

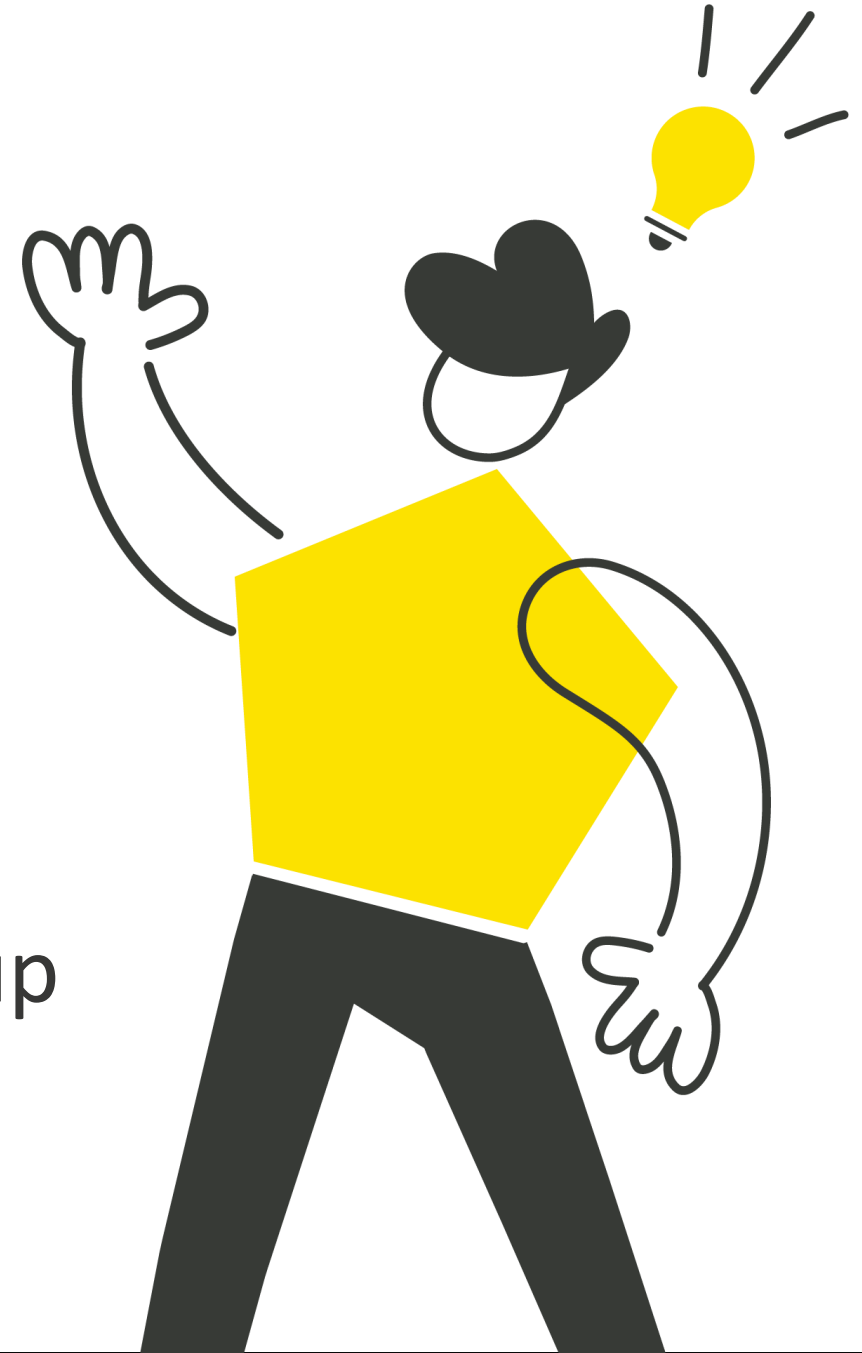


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Cost of Living Crisis The Early Years Matter

Helen Wales | Early Years Action Group

www.childreninwales.org.uk





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The Early Years Action Group (EYAG)

- Formed in 2020 to bring together third sector organisations who have a focus on Early Years, and to establish a collective voice to motivate and activate positive change for the youngest children.
- Includes representatives from BookTrust Cymru, Children in Wales, Early Years Wales, Home Start Cymru, Mudiad Meithrin, Save the Children, Nesta Cymru, NSPCC Wales, NYAS, Play Wales, NYAS and Save the Children.

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EYAG response to the Cost of Living crisis





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- One in three children in Wales are living in poverty.
- More than a quarter of children in all 22 Welsh local authorities are now living below the poverty line.
- Of the **4.2 million** children in poverty in the UK, **1.3 million** are babies and children under the age of five.



Poverty has a doubly negative effect on babies and young children:

- Access to opportunity is reduced through limited resources.
- Parental and family stress are increased as a result of the challenges of living with a constrained income.



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Children's rights are at risk when families face overwhelming pressures.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) explicitly recognises the central role played by parents and families in ensuring that children grow up healthy, happy and safe.

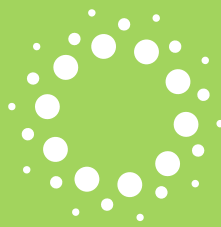
Article 3 states that Government must support families in their vital role in raising children.



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Polling August 2022 (Nesta)

- Parents are concerned about the cost of living over the next 12 months about paying for children's social activities (66%) as well as food (72%) and fuel (84%).
- 57% of parents in Wales were concerned about the long-term impact of the pandemic on their child's mental health.

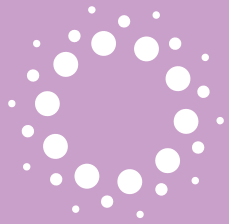


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“There is not one family that I am working with who have not said that they are now struggling”.

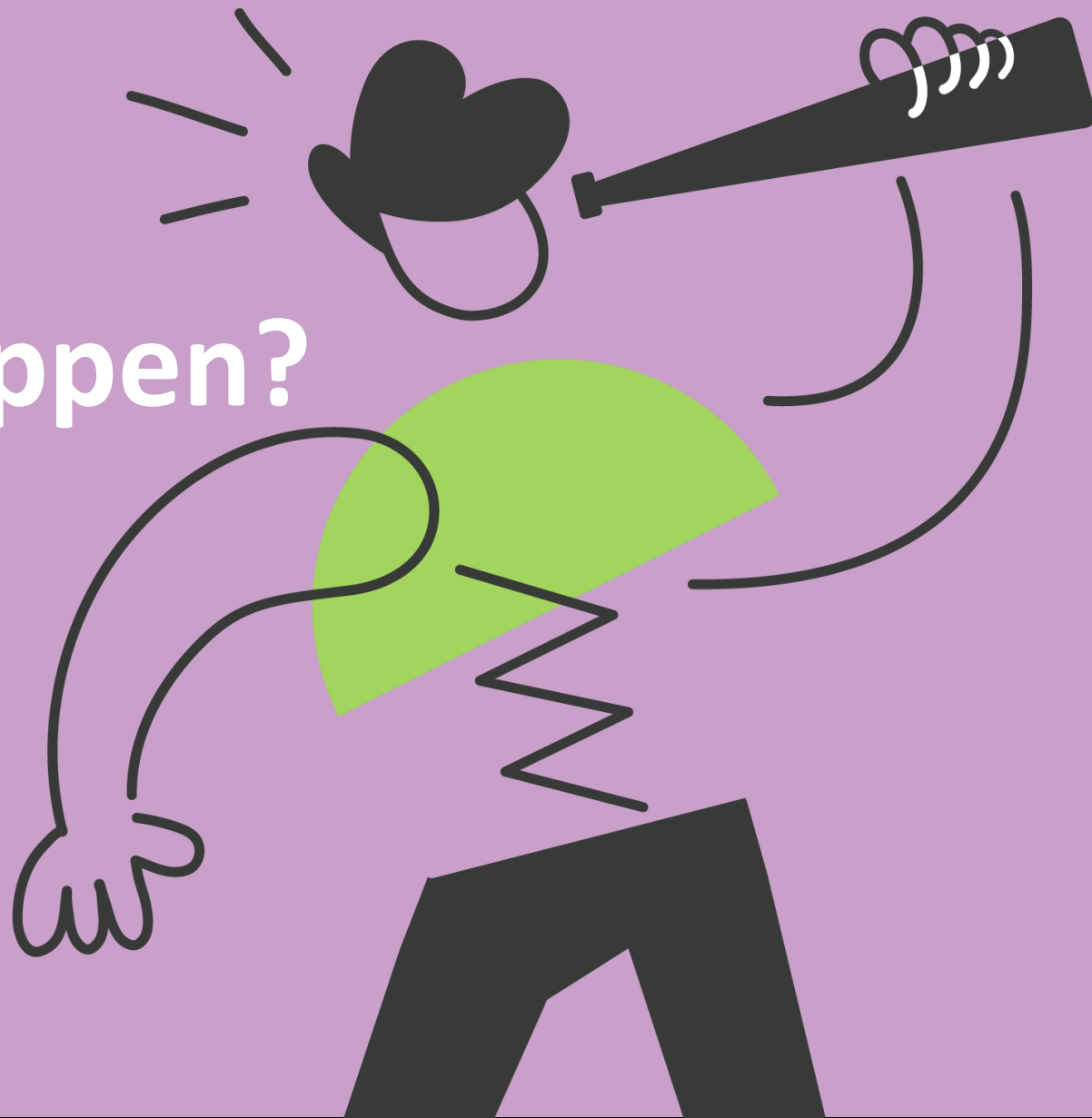
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What needs to happen?





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- We need long-term thinking as well as short-term and crisis responses.
- Our policy environment is favourable – is it enough?
- We need to work across services and sectors.
- Now is the time for action.



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Early Years Action Group Calls

- **Prioritise babies and young children in tough decisions ahead, including protecting services that support children and families and early intervention.**
- Ensure the right support at the right time for parents and parents-to-be: antenatal, perinatal mental health, childcare, dads.
- Invest in specialist parent-infant relationship services across Wales.
- Target campaigns to encourage take-up of benefits and financial support at families with babies and young children.



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- Bring forward plans for an integrated Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) system that promotes equity of experience for all children and equity of access (incl. Welsh medium provision).
- Revise the Child Poverty Strategy and create a Delivery Plan, with input from the early years sector.
- Ensure robust monitoring of the impact of poverty on children's outcomes.



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Listen to babies, young children and families to support decision making.



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[EYAG_COL_paper_Dec_2022.pdf \(childreninwales.org.uk\)](https://www.childreninwales.org.uk)



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