Children's Rights Impact Assessment

Overview of the National Strategy for Unpaid Carers

Unpaid carers make an essential contribution to families, communities and public services across Wales, often providing substantial emotional, practical and personal support to those who depend on them. The National Strategy for Unpaid Carers sets out a clear vision for recognising, valuing and supporting carers of all ages, and ensuring they can access the help they need to live healthy, fulfilled lives alongside their caring roles. Working in partnership across health, social care, education and the third sector, the Strategy aims to create a more consistent, equitable and proactive system of support that reflects the diversity of carers' experiences and safeguards their rights and resilience now and into the future. Developed through extensive engagement with carers and the organisations that represent them, the Strategy focuses on seven priority areas:

1. **Recognition and awareness**
2. **Access to services**
3. **Young carers**
4. **Financial hardship and paid employment**
5. **Respite**
6. **Mental health and wellbeing**
7. **Carers and care planning**

These priorities are relevant to children's rights because young carers may experience caring responsibilities across all areas of the Strategy, not only under the dedicated young carers priority.

Policy objectives

This Children's Rights Impact Assessment (CRIA) examines how decisions relating to the draft National Strategy for Unpaid Carers affect the rights and wellbeing of young carers (children and young people under 18) who provide unpaid care. Grounded in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), it reflects the Welsh Government's duty to safeguard, respect and promote children's rights in all areas of policy development.

Young carers are those under the age of 18 who provide unpaid care for an adult or disabled child in need of support. The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 sets out clear rights for carers of all ages, including young carers. Under the legislation, a 'carer' is 'a person who provides or intends to provide care for an adult, or disabled child'. The term 'young carer' does not appear in the legislation, but the term 'child carer' does appear, albeit not in the definitions. A 'child' means a person aged under 18, so a 'child carer' would be a carer aged under 18.

Young carers often face pressures that can influence their education, health, development and future opportunities. The Strategy acknowledges these risks and outlines actions to improve early identification, ensure access to appropriate support, and reduce the likelihood of children undertaking inappropriate or excessive caring roles.

This CRIA assesses the potential impact on children's rights and the extent to which the Strategy strengthens protections and support for young carers.

Gathering evidence and engaging with children and young people

A range of engagement activity was undertaken before and during the formal consultation to inform the development and refinement of the National Strategy for Unpaid Carers. This included:

- extensive pre-consultation engagement undertaken in summer 2025 with unpaid carers across Wales, ensuring lived experience shaped the Strategy's priorities and actions. We met with 11 groups of carers from differing parts of Wales, ethnic minority communities, disabled carers, older and young carers and from other communities. We also met with or received written contributions from 33 groups of carers and local/ national carer organisations and other stakeholder groups.
- a period of public consultation in February-April 2026. The Welsh Government received 130 responses to the consultation. Of these, 52 were from individuals and 67 were on behalf of organisations, with the remainder not specifying. Additional feedback was collected by Welsh Government officials at four workshops with carers, in person and online.
- children and young people were engaged directly through young carers' networks and national events, including the Young Carers Advisory Board.
- steering group activity involving young carer representatives from unpaid carer organisations.

Unpaid carer representatives were encouraged to support discussions with young carers, helping them to understand the proposed Strategy and share their experiences, views and suggestions on how it could be strengthened. Targeted focus groups were also held with young carers to gather structured feedback from a diverse range of children and young people across Wales.

Engagement also sought views from individuals and organisations representing children and young people with protected characteristics. These included dedicated sessions delivered both virtually and in person with the Young Carers Advisory Board, Credu Young Carers, the Young Carers Professional Network and through Carers Wales. The sessions involved young carers aged 10 to 16 and young adult carers aged 16 to 25, enabling participants to share their experiences, challenges and aspirations. This helped identify how the Strategy could better recognise underrepresented groups, address barriers to participation and support, and promote more equitable outcomes for young carers with different needs and experiences.

Young carers and those who represent them were directly involved throughout the development of this Strategy, and their insight was central to shaping the decision to identify 'Young Carers' as a standalone priority.

Young carers were also invited to respond to the consultation, and young carer representatives were involved in steering group activity during the development of the Strategy. Their views helped shape the Strategy's focus on recognition, early identification, support in education, mental health and wellbeing, transitions, respite and opportunities to participate in decisions affecting them.

Existing research and data informing the policy

The evidence considered for this assessment brings together national data, published research, inspection findings, evaluation evidence, consultation feedback and direct engagement with young carers and their representatives.

Source	Evidence
Census Data 2021	Census 2021 recorded approximately 310,000 unpaid carers in Wales and around 8,200 young unpaid carers aged 5 to 17, equivalent to 1.8% of children in that age group. This provides a minimum baseline, as consultation respondents and carers' organisations highlighted that many young carers remain hidden or do not self-identify. The Strategy therefore places young carers as a dedicated priority and strengthens actions on early identification, awareness in education and community settings, and improved data collection to better understand need.
Health outcomes and psychosocial determinants in young carers: a systematic review Bowman Grangel, Aoife et al. The Lancet Public Health, Volume 10, Issue 7, e625 - e639	This systematic review found that young carers face a small-to-moderate increased risk of poorer mental health compared with non-carers, with stronger effects for those providing intensive care. It also found that social connection and the conditions in which care is provided influence outcomes. This evidence has strengthened the Strategy's focus on mental health and wellbeing, regular assessment of caring intensity, prevention of inappropriate caring roles, and action to reduce isolation through schools, community services and the NEST framework.
Research into the mental health of young carers Dr Becca Lacey Population Health Research Institute St George's, University of London	Research on young carers' mental health identifies elevated levels of psychological distress, including anxiety, depression and self-harm, particularly where caring is long term, intensive or involves personal care. The findings support the Strategy's commitment to improve professional awareness, ensure young carers are identified earlier, and strengthen access to

	timely, appropriate mental health and wellbeing support.
Public Health Wales and Swansea University (2024)	Public Health Wales and Swansea University research found that around 1 in 5 young people aged 16 to 22 in Wales reported caring responsibilities. Young carers were less likely to be in full-time education than non-carers (45% compared with 54%), with lower participation particularly evident among young adults aged 19 to 22 and those living in the most deprived areas. This evidence has directly informed the Strategy's emphasis on identification in education settings, support during transition to further education and employment, and action to reduce the long-term impact of caring on life chances.
Provision for young carers in secondary schools, further education colleges and pupil referral units across Wales - Estyn 2019	Estyn found that provision for young carers across secondary schools, further education colleges and pupil referral units was variable. Caring responsibilities can affect attendance, punctuality, wellbeing and attainment, while settings that proactively identify young carers and provide named support are better placed to reduce barriers. This has informed the Strategy's actions on school and college awareness, staff training, young carer identity cards and clearer links between education providers, local authorities and young carer services.
Action for Children (2025) FOI-based research	Action for Children's FOI-based research highlights the continuing risk that significant numbers of young carers are not known to, or supported by, statutory services. This aligns with consultation feedback that the final Strategy should do more to reach hidden young carers, including those who may not recognise themselves as carers or who face cultural, linguistic or digital barriers. The Strategy has therefore been strengthened through actions on whole-system recognition, outreach through trusted community partners, and clearer routes into assessment and support.
Bangor University interim evaluation (Carers Trust Wales, 2025)	The interim evaluation of the Short Breaks Scheme indicates that short breaks can reduce pressure on carers, support wellbeing and provide opportunities for rest, connection and ordinary childhood activities. Responses to the consultation also emphasised that respite and replacement care must be flexible, reliable and available across Wales. This evidence has

	informed the Strategy's commitment to maintain the Short Breaks Scheme, review gaps in provision with local authorities and ensure young carers can access meaningful breaks from caring.
All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Young Carers and Young Adult Carers.	Evidence from the APPG for Young Carers and Young Adult Carers highlights the importance of transitions, including from school to further education, training, employment and adulthood. Consultation respondents also asked for stronger support at key transition points. This has shaped Strategy actions on improved information, young carer voice, transition planning, links with education and employability support, and preventing caring responsibilities from narrowing future opportunities.
Public Health Wales	Public Health Wales / School Health Research Network data can help monitor young carers' wellbeing, school connectedness and educational engagement over time. Consultation respondents stressed the need for stronger data, outcome monitoring and equality analysis so implementation can be judged by changes in young carers' lived experience, not only by activity counts. The Strategy has therefore strengthened its monitoring approach, including use of SHRN evidence, local authority assessment data, Young Carer ID Card data, and feedback from young carers and representative organisations.

During consultation and engagement sessions, young carers consistently reported challenges including lack of recognition in school and in services; emotional strain, stress and anxiety; reduced educational participation; limited access to mental health support tailored to their needs; financial hardship affecting access to transport, leisure and essential items; concerns about future opportunities in education and employment; and a desire for better involvement in shaping services affecting them.

Primary and secondary age young carers balancing school with caring responsibilities

Evidence gathered through consultation and engagement sessions highlighted that many young carers feel unrecognised by professionals and face challenges balancing education with caring responsibilities, including missing revision sessions, extracurricular activities and social opportunities.

This is consistent with Estyn evidence on variable provision for young carers in schools and colleges, which shows that caring responsibilities can affect attendance, punctuality, wellbeing and attainment where young carers are not proactively identified and supported. Census 2021 data also provides an important baseline,

recording around 8,200 young unpaid carers aged 5 to 17 in Wales, while recognising that this is likely to understate the true number because many young carers remain hidden or do not self-identify. Taken together, this evidence has informed actions on earlier identification in schools, improved staff awareness, named points of contact and wider use of the Young Carer ID Card. The policy is expected to have a positive impact by improving recognition of young carers, helping them remain engaged in education, improving attendance and participation, and reducing the likelihood that caring responsibilities adversely affect their wellbeing and attainment. However, if implementation remains inconsistent between schools or local areas, some young carers may continue to experience interrupted learning, reduced participation in school life and poorer wellbeing outcomes because their caring role is not identified or supported.

Young adult carers aged 16 to 18 transitioning to further education, training or employment

The evidence table highlights findings from Public Health Wales and Swansea University showing that young carers aged 16 to 22 are less likely to be in full-time education, alongside All-Party Parliamentary Group evidence on the importance of support at key transition points. Consultation feedback similarly indicated that young carers believed their “future education and employment opportunities will be constrained by their caring roles”. Respondents also called for stronger support during transitions, including clearer links between schools, further education providers, employment support and carers’ services. This evidence has informed the Strategy’s focus on transition planning, employability support, stronger links with further and higher education, and improved access to information on financial support. The anticipated positive impact is that more young adult carers will be able to sustain education, training and employment pathways and achieve better long-term economic and wellbeing outcomes. However, if support remains fragmented or is provided too late, some young adult carers may disengage from education, training or employment opportunities during key transition periods.

Disabled young carers and young carers supporting disabled parents or siblings

This assessment is informed by evidence in the table relating to caring intensity, mental health and care planning, including systematic review evidence indicating that poorer outcomes are more likely where caring responsibilities are intensive or long term. Consultation respondents emphasised that carers supporting people with learning disabilities or complex needs can face additional pressures during “life transition points”, including transitions between children’s and adult services, changes in education or day opportunities, and deterioration in health. This evidence has informed commitments to regular carer assessment, prevention of inappropriate caring roles, improved transition planning and stronger care planning for the cared-for person. The policy is expected to have a positive impact by reducing reliance on children and young people to provide inappropriate levels of care and by improving coordination of support for the whole family. This should help safeguard children's wellbeing, education and opportunities to participate in social and recreational activities. However, where adult disability, mental health or social care services are

insufficient or delayed, children may continue to fill gaps in care, which could negatively affect their wellbeing, educational attainment and leisure time.

Young carers from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities

This assessment draws on evidence relating to hidden young carers and the risk that some children and young people are not known to services. Evidence from consultation responses suggests that some young carers may face cultural, linguistic or trust-related barriers to identifying themselves as carers or accessing support. This has informed actions on targeted outreach, culturally appropriate information and engagement through trusted community partners. The anticipated positive impact is improved awareness of rights and available support, increased uptake of assessments and services, and a reduction in the number of young carers who remain hidden. However, if engagement and communication approaches are not culturally appropriate or sufficiently targeted, inequalities in recognition and access to support may persist for some young carers and their families.

Young carers living in poverty

This assessment draws directly on evidence from Public Health Wales and Swansea University, which shows lower participation in full-time education among young carers and identifies greater disadvantage for those living in the most deprived areas. The evidence suggests that the impacts of caring responsibilities can be compounded by financial hardship, increasing the risk of poorer educational, health and wellbeing outcomes. Consultation respondents also highlighted the impact of financial pressures on young carers and their families. This evidence has informed actions on income maximisation, benefit uptake, financial support and measures intended to support participation in education. The policy is expected to reduce financial strain on some families, improve access to essential items, transport and learning opportunities, and support better educational outcomes. However, where wider household poverty persists, caring responsibilities may continue to affect children's opportunities and wellbeing unless financial support is accompanied by practical support and accessible respite.

BSL users and young carers with learning disabilities

This assessment is informed by evidence relating to hidden caring, barriers to accessing information and the need for clearer routes into assessment and support. Evidence suggests that children and young people can face difficulties accessing information and services where communication needs are not adequately recognised or addressed. This has informed commitments to provide clearer and more accessible information, including through BSL, Easy Read and other appropriate communication formats. The anticipated positive impact is improved understanding of rights, assessments and available support, enabling children and young people to participate more fully in decisions affecting them and to access support earlier. However, these benefits may not be realised if accessible formats are not provided consistently or if professionals do not adapt communication approaches to individual needs, potentially creating barriers to participation and support.

Young carers who are Welsh speakers

This assessment is informed by evidence relating to accessibility, hidden caring and the importance of removing language barriers to support. Consultation feedback highlighted the importance of providing services and information through the language of choice of children, young people and families. This has informed the Strategy's emphasis on equitable access to support and information. The policy is expected to have a positive impact by enabling Welsh-speaking young carers to access information, assessments and support in Welsh where they choose to do so, helping to improve understanding, trust and participation in decision-making. However, inconsistent Welsh-language provision across services or local areas could result in unequal access to support and a poorer experience for some Welsh-speaking young carers.

Analysing the evidence and assessing the impact

Using the evidence you have gathered, what impact is your policy likely to have on children and young people? What steps will you take to mitigate and/or reduce any negative effects?

Likely positive impacts include improved early identification in schools, health settings and communities; better access to services, including carers' assessments and support plans; a dedicated young carers priority that enhances rights to education, play, health, safety and participation; financial hardship measures that support an adequate standard of living; mental health and wellbeing actions, including NEST-aligned support; access to respite, protecting rest and leisure; and care planning commitments to prevent unsafe or inappropriate expectations of children, especially during hospital discharge.

Potential risks include inconsistent local authority implementation, unequal access to respite, data gaps limiting monitoring, and cultural, linguistic or digital barriers that may prevent some young carers from being identified or supported. These risks will be mitigated through nationally consistent information, improved data collection, enhanced professional training, targeted outreach through trusted community partners, accessible and multilingual formats, and clearer monitoring of local delivery. The delivery plan that will follow the finalised National Strategy for Unpaid Carers will provide further detail on how these actions will be implemented and reviewed.

- **How does your proposal enhance or challenge children's rights, as stipulated by the UNCRC articles and its Optional Protocols? Please refer to the articles to see which ones apply to your own policy.**

The Strategy demonstrates a strong commitment to realising children's rights for young carers in Wales. It:

- Places young carers as a core priority
- Embeds rights-based approaches across education, health, and social care
- Protects against inappropriate caring roles
- Strengthens access to financial, emotional, and practical support
- Improves participation in decision-making

- Recognises intersectionality, including poverty, ethnicity, disability and language needs

Remaining challenges relate mainly to implementation: consistency in identification, equitable access across Wales, and strengthened data collection. With effective monitoring, these risks can be mitigated.

We have outlined our consideration of the impact in relation to the following UNCRC articles in Table 1 below. The Strategy also commits the Welsh Government to promoting the Young Carers Covenant, complementing the UNCRC by providing a practical framework through which organisations can support the realisation of young carers' rights. While the UNCRC establishes the rights of children and young people, the Covenant translates those rights into specific commitments and actions aimed at improving outcomes for young carers, including access to education, participation in decision-making, health and wellbeing, support, and protection from poverty.

UNCRC Article	**Rounded assessment of enhancements and challenges**
Article 2 (non-discrimination) 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.	The Strategy enhances this right by recognising that young carers are not a single group and may experience additional barriers linked to poverty, ethnicity, disability, language, rurality, digital exclusion, age and caring intensity. Actions on targeted outreach, accessible information, Welsh language provision, BSL and Easy Read formats, and trusted community partners should promote more equitable access to identification, assessments and support. The main challenge is that hidden young carers, including those who do not self-identify or who face cultural, linguistic or communication barriers, may still be missed unless implementation is consistently monitored and adapted locally.
Article 3 (best interests of the child) The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all decisions and actions that affect children.	The Strategy strengthens consideration of young carers' best interests by promoting early identification, carers' assessments, support planning, prevention of inappropriate caring roles and improved links between education, health and social care. This aligns with General Comment No. 14, which emphasises that the child's best interests should be treated as a primary consideration in decisions affecting them. The challenge is ensuring that the best interests of the child are applied consistently in local assessments, care planning and hospital discharge, particularly where adult service gaps create pressure for children to provide care.
Article 4 (implementation of the Convention) Governments must do all they can to make sure every child can	The Strategy supports implementation of children's rights through a national policy framework that recognises young carers as a dedicated priority while also embedding their needs across all seven priority areas. It helps give practical effect to rights through professional awareness, improved assessment, accessible information, data

enjoy their rights by creating systems and passing laws that promote and protect children's rights.	collection and cross-sector working. The challenge will be translating national policy into measurable delivery, particularly where progress depends on local authorities, health boards, education settings and third sector capacity.
Article 6 (life, survival and development) Every child has the right to life. Governments must do all they can to ensure that children survive and develop to their full potential.	The Strategy enhances young carers' right to develop to their full potential by seeking to reduce the effects of caring on education, wellbeing, friendships, leisure and future employment. Actions on mental health, transition support, short breaks, income maximisation and preventing inappropriate caring roles should support healthier development. The challenge is that young carers' development may continue to be constrained where caring responsibilities are intensive, adult services are delayed, or support is not available early enough.
Article 12 (respect for the views of the child) 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. This right applies at all times, for example during immigration proceedings, housing decisions or the child's day-to-day home life.	The Strategy enhances this right because young carers and young adult carers contributed through dedicated engagement sessions, consultation opportunities and representative involvement in steering group activity. This reflects General Comment No. 12, which stresses that children should be able to express views freely and receive feedback on how their views have influenced decisions. The challenge is ensuring participation continues during delivery, not only during development, and that younger children, disabled young carers, Welsh speakers and those from marginalised groups have accessible routes to influence implementation.
Article 13 (freedom of expression) Every child must be free to express their thoughts and opinions and to access all kinds of information, as long as it is within the law.	The Strategy supports young carers' ability to express their views by promoting engagement through schools, young carer services, representative groups and consultation activity. It should enable young carers to describe their experiences, raise concerns and help shape services affecting them. The challenge is that some young carers may not feel safe or confident to speak openly, especially where they worry about stigma or family consequences; trusted settings, clear confidentiality arrangements and child-friendly engagement methods will be important mitigations.
Article 17 (access to information from the media) Every child has the right to reliable information from a variety of sources, and	The Strategy enhances access to information through commitments to clearer, nationally consistent and accessible information about young carers' rights, assessments, identity cards and support. Promotion through schools, local authorities, health settings, young carer services and trusted third sector partners should

governments should encourage the media to provide information that children can understand. Governments must help protect children from materials that could harm them.	help young carers understand what help is available. A child-friendly version of the Strategy and outcome materials would further strengthen this article. The challenge is ensuring information is available in formats young carers can use, including Welsh, Easy Read, BSL, digital and non-digital formats, and that it reaches hidden young carers.
Article 19 (protection from violence, abuse and neglect) 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.	The Strategy strengthens protection by aiming to prevent young carers undertaking inappropriate or excessive caring responsibilities. Carers' needs assessments, better care planning, discharge planning and professional awareness should identify risks earlier and reduce reliance on children to fill gaps in care. The challenge is that safeguarding and support responses may remain variable if professionals do not recognise young caring roles or if the care needs of adults or disabled siblings are not met promptly.
Article 24 (health and health services) 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 education on health and well-being so that children can stay healthy. Richer countries must help poorer countries achieve this.	The Strategy enhances this right through actions on mental health and wellbeing, NEST-aligned support, improved professional awareness and better links between health, social care and education. It also responds to evidence that young carers can experience stress, anxiety, isolation and poorer health outcomes. The challenge is ensuring support is timely and proportionate, particularly for young carers providing intensive care or supporting someone with mental illness, disability or complex needs.
Article 26 (social security) Every child has the right to benefit from social security. Governments must provide social security, including financial support and other benefits, to families in need of assistance. &	The Strategy supports these rights by promoting income maximisation, benefit uptake, financial advice, awareness of support such as Education Maintenance Allowance, and access to practical help for carers and their families. This should reduce hardship that can limit young carers' education, transport, social participation and wellbeing. The challenge is that wider poverty, low awareness of entitlements and inconsistent local signposting may continue to affect young carers unless information is proactive, accessible and linked to practical support.

Article 27 (adequate standard of living) Every child has the right to a standard of living that is good enough to meet their physical and social needs and support their development. Governments must help families who cannot afford to provide this.	
Article 28 (right to education) Every child has the right to an education. Primary education must be free and different forms of secondary education must be available to every child. Discipline in schools must respect children's dignity and their rights. Richer countries must help poorer countries achieve this. & Article 29 (goals of education) 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.	The Strategy enhances these rights by promoting recognition in schools and colleges, staff awareness, young carer identity cards, transition support and stronger links between education providers and young carer services. These actions should help reduce the impact of caring on attendance, punctuality, attainment, participation and future opportunities. The challenge is that education support may remain inconsistent unless all settings identify young carers proactively and provide flexible, stigma-free support.
Article 31 (leisure, play and culture) Every child has the right to relax, play and take part in a wide range of cultural and artistic activities	The Strategy enhances this right through reinforcing responsibilities of local authorities regarding respite, the Welsh Government Short Breaks Scheme and wider recognition that young carers need time away from caring for rest, friendships, hobbies and ordinary childhood experiences. The challenge is ensuring respite is reliable, flexible, age-appropriate, culturally appropriate and

	available across Wales, including for young carers in rural areas or those supporting people with complex needs.
Article 42 (knowledge of rights) Governments must actively work to make sure children and adults know about the Convention	The Strategy offers an opportunity to raise awareness of children's rights and the Welsh Government's commitment to the UNCRC among young carers, families, professionals and partner organisations. This could be strengthened by explicitly referencing children's rights in the Strategy, producing child-friendly materials and including rights awareness in communications and training for professionals. The challenge is ensuring this is not treated as a one-off publication activity but is embedded in implementation, monitoring and engagement with young carers.

Policy Priorities and how they support the rights of children and young people;

Priority 1: Identification and Recognition

Relevant UNCRC Articles: 12, 3, 29, 24

Early and consistent identification of unpaid carers across health, education and community settings is essential to ensuring young carers are recognised, listened to and properly supported. Many young people describe feeling unseen or overlooked, so strengthened awareness campaigns, professional training and initiatives such as the Young Carers Covenant play a critical role in ensuring they are identified sooner and protected from taking on inappropriate levels of care. Improved recognition also upholds children's right to participate in decisions that affect their lives, enabling earlier conversations about their wellbeing, education and safeguarding needs across schools, primary care, pharmacies and local authorities. At the same time, the Strategy acknowledges that inconsistent or culturally insensitive identification practices may continue to overlook some young carers, particularly those from minority ethnic communities or those who do not self-identify; this risk is mitigated through commitments to culturally appropriate, multilingual information and more inclusive engagement approaches, helping to ensure that all young carers are recognised and supported.

Priority 2: Access to Services

Relevant UNCRC Articles: 24, 12

Improving access to carers' assessments, support plans and clear, consistent information strengthens young carers' rights to equitable, preventative support, particularly as many still face barriers such as digital exclusion, language needs and a lack of information tailored to their circumstances. The Strategy's commitment to nationally consistent materials, including accessible formats such as BSL and Easy Read, helps ensure young carers can understand their rights and the support available to them, while timely access to services for the person they care for

reduces the risk that children are left filling gaps in statutory provision or taking on inappropriate levels of responsibility. At the same time, the Strategy recognises that delays in accessing assessments and support may continue to affect young carers' wellbeing and their ability to balance caring with education, and it mitigates this risk through standardised assessment processes, improved information sharing and ongoing monitoring of local authority performance to promote more timely and consistent access to support across Wales.

Priority 3: Young Carers (Dedicated Priority)

Relevant UNCRC Articles: 12, 24, 26, 27,28, 29, 31

This priority offers the strongest and most wide-ranging children's rights protections within the Strategy, advancing young carers' rights by recognising their lived experiences and embedding rights-based support across services. It promotes awareness of the Young Carers Covenant and young people's rights, while creating meaningful mechanisms for young carers to shape services and influence local and national policy, supporting their right to be heard under Article 12.

Regular assessments help ensure children are not undertaking inappropriate levels of care, aligning with Articles 3 and 19, and improved educational support through greater recognition in schools, consistent policies and staff training, this reinforces their right to develop their full potential. Access to mental health support through the NEST framework strengthens emotional wellbeing and reduces isolation, and wider availability of identity cards enables young carers to navigate schools, pharmacies and community services safely. In addition, actions to expand opportunities for further education, apprenticeships and employment help address the long-term disadvantage many young carers face. While incomplete data could limit the effectiveness of these measures, the Strategy's commitment to improving data collection and insight will help ensure support becomes more targeted and equitable over time.

Priority 4: Financial Hardship & Paid Employment

Relevant UNCRC Articles: 3, 26, 27, 28 &29

Young carers may experience financial hardship due to pressures within their households. Improving access to income maximisation support and welfare advice may help to maximise family incomes and contribute to supporting young carers' right to an adequate standard of living, aligning with the aims of the Child Poverty Strategy. Targeted work to increase benefit uptake, particularly for families facing linguistic, cultural or digital barriers, helps address inequality and ensures young carers are not excluded from available support. Access to Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) and other financial assistance for essential items further protects their ability to participate in education and social activities. However, low awareness of financial entitlements in schools, colleges and community settings may mean some young carers continue to miss out. The Strategy mitigates this risk through strengthened communication, targeted awareness raising, and collaboration with education providers and carers' organisations to ensure young carers and their families receive clear, accessible information about the help they are entitled to.

Although paid employment outcomes focus primarily on adult carers, the actions outlined have important indirect benefits for young carers. Supporting adults to stay in, or return to, paid employment reduces financial pressure within households and lowers the likelihood that children and young people will assume additional or inappropriate caring responsibilities. This, in turn, helps safeguard their rights to education, personal development and leisure. Ensuring that carers' assessments consider employment aspirations, and that appropriate replacement care is put in place when a parent or guardian returns to work, further prevents caring duties from being transferred to young people and helps protect their wellbeing and opportunities.

Priority: Respite

Relevant UNCRC Articles: 3, 24, 31

Young carers consistently emphasise how vital short breaks and respite are to their wellbeing, as increased access to respite directly supports their health, emotional resilience and right to leisure. The Welsh Government's commitment to maintain the Short Breaks Scheme until 2029 provides an important foundation for ensuring young carers can take time away from their caring responsibilities, protecting their childhood experiences and preventing burnout. However, if respite provision remains inconsistent or unsuitable, young carers may still find themselves without meaningful breaks, and the Strategy addresses this risk by committing to review existing provision and expand capacity so that all young carers can benefit from regular, reliable opportunities to rest.

Priority 6: Mental Health and Wellbeing

Relevant UNCRC Articles: 12, 24, 27

Young carers consistently report high levels of stress, anxiety and social isolation, reflecting the emotional burden that caring can place on children and young people. Strengthening access to mental health support through the NEST framework is therefore an important rights-based action, ensuring that young carers can receive holistic, needs-led support that recognises their specific circumstances. Improving professional understanding of young carers' emotional and psychological needs further supports earlier identification of distress and more effective responses across services. In addition, including unpaid carers within suicide-prevention training and wider wellbeing strategies helps ensure that young carers who may be at heightened risk are identified, appropriately signposted and offered timely, targeted intervention.

Priority 7: Carers and care planning

Relevant UNCRC Articles: 3, 12, 19, 24

Recognising that some unpaid carers are children is essential to ensuring young carers are meaningfully involved in assessment, care planning and decision-making for the person they care for, where this is appropriate and in their best interests. Strengthening their involvement upholds their right to be heard, supports their best interests and helps prevent them from being placed in unsafe or inappropriate caring roles. Early engagement in hospital discharge planning and care reviews can reduce

the risk that young carers are left to fill gaps in statutory provision. Clear and consistent guidance on confidentiality and consent across health boards further promotes safe and appropriate involvement in care planning processes. At the same time, the Strategy recognises that inconsistent practice across regions could lead to variable levels of involvement for young carers. This risk is addressed through strengthened assurance mechanisms, including audits and monitoring frameworks, to support greater accountability and a more consistent approach across Wales.

Communicating with Children and Young People

If you have sought children and young people's views on your proposal, how will you inform them of the outcome?

Young carers will be informed of the outcomes of the policy decision through accessible consultation materials, child-friendly summaries, and communication via young carer organisations, schools, Carers Trust Wales networks, the Young Carers Advisory Board and the Young Carers Subgroup of the Ministerial Advisory Group. Communications should explain not only the final Strategy, but also how young carers' views influenced this and its delivery arrangements.

Monitoring and Review

Monitoring will draw on local authority data on young carer assessments, the Unpaid Carers Receiving Assessment of Carer's Needs Census, School Health Research Network wellbeing and education data, Short Breaks Scheme monitoring, Young Carer Identity Card distribution, and surveys and feedback from Carers Wales, Carers Trust Wales and young carers themselves. The CRIA will be reviewed periodically to assess actual impacts, identify unintended consequences and inform adjustments to delivery.