



## Executive Summary

Young Wales is based in Children in Wales, the national umbrella body for organisations working with children and young people, funded by Welsh Government. Young Wales aims to give children and young people in Wales a voice on issues that affect them, so that their views can be heard.

Welsh Government has a duty to have due regard to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child as part of the 'Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011.'

['We want Wales to be a wonderful place to grow up, live and work, now and in the future.'](#)

In 2022 Welsh Government launched the 'Children and Young People's Plan' with a commitment to the principles of the UNCRC and to seven cross governmental priorities developed with Young Wales in consultation with over 200 children and young people.

This report has been co-produced by the Young Volunteer Researchers and Young Wales staff and is about the experiences of young people and their human rights in Wales. It will be sent to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.

We worked with Young Wales to better understand what children's rights are, and what they mean for children and young people. We looked at the previous report, conducted a literature review, decided some questions to ask, and got in touch with other groups to see what children and young people saw as priorities in Wales. We contacted all 22 local authorities in Wales and a range of other organisations including the Welsh Youth Parliament, Children's Commissioner for Wales Office, Young Carers Network, National Participation Workers Network, Supporting Service children in education in Wales, TGP Cymru Refugee and Asylum Programme and many others, to better understand the priority areas on a local and national level.

We worked with Young Wales to collate the data from 41 young people consultations delivered by Young Wales between 2020 to 2022 with over 1000 young people contributing. We drew upon data received from events attended by Young Wales between 2020 to 2022 including the newly formed 2022 annual young carers Wales Festival and annual Young Wales Festival with over 200 young people in total attending across both events. We also consulted with the Young Wales young people advisory groups with 56 young members that include: Education and Social Justice Special Interest Group, Health and Social Services Special Interest Group, Climate Change and Rural Affairs Special Interest Group, Young Wales Project Board and the National Youth Stakeholders Group; to further inform this report. We also created an online survey with questions on children's rights and on the priority areas which had been decided by children and young people across Wales.



We asked organisations and young people to identify their current priority areas, we then asked young people to rank the priority areas in order of importance as follows:

1. Cost of Living
2. Mental Health and Wellbeing
3. Addiction and Substance Misuse
4. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
5. Children's Rights and Participation
6. Education
7. Crime
8. Life Experiences
9. Play
10. Transport
11. Online Safety
12. COVID-19
13. Climate Change

We listened to what children and young people have told us and have come up with some recommendations for each of the priority areas as follows:

### **Recommendations**

#### **Cost of Living**

- Full roll out of free school meals
- Re-Nationalisation of organisations like energy and transport providers
- Better standards of living
- Free Activities for children and young people
- More financial support for people living in poverty

#### **Mental Health and Wellbeing**

- Increased levels of support and earlier intervention
- Ensure better access to services.
- Offer a wider range of services
- Increase visibility and normalise mental health
- Create Safe Spaces

#### **Addiction and Substance Misuse**

- Stronger enforcement of age restricted products.
- More support for those who are already addicted to substances.
- Make drugs and substances un-cool through awareness raising strategies.
- Include drug and substance awareness in the new curriculum and in training for teachers.



### **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion**

- Ensure young people feel safe by introducing more laws to protect us all.
- Include Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in the New Curriculum for young people and training for teachers.

### **Children's Rights and Participation**

- Increase awareness activities and resources so that all children and young people know they have rights and how to access their rights.
- Create more opportunities for young people to have a say.
- Ensure that all children and young people have the opportunity to be heard representing the diversity and culture within Wales.
- Ensure that opportunities for participation are accessible and inclusive to all children and young people.
- Increase awareness resources and training for adults.

### **Education**

- Improve awareness of the new curriculum
- Make education more relevant to the real world. Provide work experience that interests and motivates young people.
- Provide more funding in education for resources and meaningful experiences and opportunities for all young people.
- Make education accessible and inclusive to all children and young people in Wales.
- Provide quality mental health training and support for teachers and young people to change the stigma around mental health.
- Change the rules around school uniforms so they are affordable for all families.

### **Crime**

- Increase police numbers and visibility and consider introducing harsher punishments as a preventative approach to reduce crime rates.
- There needs to be a change in the system to prevent crime, support those who commit crimes and support victims of crime.
- Raise awareness and education on crime and where to get help.
- Create safer spaces for children and young people.
- Wales should have more devolved powers for the justice system, as it would have a specific focus on Welsh issues such as the ongoing addiction and substance misuse and knife crime problems prevalent here.



### **Life Experiences**

- More tailored and specific services and support is required for children and young people who experience negative life experiences. Including earlier mental health interventions and preventative approaches for mental health support.
- More funding is required to ensure support and services can be offered at the right time and appropriately to the needs of the child or young person.

### **Play**

- We need more options, opportunities and time to play.
- There should be open access and free opportunities to play for all children and young people in Wales.
- Play spaces should be accessible, inclusive and safe.

### **Transport**

- Make public transport free for all children and young people.
- Improve reliability, frequency and accessibility of public transport so that children and young people feel safe.
- Extend catchment areas so that more young people can access free school transport.
- Improve the public transport infrastructure so that it is accessible in all areas including rural areas of Wales.

### **Online Safety**

- Introduce more rules and accountability on providers to check ages of users accessing the web to make it safer for all.
- Raise more awareness of online safety amongst children and young people using real life experiences as examples.
- Provide more training and resources on online safety for adults.

### **COVID-19**

- Provide additional 1 to 1 support and resources for children and young people who need it post pandemic.
- Continue to acknowledge the long-term effects of the pandemic on children and young people. Specifically with regard to mental health and wellbeing and provide support to mitigate the long-term impacts.
- Provide safe and meaningful opportunities for children and young people to socialise and regain their social skills and face-to-face interactions with their friends and peers.





## Climate Change

- Embed lessons, resources and more campaigns on climate change in to the curriculum to raise awareness on the reality now, what is being done, and what can be done with practical advice on how children and young people can make a difference.
- Provide clearer recycling bins, more safe walkways to school and support more outdoor activities such as gardening and litter picking.
- Reduce industrial impact on the climate and offer more incentives for eco-friendly industries.
- Listen to children and young people on climate change.

Young people are using their voices, claiming their right to be heard, and telling us what issues are important to them. It is crucial that we listen, understand, and act upon the concerns and suggestions outlined within this report.

Co-producing this report with Young Wales has been a fantastic opportunity for us volunteers. We have not only been able to share our own views but also amplify the voices and advocate for fellow young people.

In Wales, Children's rights are generally upheld. However, there are some improvements to be made. The UNCRC works hand in hand with ideas of equality, diversity, and inclusion. Throughout the report accessibility and inclusivity has a strong presence. When actions are taken following this review, this ethos must remain as a central factor. Children's rights should be the forefront of decision-making, with young people's voices acting as the driving force for change and progress.

