**. It sets out long-term goals to make life better for disabled people. It includes actions to reduce the pay gap and fight discrimination.

Helping people start a business

Business Wales / Big Ideas Wales helps young people explore business ideas. Since 2021:

- over **283,000 young people** took part in workshops
- **3,761** got business advice
- **850** started their own business.

Helping families

Childcare is important to families. In 2025, we increased our funding to childcare providers to fund more places. Working families, or those in education or training can now have **30 hours** of nursery or childcare for 3 to 4 year olds.

Helping people learn skills and find work

So far, the Flexible Skills Programme helped over **160 businesses** and **over 10,500 people** to learn new skills (2025 to 2026)

The Out of Work Service helped over **12,000 people** recovering from mental health or substance misuse (between October 2022 and September 2025).

The In-Work Support Service helped **9,000 people** stay in or return to work (between April 2023 and September 2025).

Helping young carers and adult unpaid carers

Carers do an amazing job and make a big difference to people's lives. They can get support through the Carers Support Fund and breaks from caring through the Short Breaks Scheme.





Objective 3: To support families' wellbeing and make sure children and young people have their rights.

What we've done to support children, young people and their families

Helping communities

In 2024 to 2025, the Community Facilities Programme budget was **£7.1 million**. It gave grants of up to **£300,000 to help community groups** improve buildings for things like playgroups, foodbanks and advice services.

That funding will rise to **£10 million** in 2025 to 2026.

Protecting parks and green spaces

£1 million was given to Keep Wales Tidy to help communities improve their local areas. It was to help them deal with things like litter and making spaces better for people and wildlife (in 2025 to 2026).

Helping local services work together

We give money to communities through the Integration and Rebalancing Capital Fund. It supports community hubs where services like GPs, social care, housing and foodbanks are in 1 place.

Supporting schools to be community hubs

Schools are a big part of community life. They get extra support to become Community Focused Schools (CFS). We invested **£60 million** to the Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme (from 2024 to 2025). This is to support schools to make the changes they need to open outside school hours and benefit the community around them.

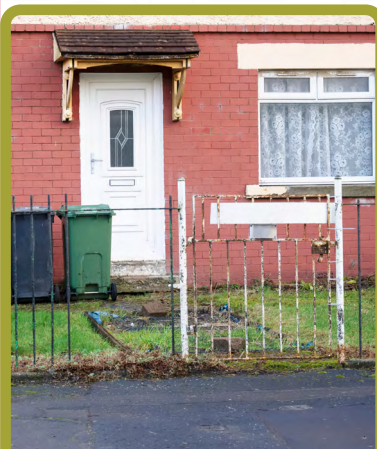
Supporting play, sport, and activities

In 2025:

- we gave **£1 million** to the Playworks Holiday Project to increase play opportunities during school holidays
- we updated our play guidance
- we gave an **extra £5 million** to improve play spaces.

Sport Wales funded **180 projects** in areas that face poverty (in 2024 to 2025).

Cadw made their historic sites more affordable by offering **£1 entry** for families on benefits.



Supporting Youth Work

We are developing a new national Youth Work Framework. It focuses on services and groups working together to give young people opportunities.

Supporting mental health and wellbeing

In April 2025, we launched our new Mental Health and Well-being Strategy. It includes actions to give people the right support at the right time.

We put **£2.5 million** a year into projects to help young people in emotional crisis.

Supporting children with Neurodivergence

i Neurodivergent — when someone's brain works and processes things in a different way to others.

Since 2022 we've put **£25.7 million** to improve services for children with autism and ADHD.

In 2025 to 2026, we put **£5.6 million** to help reduce waiting times people face for support.

Helping with housing and stop homelessness

In 2025 to 2026 we gave almost **£220 million** for homelessness support and prevention.

We've invested **£360 million** to build more Social Housing (affordable homes).

We've invested **£60.5 million** (in 2024 to 2025) to the Housing with Care Fund. This helps people make changes to their homes, so they meet their needs and don't have to move.

We invested **£155 million** to build over 1,100 new homes for pathways out of temporary accommodation.





Objective 4: To make sure children, young people and families are treated with dignity and respect.

What we've done to promote dignity and respect

Making sure children and young people have a voice

We put children's rights at the heart of everything we do.

We use a Children's Rights Impact Assessment to check how decisions affect children's rights.

We work with Young Wales and other organisations to listen to children's views on policies and what matters to them.

In July 2024, Wales reported back to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, explaining how children's rights are being protected.

Making sure support is kind and compassionate to children's needs

Many children living in poverty feel shame, stress or get bullied because of money worries.

In 2025 to 2026 we increased funding from £400,000 to **£500,000** to support trauma-informed training for professionals who work with children who've had tough experiences.

Helping communities give people warm and safe spaces

Since 2022, **£4 million** has been given to create Warm Hubs. These are free community spaces where people of all ages can get advice, support and feel safe and welcome.

Supporting period dignity

We have the Period Proud Wales Action Plan. This includes ways to provide free period products in schools and community spaces, so no one misses out because of their period.



Making sure schools reduce the impact of poverty

In 2025 to 2026, **£13.6 million** is supporting this work in schools, special schools and Pupil Referral Units. About 9 in 10 schools are working on well-being action plans.

Estyn is helping schools spot and deal with the impact of poverty.

Stopping discrimination

i Discrimination — being treated unfairly or differently because of who you are.

We have published:

- The Strategic Equality and Human Rights Plan.
- The Anti-racist Wales Action Plan
- The LGBTQ+ Action Plan.

These plans take action to make sure everyone is treated fairly.



Objective 5: To make sure everything we do helps services work together regionally and locally.

What we've done to help services work together regionally and locally.

Building teamwork between organisations

We've created new ways for people and organisations to share what's working and improve services.

In 2024 we set up the Tackling Poverty Community of Practice. **Over 320 professionals** took part in events. They shared ideas on tackling child poverty.

The Child Poverty External Reference Group supports delivery of the Child Poverty Strategy.

Helping local projects work together and learn from others

Since 2023, we've given **£2.4 million** to 47 organisations through the Child Poverty Innovation and Supporting Communities Grant. In 2024 to 2025, this supported over **7,300 people**.

In 2022 and 2023, we held events where over 500 people talked about the cost-of-living crisis. This allowed people to share what mattered to them and what worked to support people.

The Child Poverty Innovation and Supporting Communities Grant supported lots of families, including parents and carers of disabled children.

We also supported conferences in North and South Wales on:

- child poverty
- increasing income
- reducing costs for families.

Supporting children and families across the regions

All Regional Partnership Boards now have children and young people forums.

They bring together health, care, education and third sector organisations to improve local services.

Helping young people get their Child Trust Funds

Young people born between 2002 to 2011 have Child Trust Funds. It's money they can get when they turn 18. Many young people don't know about this money. We're working to raise awareness so they can claim what's theirs.

Supporting services to work together and share learning

We're working with other UK nations to share ideas, learn what works and push changes in welfare benefits.



What happens next?

We are committed to making a difference in children and young people's lives in Wales and will keep asking the UK Government to do the same. We will also continue to talk to people across Wales to make sure we are reaching our objectives and fighting poverty.

The next report on how well Wales is doing and how the Child Poverty Strategy for Wales 2024 is making a difference will be in 2028.

Thanks for reading

You can read more about the Child Poverty Strategy here:

gov.wales/child-poverty-strategy-wales-2024

