

Impact Update: Autumn Edition



Autumn is a season of highly visible change: carpets of leaves on pavements; cold mornings; and increasingly starry nights.

It's also the time of year I publish my Annual Report, which not only details my dedicated team's accomplishments over the past year but also the specific changes I think are needed to make life better for children in Wales.

My report makes 22 recommendations this year to the Welsh Government, covering a range of policy areas. You can read more about them on page 8.

Like the seasonal changes all around us, these changes for children need to be just as strong and just as visible.



Here for all children



Our engagement team puts children's voices at the heart of our work, hearing views and experiences from every corner of Wales.

Over the past three months we've engaged with around 400 schools and groups, worked with adults who support children, and listened thousands of children's views through our Monthly Matters surveys.

Monthly Matters - our monthly discussion pack and survey for schools and clubs



Over the past three months we've heard children's views on:

- Welsh Government proposals to ban energy drinks to under 16s, and changes to the rules around food placement in shops and food promotion. We've used what children told us to respond to Welsh Government's consultation on the proposals
- The availability of activities in their local area over the summer holidays
- Mobile phone use in schools

You can read [reports of our completed Monthly Matters surveys](#) on our website.

Energy drinks and food promotion

- 62% thought energy drinks should not be sold to children under the age of 16
- Common reasons in support of a ban included the health risks of drinking energy drinks, the amount of sugar and caffeine in products, and the impact energy drinks can have on sleep
- 44% of children thought banning free refills on fizzy drinks was a bad idea, whilst 31% supported a ban. Many children opposing a ban on refills were concerned about the cost of eating out and saw a ban as an extra expense

Summer activities

- Children said spending time with their families (66%), being outside with friends (63%), and doing sports and swimming (62%) were some of the main things they enjoyed doing outside of school
- The weather (50%), financial constraints (44%), parents not allowing them (35%), and things being too far away (33%) were common reasons why children can't always do the things they enjoy doing
- 62% of children thought there were enough things to do in their local area
- Children wanted more play parks and play areas, sports facilities, and leisure centres and swimming pools in their local areas

Mobile phones in schools

- During October, over 3000 children and young people shared their views with us on phone use in mobile schools.
- We'll be analysing the data over the coming weeks and publishing the results on our website.



**A rights
realiser**



Our Advice team helps children and young people in Wales to access their human rights.

Over the last quarter, we've been contacted by children, parents, professionals, and elected members on a range of children's rights issues.

The wide variety of cases our team has worked on over the past three months has included :

- safeguarding issues
- advice on specialist education placements
- school transport
- exclusions
- advice on complaints including to social services and education
- Individual development plans (IDPs)

You can contact our team by emailing advice@childcomwales.org.uk or phoning 01792 765600

Over the past quarter, our Advice team has:

Supported children in **every local authority** in Wales

Dealt with **267 individual cases**, a **47% increase** on the previous quarter

31% of all cases related to **Additional Learning Needs** support

Helping organisations develop their children's rights work



The Right Way: A Children's Rights Approach in Wales

Over 70 professionals from a range of sectors including health, youth justice, the police, local authorities and the third sector joined us in our event in St Asaph on October 9th to be inspired by children's rights, and to learn how a rights approach can help them in their work.

We heard excellent practice in supporting children's rights from a variety of workshop leaders, including the Children's University, North Wales Police, Gwynedd and Môn Youth Justice service, Wrexham Youth Parliament, and Betsi Cadwaladr Health Board.

And a special mention to pupils from Eirias High School who made a powerful and moving presentation about stigma, which they had previously delivered at the Wrexham Wellbeing Festival.



Training day with Hywel Dda Health Board

Following a highly successful children's rights network event in March we were asked to run a similar training and information sharing workshop to healthcare professionals in Hywel Dda Health Board.

Over 50 people with a variety of expertise across the health board, including safeguarding leads, schools' nurses, community nurses, engagement officers and health leads came along to learn more about children's rights and how it can help shape their work. Our participation team told the story of the UNCRC: its history, its purpose, and its importance, and helped attendees to see how they already support children's rights and to get ideas for doing more.

Thanks for this lovely feedback!

"The team were brilliant and engaging the team ensuring full participation. It was good to hear what others are doing within the childrens right space."

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A challenger

Our policy team challenges and scrutinises decision-makers on the key issues affecting children and young people.

Our Annual Report

Our latest annual report details the work of our team during 2023/24, and makes recommendations in the following areas. To read the full recommendations, open [our annual report on our website](#).

Children's social care – corporate parenting



- We want Welsh Government to increase awareness and sign up to the corporate parenting charter, including setting targets for sign up.

Single Unified Safeguarding Reviews (SUSRs)



- We want Welsh Government to clearly set out how lessons from all safeguarding reviews will be shared across agencies in Wales, and whose role it will be to do this proactively. There is no point in reviews taking place if lessons aren't just identified, but also addressed in practice.

Additional Learning Needs (ALN)



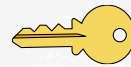
- Welsh Government need to produce technical guidance for local authorities on implementing the ALN Act and Code.
- Funding for ALN provision needs to be clear and sustainable, so you can track spending and make sure it reaches the children who need the provision.

Food in schools



- The Welsh Government review of the Nutritional Standards in Schools regulations must reflect the views and experiences of a diverse range of children.
- Despite universal free school meals in primary schools, children whose families have 'no recourse to public funds' (NRPF) are not automatically eligible. In England all families with NRPF are eligible for free school meals. We want Welsh Government to amend guidance to ensure all children of families with NRPF are eligible for free school meals.

Asylum seekers and refugees' access to services



- Public transport has been highlighted as a key issue and barrier for children and young people who are seeking asylum being able to access their rights.
- We are disappointed that Welsh Government's Welcome ticket scheme came to an end in April 2024 with no substitute provision or offer in place; this needs to be addressed.

Racism and community cohesion



- We want Welsh Government to review their community cohesion strategy, and ensure that children and young people's voices are heard as part of this work.
- Our report Take It Seriously, called for consistent reporting of racist incidents in schools. Welsh Government need to deliver on their promise to establish the mechanisms needed to collate data and produce a consistent reporting format of racist incidents and harassment in schools and colleges.

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller equality



- Welsh Government have agreed in the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan to set up a Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community forum, but this has not progressed yet.
- There are widespread concerns about school attendance figures generally, but Gypsy pupils' attendance has decreased by 12.4 percentage points to 70.6%, and Traveller pupils decreased by 21.9 percentage points to 63.3%

Mental health and wellbeing



- We want Welsh Government to publish a delivery plan for children and young people's mental health and wellbeing within the 2024/25 financial year.

Healthy child Wales programme



- In 2022, over 62,000 contacts from health visitors that should have taken place did not.
- We want Welsh Government to review the effectiveness of the current Health Child Wales Programme within this Senedd term. The review should set out clear expectations on frequency/ number of contacts.

Vaping



- We want Welsh Government to support Public Health Wales to increase awareness of new vaping guidance for schools during the 2024/25 academic year. We want Welsh Government to ensure access to interventions such as Nicotine Replacement Therapy is consistently available across Wales and that children and support services are aware of these interventions.

Public Transport



- We continue to raise the call for free public transport at every opportunity with relevant ministers. Throughout our visits across Wales, transport costs and availability has continued to arise as a key concern and barrier to children accessing their rights.



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A truth teller

We work hard to shine a light on children and young people's real-life experiences and to use them to influence change.

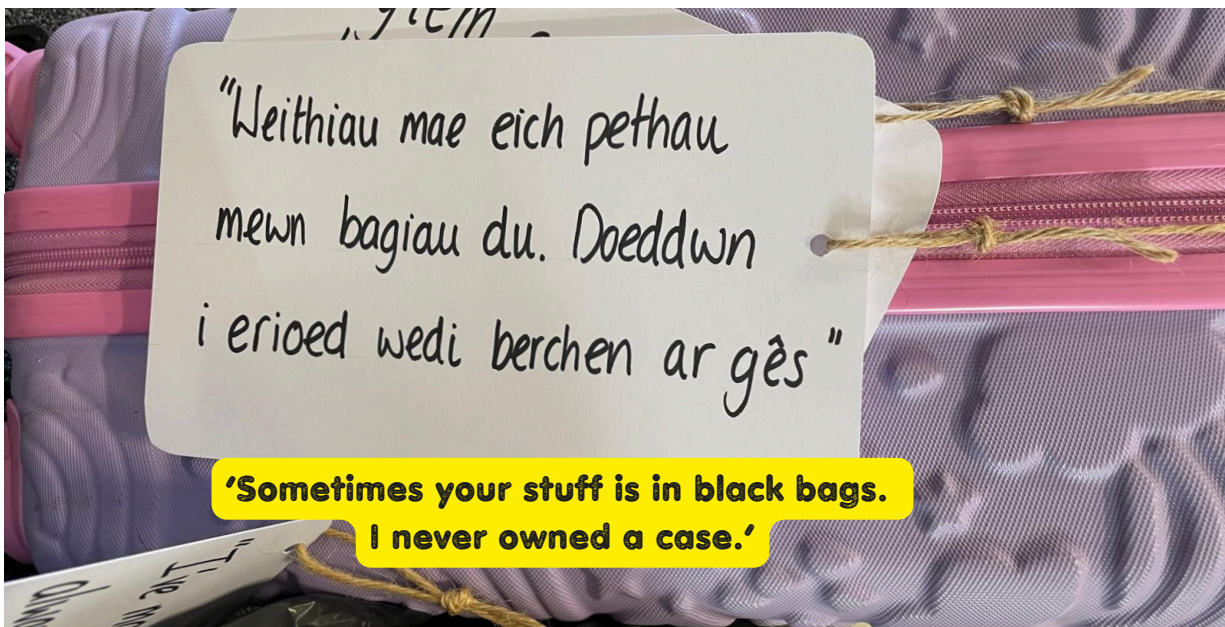
Exhibition with care experienced young people

Here's an example of a quote from a care experienced young person that will form a part of our Senedd exhibition on 12 November.

It's an opportunity to take care experienced children's views and experiences directly to decision makers, and to emphasise the importance of widespread commitment to the corporate parenting charter.

The exhibition follows months of ongoing engagement work with a group of care experienced young people.

Our team has really valued the opportunity to get to know them and to be able to help them tell their stories.



**Diolch/thanks
for reading!**
**We'll publish our next
quarterly impact
paper in the winter.**

In the meantime, sign up to our monthly newsletter.



**Comisiynydd
Plant Cymru**

Children's
Commissioner
for Wales

post@childcomwales.org.uk @
01792 765600 ☎

Children's Commissioner for Wales ✉
Llewellyn House
Harbourside Business Park
Harbourside Road
Port Talbot
SA13 1SB

