Hwb Programme – Children's Rights impact Assessment

Policy objectives

The Welsh Government is committed to delivering a national, equitable, inclusive, consistent, and bilingual approach to digital services as part of its Programme for Government, "Our National Mission," the Well-being and Future Generations (Wales) Act, and the Curriculum for Wales.

Underpinning these commitments, the Hwb programme is pivotal in supporting long-term educational reform and improving outcomes. It provides the digital foundations for schools, a platform for learning and teaching, and supports day-to-day operations. The Hwb programme ensures access to safe, secure, and equitable services that inspire teachers and learners to embed digital practices and develop the competencies necessary for the Curriculum for Wales.

The programme is driven by strategic objectives that prioritize practitioners and learners. These objectives include providing leadership, developing strategic partnerships for effective procurement, delivering digital infrastructure, supporting digital transformation through bilingual services, enhancing digital resilience, and building digital capabilities.

Key Initiatives

The Hwb programme encompasses several critical initiatives that support the Programme for Government and Ministerial priorities:

- **The Hwb Platform**: A digital gateway for education in Wales.
- **Provisioning and Authentication Service**: Ensures secure access for over 550,000 users across Wales.
- **National Licensing Deal for Microsoft Office**: Provides essential tools for teaching and learning.
- **EdTech Programme**: Enhances digital infrastructure and support services.
- **Digital Resilience in Education**: Focuses on safeguarding and secure digital practices.
- **Digital Maturity**: Ensures schools are equipped to meet modern digital standards.
- **Maximising usage of Hwb tools**: Provides ongoing digital skills development for educators.

Gathering evidence and engaging with children and young People

As part of the Hwb Programme we are committed to embedding digital resilience throughout schools in Wales. We have committed to a range of actions to support this objective.

The views of children and young people are integral to the actions that are being taken forward by us to help keep them safe online. We have worked with partners to

gather learner views that help us to understand children's top online safety concerns and priorities and have used these responses to shape our actions.

We continue to gather and listen to the views of children through an online safety youth group.

With regards to children's data and privacy rights, the Hwb Programme has a Data Protection Integrated Assessment in place.

Analysing the evidence and assessing the impact

The Hwb programme underpins the delivery of the Curriculum for Wales in maintained schools in Wales. A separate IIA and CRIA has been produced for Curriculum for Wales.

The Hwb programme provides a mechanism to support Local authorities and schools to provide a consistent and sustainable education technology experience across maintained schools in Wales.

The Welsh Government works collaboratively with local authorities and schools to ensure the Hwb programme meets the needs of schools and learners.

The programme provides equal and cost-effective access to selected digital services and resources to all learners in maintained schools in Wales. This will include all groups of learners who are engaged in education in Wales.

Analysing the evidence and assessing the impact

The Hwb programme underpins a number of key Welsh Government policy areas that impact the rights of the child, including the Curriculum for Wales. The programme also supports schools and local authorities to adhere to and uphold children's rights and the Information Commissioner's children's code.
The following UNCRC articles are considered relevant to the Hwb programme:

UNCRC Articles or Optional Protocol	Enhances (X)	Challenges (X)	Explanation
Article 16 – Right to privacy	x		The improvement of digital skills and confidence in using digital services supports children's rights to privacy. Ensuring children and young people understand how the information about themselves they put online or create through using digital services is key to helping them make informed, ethical

			choices about the information that they put online, and how to deal with problems if they occur.
Article 17 – Right to access information via the media	x		The media is increasingly moving away from traditional channels into the digital space; ensuring that all children have reliable connections at school to the internet, the skills and confidence to safely go online, and an understanding of the benefits and limitations of online media are key to them being able to access information from the media.
Article 23: Children with disabilities accessing services and engage with their wider communities	x		Ensuring that all new digital services meet stringent accessibility services will ensure that children who are disabled will be able to access digital services independently in school wherever possible. Reliable connections, and ensuring all children have appropriate skills and confidence to go online will also support disabled children to engage with their communities, including online or digital communities.
Article 28 – Right to an education	x		The pandemic has shown how important digital skills in general are for children's education. Ensuring children they have the right skills to access digital educational resources, have reliable connections to use them, and the confidence to do so all support their right to an education

Article 31 – Right to leisure, play and culture	x		Digital provides many opportunities for leisure, play and culture; from online gaming to virtual tours of cultural sites and collections. Ensuring children have the ability, skills and confidence to go online safely is essential to protect their rights to access leisure, play and culture in the digital age.
Article 34 – Right to be protected from sexual abuse and exploitation, including prostitution and being used in pornography. Article 36 – Right to be protected from any other activities that may harm the child's well-being and development.	X		Developing good digital skills, confidence and online safety awareness will help protect children from all forms of exploitation. Providing robust digital services that children can use to seek help and advice, if they feel uncomfortable or threatened, is also key.

Additional articles met through Hwb's Digital Resilience Programme

The Digital resilience in education programme, a key part of the Hwb Programme has the rights of child at the heart, as articulated in the Digital Resilience Action Plan.

The activities within the Action plan will contribute to having a positive impact and contribution towards making the articles of the UNCRC a reality for children in Wales and their best interest is central to all of the actions (article 3).

It recognises that online environments enable children and young people to experience a broad range of their rights including the right to be safe.

A key objective of this action plan is to support children and young people to become responsible digital citizens, which has explicit links to several of the UNCRC articles. This includes supporting children and young people to achieve their potential, primarily in an educational context (articles 17 and 29).

The educational resources available on the Keeping safe online area of Hwb have been created so that children and young people gain an understanding of not only their own rights (article 42), but also of how certain behaviours online can infringe on the rights of others, e.g. by outlining the difference between freedom of expression (article 13) and online hate.

A key aim of our digital resilience in education activity is to raise awareness of issues that children and young people may encounter online, such as bullying or discrimination (article 2) or sexual exploitation (article 34), and to provide information and advice to practitioners, children and young people and their families. This includes signposting to support or reporting services available.

Although risks are highlighted, the message is not to avoid technology, but to use it responsibly and to apply critical thinking with issues such as reliability of information and privacy (article 16). The internet is recognised as an important tool for gaining access to information (article 17) and in support of children and young people's personal and social development (article 31).

Crucially, there is recognition that children need guidance, but also increased independence as they develop (article 5) and a key aim is to support parents and carers as well as practitioners to nurture the skills required for them to use the internet safely.

A formal Equality Impact Assessment has been completed for the HWB Programme.

Ministerial advice and decision

In formulating Ministerial advice in respect to the Hwb Programme, officials have paid due regard to the rights of children as set out in the UNCRC.

An Integrated Impact Assessment has been developed for the Hwb Programme with publication of section 1 and 8 and the Children's Rights Impact Assessment will be published.

Communicating with Children and Young People

Whilst we have not sought children and young people's views on the whole of the Hwb Programme, with regards to our work on online safety we will advise our online safety youth group that an Integrated Impact Assessment for the Hwb Programme has been published.

Monitoring and Review

The Integrated Impact Assessment and the CRIA for the Hwb Programme is a live document that will be reviewed and updated as work progresses on the various workstreams within the Hwb Programme.