
Senedd Cymru | Welsh Parliament

Y Pwyllgor Cydraddoldeb a Chyfiawnder Cymdeithasol | Equality and Social Justice Committee

Ymateb gan: Plant Yng Nghymru | Evidence from: Children In Wales

To - Senedd Equality and Social Justice Committee

Submitted by Children in Wales-Plant Yng Nghymru

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015: Post-legislative scrutiny

Introduction

We welcome the opportunity to contribute comments to inform the Equality and Social Justice Committees inquiry on post-legislative scrutiny of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (thereafter 'Act').

We note that the Committee is keen to build on the existing body of literature regarding the operation of the Act rather than duplicate, with the terms of reference specifying the areas for our consideration.

Our response is focused on the effectiveness of particular priorities set out in relevant sections of the Act and within supporting statutory guidance as they impact on babies, children, young people and their families. To inform our response, we have drawn upon our existing knowledge and experience since the Act gained Royal Assent, complimented by information recently received from our members through a bespoke survey.

General Comments

The introduction of the Act elevated Wales on to the global stage, providing a legislative framework by which public bodies and their partners could shape change around the Well-being goals for children, adults and communities, both now and for future generations. At Children in Wales, we share the national mission and vision of the Act and that which it is trying to achieve in contributing towards delivering better outcomes for babies, children and young people as part of a whole population approach. Despite the lack of explicit reference and consideration given to the often-distinct well-being needs of babies, children and young people, statutory guidance does serve to remind decision makers that the Five Ways of Working supports existing commitments through the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).¹

In any future review of the statutory guidance to support implementation of the Act, we would wish to see a more explicit and considered recognition of the rights and needs of babies, children and young people, recognising their unique attributes, characteristics and differing needs, including those who can benefit from additional help, support, advice and information. Greater prioritisation would better reflect the first of the seven identified foundations of the then proposed Act, that 'children need to be given the best start in life from the very early years'²

Prevention

The focus on prevention within the Act is still to be welcomed and has served to drive greater prominence within future policy and legislation³, for example through the Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act and more recently the 10-year Mental Health and Well-being Strategy. However, as demand for services has increased and needs have escalated, there is a growing need to ensure that preventative and early intervention programmes and services which provide an essential support mechanism and a safety net for babies, children, young people and families are fully protected from adverse short-term budgetary decisions. Investment and extension of preventative support services and programmes for families can make a crucial difference to children's lives and alleviate the need for

¹ The Children's Commissioner for Wales published a helpful toolkit which reinforces how the Act upholds the spirit of the UNCRC to support public bodies to embed The Right Way Approach [CCFW-FGCW-Report-English_01.pdf](#)

² [The-Wales-We-Want-Report-English-Final.pdf](#)

³ The focus in the Act on the Welsh Language, environment and Culture was also recognised by many members responding to our survey

more costly and lengthy support and intervention at a later stage. For example, research has shown that cutbacks to preventative services for children from 12 years old has a direct correlation with numbers of 16–17-year-olds coming into care.

With a rising demand for support, invariably resource and focus has shifted towards responding to people in crisis rather than providing the means to address issues much earlier in a person's journey or indeed preventing issues emerging in the first place. Our recent publication 'State of the Parenting and Family Support Sector 2025'⁴ reported services being stretched well beyond their original remit, with a workforce increasingly responding to more complex caseloads. Evidence continues to show that early intervention and prevention, particularly in the first 1000 days of a child's life, can have a transformative impact on long-term outcomes for children and families. Yet as the Future Generations Commissioner rightly points out, prevention budgets are being cut, and without investment, public services will not be there for children⁵. Pressure to meet short term needs and respond to immediate crises has also been highlighted in the Audit Wales report into the Act.⁶

Long Term

Many members responding to our survey stressed the challenges facing children's third sector organisations in not being able to fully plan and focus on solutions for long term challenges and goals due to the short-term nature of current funding arrangements⁷. This despite the valuable role children's third sector organisations play in supporting public bodies to deliver their priorities and enable the Welsh Governments overarching goals to be met. One-year funding cycles put immense pressure and stress on staff and makes it challenging for organisations to commit to long-term planning.

There is an urgent need to review budget processes and allocations, with a view to securing longer term and sustainable levels of funding for the children's third sector to enable them to fully contribute to delivering the

⁴ [Children in Wales | State of the Parenting and Family Support Sector in Wales 2025 – A sector under strain but full of resolve](#)

⁵ [Future Generations Report 2025 - Future Generations Wales](#)

⁶ [No time to lose: Lessons from our work under the Well-being of Future Generations Act](#)

⁷ For example, the need for longer term funding was raised by our member Clybiau Plant Cymru

vision of the Act and to achieve better and lasting outcomes for babies, children, young people and their families

Tackling Poverty

The Act made consequential amendments to Part 1 of the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010 enabling public bodies to discharge the duty to tackle child poverty through the introduction of local Well-being Plans. This was intended to provide for a more holistic, citizen focused approach to the planning and delivery of public services in Wales, by public bodies setting out local objectives to improve the social and economic wellbeing of individuals and communities, including babies, children and young people.

Many of our members shared concerns at the time of the Acts introduction that the rationalisation of the planning and reporting process would not bring about an improved focus on tackling child poverty locally within a wider remit. Previously there was a statutory duty on local authorities and public bodies to produce a bespoke Child Poverty Strategy, setting out the actions they would take towards contributing to the shared objective of eradicating child poverty in Wales. This duty is no longer in place as previously prescribed through the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010⁸.

Whilst all Well-being Plans developed through regional multi-agency Public Service Boards outline steps to address child poverty in their locality, many lack the necessary detail as to the specific actions they will take; are unclear how impact will be measured or progress reported or outline the necessary timetable for completion and the resources allocated. Our second report⁹ into child poverty and Well-being Plans published in 2025, provides a snapshot of the actions being taken to meet the statutory duty, as well as highlighting noticeable gaps in information and a lack of indicators and performance measures in many regions by which to monitor, measure and report progress to their communities.

A greater urgency is needed to address rising levels of local and regional child poverty¹⁰ and widening economic inequalities in every part of Wales. We would wish to see existing duties strengthened through any future

⁸ The duty remains on Welsh Government.

⁹ [Children in Wales | Reports & Publications](#)

¹⁰ Recent local level data shows that over a quarter of all children live in poverty in 21 of the 22 local authority areas in Wales [Local Child Poverty Statistics - End Child Poverty](#)

review of the statutory guidance for public service boards. This should include robust periodic reporting requirements (as is already in place for the Welsh Government) alongside performance management systems and monitoring and scrutiny arrangements. Whilst local determination should be protected, we would suggest a more prescriptive approach is reintroduced which would be in keeping with the 13 Broad Aims for contributing to the eradication of child poverty previously set out to guide public bodies and outlined in Part 1, Section 1 of the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010¹¹

Participation

The Act also made amendments to Part 2, Section 12 of the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010 which required local authorities to make arrangements to promote and facilitate the participation of children in decisions which might affect them¹². The scope of their participation is wider than their involvement in the Well-Being Plan, with the expectation that they adopt the Children and Young People's National Participation Standards for Wales and embed participation throughout their structures¹³. Local authorities are expected to establish and resource a Youth Council or Forum, whilst other public bodies should ensure that opportunities are in place for children and young people's involvement in decision making processes which supports their overall well-being (Section 5 of the Act).

The Welsh Government are required to monitor local arrangements for children and young people's participation under the Act. The Committee will be interested to learn how the participation duty is currently being applied in all regions of Wales and whether there is a need to strengthen existing Guidance and oversight arrangements to ensure that children and young people's participation is fully embedded into all aspects of planning, delivering and reviewing of services as the Act intends. As has been reported elsewhere, children and young people remain underrepresented in decision making processes¹⁴

Play

¹¹ [Children and Families \(Wales\) Measure 2010](#)

¹² Statutory Guidance on children and young people's participation for Public Service Boards – Annex B - [SPSE 3: Collective role \(public services boards\)](#)

¹³ [Children and young people's national participation standards | GOV.WALES](#)

¹⁴ [Future Generations Report 2025 - Future Generations Wales](#)

The need for enhanced guidance for public bodies to help identify and deliver wellbeing goals for children has been made by our member organisation Play Wales¹⁵ in their response to our survey. As well as advocating for a named play champion on public services boards, they have called for play and the existing Play Sufficiency duty to be incorporated into revised guidance, referencing the Ministerial Review of Play report recommendations to widen the scope of the statutory duty.

National Well-being Indicators

Whilst we have welcomed the National indicators and informed their development through responding to a number of consultation opportunities since the Act came into force, we recognise their limitations and overreliance on their use to monitor policy delivery despite notable gaps¹⁶. We have previously suggested that a roadmap towards the targets is developed and which includes interim milestones to help track progress, and to allow for any necessary adjustments and changes to be made, particularly as new data becomes available. The lack of disaggregate data, including by age and protected characteristic, hampers resources being better targeted where action is most needed. Introducing milestones towards the targets and improving the availability of data would allow for better reporting on how the Act is delivering positive change and improved outcomes for the population.

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About

Children in Wales is the national umbrella organisation in Wales for children and young people's issues, bringing organisations and individuals from all disciplines and sectors together. One of our core aims is to make the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)** a reality in Wales. Children in Wales campaigns for sustainable quality services for all children and young people, with special attention for children in need and works to ensure children and young people have a voice in issues that affect them.

¹⁵ Please see Play Wales submission to the Committee's inquiry

¹⁶ For example, the Monitoring Framework as one tool by which to measure implementation of the Welsh Government's Child Poverty Strategy was informed by the National Well-being Indicators [Child Poverty Strategy Monitoring Framework](#)

Children in Wales works closely with its member organisations and has an established and recognised number of national professional forums and networks. This provides an opportunity for a broad range of our members to share knowledge and expertise on particular thematic priorities, with a view to maximizing capacity and impact across the sector and to coproduce agreed positions in relation to policy and legislation.

Children in Wales also manages and facilitates the **Young Wales** programme of work through funding from Welsh Government. This initiative provides an opportunity for a broad range of children and young people to be involved in national decisions which will have an impact on their lives. It also provides a key role and function in respect of supporting participation activity and adherence to the National Standards for Children and Young People's Participation at a local level

For further information on the work of **Children in Wales**, please see www.childreninwales.org.uk.