



**Comisiynydd
Plant Cymru**

Children's
Commissioner
for **Wales**

The Right Way: A children's rights approach to tackling child poverty



Contents

INTRODUCTION by the Children's Commissioner for Wales	05
THE RIGHT WAY TO TACKLING CHILD POVERTY: A PRINCIPLED FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION	06
Embedding children's rights	07
Equality and Non-discrimination towards children	08
Empowering children	09
Participation of children	10
Accountability to children	11
CONCLUSION	12
OTHER AVAILABLE RESOURCES	14
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	14



**Comisiynydd
Plant Cymru**

Children's
Commissioner
for Wales

Mae fersiwn Cymraeg o'r adroddiad yma ar gael ar ein gwefan, o dan 'Cyhoeddiadau'.
A Welsh language version of this report is available on our website, under 'Publications'.

INTRODUCTION

by the Children's Commissioner for Wales

For over a decade, the rate of child poverty in Wales has remained stubbornly around 30%. This figure is often quoted, but there's a danger it's losing its impact – it should shock and anger us every single time we hear it.



Living in poverty continues to have a corrosive, destructive and enduring impact on children's lives, and has a fundamental impact on their human rights too.

In November 2023, we teamed up with partners Children's Legal Centre Wales, Swansea University's Observatory on Human Rights of Children, and Children in Wales to host a [summit](#) where we explored children's rights breaches resulting from child poverty and how a children's rights approach might address some of the challenges identified.

Whilst children's human rights are relevant to all laws and guidance, at that summit, we explored the various specific statutory duties on Welsh Government and other public bodies in Wales which function to protect children from the impact of poverty, and which should help to lift children out of poverty. Welsh Government Ministers have additional obligations in relation to children's rights, and you can read more about all these duties in [this briefing](#) by Swansea University's Observatory on Human Rights and Social Justice and Children's Legal Centre Wales here.

All of these duties have not led to a reduction in child poverty. But if we truly take a children's rights approach to tackling poverty, policy and budgetary decision making will be focused on addressing the needs of the most vulnerable children.

My office has produced a series of Right Way guides, providing practical frameworks for working with children, grounded in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, to help public bodies integrate children's rights into every aspect of decision-making, policy and practice and, critically, to assist public bodies in delivering on their duties. This latest supplement provides guidance on a children's rights approach (CRA) to child poverty – it outlines a practical framework that supports the fulfilment of children's rights. It offers for public bodies a holistic way of working that supports principled and practical implementation of all the rights of children, including rights that impact on child poverty. We urge you to use it.



Rocio Cifuentes MBE
Children's Commissioner for Wales

THE RIGHT WAY TO TACKLING CHILD POVERTY: A PRINCIPLED FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION

The principles for a human rights approach for children are:

- ★ Embedding children's rights
- ★ Equality and non-discrimination
- ★ Empowering children
- ★ Participation
- ★ Accountability



This section sets out the actions that can be taken to put each principle into practice.

Embedding children's rights

Children's rights must be at the core of planning and service delivery.

Actions contributing to embedding:

- ✓ Develop a clear strategic vision that embeds a children's rights approach to child poverty across the public authority. Leaders in the authority need to champion this vision and drive it forward with a clear plan.
- ✓ Local well-being plans that address child poverty should directly and expressly acknowledge children's rights as the framework for tackling child poverty and recognise where poverty has an impact on rights, beginning with those rights most obviously and adversely affected by poverty.
- ✓ All plan objectives should be underpinned firstly by direct reference to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and direct reference to specific rights within that Convention, but also take into consideration the 13 Aims of the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010 and the Well-Being Objectives of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (WCFG).
- ✓ Carry out an initial and on-ongoing evaluation of levels of knowledge and understanding of children's rights and duties to address child poverty amongst staff.
- ✓ Training on how to embed a children's rights approach to child poverty into the practice of the public body and the work of cross-organisation delivery frameworks.
- ✓ A clear communication plan should be developed, setting out how the public body or cross-organisational delivery framework intends to address child poverty.



Every child to have an equal opportunity to make the most of their lives

Equality and Non-discrimination towards children

Every child must have an equal opportunity to make the most of their lives and develop to their fullest potential. No child should have their opportunities limited through adverse discrimination. There must be clear recognition that child poverty or socio-economic disadvantage is caused by and results in discrimination towards children and specific groups of children.

Actions contributing to non-discrimination:

- ✓ A clear senior level commitment is made to taking action against discrimination relating to poverty and socio-economic disadvantage, including the delivery of responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- ✓ It is important that as part of the analysis for local well-being plans, disaggregated data is collected on children and specific groups of children to identify discrimination relating to poverty or socio-economic disadvantage and from this action developed to address it.
- ✓ Each authority and cross-organisational delivery framework must take action to ensure that due regard is given to eliminating discrimination. This can be done through the proofing of all policies and budgets for their compliance with children's rights impacting on child poverty and reducing the inequalities of outcome which result from socio-economic disadvantage.

This commitment can be delivered by undertaking a Children's Rights Impact Assessment (CRIA) – a useful tool to prompt decision-makers to stop and think about the implications of their plans and how to ensure they have the most positive impact possible on children and young people. We've created a free CRIA tool [here](#).

- ✓ There should be transparent evidence of the proportion of expenditure on children/ allocation of funding linked to policy intentions, to address children living in poverty and specific groups of children in poverty.
- ✓ Action should be taken to ensure essential services are made available, accessible, appropriate and of good quality, without discrimination, so that children can take advantage of their rights in relation to child poverty.



Empowering children

Children's capabilities need to be enhanced so they can access their rights and influence and hold accountable organisations and institutions that affect their lives.

Actions contributing to empowering children:

- ✓ Children (and their parents/guardians/ caregivers) should be empowered with the capabilities to access and engage with services, structures and opportunities that will help them to mitigate their experience of living in poverty.
- ✓ Children (and their parents/guardians/ caregivers) must be empowered through accessible and child friendly information in a language and format that they understand, so they are enabled to claim their rights not to live in poverty.
- ✓ Children (and their parents/guardians/ caregivers) should be empowered to access advocacy, independent advice and legal representation, so they are able to hold public bodies to account not to breach their rights that are impacted by living in poverty.

- ✓ Children should be given opportunities to act collectively to develop ideas and proposals to bring about changes in relation to addressing child poverty.





Participation of children

Children must be listened to, and their views taken meaningfully into account when decisions or actions are taken that affect their lives. Commitment to children's participation is included in the Children and Families Measure 2010 (section 12), and of course the UNCRC and National Participation Standards.

Actions contributing to participation:

- ✓ Children as experts on their own lives, must be included in evidence-based considerations regarding the development of local well-being plans.
- ✓ Children affected by poverty in policy decision-making, must be included in discussions that inform policy and interventions, and be involved in the co-production of service design, monitoring and evaluation.
- ✓ Sufficient human and financial resources must be identified so that participation of children is meaningful, including ensuring safe places and space, and time, for children to participate.
- ✓ Policy decision-makers must take into account and act on children's input, and feedback to children on how their input has influenced interventions.

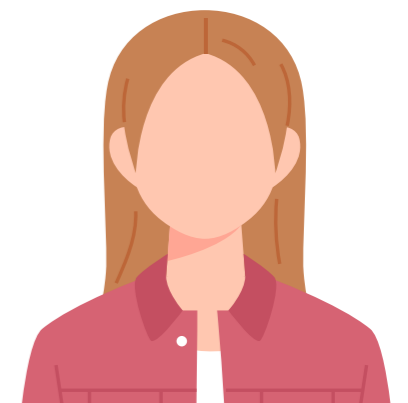
Listening to children

Accountability to children

Organisations and institutions must be accountable for the decisions and actions with affect children's lives, in particular to children themselves.

Actions contributing to accountability:

- ✓ Public bodies and cross-organisational delivery frameworks should develop clear monitoring frameworks that recognise that child poverty is a violation of many rights and must be eradicated as outlined by the Children and Families Measure 2010, and to meet the objectives of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act. The monitoring framework should include:
 - rights-based outcome targets for all interventions.
 - rights-based indicators to measure progress.
- ✓ Public bodies should regularly report on how they have met the indicators and targets set out in the monitoring framework and how they are meeting their public law duties outlined in this document.
- ✓ There should be independent monitoring of performance against these indicators and children should be involved in the monitoring process.
- ✓ There should be a clear commitment to ensuring adequate human and financial resources are allocated to implement a children's rights approach to addressing child poverty.
- ✓ Staff must understand their responsibilities and obligations to children's rights and in addressing child poverty, including by making this explicit in job descriptions and performance management frameworks.
- ✓ Public bodies should develop child friendly complaints systems, so children are able to complain if the public authority has violated their rights or not met their duties in relation to child poverty.



Be accountable to children

CONCLUSION



A child's rights-based approach means that organisations will prioritise children's rights in their work with children and families to improve children's lives; all children are given the opportunities to make the most of their talents and potential; all children are given access to information and resources to enable them to take full advantage of their rights; children are provided meaningful opportunities to influence decisions about their lives; and authorities and individuals are accountable to children for decisions, and for outcomes that affect children's lives.



This guide sets out how **The Right Way framework** can be practically applied to make a real difference to the lives of children. While here in Wales we have limited power to change how much money individual children have in their pockets, taking a Children's Rights Approach will ensure we maximise the tools we have available to us to improve children's lives while those lives are blighted by the impact of poverty. It can also help us identify routes out of poverty.



Children across Wales living in poverty need this support urgently – and they are entitled to it.

Even one child growing up in poverty is one child too many, and these experiences can and must stop. Wales can do more, Wales can do better.



OTHER AVAILABLE RESOURCES

Here are some free bilingual resources we've created to support public bodies, all of which are available on our website www.childcomwales.org.uk:

1. Children's Rights Impact Assessment (CRIA): a tool to prompt decision-makers to stop and think about the implications of their plans and how to ensure that they have the most positive impact possible on children and young people.
2. Self-assessment tool: to help professional and organisations improve how they work with young people
3. The Right Way: A Future Fit for Children – a joint resource with the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales
4. A Children's Rights Approach to Education
5. A Children's Rights Approach to Social Care in Wales
6. A Children's Rights Approach to Additional Learning Needs

designed to help public bodies review and improve the services they provide for children and young people

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This supplement was created with expert advice from Dr Rhian Croke and Professor Simon Hoffman at the Observatory on Human Rights and Social Justice, based at Swansea University.



www.childrenscommissioner.wales

T: 01792 765600

E: post@childcomwales.org.uk

Facebook: @childcomwales

Freephone Advice helpline:
0808 801 1000



**Comisiynydd
Plant Cymru**

Children's
Commissioner
for **Wales**