



PLANT YNG NGHYMURU
CHILDREN IN WALES

Impact Report

2024-2025



The difference we make at Children in Wales

Every baby, child and young person in Wales has the right to be heard, respected, and supported to thrive. Yet, too many still face barriers to having their voices taken seriously.

Children in Wales exists to change that. We listen to what matters most to children, work alongside the organisations that support them, and make sure their voices reach decision-makers.

As the national membership organisation for children's rights, we campaign for and support the full implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in Wales (UNCRC).

Through advocacy, research, policy work, and collaboration, we drive change, empower young voices, and equip professionals to make rights a lived reality for every child.

Guided by integrity, respect and compassion, we believe in a Wales where every baby, child and young person can flourish - and where children themselves help shape the policies and decisions that affect their lives.



UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

1 I am under 18, so these rights are for me



2 I have these rights no matter what

3 Any decisions must consider what is best for me

4 My Government must make sure I can access all my rights

5 My parents/carers must have support so I can access all my rights

6 I have the right to life

7 I have the right to a name and nationality

8 I have the right to an identity

9 I have the right to live with my family, if that is best for me

10 I have the right to see my family if they don't live with me

11 I have the right to not be taken out of my country illegally

12 I have the right to have my views heard and taken seriously

13 I have the right to express myself

14 I have the right to have my own thoughts, beliefs and religion

15 I have the right to meet with friends and join groups



16 I have the right to privacy



17 I have the right to access reliable information

18 I have the right to be brought up by both parents if possible

19 I have the right to be kept safe from violence, abuse, or neglect

20 I have the right to be cared for and protected if I can't live with my own family

21 I have the right to the best care if I am adopted

22 I have the right to be cared for and protected if I am a refugee

23 I have the right to special protection and support if I have a disability

24 I have the right to good healthcare

25 If I am away from my family, my treatment and care must be reviewed regularly

26 My family must have financial help if they need it

27 I have the right to food, clothing, and a clean, safe home

28 I have the right to an education

29 I have the right to reach my full potential



30 I have the right to learn about my culture, customs, language and religion



31 I have the right to relax, play, and take part in cultural activities

32 I have the right to be protected from doing dangerous work

33 I have the right to be protected from illegal drugs

34 I have the right to be protected from sexual abuse

35 I have the right to be protected from abduction, sale, and trafficking

36 I have the right to be kept safe from harm



37 I must be treated with respect and care if I am accused of breaking the law

38 I must not join the army until I am at least 15 years old

39 I have the right to extra help if I have been hurt, neglected, or badly treated

40 If I am accused of breaking the law, I have the right to legal help and to be treated fairly

41 When my country has extra laws to protect children, these must be followed

42 I have the right to know about all my rights





Welcome from Hugh Russell, CEO at Children in Wales

Croeso cynnes, a warm welcome to Children in Wales' second annual Impact Report.

At Children in Wales, accountability is hugely important to us. We are accountable to babies, children and young people, whose rights we seek to promote; to our members, whose crucial work brings into focus a Wales where all children have all of their rights met; to our funders, whose support propels us towards our mission; and to one another, as colleagues striving to deliver that better Wales for children. Our Impact Report offers a valuable opportunity for us to publicly set out what we've achieved and the difference we have made over the last year in collaboration with all of these partners.

Demonstrating impact is a cornerstone of our five-year strategy – *Towards a Better Wales for Babies, Children and Young People* – which I was thrilled to launch alongside a brilliant group of young people in March 2025. The strategy was shaped by hundreds of conversations about what matters to people touched by Children in Wales' work. The themes from those discussions run through the work we have delivered since: amplifying the voices of children, in line with Article 12 of the UNCRC, as well as supporting others to do the same; influencing the nature and delivery of governmental activity to better reflect the needs of babies, children and young people and those working for them; and exploring new ways to connect with our members.



The young people I stood alongside to launch our strategy were there to launch their own report – a superbly written piece of work examining the barriers their peers experience in leading sustainable lifestyles. This project typifies how we have set out to work with babies, children and young people in our strategy: providing the space and support for them to push for positive, meaningful change (including the first-ever baby voice response to a government consultation). The Peer Research also provided opportunity to collaborate with colleagues in research roles too, which our move to new office space in SPARK – Cardiff University’s Social Science Research Park – at the start of 2024/25 has allowed us to develop further.

As well as the work we have delivered directly, we will also, for the first time, use this report to demonstrate the impact that some of our members have made. The youth sector across Wales is replete with brilliant examples of meaningful, impactful work that can change the whole life course of children. Children in Wales was established to represent these organisations and individuals delivering this life-changing work, so it feels only right that we use this space to platform some of the year’s highlights.

I also want to use this report to pay tribute, once again, to our colleague and friend Karen McFarlane, a Senior Policy Officer at Children in Wales and a knowledgeable and powerful advocate for children’s rights, who sadly passed away in 2024. Amidst the tributes that poured in following Karen’s death, one of our members noted that *“Karen’s unwavering commitment to raising the voices and experiences of vulnerable children and their families in Wales was inspiring.”*

Thank you to my wonderful colleagues who have contributed so much excellent and impactful work over this year, and thank you for taking the time to read about it.

Our year in numbers

Through our work over the past year, Children in Wales has enabled children, young people, and professionals to influence decisions, build skills, and ensure that children's rights are at the heart of policy and practice across Wales.

4,225 professionals gained practical skills and knowledge on safeguarding and children's rights through our training courses.

215 young people aged 11–25 signed up to our Young Wales programme, actively shaping decisions affecting their lives, gaining leadership, advocacy, and teamwork skills.

238 young people directly influenced Welsh Government policy by sharing their lived experiences through our events, surveys and consultations.

512 young people were supported to express their views and contribute meaningfully to decision-making through advisory boards, residentials, and induction sessions.

14 consultation responses submitted to Welsh Government Policy Team and the Senedd Committee.

50 news stories published reaching **26,214** people, raising awareness of children's rights and the ways young people are influencing change in Wales.

76 meetings of our **15** professional networks and working groups brought together experts to integrate children's rights into policies and services.

132 external activities, including contributing to events, delivering presentations, and informing research - raising awareness in local communities and national forums.

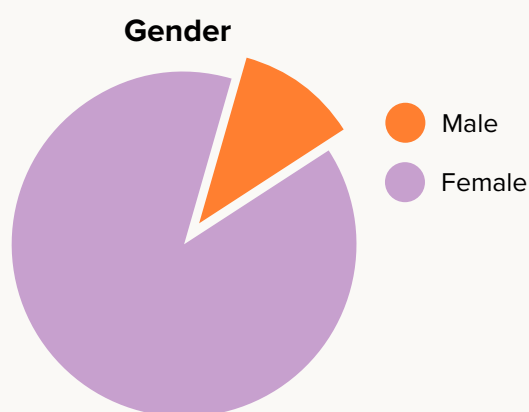
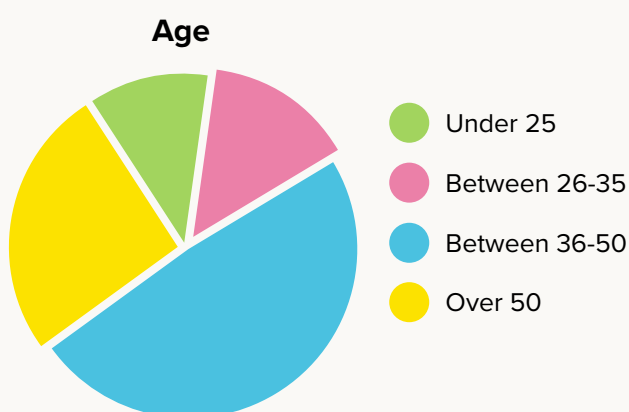
Contributed to **56** meetings convened by government officials and partner organisations.

Young Wales involved young people in **16** consultation responses to ensure their rights and views shaped key policies and laws.

304 members, bringing together a network of organisations and young people committed to promoting children's rights, strengthening collective influence and collaboration across Wales.

Produced **4** magazine issues showcasing **55** member stories, engaging **2,694** readers.

About us - Children in Wales' employees:



Our Commitment to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

One of our key strategic objectives in our [2025–2030 Strategy](#) is to be a sustainable and inclusive organisation. Over the past year, we've made significant progress toward this goal. We have:

- ▶ Established a staff EDI network, which meets quarterly to plan, monitor and review our diversity and inclusion activities and policies.
- ▶ Delivered training for all staff through the Ethnic Minorities and Youth Support Team (EYST), and for our management team through Diversity and Anti-Racist Professional Learning (DARPL), to build awareness and confidence in inclusive leadership.

- ▶ Strengthened diversity in recruitment through inclusive job adverts and anonymised applications.
- ▶ Enhanced our policies to ensure inclusivity is embedded in all areas of our work.
- ▶ Joined Stonewall's Diversity Champions scheme.

Looking ahead, our next focus will be on measuring and evidencing the impact of these initiatives to ensure our EDI commitments are delivering meaningful and sustainable change across the organisation.

Impact: The difference we make for babies and early years

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'I'm ready to communicate with you and want to find out about this big wide world, it is all so new to me.'

Listen to my Voice

Children in Wales has been working to promote awareness that babies have their own thoughts and are able to communicate from birth, and that we can and should be listening to them. Listening to babies helps them feel safe and understood, allowing them to express their needs and build a foundation of trust and secure attachment.

In June 2024, Children in Wales made history by submitting the first-ever formal Baby Voice consultation in response to Welsh Government's Mental Health and Well-Being Strategy.

Through an online focus group, 18 professionals working with babies and young children came together to speak on behalf of those too young to use words themselves. Guided by carefully developed questions, participants were asked to hold a baby in mind, whether thriving or facing difficulties, and respond from the baby's perspective.

This innovative approach shines a spotlight on the often-overlooked voices of babies, emphasising their right to be heard and included in decisions that shape their well-being. It marks an important step forward in ensuring babies' needs and experiences inform future policy and strategy.

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'As you listen to me you will understand me more. I express what I like and don't like through my gaze, movement, facial expressions, noises and sounds I make. Yes, I do cry but I am only trying to tell you something.'



Listen to my Voice

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'I am me and I have my own individual and unique personality; I just need help to work this out.'



Listen to my Voice

What difference did this make?

Our Listening to the Voice of the Baby project was positively evaluated, with the report noting:

- ▶ The first formal Baby Voice consultation submitted in Wales
- ▶ Strengthened recognition that babies have a right to be heard in policy development
- ▶ Created a replicable model for future early-years consultations

This work represents a significant step forward in embedding the voices of babies and very young children in decision-making processes that shape their wellbeing and development.

'I might not be
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'voice'; you ju
it all means.'



'I need oppo
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make choice



'I need every
about what
me and how
you make an

able to talk but I am communicating with you, expressions, movements and I make. This is my first need to learn what



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opportunities to
myself as I explore,
I have the chance to
express.'



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anyone to think things are like for me I would feel before my decisions.'



Listen to my Voice

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PLANT YNG NGHYMRL
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‘Give me time and space to share my voice, and let others know what life is like for me.’



Listen to my Voice

www.childreninwales.org.uk



PLANT YNG NGHYMRL
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‘I see a lot of new faces; can you help others know what life is like for me and help me share my voice.’



Listen to my Voice

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'As you listen to me and respond to what I need, I'm watching you use language and facial expressions that this can help me feel safe and secure, and my brain grow and develop.'



Listen to my Voice

www.childreninwales.org.uk



**'I know you won't always know
I'm trying to tell you, that is ok
to me about what is happening
will help us work things out to
and for me to know what is go**



Listen to my Voice

www.childreninwales.org.uk



'I might not be able to talk but I'm already communicating with you. You just watch my expressions, movements, and the sounds I make. This is my 'voice'; you just need to learn to listen.'

Impact: The difference we make for children and young people





Young Wales

Through our Young Wales programme, funded by Welsh Government and rooted in the UNCRC, we provide children and young people with a platform to influence the decisions that shape their lives.

Working with local authorities, charities, schools, and organisations across Wales, we create opportunities for young people to get involved through consultations, projects, residentials, and events – all centred around putting their voices first.



What difference did this make?

Young people across Wales shaped decisions, built skills, and spoke directly to decision-makers.

- ▶ 215 young people shaped decision-making in Wales by participating in 7 Advisory Boards, meeting frequently to share their priorities. Their insights were taken directly to Welsh Government representatives, Ministers, and Members of the Senedd, ensuring young people's voices influenced policy at the highest levels.
- ▶ 152 young people grew in confidence, developed leadership skills, and built supportive networks through our residentials. Many reported feeling more capable of speaking up in their school communities and with decision-makers.
- ▶ As a result of their contributions to 28 consultations, 238 young people's perspectives informed Welsh Government policy development on mental health support in schools and climate actions plans, ensuring policies are better aligned with the realities of young people's lives.
- ▶ Ten young people from across Wales debated in the House of Commons in February 2025, representing their peers and ensuring Welsh perspectives were represented as Members of the UK Youth Parliament. Through our Development Days, they honed their skills, debated key issues, and built direct connections with national and Welsh leaders, including Sir Chris Bryant MP, Ben Lake MP, and Sioned Williams MS.
- ▶ We took the Big Conversation on the road, engaging 122 young people across 8 local authorities to identify their key priorities. Their insights shaped discussions at the Young Wales Festival and were presented in Ministerial meetings, ensuring youth voices were not only heard but acted upon.

These activities made rights real:

- ▶ Article 12 (the right to be heard) was put into practice as young people directly influenced national decision-making;
- ▶ Article 29 (education to develop talents and abilities) was realised through leadership training and residentials;
- ▶ Article 17 (access to information) was advanced through workshops on democracy and media literacy.

12

I have the right to have my views heard and taken seriously

17

I have the right to access reliable information

29

I have the right to reach my full potential



Feedback from Young Wales volunteers

Volunteers tell us that Young Wales gives them genuine influence and a sense of agency: *"I really enjoy being a Young Wales volunteer. It gives me the opportunity to have my voice heard in an impactful way."* This demonstrates how young people feel their voices are not only heard but also acted upon.

Young people recognise that their involvement is a direct fulfilment of their rights under the UNCRC: *"The residentials are a really valuable opportunity to tell my opinions to government ministers, get my views across, and exercise Article 12. This shows how our work turns children's rights from theory into lived practice."*

Residentials also strengthen young people's wellbeing and network: *"I always love going on a residential with CiW, I get such a fulfilling experience. There's never been a residential where I haven't made a new friend!"* Friendship, connection, and a sense of belonging are clear outcomes of our approach.

Young people gain not only knowledge but the confidence to advocate for others: *"I've learned so much about children's rights which has encouraged me to find out even more about them and advocate for them."* This shows the ripple effect of our work, as participants become champions for rights in their schools and communities

Through partnerships with schools and members, more professionals now understand how to embed youth voice in their work. This means young people's perspectives are being considered not only in government policy but also in local services and community projects.



Young Researchers

The Peer Research Project supported young people in Wales to design and carry out research into the barriers and opportunities around eco-friendly living.

Participants trained as peer researchers, chose a question to explore, and developed a project plan, including a successful funding bid. They then delivered the research - running surveys and focus groups, analysing the data with support from Children in Wales staff, and producing tailored outputs:

- ▶ [A child-friendly summary report](#)
- ▶ [A full professional report](#)
- ▶ [A summary report](#)
- ▶ A one-page of recommendations printed on seeded paper

The findings were launched at a youth-led event on 14 March 2025, which also introduced Children in Wales' new [five-year strategy](#) for strengthening youth voice and engagement.

The Difference Made

- ▶ Amplified authentic youth perspectives, demonstrating the power and value of peer-led research.
- ▶ Strengthened young people's confidence and skills as researchers, trainers, and advocates for change.
- ▶ Produced accessible, sustainable outputs – including a child-friendly report printed on seeded paper – underscoring our commitment to sustainability.
- ▶ Fostered meaningful collaboration between young people, professionals, and environmental organisations, driving momentum towards systemic change.



What the Young Researchers Say

"I think it's so crucial that research like this is distributed and meets legislative power so we can mitigate the very prevalent impacts of the climate crisis."

– **Cor, Young Researcher**

"Gathering views from younger generations about pressing issues is essential to understanding how to fix major problems that will most likely affect them the most when they become adults. Reporting this information is important so that the public and even people in places of power can act upon it and help shape a world that we deserve to live in." – **Harriet, Young Researcher**

"This report is important because it conveys the actual views of Welsh young people. Our mission was to listen to and share these views; by launching our report, we hope to encourage our government and organisations working with young people to take action in accordance with our recommendations." – **Elizabeth, Young Researcher**



Case Study:

From Young Wales Volunteer to Trustee – Nirushan Sudarsan

“I always found it incredibly valuable to be part of Young Wales – meeting other young people who care about the world and want to make it better.”

Growing up in Grangetown, Cardiff, Nirushan first connected with Young Wales as a teenager after attending local youth projects. He started out as a participant at events and residential, before taking on more responsibility as a volunteer.

Over the years, he built lasting connections, developed confidence, and gained unique insight into how young people’s voices can influence policy. *“No other organisation brought together such a mix of young people from across Wales. Hearing different perspectives opened my mind and motivated me to get involved in shaping change.”*

That experience inspired Nirushan to pursue research into youth participation at university, leading to a PhD project on children and young people’s roles in decision-making.

In 2024, Nirushan took the next step by becoming a Trustee of Children in Wales. *“Boardrooms are often older and not always reflective of young people’s perspectives. Being part of the board gives me a chance to bring the Young Wales experience into those conversations, making sure youth voice is part of the organisation’s future.”*

As a Trustee, Nirushan has embraced the ambassadorial role, championing children’s rights and learning from experienced board members. He is also passionate about creating pathways for other young people to follow in his footsteps. *“It can’t just be me – we need more young voices on boards. If I can do it, others can too.”*

Nirushan’s story shows the long-term impact of youth participation: building confidence, shaping career pathways, and ensuring young people’s perspectives reach the highest levels of decision-making in Wales.



Case Study:

From Volunteer to Sessional Worker: A Journey Driven by Children's Rights – Arthur Templeman-Lilley

Arthur first encountered Young Wales during the 2021 online Festival, where a Youth Council invitation sparked an interest that would shape their future. *"It was all about children's rights, which I loved."* A year later, Arthur joined the Young Wales advisory boards, *"and I never looked back."*

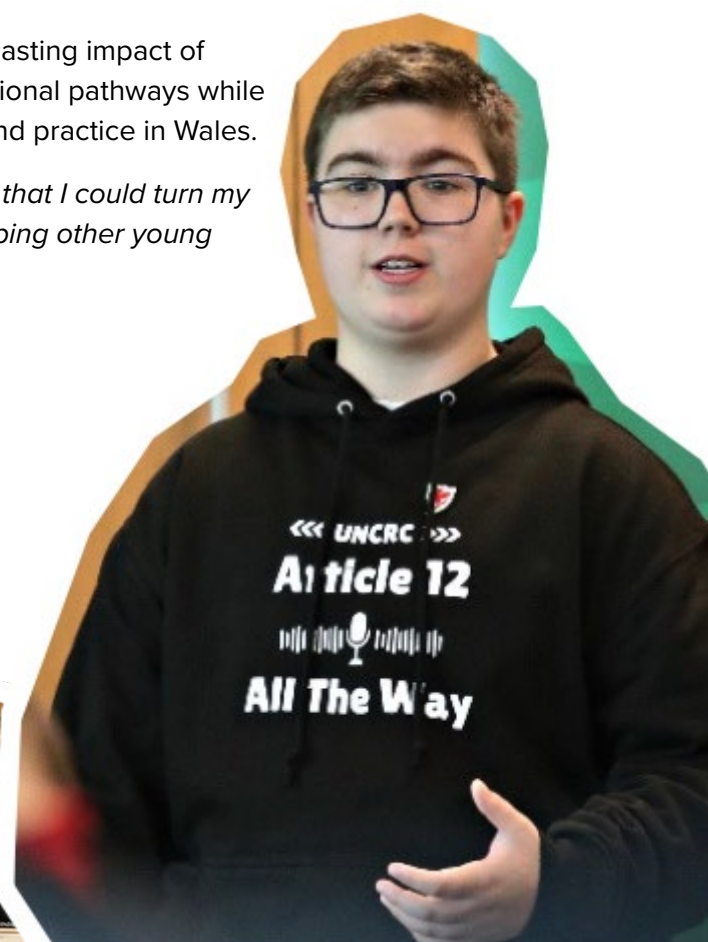
Arthur's passion for participation and rights quickly grew, leading him to take part in the UN Periodic Review Project between 2022 and 2023. *"We researched whether young people in Wales feel their rights are being realised and identified key priorities like cost of living, mental health, and equality."* The team's report was shared with the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, and Arthur was invited to Geneva twice to present their findings.

"It was incredible - seeing governments questioned on children's rights and knowing we'd helped shape those discussions."

In 2024, Arthur joined Children in Wales as a Sessional Worker, turning passion into practice. His work now includes running rights-based workshops and consultations across Wales, from youth councils to sports conferences, helping young people explore what children's rights mean in their daily lives. He recently delivered workshops during Young Wales' Big Conversation campaign, gathering insights on how accessible rights feel to young people and where the biggest gaps remain.

Arthur's journey from volunteer to staff member shows the lasting impact of youth participation - building skills, confidence, and professional pathways while ensuring young people's voices continue to shape policy and practice in Wales.

"Young Wales gave me the experience, support, and belief that I could turn my passion for children's rights into a career - and now I'm helping other young people start that same journey."



Partnerships that amplify children's voices



Partnership in Action: FAW Youth Conferences 2024

At Children in Wales, we believe every young person has the right to be heard, valued, and empowered. This vision was realised through our partnership with the Football Association of Wales (FAW) at the 2024 Youth Conferences held in Wrexham and Newport.

Over two days, young players, coaches, and community leaders explored youth development, participation, and co-production in football. Our team led two interactive workshops on children's rights and participation, engaging over 100 young people in conversations about fairness, inclusion, and how their voices can shape decisions in their clubs and communities.

We also hosted a resource stall and supported FAW with event coordination, strengthening our growing partnership and paving the way for future collaboration, including a youth engagement model and national youth ambassadors' initiative.

The impact was clear: young participants felt more confident to speak up and contribute to decision-making within their local clubs. These conferences highlighted the power of partnership and co-production with young people recognised not just as players, but as leaders and changemakers influencing the future of football in Wales.

[Find out more about the project here.](#)

Empowering young people through democratic education: Votopia

"All children across Wales should have the chance to play Votopia and learn about their rights and democracy in an exciting way." - Feedback from young person in Bridgend

Votopia was developed through the Bridgend Democracy Project, funded by Bridgend County Borough Council via the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. This six-month partnership aimed to help young people understand and engage more deeply with local democracy.

Children in Wales worked with Promo Cymru and 95 young people from Bridgend to co-design and test a new educational resource: a board game called Votopia. Created from young people's own ideas, the game helps players explore how local democracy works, debate real issues, and learn through play.

The resource, available in Welsh and English, has been well received by Bridgend Council, who distributed copies through their youth services and funded further production. Votopia now serves as a lasting legacy tool that encourages dialogue about democracy and decision-making among young people across Bridgend.

Young participants gained teamwork, communication and leadership skills, as well as a stronger grasp of democratic processes. By making democracy engaging and accessible, Votopia empowers young people to become informed, active citizens with the confidence to shape their communities.

[Find out more about Votopia here.](#)

Impact: The difference we make for families

In November 2024, Parents Connect Wales led Wales' first-ever celebrations of National Parenting Week, putting parents' voices and experiences at the heart of the conversation.

Highlights included:

- ▶ A nationwide photo competition showcasing what makes families special and unique, celebrating the diversity of family life in Wales.
- ▶ A Four Nations webinar – *Parents' Voice Across the Four Nations* – where parents and experts from across the UK shared real challenges and practical solutions, strengthening the call for better support.
- ▶ Impactful social media campaigns, co-designed with our Parent Advisory Group, raising awareness of parents' top concerns and directing families to trusted sources of support.

By shining a spotlight on parents' voices, these activities not only recognised the vital role of parents and professionals but also created a platform for ongoing dialogue, support, and recognition. Parents Connect Wales will continue to lead these activities each year, ensuring parents' experiences shape practice and policy.

Strengthening parental voice through the Consultation Toolkit

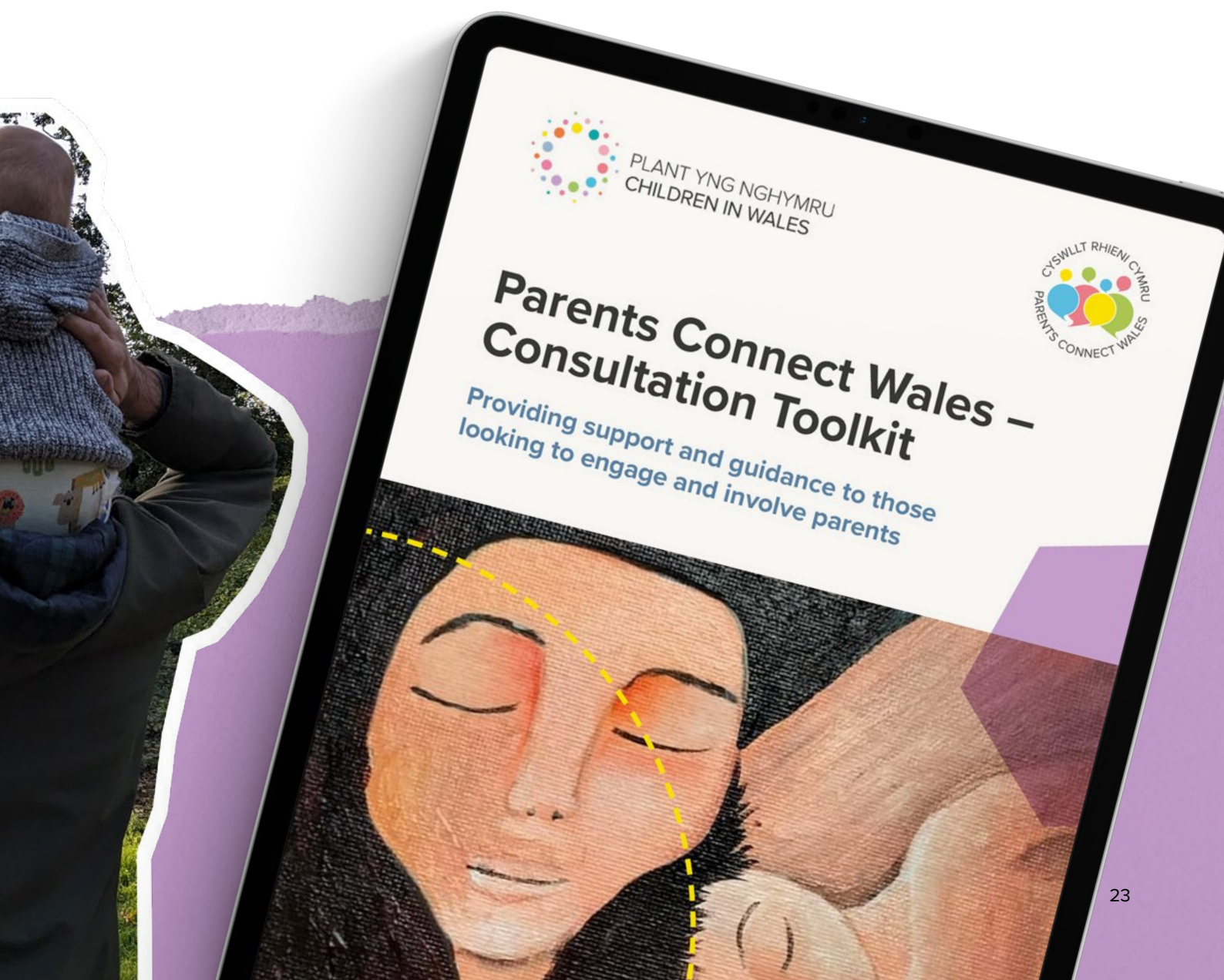
Many organisations want to involve parents in shaping services and decisions but lack the tools and confidence to do so effectively. The Consultation Toolkit, developed by Parents Connect Wales, is changing that.

This practical resource empowers professionals to run high-quality consultation sessions that ensure parents' voices are heard, valued, and acted upon. By providing clear guidance, creative engagement techniques, and ready-to-use resources, the toolkit builds capacity across the sector and strengthens the link between families and decision-makers.

Since its launch in March 2025, the toolkit has helped organisations from schools and charities to local authorities to increase parental participation and gather richer, more representative feedback from families. Practitioners report greater confidence and improved outcomes in their consultation work.

The Consultation Toolkit represents a step change in how parents' insights shape policies, services, and community initiatives, ensuring that those closest to the issues have a genuine voice in creating solutions.

[Download the toolkit here.](#)



Amplifying voices together Children in Wales' membership

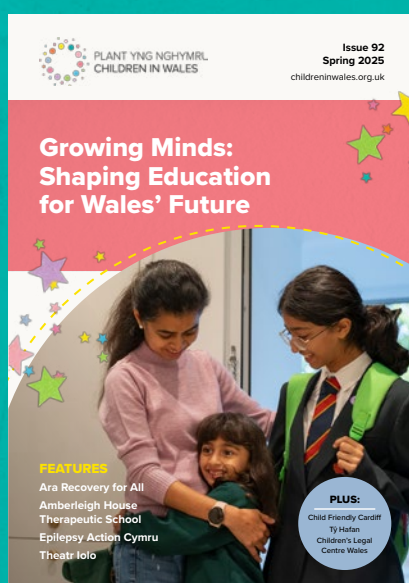


Children in Wales unites a diverse community of individuals and organisations dedicated to improving the lives of babies, children, young people, and families. By the end of 2024–25, our network had grown to 304 members - including 208 organisations, 47 individuals, and 49 students and young people.

Membership is about more than connection - it's about collective action and influence. Together, our members amplify the voices of babies, children and young people, share knowledge and expertise, and strengthen advocacy for children's rights in Wales.

Throughout the year, members receive timely sector updates, accessed training and networking opportunities, and contributed to our quarterly magazine.

These activities enabled members to share good practice, influence wider conversations, and embed children's rights into policy and practice.



In 2024-25, Children in Wales' membership translated into tangible impact:

- ▶ **Sector awareness and knowledge-sharing:** 92 news bulletins kept members informed of policy developments, research and opportunities, equipping them to act on children's rights in their own work.
- ▶ **Updates to 3,415 recipients:** covering critical topics such as safeguarding, LGBTQ+ rights, knife crime awareness, and resilience against adverse childhood experiences – strengthening sector capacity to support children and young people effectively.
- ▶ **Targeted engagement:** 448 members received our exclusive fortnightly e-briefing, keeping key stakeholders up-to-date and connected to national priorities.
- ▶ **Showcasing good practice and influencing policy:** four editions of our magazine explored themes including *Centering Children's Rights at a Time of Change*, *The Right to the Best Start in Life and Empowering Parents and Caregivers*. The magazines featured contributions from Welsh Government Ministers Dawn Bowden MS and Jayne Bryant MS, as well as 55 member organisations, highlighting their vital work. Engagement reached 2,694 direct readers, helping to amplify messages, shape discussions and strengthen the implementation of children's rights.

Through membership, organisations and individuals not only stay informed but actively influence change, embed children's rights in practice, and collaborate to make a real difference for babies, children, young people and families across Wales. The collective voice of our network ensures that children's perspectives are heard, understood, and acted upon at both local and national levels.



Impact: Our influencing work with government and decision-makers

We worked in partnership with a diverse range of members and partners to create positive change for babies, children and young people across Wales. We collaborated with decision makers, policy influencers and practitioners through our professional thematic networks and working groups; our projects with children and families, and through our contributions in external meetings and events to drive impact.

Child Poverty

Through our End Child Poverty Network Cymru (ECPN), we have directly shaped national action on child poverty - influencing Welsh Government's Child Poverty Monitoring Framework and providing expert evidence to a Senedd committee on progress in tackling child poverty. Many of our key recommendations were formally recognised in their report.

Our 8th annual Child and Family Poverty in Wales report continues to drive change. It has been widely referenced by ministers, decision-makers and partners, not only shaping policy and practice decisions but also amplifying the voices of professionals, young people and parents whose experiences underpin our work.

A motion graphic was created from the report's findings to help raise awareness and understanding of child poverty and its impact in Wales. It's been used throughout the year at events and training sessions to start conversations, build empathy, and support better-informed decisions.

[Watch it here.](#)



Additional Learning Needs Reform

Additional Learning Needs (ALN) reform remains a key priority for Children in Wales and our members. Through our Third Sector Additional Needs Alliance (TSANA) network, we continue to support the effective implementation of the Additional Learning Needs Act, ensuring the voices and experiences of children and young people are central to the process.

Through our ALN Participation programme, we have shared insights from direct engagement with pupils in schools, helping to shape Welsh Government's current review of the legislation and strengthen its impact on learners.

Embedding the voices of learners with ALN in national policy

As part of Welsh Government's evaluation of the new Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Act, Children in Wales has worked with schools across the country to ensure learners' voices shape how the system is delivered.

Over two years, we have engaged 33 children and young people aged 6 –16 through 36 creative sessions in four settings — including Welsh and English medium schools and specialist provisions. Using participatory and child-centred approaches, learners shared what good support looks like and where change is needed:

"Before, I felt overlooked – now I finally feel listened to."

"Small group sessions make me more confident."

Pupils who said that teachers who are *"too strict, shout and don't allow enough time to complete the work"*, were not meeting pupils needs.

Their insights are informing Welsh Government's ongoing review of the ALN system, ensuring that policy reflects real experiences from the classroom.

All participants have been invited to the Senedd to share their views directly with the Cabinet Secretary for Education, reinforcing children's rights to be heard in the decisions that affect them.

The difference made:

- ▶ Engaged 33 ALN learners aged 6–16 across 4 schools
- ▶ 36 creative participation sessions delivered
- ▶ Children's insights directly informing Welsh Government's ALN evaluation
- ▶ Pupils invited to share experiences at the Senedd.

Care experienced children

We have strengthened support for care experienced children and young people through our Getting Ready Project, empowering professionals and informing children of their rights and entitlements. Working in partnership with local authorities, we published a series of tailored resources designed specifically for children in care.

Alongside this, we continue to influence national priorities - providing advice to Welsh Government officials on the development of the Corporate Parenting Charter, shaping legislation to eliminate profit from the care of children, and championing the need to strengthen independent advocacy.

Mental Health

In response to growing demand, we established the Children and Young People's Mental Health Network, uniting national third sector organisations to campaign for stronger policy and better access to services that support babies, children and young people's emotional wellbeing.

The network has already influenced the development of the Welsh Government's new Mental Health Strategy, ensuring children and young people's needs are prioritised. We continue to press for a dedicated children's workstream and plan, so that mental health support is designed around their rights and experiences.

Engagement with Welsh politicians

As well as our regular engagement with Welsh Government ministers and opposition politicians, we re-established the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Children in Westminster as a vehicle by which to inform and support the work of our Welsh Members of Parliament, beginning by influencing their work on child poverty. Our Cross-Party Group on Children and Families in the Senedd is going from strength to strength, as we continue to focus on delivering the 4 priorities of the group which are: 1) Edge of care, 2) First 1000 days, 3) Adverse childhood experiences and 4) Child poverty, as well as beginning to capture shared priorities for the next Senedd elections in 2026.

Through our broader representative function, including our active contributions to Welsh Government meetings, engagement with Senedd members, our consultation responses to Welsh Government and Senedd inquiries, we have helped ensure that the priority issues impacting on babies, children, young people, and the professional services there to support them remain prominent.



The difference we make through training

In 2024–25, Children in Wales delivered 296 training sessions to 4,225 professionals. Additionally, 3,645 people subscribed to receive regular updates about learning opportunities.

As a leading provider of child-focused safeguarding and children's rights training in Wales, we have continued to strengthen knowledge and practice across sectors - from education and health to social care and the voluntary sector.

We played a key role in supporting the rollout of the National Safeguarding Learning and Development Standards, delivering 40 Group C and 54 Group B courses to local authorities and partner organisations across Wales.

Funded by Welsh Government, we provided free training on Children's Rights and Participation and delivered 10 sessions focused on improving outcomes for young people leaving care. Our trainers also designed bespoke courses on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and Co-production with Young People in response to sector needs.



Impact: The Difference We Make

Training attendees said:

"I'll be embedding the UNCRC into our youth ambassador programme – it's helped me see how to make volunteering more inclusive."

"The training reminded me how vital it is to make time to think about participation, not just practice."

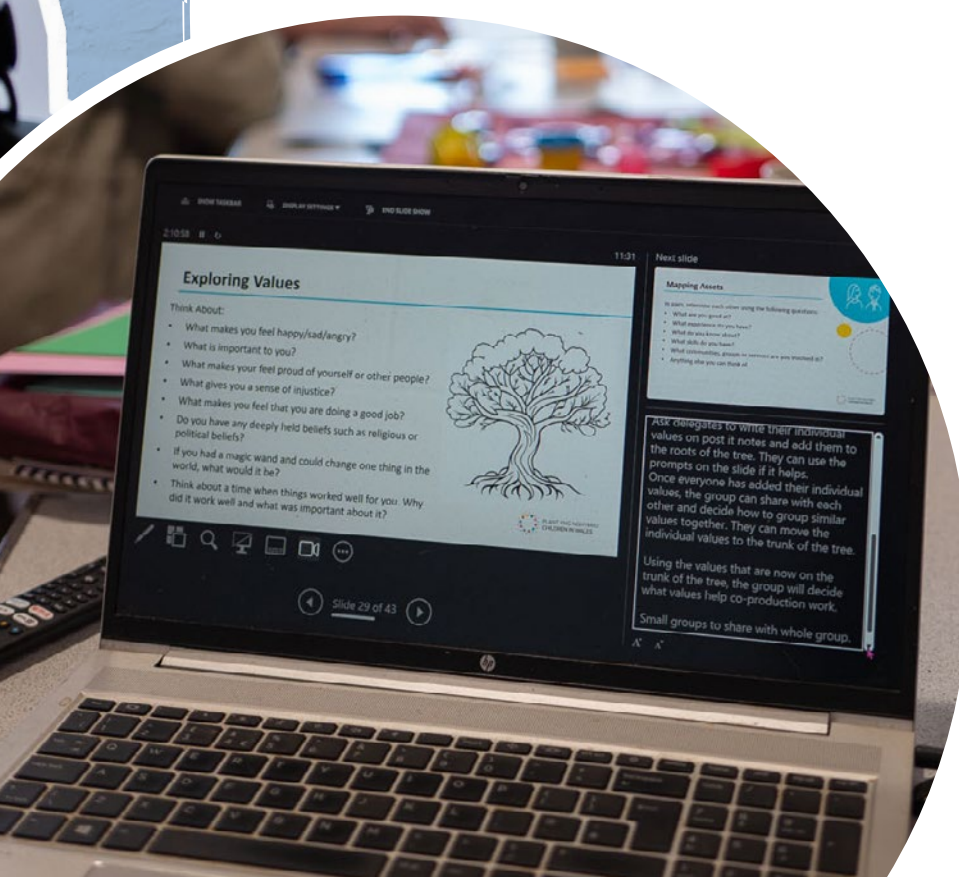
"Neglect training has changed how I assess and understand the bigger picture with families."

"So many light bulb moments – engaging, insightful and practical."

Through high-quality, reflective learning, we are equipping Wales' children's workforce with the tools, confidence and understanding to put children's rights and safeguarding at the heart of everyday practice.

Impact Summary:

- ▶ 296 sessions delivered to 4,225 delegates
- ▶ 3,645 subscribers
- ▶ 94 safeguarding courses (Groups B & C)
- ▶ 10 funded leaving care sessions
- ▶ 6 bespoke EDI courses
- ▶ 2 co-production courses



The impact that our members made



Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs

Inclusive Play Opportunities for 141 Children

Funding from the Moondance Foundation enabled Clybiau Plant Cymru to support 141 children, regardless of need or ability, to access play-rich Out of School Childcare sessions that they would not ordinarily have had the opportunity to attend.

This programme delivered in a non-stigmatised way, ensuring every child felt included and able to fully participate. Activities were designed to be fun, engaging, and accessible to all, promoting social interaction and personal development.

100% of participating settings reported that the sessions supported children's social engagement and mental wellbeing.

100% of children said they enjoyed attending and looked forward to the sessions.

Children developed confidence, social skills, and a sense of belonging through inclusive play-based activities.

"I like making new friends and meeting new people. I like to draw and write stories. I love having chats with the team at club and showing them my stories. I look forward to the days I come to club."

23

I have the right to special protection and support if I have a disability

29

I have the right to reach my full potential

31

I have the right to relax, play, and take part in cultural activities

We're proud to provide a space to amplify the impactful contributions our members make to children's lives in Wales.

How our members are raising awareness of the UNCRC and tackling the issues that matter most to young people.

Our members drive real change for children and young people across Wales. Through their expertise, advocacy, and dedication to children's rights, they deliver services, influence policy, and amplify young voices. These case studies show how their work turns ideas and principles into tangible impact.



NYAS Cymru

Missing the Point

In England, care-experienced children have the right to an independent return interview after going missing. NYAS Cymru has set out to secure the same entitlement for children in Wales.

This led to the creation of the All Wales 'Missing the Point' National Steering Group, bringing together professionals from across the country to share best practice and reduce the number of missing children. Welsh Government have also established a steering group to produce statutory guidance for missing children. NYAS Cymru have also been instrumental in writing guidance for return home interviews for when children go missing, which will be published once approved by the National Safeguarding Board and will form part of the All Wales Safeguarding Procedures. Alongside this, the 'Missing the Point' Campaign has consistently called on Welsh Government to make independent return interviews a statutory right, breaking the cycle that leaves care-experienced children at higher risk of going missing and exploitation.

After five years of campaigning, NYAS are closer than ever to change. Calls are now being echoed by Senedd Members, embedded in Committee report recommendations and raised in First Minister's Questions – keeping children's safety firmly on the national agenda.

[Find out more here.](#)

19

I have the right to be kept safe from violence, abuse, or neglect

20

I have the right to be cared for and protected if I can't live with my own family

Barnardo's Cymru

Baby and Me Service

The number of babies going into care in one part of Wales has been halved thanks to partnership working between Newport City Council and Barnardo's Cymru. The charity's Baby and Me service is proving how early intervention can be life changing for parents and their children.

Wales has the highest percentage of looked after children in the UK and numbers have risen to more than 7,000, an increase of 34% in the last 15 years. But in Newport there has been a 60% reduction in care proceedings issued at birth since Baby and Me began in 2019, and of the babies who have gone home, 100% had been deregistered from the Child Protection Register by one year old.

[Find out more here.](#)

9

I have the right to live with my family, if that is best for me

18

I have the right to be brought up by both parents if possible

27

I have the right to food, clothing, and a clean, safe home



BookTrust Cymru

BookTrust Cymru's delivers a range of evidence informed, behaviour changing, bilingual reading programmes across the whole of Wales. Their Bookstart programme ensures every baby in Wales receives a free bilingual book pack and reading tips in their first year of life, and again at ages 2–3. These Bookstart Baby and Early Years programmes reached just under 60,000 children in 2024

For children who need extra support on their reading journey, the Bookstart Toddler programme, is designed for children aged 1–2 from low-income families, and is distributed through partners including local early years teams, Cymraeg i Blant groups, and Flying Start health visitors and reached 5,000 children in 2024. A Bookstart Storyteller backpack, providing books, resources and props for early years' practitioners to bring storytelling adventures to life for children and families was given to 50 organisations.

The Pori Drwy Stori programme aims to support the development of children's progress in literacy, oracy and numeracy and develop a love of reading through rhyme and stories. The programme is currently delivered to 'Rising 4's' at nursery and within the reception year of maintained schools and aligns with Curriculum for Wales as well as supports practitioners to enable their learners to develop towards the four purposes and increase family engagement. 45,000 children were part of the programme in 2024.

Letterbox Club, delivered to 850 children in 2024, brings additional support to vulnerable children and those looked after, from Nursery to Year 8 (ages 3-13), by providing high quality educational resources to support literacy and numeracy development.

These programmes, funded by Adnodd and sponsored by the Welsh Government, are delivered in partnership with health visitors and libraries to families across all 22 Local authorities in Wales.

17

I have the right
to access reliable
information

28

I have the right
to an education

29

I have the right
to reach my full
potential

31

I have the right
to relax, play,
and take part in
cultural activities



Bryn Celyn Primary School

Family Engagement in Action at Bryn Celyn Primary

At Bryn Celyn Primary School, strong family engagement is central to children's learning and development. Over the past few years, the school has strengthened connections with families through a range of programmes that support, educate, and empower parents and carers.

Highlights include:

- ▶ Curriculum workshops giving parents hands-on insight into their children's learning.
- ▶ 'Cook with Me' sessions promoting healthy eating and practical skills for families.
- ▶ 'Strengthening Families' workshops offering guidance on child behaviour, mental health, and family communication.
- ▶ 'Into Work' drop-ins supporting parents with employment and skills development.
- ▶ Stay and Play sessions for babies and toddlers, helping parents to bond and connect with other families.

Together, these initiatives create a supportive, inclusive environment that benefits children, parents, and the wider school community.

5

**My parents/
carers must have
support so I
can access all
my rights**

18

**I have the right
to be brought up
by both parents
if possible**

29

**I have the right
to reach my full
potential**



Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority (PCNPA)

1st 1,000 days project

Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority launched the 1st 1,000 Days outdoors project. The project seeks to connect families with nature and the outdoors, highlighting the value of wild spaces and outdoor play in contributing to the wellbeing of young children and their families.

Their target audiences for the work have been in some of Pembrokeshire's most disadvantaged communities with relatively high rates of child poverty.

[Find out more here.](#)

27

I have the right to food, clothing, and a clean, safe home

31

I have the right to relax, play, and take part in cultural activities

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

The Dungeons and Dragons Project

The Child and Family Community Psychology (CFCP) team, in partnership with the Education Welfare Service (EWS), runs the Dungeons and Dragons (DnD) project to support children's wellbeing and resilience.

DnD sessions allow young people to collaboratively create interactive stories, building social skills such as teamwork, empathy, problem-solving, and planning. The project also supports electively home-educated children in Blaenau Gwent, a group vulnerable to social isolation.

Participants highlighted making friendships as a key benefit, with one young person asking, "So when is the next session being held?"

[Find out more.](#)

29

I have the right to reach my full potential

31

I have the right to relax, play, and take part in cultural activities

ProMo Cymru

The Mind our Future Project

Since 2022, [ProMo Cymru](#) and [Mind in Gwent](#) have been working with a group of Peer Service Designers (aged 17-25) in Gwent to co-produce solutions to improve mental health support for children and young people in the area.

Funded by the National Lottery Community Fund, the Mind our Future Gwent (MoFG) project uses service design methodology to ensure we develop evidence-based and solution-focused approaches that effectively address the needs and priorities of young people.

Young people are at the heart of the project right from the start. We recruited and trained up 11 Peer Service Designers to work alongside us to shape the project, paying them the Real Living Wage.

During the Discover phase, the Peer Service Designers surveyed over 200 peers and identified 7 powerful key insights, which were captured in the [Discovery Report](#). In the Define and Develop phases, we hosted a series of engagement events and collaborative meetings with young people and professionals to co-create prototype solutions.

Following a period of testing and refinement, we are now ready to Deliver the final outputs:

- ▶ Two youth-led mental health conversation training workshops - one for professionals and one for young people.
- ▶ A dedicated Instagram page [@keepinmindgwent](#) aimed at reducing stigma and promoting ways to seek help.

MoFG is giving young people the power to co-produce solutions for the challenges they are facing, through a unique blend of youth work and employment. We want to create a culture of responsive, youth-centred mental health system in Gwent, where every young person knows how to access the help they need and every professional is aware of how best to support them.

[Find out more.](#)

3

Any decisions must consider what is best for me

12

I have the right to have my views heard and taken seriously

24

I have the right to good healthcare





The Year Ahead

Having done the foundational work together of developing and launching a strategy that all of us at Children in Wales can proudly work to, the year ahead is a chance to get further stuck into what we've set out to deliver. One of the questions I asked of the team when developing the strategy was, "What does a great day at Children in Wales look like?". While the answers were varied, a couple of consistent themes were clear: doing meaningful work that makes a difference, and connecting with others - whether young people, members, or fellow colleagues. We'll take that energy into the year ahead.

Our fundamentals – amplifying youth voice and influencing policy change – will be delivered with a keen eye on impact and meaning. I want to know that what my colleagues and I are doing really does change things. When we bring young people together to have their voices heard, I want to be able to report back to them that they were heard and made a difference. We'll ensure that young people's voices influence our own work too. Over the next year, we're going to take tangible actions to give young people a greater say over our direction and our delivery.

We'll also ensure that the focus on enhancing connection runs through what we do. Speaking to stakeholders for the strategy, it was clear that Children in Wales is really valued for its role as a convenor. There are thousands of skilled, passionate people working to make the lives of babies, children and young people better in Wales. Part of our role is to support them, promote the good work that they do, and help ensure that it has a platform to influence good practice around the country. Bringing members together with one another and with policymakers is an important role for Children in Wales and we will continue to develop how we do this into next year. We're planning to deliver an enhanced membership offer with more opportunities for members to come together, including a return to the regular conferences that we delivered before the pandemic.

So, there is plenty to do. Thank you for joining us on the journey.

Hugh Russell, CEO at Children in Wales

