

Impact Update: Winter Edition

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Child Poverty is the biggest and most important challenge facing the Welsh Government. Families are worried about heating their homes, putting food on the table, and paying for other basic needs like clothing and travel. And during the coldest months of the year, these pressures are intensified. Governments at both ends of the M4 need to find a way to put more money into people's pockets, to mitigate the impact of the cost-of-living crisis, and to protect children from the devastating impact poverty can have on their lives. And all public bodies have a role to play, too. This month my team has published 'A Children's Rights Approach to tackling poverty', a practical framework to help focus policy and budgetary decision-making on addressing the needs of the most vulnerable children. Read more on page 7.



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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 over 3000 children and young people, worked with adults who support children, and listened to 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:

- **Climate action:** we asked children and young people how they help the environment at home, in school, and in their community, and how aware they are of local and national action in this area.
- **Human Rights:** we wanted to know which areas of human rights children were most interested by and how they wanted to learn about them
- **Housing:** children told us what they like about their homes, what they would change, and what makes a good home. The survey results will contribute to our upcoming housing report, which will hear children's first-hand accounts of poor housing experiences and will call on parties to make positive commitments in their election manifestos.

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

Climate Action

- **31% of participating children and young people would like to take part in a group that help the environment. However, 42% said they didn't know of any groups that supported the environment, and 47% said they don't know what Welsh Government are doing to help the environment. Considering these findings, child-friendly information about the actions being taken in Wales, and opportunities to take action to help the environment would be helpful to further promote climate action.**
- **Only 15% of children and young people responding to this survey reported using 'more public transport' to help the environment. This reinforces the importance of our [calls](#) for free public transport for under 18's, not only to alleviate poverty, but to introduce life-long behaviours in relation to transport which can benefit the environment.**

Human Rights

- From the broad range of topics we listed, children were most interested in learning about health (physical and mental) through a human rights lens.
- This was followed by safety at school, at home, and the community, and having their say.
- Children wanted to learn by watching videos, activities in class, quizzes, and posters.

We'll use children's answers to shape our participation offer to schools and youth groups.

Housing

- When asked what they like about their home, the most common answers related to feelings of comfort and cosiness, their bed or bedroom, their family, and feeling safe.
- When asked if the space they use to do homework is a good space to work, the most common answers showed that young people valued privacy, a quiet space, and a desk.
- Children felt that family, safety, and comfort make a good home.

We'll be fully analysing and reporting on responses to this survey as part of our wider research into Housing and Homelessness in Wales, due to be published in spring.



**A rights
realiser**



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

With over 30 years' collective experience of helping children and young people in Wales to access their human rights, our Advice team is well versed in some of the biggest issues affecting families.

We sat down for a chat with our Advice team members to hear more about their work.

Q: What were the biggest issues you dealt with as a team in 2024?

A: I'd say the top one would be the difficulties created by the transformation to the new ALN process. It's created a lot of difficulties to parents across Wales, and there are a number of issues within that, but it's the whole transformation that's creating a whole lot of issues for parents and families and local authorities. What it means in reality is people are struggling to navigate the new system: parents, but professionals as well.

We're getting an increase in people coming to us saying their children are autistic, but they don't have a diagnosis. Schools are struggling to meet the challenges and it can create tensions between schools and parents. Continuous waiting times for these assessments is causing issues because parents are seeing distressed children, but schools are often saying they don't meet the threshold for a referral.





Q: What are your expectations for 2025?

A: We cover such a broad range of issues that I expect we'll cover a broad range of things again for 2025. Housing is an issue, and I anticipate us having more cases this year because the situation is getting worse.

Lots of calls can be about waiting lists and adaptable properties. Unfortunately, with waiting lists what we can do is limited, but we would get in touch with the local authority's team to ensure families are on the correct band and waiting lists, as there can be more than one wait list, and with adaptations it's about making sure the local authority has considered everything. For instance for a disabled child, we would advise the family in the first instance to speak to an occupational therapist to assess the child's needs, which could then lead to a referral for a disabled facilities grant which could be used for things like paying for an extension, fitting hoists, stair lifts, shower rooms, things to make the accommodation suitable for the child.

Other times it's about helping the family to understand the situation and to navigate different services, and sometimes getting social housing providers to speak to families directly.





Q: When you look back at the hundreds of cases the team dealt with in 2024, what work are you most proud of?

A: For me, it's the ones where we've got kids back into education. Where we've worked with parents, the child and the local authority to get the child to re-engage with their education, which is huge for us. It's also where relationships between local authorities and families has completely broken down, so we would mediate and start the conversation with the local authority and the family, because the child can be caught in the middle – we'll get it sorted enough so the child can get back into school and the discussions can continue alongside it. Another thing I think we do really well is the work we do to enable parents to take their concerns forward themselves. We give a lot of advice to empower parents to enable them to deal with their own issues, giving them the information to deal with the issues this time and giving them confidence to deal with things as they go forward.



We are here to help

You can contact us by:

Website: www.childcomwales.org.uk

Email: advice@childcomwales.org.uk

Freephone: **0808 801 1000**

The Right Way:

A Children's Rights Approach to tackling child poverty



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.

There are 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.

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.**

We've made 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 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. You can [read it on our website](#). 

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A challenger

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

Safeguarding

Events and developments over the last six months have meant that we have spent more time than usual on safeguarding-related issues. Here is a brief overview of some of the work we've been actively pursuing.

Gwynedd case

Following Neil Foden's conviction in July 2024 of the abuse of children in his care while a headteacher in Ysgol Friars, the office has had a range of meetings with key stakeholders, including the Child Practice Review (CPR) team, the North Wales Regional Safeguarding Children Board, and senior officers at Gwynedd local authority. We have also heard from and met with concerned parents, elected representatives and members of the public.

Through these meetings we have continuously called for more transparent communication with the public to provide reassurance, including calling for publication of the CPR Terms of Reference, which was published at the end of January and welcomed by the Commissioner. The Commissioner also welcomed the publication of Gwynedd's Response Plan, and we remain in continued dialogue with the local authority regarding their plans and actions to keep children safe.

Caldey Island

An independent safeguarding review was carried out into historic allegations of abuse on Caldey Island, and their report was published in December 2024. This followed years of concerns and allegations being made about abuse of children on the island. The Commissioner met with the reviewer, Jan Pickles, and with two of the victims. We're also in communication with Pembrokeshire local authority to establish their role in the continuing safeguarding arrangements, as per the review recommendations, and with the National Independent Safeguarding Board and Welsh Government to seek clarity on who has oversight of the island as a religious order organisation.

Single Unified Safeguarding Reviews (SUSRs)

Since October 2024, new arrangements have been in place in Wales which aim to bring together what were formerly Child Practice Reviews, Adult Practice Reviews, Domestic Homicide Reviews, Mental Health Homicide Review and Offensive Weapons Homicide Reviews. There is also a new 'repository' which serves to collate published reviews (including previously published CPRs) and action plans, which is intended to enable thematic analysis of key patterns and recurrent issues.

We have been engaged in ongoing dialogue with Welsh Government over the last year, through consultation responses and written evidence, meetings and correspondence with Ministers and officials, to seek clarity on how the new mechanism will ensure that learning from reviews can be identified and implemented fully, across Wales.

The Commissioner has been invited to join the SUSR Ministerial Advisory Board which met in January 2025 and will meet again in July 2025.

IICSA

While the Independent Investigation into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) Inquiry report was published in 2022, recent events have brought their work into the spotlight again, with the chair of this inquiry, Professor Alexis Jay, making fresh calls for the report recommendations to be implemented fully and swiftly.

Welsh Government published its own response to the recommendations in 2023, accepting or accepting in principle all relevant recommendations. As an office we have sought an update from WG on how it is progressing on the implementation of these recommendations. We are particularly interested to understand progress towards the recommendation of establishing a Child Protection Authority and how WG sees the role of NISB fulfilling those functions, as per their response.

Our Head of Policy and Public Affairs, Rachel Thomas, wrote **a piece for Nation Cymru on how Welsh Government have progressed on each of the six recommendations it was given by the inquiry.**

Position paper - Additional Learning Needs



We know that children with Additional Learning Needs are frequently faced with barriers when accessing support in areas such as education and health. **What are the challenges and what needs to change?**
Read our policy position on Additional Learning Needs.

Our policy position pages are an excellent resource for professionals wanting an overview of the Children's Commissioner's take on a range of children's rights issues



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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.

Lwc/Luck - Recommendations from young people in care - next steps for policy and practice

After working closely with a group of care experienced young people last year, which culminated in a Senedd exhibition presenting their views and recommendations to decision-makers, we've published a report based on their work.

It's something we think everybody working with care experienced young people should read.


Their recommendations, straightforward and practical, would make an immeasurable difference to the lives of children in care. [▶](#)



It is not enough to simply say that these experiences should be a thing of the past; we have to make sure that that is the case for every child in Wales and not just a 'lucky' few.

And we know our work is already making a difference. We were delighted to hear that AFKA Cymru, who provide training and support to professionals and parents related to children's care, have added specific courses to their training programme that have been influenced by our work.

We'll keep championing the needs and rights of care experienced young people, and will make sure the recommendations in this report are heard consistently and loudly!

[Read the report on our website!](#) 



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

In the meantime, sign up to our monthly newsletter.



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