

Briefing Paper

What are the main political parties promising to deliver for babies, children and young people ahead of the Senedd Election in May 2026.

The following provides a snapshot of some of the proposals the main political parties are promising to deliver for babies, children and young people in their party manifestos released in advance of the Senedd election on May 7th 2026. The manifestos are listed in order of their release.

Welsh Conservative priorities and how they relate to the rights and wellbeing of babies, children and young people

The Welsh Conservative 'Fix Wales' Manifesto outlines a series of policy proposals aimed at strengthening support for babies, children and young people with a clear emphasis on families, education and future opportunities. The Party commits to expanding access to affordable childcare to enable parents to balance work and family responsibilities, while supporting high-quality early childhood development. Proposals to support families include reducing childcare costs, through an extension of free childcare from 9 months – 4 years and by introducing a grandparent childcare payment for those who care for their grandchildren. In education, the manifesto prioritises raising school standards, improving literacy and numeracy outcomes, and strengthening accountability to drive improvements in learner outcomes. The Manifesto also highlights the importance of offering diverse vocational pathways, expanding apprenticeships and building stronger links between education providers and employers to support successful transitions into the workforce. Additionally, the Manifesto includes a commitment to develop a comprehensive tackling poverty action plan, incorporating targeted strategies to address and reduce child poverty.

The Manifesto outlines several commitments aimed at improving the wellbeing and opportunities of children, young people and their families. These include bringing an end to use of hotels and caravans as emergency accommodation for families with children: protecting free bus travel and offering a free rail card to all 16–24-year-olds; increasing capacity for mental health services for children and young people to prevent placements at great distances from their loved ones.

There is also recognition of the contribution made by young carers, with proposals for through a young carers card scheme, free bus travel, and grants to access education, training and employment opportunities.

Other key priorities set out in the Manifesto include:

- Launching an inquiry into grooming gangs
- Reform of flying start
- Introduction of an autism and learning disability bill
- Review of current ALN legislation
- Permitting parents to withdraw their children from sex education and religious education lessons.

Children in Wales welcome proposals to prioritise early childhood development and ensure children get the best start in life, including policies that aim to expand free childcare, improve health, education and housing support, and provide stronger provisions for young carers.

[Welsh Conservatives Manifesto 2026 EN_0.pdf](#)

Reform UK priorities and how they relate to the rights and wellbeing of babies, children and young people

The Reform UK Wales Senedd Manifesto sets out a programme of proposed reforms centred on education, skills development and economic growth, with the stated aim of improving outcomes for children and young people across Wales. A central theme of the Manifesto is the emphasis placed upon raising academic standards, particularly through proposed changes to the school curriculum. Reform UK places a strong emphasis on the importance of core academic subjects, including English, mathematics and science, with the intention of strengthening foundational skills and improving educational attainment. The Manifesto commits to reviewing the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) system, with the intention to address inconsistencies in support across different areas of Wales. Reform UK proposes enhanced provision for special schools, alongside improved access to specialist support for teachers in mainstream settings. These measures are designed to ensure learners with complex or additional needs receive appropriate and timely support. In relation to health and wellbeing, the Manifesto proposes building on existing mental health provision within the school curriculum. Reform UK highlight the importance of schools continuing to prioritise mental health alongside physical health, supporting emotional wellbeing and early intervention for children and young people.

The Manifesto outline plans to expand vocational education pathways and apprenticeship opportunities. This includes the introduction of a national rural apprenticeship scheme, aimed at supporting young people in rural communities to improve access to skills development and employment opportunities. Additional proposals include investment in sport and extracurricular activities across Wales, as well as recruiting additional health visitors to help improve school readiness and early development outcomes.

Other key priorities set out in the Manifesto include:

- Expanding early intervention services to reduce crisis-level demand and prevent young people from falling through gaps at critical points
- Launching an enquiry into grooming gangs

Children in Wales welcome the focus on raising educational standards, strengthening mental health support, improving ALN provision, expanding early intervention, and increasing vocational and apprenticeship opportunities for young people.

[welsh-manifesto-english.pdf](#)

Welsh Labour priorities and how they relate to the rights and wellbeing of babies, children and young people

The Welsh Labour 'A New Chapter for Wales: Fairness you Feel' Manifesto sets out a range of policies aimed at improving outcomes for babies, children and young people, with a focus on education, health, welfare and reducing inequalities. Central to the Manifesto are commitments to tackle the cost of living, expand access to childcare and continue to offer cheaper transport, including the £1 bus fare for under 25s. The Party commits to reducing waiting times for neurodevelopmental assessments and investing in community based mental health support, particularly for pregnant women and new mothers. In education, Welsh Labour pledges to raise standards by targeting numeracy and literacy support in years 6 and 7, ensuring all school staff are trained to support children with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) and implementing new national guidance on pupil behaviour supported by resources to tackle weapons in schools. Addressing child poverty and the cost of living are key priorities. The Manifesto includes proposals to expand the Baby Bundles scheme, extend free school meals in secondary schools for households receiving Universal Credit, and put the Welsh benefits Charter into law. These measures are intended to support families and improve children's access to essential services and a decent standard of living.

The Manifesto also outlines commitments to support children and young people's mental health and wellbeing through improved access to school counselling services and embedding the whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing. Proposals for reforming the care of care experienced children focus on keeping children closer to home and with families wherever possible, whilst building on the Step-up, Step-down fostering model and strengthen support for kinship and special guardianship carers.

Other key priorities set out in the Manifesto include:

- Acting on the national strategy for preventing and responding to child sexual abuse and safeguarding governance review recommendations
- Establishing a national body for youth work to support the delivery of universal, open access, bilingual youth work.
- Ending homelessness by 2034, including stopping children being placed in B&B accommodation by 2030
- Phasing in funded childcare from nine months of age

Children in Wales welcome policies that give babies the best start in life, tackle child poverty and reduce inequalities, improving children's rights to education, health, adequate standard of living and early development and provide stronger provisions for care experienced children and young people.

[English Manifesto PDF.pdf - Google Drive](#)

Welsh Green Party priorities and how they relate to the rights and wellbeing of babies, children and young people

The Welsh Green Party Manifesto sets out a holistic programme of social, economic and environmental policies to support the rights and wellbeing of babies, children and young people. It prioritises early childhood development, tackling inequality and improving living conditions, with key commitment to expand free childcare from nine months and increasing funded hours to support children's development and help families balance work and family life. Priorities in education focus on ensuring fair access to high-quality education for all learners, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. The Party places an emphasis on wellbeing in schools, recognising the importance of mental health alongside academic achievement. Proposals include applying evidence-based approaches to improving literacy, phone free schools, eco-literacy, food literacy and strengthened health, wellbeing and relationships education, inclusive of LGBTQIA relationships. In relation to mental health, the Manifesto prioritises early intervention through the implementation of a young people's mental health plan and improved support for the 'missing middle', alongside strengthened work on healthy relationships, sexual health and substance misuse.

Improving housing and living conditions are identified as key areas for supporting children's wellbeing. The Manifesto includes proposals aimed at ensuring families have access to safe, warm and secure homes, tackling homelessness and addressing the rising costs of living. Measures to reduce child poverty include proposals such as abolishing council tax and introducing a land value tax, introducing free bus transport for under 22s and £1 bus fare for people aged 22–59. These proposals are complemented by actions to lower the cost of the school day, including extending universal free meals to secondary schools and limiting branded uniform items.

Other key priorities set out in the Manifesto include:

- Campaigning for care experienced people to be recognised as a protected characteristic under equality law
- Establishing a dedicated gender service for under 17s
- Access to creative, cultural, and reading opportunities for children and families

Children in Wales welcome policies that address child poverty, reduce inequality, and improve mental health provision, enhance education opportunities and raise living standards, supporting children's rights to a safe and healthy childhood and positive life chances.

[Senedd-Manifesto-2026-EN2.pdf](#)

Plaid Cymru priorities and how they relate to the rights and wellbeing of babies, children and young people

Plaid Cymru's 'For Wales' Manifesto sets out a child-centred programme focused on strengthening the rights, wellbeing and development of babies, children and young people across Wales. A central commitment is to fully embed the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) into Welsh law and decision-making, ensuring children's rights are upheld and that they are meaningfully involved in decisions that affect their lives.

The Manifesto prioritises universal access to high-quality, affordable childcare and early education to improve developmental outcomes and reduce inequalities linked to socioeconomic disadvantage.

In compulsory education, the party commits to increased investment in schools, strengthened support for children with Additional Learning Needs (ALN), and targeted measures to close the attainment gaps. In relation to health, the Manifesto prioritises equitable access to NHS services, with a particular emphasis on expanding mental health provision for children and adolescents. Early intervention and integrated care models are highlighted to improve continuity and effectiveness of support. Commitments include enhanced support for children with disabilities and long-term health conditions and closer integration of Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and Adult Mental Health Services (AMHS) to address the 'cliff edge' experienced by young people when they reach 18.

Tackling child poverty is identified as a core priority, with a commitment to develop a new child poverty plan with clear targets, benchmarks and milestones. The Manifesto proposes strengthened social protection measures, including expanding free school meals into secondary schools for families receiving Universal Credit, introducing Cynnal as a Welsh child payment to support low-income families, and increased devolved control over welfare to enable more responsive support. Housing proposals align with children's rights, with commitments to increase the availability of safe, affordable homes for families.

Other key priorities set out in the Manifesto include:

- Equitable access to perinatal mental health and parent-infant relationship services across health boards
- Simplifying and clarifying the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) system
- New duties to report child sexual abuse
- Reducing waiting times for neurodevelopmental assessments alongside improved neurodiversity awareness among professionals and service providers.

Children in Wales welcome policies that tackle child poverty, address inequalities, strengthen mental health support, improve educational opportunities, and raise living standards for children and young people.

[For Wales - 2026 Manifesto.pdf](#)

Welsh Liberal Democrat priorities and how they relate to the rights and wellbeing of babies, children and young people

The Welsh Liberal Democrats 'A Stronger Wales in a Stronger UK' Manifesto focuses on early intervention, educational opportunity and reducing inequality to improve outcomes for babies, children and young people. It commits to expanding access to childcare, including 30 hours of free childcare provision for children aged nine months to four years, to support early childhood development, reduce inequalities and help parents balance work and family responsibilities and ease financial pressures. The party also proposes providing free school meals to eligible children throughout the school holidays.

For older children and young people, the Manifesto prioritises raising educational standards and tackling attainment gaps, ensuring every child can reach their full potential, regardless of their background. The Manifesto sets out a commitment to identify pupils at risk of disengagement from education at age 14 and working more closely with schools and Careers Wales to provide targeted support.

The Manifesto outlines proposals to improve transitions into further education, training and employments, including the introduction of a school leaver guarantee to ensure every young person leaving compulsory education receives an offer of further education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within three months.

The Manifesto sets out measures to improve access to opportunity, including a commitment to extend the £1 bus fare to under 25s helping to reduce transport barriers to education, training and work. The party proposes enshrining the rights of children and young people through Bill Pob Plentyn [Bill Pob Plentyn - A Law for Every Child by childreninwales - Issuu](#), which aims to ensure every child has the rights, support, and opportunities they need for the best possible start in life.

Other key priorities set out in the Manifesto include:

- Improve early access to support and address chronic CAMHS underfunding
- Require NHS bodies and Local Authorities to put transition plans in from age 14 for disabled young people needing long-term support, ensuring continuity at 18
- Ensure all settings can identify and support children with Additional Learning Needs (ALN)

Children in Wales welcome commitments to early intervention, high-quality childcare, reduced financial pressures on families, and improved educational opportunities, and transport access for young people, alongside wider efforts to tackle inequalities and improve outcomes for babies, children and young people across Wales.

[A Stronger Wales in a Stronger UK - Welsh Liberal Democrats - Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru](#)

