



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

PUBLICATION

# Consultation on the draft Child Poverty Strategy for Wales 2023

We are seeking your views on the draft Child Poverty Strategy for Wales.

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# Ministerial foreword

Child poverty blights lives and stores up problems for the future.

It does not have to be like this.

In the first decade of devolution, child poverty fell across Wales. The efforts of government in Wales caught a rising tide of investment by the UK Government, using its far greater fire power, and made that effort go further.

Since 2010, and the age of austerity, investment by successive UK Governments has been reduced. Child poverty targets have been abandoned. The child poverty unit in the UK Government has been closed down. Time after time, the documents produced by those Governments demonstrate that the impact of the policies pursued will be to add more children into poverty. The 'benefit cap', by itself, is designed to ensure that children have to carry the consequences of decisions made by adults, in which they played no part.

In these circumstances, while the efforts of the Welsh Government can mitigate, or slow down, the impact of UK decisions, they cannot reverse the tide which flows so powerfully and deliberately in the opposite direction.

In this Strategy we set out everything we are doing, and the difference it makes in the lives of children and families in all parts of Wales. Without a change in the broader context, however, those efforts will always be uphill - seeking to mitigate the creation of child poverty, rather than to collaborate in its elimination.

The Strategy therefore sets out what we are able to do in the circumstances we currently face. What we really need, and what those children who live in poverty in Wales need, is a change of UK Government. Then, once again, we will demonstrate that a willing partnership across government at all levels can make a decisive difference: ensuring that families have a sufficient income to lift

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children out of poverty; providing decent, dependable homes in which those families can shape their futures; investing in education and skills to prepare our young people for the jobs of tomorrow, and doing all that in a way that amplifies the voice of children themselves, knowing that the rights of every child depend upon making those rights a reality for all.

Minister for Social Justice and Chief Whip.

## Introduction

Our current Programme for Government commitments are being shaped and delivered with the need to combat poverty and inequality as a central driver. The draft strategy for consultation seeks to ensure that key policies currently under development and those in the future deliver the Government's policy on addressing poverty. It also sets the direction for our partners and stakeholders across Wales to enable better collaboration in the delivery of our poverty outcomes.

The **Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010** places a duty on Welsh Ministers to set child poverty objectives and to report every 3 years on progress towards achieving those objectives. The Welsh Government's child poverty objectives are rooted in what the evidence tells us about where we can have most impact in terms of improving outcomes for low-income families.

The last **Child Poverty Strategy for Wales** was published in 2015. The Strategy identified 5 Objectives for tackling poverty and 5 priorities for immediate action for supporting families.

This draft strategy builds on the investments of the last decade, refocuses the 2015 objectives for supporting families out of poverty and prioritises actions to mitigate both the harmful effects of living in poverty and improve the

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opportunities for children living in poverty.

The latest triannual **Child Poverty Strategy: 2022 Progress report** was published in December 2022 and covers the 3 years from December 2019. The report shows the Welsh Government has made tackling child poverty a priority.

In delivering the 2015 strategy, we have made significant investment in a range of policies and programmes to promote prosperity, prevent and mitigate poverty and reduce the number of children living in poverty in Wales. Despite this investment, poverty remains a significant issue that limits the opportunities of too many children, young people, families and communities.

The key indicator of child poverty is the percentage of children living in households below 60% of the median UK household income (after housing costs). The statistics are stark: the most recent **evidence** suggests that 28% of children were living in relative income poverty in the 3 financial years ending 2020 to 2022.

Children living in a household where no adult is working remain at higher risk of relative income poverty (43%) compared to children living in a working household (26%). However, 81% of children who were living in relative income poverty lived in working households. Lone parent households were most likely to be in relative income poverty (at 38%). There was a 40% likelihood of people whose head of household comes from a Black, Asian or minority ethnic group living in relative income poverty. This compares to a 22% likelihood for those whose head of household comes from a white ethnic group. 31% of children who lived in a family where there was a disabled person were in relative income poverty compared with 26% of those in families where no-one was disabled.

Welsh Ministers are clear that child poverty rates in Wales are too high. However, the UK Government holds the key levers for tackling poverty: powers over the tax and welfare systems. The 2 child limit and the benefits cap have been particularly damaging (**Joseph Rowntree Foundation**, 2023).

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On the economy, the financial levers currently available to the Welsh Government limit our ability to respond quickly to emerging needs and regional disparities and too often we are dependent on decisions made by the UK Government. The impact and influence of the UK Government economic policies and welfare system on poverty in Wales means we have to use the levers we do have in a more joined up and effective way if we are to make a lasting difference, creating Made in Wales, Made for Wales solutions.

The 2011 Child Poverty Strategy for Wales defines poverty as:

“ a long-term state of not having sufficient resources to afford food, reasonable living conditions or amenities or to participate in activities (such as access to attractive neighbourhoods and open spaces) which are taken for granted by others in their society”. ”

To ensure consistency in our approach and continuity with existing action we are taking to tackle child poverty and poverty more generally, this definition is retained.

At the centre of this is ensuring that no matter what the economic circumstances of the household in which a child lives, they have the same opportunities to realise their rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). This means engaging with and supporting children and young people themselves, as well as those who care for them and the communities, they grow up in.

We have embedded the 5 ways of working under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, 2015 in this draft strategy. These principles are central to delivering our long-term anti-poverty agenda for action, delivered in collaboration with our partners and stakeholders across Wales, with the needs of our communities and those with lived experience of poverty at its core. Achieving the seven well-being goals will, in turn, help to deliver our ambitions

on tackling child poverty.

The **Socio-Economic Duty** came into force in Wales on 31 March 2021 gives us an opportunity to do things differently in Wales. It puts tackling inequality and helping those who are socio-economically disadvantaged at the heart of decision-making and will build on the good work public bodies are already doing and supports our work on tackling child poverty.

## Our evidence base

The Wales Centre for Public Policy (WCPP) review of international poverty and social exclusion strategies, programmes and interventions **Poverty and social exclusion: A way forward** (2022) concluded that an anti-poverty strategy would by necessity need to prioritise areas for action in order to be effective. It sets out that the views of those with lived experience of poverty and social exclusion should play a critical role to determine what is most important.

**Socio-economic disadvantage** is highly intersectional. What this means is that deprivation interacts with protected characteristics, and certain people and communities experience worse outcomes as a result of barriers they face because of their protected characteristic as well as socio-economic disadvantage. The intersectionality between deprivation and other characteristics can be thought of as a web, where different areas connect, compounding and exacerbating each other.

The Welsh Government has a proud history of working to ensure that the views of the people of Wales are at the centre of our decision making. The duty of due regard to the UNCRC that is placed on Welsh Ministers through **Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011** means that seeking the voices of children and young people is integrated into the process for the policy decisions we make.

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We have worked with our partners to hold engagement events in the communities where people live, delivered by organisations that people know and trust. This was especially important in relation to engaging people with protected characteristics, including Black, Asian and minority ethnic people, disabled and neurodivergent people, LGBTQ+ people and women receiving support because of gendered issues.

The engagement activity has involved engagement with 3,358 people. 1,953 of these people engaged via work targeted at those with protected characteristics. Of the total, 1,402 were children or young people, 1,329 were parent/carers and 319 were grandparents and great grandparents. This has included care experienced young people and kinship carers. We also engaged with 222 representatives of organisations directly or indirectly. The information gathered through this engagement activity has had a direct impact on our decisions about the areas to focus on in this draft strategy.

We have identified 5 objectives which we believe reflect the areas we must continue to take forward to make a measurable change to the lives of children and young people in poverty, including those with protected characteristics, and deliver for the families and communities that children and young people are growing up in.

- Objective 1: to reduce costs and maximise the incomes of families.
- Objective 2: to create pathways out of poverty so that children and young people and their families have opportunities to realise their potential.
- Objective 3: to support child and family wellbeing and make sure that work across Welsh Government delivers for children living in poverty, including those with protected characteristics, so that they can enjoy their rights and have better outcomes.
- Objective 4: to ensure children, young people and their families are treated with dignity and respect by the people and services who interact with and support them and to challenge the stigma of poverty.
- Objective 5: to ensure that effective cross-government working at the



national level enables strong collaboration at the regional and local level.

The draft strategy very much builds on and draws upon the 2015 strategy and the subsequent Income Maximisation Plan and has been co-constructed with children, young people, families and the organisations that support them to help us prioritise areas for focus in the current economic climate.

In this draft strategy for consultation we set out what we have heard through external engagement and what we are already doing to address the issues raised. More importantly we set out within each objective the areas we will prioritise to drive forward implementation and increase the impact of our policy ambitions.

We have identified 5 priorities to deliver against each of these objectives which are described under each objective.

- Priority 1: entitlement (putting money in people's pockets).
- Priority 2: creating a Fair Work nation (leaving no one behind).
- Priority 3: building communities (accessible, joined up services to meet community needs).
- Priority 4: inclusion (kind, compassionate and non-stigmatising services).
- Priority 5: enabling collaboration (at the regional and local level).

## **Objective 1: to reduce costs and maximise the incomes of families**

This means making sure people know what they are entitled to and making it easier for people to claim financial support and help to access practical things.

It also means supporting people with the cost of food, fuel and housing, as well as essential items like period products, items for new babies and school

uniforms. We want services and organisations to have a focus on how they can make sure that what they do makes things easier for children and families to access their entitlements without stigma.

## What we have heard

Children and young people, parent/carers, grandparents, and organisations have all told us that the system for claiming their entitlements for financial support from the UK Government and via local government and Welsh Government is complex and difficult to understand.

People said they value face to face information and advice from trusted services and that this can overcome barriers such as language, where English is an additional language, adult literacy levels and digital exclusion. The cost and availability of public transport can also be a barrier to accessing central advice locations. These needs were particularly acute for Gypsies and Travellers, Roma families and Asylum Seeking and Refugee families.

Disabled parent/carers and the parent/carers of disabled children spoke about the difficulties of the process for claiming disability and carers benefits. Children and young people from Asylum Seeking and Refugee families spoke about the need for the right information and advice for their parent/carers who are struggling with very limited incomes.

The current cost of living crisis is having an obvious and significant impact on low income families. Food insecurity and fuel poverty were big issues for those who took part in engagement events.

The cost of the school day was an issue that parent/carers, children and young people and young people and organisations spoke to us about. They told us about the need for school meals to be more affordable in secondary school and the gap between the value of Free School Meals and the cost of food in schools.

We also heard about families struggling with the costs of school uniform, equipment and school trips.

We heard from some of the carers who contributed to engagement events, about the financial burden of caring for children. Care experienced young people told us about the challenges of understanding and negotiating complex systems to access their entitlements.

## What we are doing about it

### Maximising incomes

Building on our [Income Maximisation Action plan](#), we are working to ensure that families who rely on UK welfare benefits get access to their entitlements. We fund the Citizens Advice Bureau to provide [Advice link Cymru](#) to support people in accessing their entitlements. We fund [Dangos](#) training programme for frontline workers, so they are better able to support their service users to access all the financial support they are entitled to.

“Welsh Benefits” are payments for individuals which are devolved to the Welsh Government. For example, the Council Tax Reduction Scheme helps households pay their council tax bill, the Schools Essential Grant and Free School Meals help households with the cost of the school day.

We believe that a social security system should be delivered with compassion, should be fair in the way it treats people and should be designed to ensure that it makes a positive contribution to tackling poverty. The Welsh Benefits Charter sets out the principles which will underpin the delivery of a coherent and compassionate Welsh benefits system and supports local government to [identify](#) where we can streamline the application process for Welsh benefits to make them more accessible.

Foster Wales is helping us to decide on a new structure and payment levels for the National Minimum Allowance for foster carers. An Expert Group has been established, with the aim of ensuring an improved and consistent needs-based approach to supporting Special Guardianship families across Wales.

Since 1 July 2022, more than 500 young people leaving care in Wales have been offered £1600 each month (before tax) for two years to support them as they make the transition to adult life, as part of our **Basic income pilot for care leavers**. Those taking part in the pilot also receive individual advice and support to help them manage their finances and develop their financial and budgeting skills.

## Reducing costs

We are doing everything we can to put more money in people's pockets by reducing costs.

The roll out of **Baby Bundles** will provide free essential items for new-born babies to all new and expectant parents in Wales. We are working to promote take up of **Healthy Start Vouchers**. People in Wales benefit from **free prescriptions** and **free parking** on hospital sites across Wales, in the ethos of a health service that is free at the point of use.

We are supporting cross-sector **Food Partnerships** that can help build resilience in local food networks through the co-ordination of on the ground, food-related activity which tackles the root-causes of food poverty. **Healthy Weight: Healthy Wales** includes a National Priority to remove barriers to reduce diet and health inequalities across the population.

Our funding to the **Fuel Bank Foundation** has established a strong partner network across Wales to support people on a pre-payment meter who are at risk of self-disconnection or have already self-disconnected and those households

that are off-grid and have to bulk buy fuel but do not have the finances to afford to top up their tank.

All children who go to a primary school which is maintained by a local authority can have a free breakfast at school, if their school provides free breakfasts or parents can ask their school to provide one. All primary school children in Wales will get **Free School Meals** by 2024 and lessons from rolling out our universal offer in primary schools will inform future changes to eligibility criteria for free school meals in Wales.

Children whose families are on lower incomes and qualify for certain benefits can apply for a **School Essentials Grant**. All compulsory school years from reception to year 11 are now eligible. We have issued **School uniform and appearance: policy guidance for governing bodies**. Schools must have regard to this guidance, which focuses on equity of treatment, cost and affordability, practical considerations and the need for consultation with parents, pupils and the community.

**Education Maintenance Allowance** (EMA) has, since April 2023, increased in Wales from £30 per week to £40 for eligible further education students in sixth form or college. This is a commitment for two academic years, while a comprehensive review into EMA is conducted.

Through our **Period Proud Wales Action Plan**, we have already provided funding for local authorities and Further Education to provide free period products in all schools in Wales. Our ambition is to go further with free period products to be available in a wider variety of settings.

## **Priority 1: entitlement (putting money in people's pockets)**

We are already taking action on the issues raised through our engagement exercise and we will continue to prioritise this important work. In addition, we will

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strengthen our delivery on some key areas to secure a greater impact.

Building on all our existing work to tackle child poverty, we will:

- work at pace with partners to increase the provision of face-to-face information, advice and support to people on claiming their financial entitlements as part of the wider delivery of our Income Maximisation work
- press ahead with the development of a Welsh Benefits system that is delivered with compassion and accelerate work with our partners to passport and streamline the application process for Welsh Benefits to make them more accessible
- accelerate our work with Estyn and School Improvement partners (local authorities, Consortia) to ensure education is a cost-neutral experience for children, young people and their families

## **Objective 2: to create pathways out of poverty so that children and young people and their families have opportunities to realise their potential**

Throughout the life course (which means from birth, through life until death) there are things we can do to help people out of poverty through education, training and support into fair work. Supporting parents/carers into employment can lift children out of poverty.

Investing in the early years of a child's life can make the difference in better health and developmental outcomes, which in turn influences their later opportunities for life. We need to make education accessible to all, to build a strong economy and better paid jobs. We want everyone to share our aspirations for all children and young people to have access to support so they can reach their potential and enjoy poverty free futures.

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Tackling child poverty has to include supporting parents and carers to develop the skills they need to get a decent wage. We know that we need to plan how to do this for people who face extra barriers because of discrimination, including that related to gender, disability, ethnicity or sexuality.

## What we have heard

Parent/carers told us that they want flexible, fair work with good working conditions and fair pay. Parent/carers and young people told us that they want opportunities for career progression through education and training.

The need for accessible and affordable childcare to enable parent/carers to work was a consistent theme across our external engagement. The parent/carers of disabled and neurodivergent children and lone parents told us about the additional barriers they face to accessing appropriate and affordable childcare. Lone parents told us childcare costs mean that there are real challenges to making work pay.

Parent/carers, grandparents and organisations all told us that a lack of public transport infrastructure and public transport costs were barriers to employment.

Children and young people told us that they want greater opportunities for quality work experience and careers advice in school and further education and positive role models in the world of work and self-employment.

Parent/carers with disabled children, neurodivergent children and children with Additional Learning Needs told us about the specific barriers in terms of securing assessments and having the educational needs of their children met.

# What we are doing about it

## The best start in life

We want to provide children with the best start in life. We have started a **phased expansion** of the **Flying Start** programme recognising the significant impact that early intervention and the provision of free childcare can make to children's outcomes.

We have we **launched** our vision for a holistic Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care (ECPLC) in Wales so that children have a high-quality stimulating learning and care experience in any settings they attend (formally known as early childhood education and care (ECEC)). We are developing an Action Plan to take this forward.

The **Childcare Offer** for Wales provides up to 30 hours of government funded early education and childcare to 3 and 4 year olds for 48 weeks per year; parents who are enrolled on higher and further education courses also benefit from the Offer. Looking forward, we will look to include additional cohorts of learners over time. These expansions of the Childcare Offer are a first step in better meeting the needs of families in Wales, demonstrating our commitment to support working families with the costs of childcare. **Evaluations** have shown that this is having a positive impact on parents' ability to increase their earnings and creating more employment options for parents.

## Education and progression

**Our national mission** is to achieve high standards and aspirations for all by tackling the impact of poverty on educational attainment and supporting every learner. We will work with our partners to tackle the impact of poverty on

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aspirations and attainment. All learners, whatever their background, will be supported to be healthy, engaged, enterprising and ethical citizens, ready to play a full part in work and life.

This includes education-based practical careers, work-related experiences, and careers advice. The **Pupil Development Grant (PDG)** provides extra targeted support for disadvantaged learners and we will work with partners to review how it is used and further support schools in the effective use of the grant.

We will drive our **Additional learning needs** reform of systems, provision and practices around person-centred practice and inclusive education, delivering positive changes for learners with ALN and monitor system effectiveness. Our **Code of Practice on the Delivery of Autism Services** (2021) sets out arrangements for supporting assessment and diagnosis pathways for children.

Our **Strategy for unpaid carers** includes a priority to support unpaid carers, including young carers, in education and the workplace and encouraging employers and educational / training settings to adapt their policies and practices, enabling unpaid carers to work and learn alongside their caring role.

The **Youth Engagement and Progression Framework** contributes towards our goal of tackling the impact of poverty on educational attainment by helping us re-engage young people and raise their aspirations, to ensure no one is left behind. **The Young Person's Guarantee** is our key commitment to provide everyone aged 16 to 24 with support to gain a place in education or training, help to get into work or self-employment. **Business Wales** aims to support micro-businesses and SMEs including social enterprises, and aspiring entrepreneurs start and grow their businesses. To support the Young Person's Guarantee, Big Ideas Wales provides advice and support for young people and a network of Big Ideas Wales Role Models.

We have initiated a **Review of vocational qualifications in Wales** to make recommendations on the expansion of vocational qualifications over the period

2023 to 2026. The **Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Act 2022** will shape a new structure and system to better support learners and provide them with the knowledge and skills for lifelong learning, development and success.

Our Wales Transport Strategy, **Llwybr Newydd** aims to reduce the cost and improve the accessibility of sustainable transport for everyone in Wales, including students.

## **Economy and fair work**

Improving the well-being of everyone in Wales is the mission which drives our government's approach to the economy through our **Prosperity for All: Economic Action Plan**. The **Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act** puts new social partnership duties on specified public bodies in Wales, promote fair work and create a duty for socially responsible public procurement.

**Fair work** means supporting and encouraging employers to create high quality employment, improve the offer to workers, champion fair employment practices, ensure the social value of investment and encourage the public sector to embed the priorities in workforce planning. We are taking forward the recommendations of the Fair Work Commission to achieve this.

Our **Plan for Employability and Skills** sets out clear policy and investment priorities, and sharpens our delivery focus and the activity of partners. The key priorities for the Plan are: Young people realising their potential; Tackling economic inequality; Championing Fair Work for all; Supporting people with a long term health condition to work and Nurturing a learning for life culture.

Our evolving approach to gender budgeting in Wales has included a gender budgeting pilot to help people develop skills in non-gender typical areas. This has been enabled through our Personal Learning Account programme that

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provides support for employed people on below average salaries to gain higher level skills, helping them to access a wider range of job opportunities.

Our **evolving approach to gender budgeting in Wales** has included a gender budgeting pilot to help people develop skills in non-gender typical areas. This has been enabled through our **Personal Learning Account** programme that provides support for employed people on below average salaries to gain higher level skills, helping them access a wider range of job opportunities.

## **Priority 2: creating a Fair Work nation (leaving no one behind)**

We will sustain and strengthen our work on supporting pathways out of poverty through our early years, education and employment policies.

The employment rate for Black, Asian and minority ethnic people is **lower** than for white people. For disabled people the employment rate is **lower** than for non-disabled people. **Research** suggests that **lone parents** face specific challenges to securing suitable employment and that 90% of lone parents are women.

Building on all our existing work on tackling child poverty, we will:

- deliver against the recommendations of the **Fair Work Commission** and promote Fair Work through Social Partnership and Public Procurement legislation
- increase our focus through the **plan for employability and skills** to prioritise and consolidate Welsh Government led, national employability support to ensure no one is left behind, to further support those under-represented and disadvantaged in the labour market
- focus work across government to find affordable solutions to childcare and transport costs to remove barriers to work and make work pay

## **Objective 3: to support child and family wellbeing and make sure that work across Welsh Government delivers for children living in poverty, including those with protected characteristics, so that they can enjoy their rights and have better outcomes**

In Wales, we all want the best for our children, all our children, no matter what their backgrounds are, where they come from or where they live. We want them all to have the best start in life and go on to lead the kind of lives they want to live.

### **What we have heard**

Some parent/carers and the organisations that support them told us about the need for better quality housing conditions and affordable housing. Some of the parent/carers had experienced homelessness and were in temporary accommodation.

Children and young people, families and organisations gave us clear messages about the need for community-based support; where services and support come together to provide face to face information, advice and support on the interrelated issues that limit opportunities for good health and wellbeing and where the cultural and language needs of local families are understood and met. This included children and young people telling us that they want more parenting support to be available. Parent/carers also want more community-based no or low-cost child and family activities. Children and young people described the benefits of bringing services into schools and said that offering sporting, leisure and social opportunities at education buildings could reduce costs and increase

access for them.

Organisations working with Black, Asian and minority ethnic families told us about the need for community development to take a social partnership approach, including all community members in a meaningful way in decisions about what needs to happen at the community level. Some people spoke about experiencing racism in services like GP surgeries and schools. Gypsies and Travellers and Roma families told us that they want safe community spaces for children and young people and community services that understand their needs. LGBTQ+ young people felt that at the community level a lack of understanding of LGBTQ+ and discrimination can mean that their rights and needs are not recognised.

Young people gave us some clear messages about the need for accessible support for mental health and emotional wellbeing in education settings and in their communities. Parent/carers also spoke about wanting community-based support with their own confidence and self-esteem.

## What we are doing about it

Our **Children and young people's plan** sets out what the Programme for Government means for children and young people, with tackling child poverty and inequality as a central driver. Some work, like tackling child poverty, is so complex that it can only be done if all Ministers work together, as one Welsh Government, and in partnership with public bodies and the third sector.

## A decent place to live

On 1 December 2022 the Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016 changed the way all landlords in Wales rent their properties, improving how we rent, manage, and live in rented homes in Wales. **Renting Homes Wales** means that social and

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private tenants will see some changes in the way their contracts are provided, in the way their homes are maintained and in how they communicate with their landlords.

We are taking concerted action to address homelessness through our **Ending homelessness in Wales: high level action plan 2021 to 2026** and taking through legislation this Senedd term that will transform homelessness services, putting the emphasis on early intervention and prevention. We have a commitment to deliver 20,000 social homes for rent this government term.

## Communities

Our Programme for Government is founded on the distinctively Welsh values of community, equality and social justice. We recognise that what is needed is not a standalone community programme, but a cross-cutting, whole of government response. We have published research on **Place-based approaches to community engagement and support** which is informing our thinking.

This will mean working with our communities and other partners to co-produce solutions that will support delivery of our Programme for Government and, at the same time, enable all our communities to be thriving, empowered and connected. We want to listen to and learn from our communities, drawing on local knowledge and hard-won experience. We are working with stakeholders to develop a **Communities Policy** to support this work.

Our **Community Facilities Programme** provides funding to help communities all over Wales buy, develop and improve crucial local buildings and green space. We have also committed to supporting Community Asset Transfers and community led developments by providing a support framework that delivers advice, guidance and finance.

We are investing to make sure more schools are able to operate and develop as

Community Focused Schools, which reach out to engage families and work with the wider community to support all pupils and particularly those disadvantaged by poverty. Moving forward we want all schools in Wales to be **Community Focused Schools**: building a strong partnership with families; responding to the needs of their community and collaborating effectively with other services.

## Providing play, sport and youth opportunities

Our **Wales: a Play Friendly Country** guidance places duties on local authorities to offer play opportunities that are inclusive and encourage all children to play and meet together if they wish to, recognising that there may be barriers for some children in taking part in the range of play opportunities in their area. We provide funding to Sport Wales to work with National Governing Bodies and other partners to promote equal access to sports through their strategy **Vision For Sport**.

From September 2023 most 30 mile per hour (mph) speed limits in Wales are changing to **20 mph**. This will help to support safer healthier communities, reducing collisions and provide safer opportunities for children and young people to play and socialise in their communities.

Our **Youth Work Strategy for Wales** aims to ensure that young people are thriving. Youth work helps young people to grow, develop, achieve and be happy as they become adults. It helps to give young people skills for life and opportunities for learning and helps young people with any issues that may affect their lives.

## Supporting families

**Families First** promotes greater multi-agency working to ensure families receive holistic help and support as needed. The programme helps families with wide-

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ranging issues such as parenting, signposting to financial support, family relationships, education matters and many more. The intention is to offer early support with the aim of preventing problems escalating.

Across Wales, parents and carers have access to a range of services to support positive parenting delivered by our partners across public services. A **dedicated bilingual website** provides parenting tips, information and advice on common parenting concerns and promotes positive parenting.

## **Mental health and wellbeing**

The Welsh Government is currently developing a new Mental Health Strategy for Wales. The independent **review** of Together for Mental Health Strategy and Talk to Me 2 was published in March 2023, and Welsh Government is currently testing early thinking in relation to the principles that will underpin the new Mental Health Strategy with key stakeholders. We will ensure our early thinking on the mental health strategy is informed by the evidence gathered from those with lived experience for this draft child poverty strategy.

## **Priority 3: building communities (accessible, joined up services to meet community needs)**

The need to provide community based joined up services that promote a No Wrong Door approach is well rehearsed. We heard about some good examples of this but not as a common experience for the families who spoke to us. We recognise that in some communities, especially rural communities, it is not always cost efficient to offer co-located services in one physical base. However, rotating or 'pop up' services can provide a good level offer in areas where there are lower populations.

This does not mean doing things to communities, it means doing things with



people in communities, who know what matters to them and what they need. This includes children and young people. Wales is a nation rich with community action where initiatives have been grown by community members to address community needs. Our role is to enable and grow these approaches, always making sure that everything that is delivered addresses the distinct needs of local communities.

Building on all our existing work to tackle child poverty, we will:

- ‘think community’ when developing, reviewing and funding relevant policies and programmes including Families First guidance, our new Mental Health Strategy and our Tackling Poverty initiatives, promoting ‘one-stop shop’-style multi-agency services in the community to help address the range of interconnected needs and disadvantages people living in poverty experience
- push forward, working with partners, on the delivery of more community based offers for play, sports and youth opportunities for children and young people and low cost family activities to support health and wellbeing
- ensure that in developing our Communities Policy, we identify new, co-productive, and inclusive to all, ways of working, using a community action approach to inform the development of local joined up services to tackle poverty without stigma

## **Objective 4: to ensure children, young people and their families are treated with dignity and respect by the people and services who interact with and support them and to challenge the stigma of poverty**

We expect the people and services that support children, young people and their families to operate in a way that does not add to the burden of pressures that

poverty brings. We know that these pressures can cause poor mental wellbeing and mental health. This work must include making sure children and young people don't feel excluded because their families are on a low income.

Some families in poverty can experience discrimination and stigma both because of their protected characteristics and because of their experience of poverty. This has a direct negative impact on wellbeing.

## What we have heard

Too many people told us they do not feel they are treated with dignity and respect by the services that are there to support them. They do not always feel listened to by people who work with them and spoke about the importance of trusted relationships. This is especially the case when children, young people and their families are accessing their entitlements related to initiatives to reduce costs and maximise incomes, an experience that often leaves them feeling stigmatised, as if they are a 'problem'.

Children and young people gave us clear and strong messages about feeling stigmatised and excluded in the school community. Some of this was related to the cost of the school day (uniforms, school trips) and the cost of the school year, including non-learning activity such as non-uniforms day, school proms etc. Parent/carers also told us about the pressure they feel to try and meet these costs so that their children are included in the same way as their peers. People described the ways in which feeling stigmatised and excluded in the school community has a negative impact on engagement and potential to learn and in some cases on attendance.

A lot of the evidence from children and young people was about the way in which their circumstances are poorly understood in schools and about the ways adults speak to and respond to them, including sanctioning them. Parent/carers of children and young people with Additional Learning needs told us that they

don't feel listened to by education and health practitioners.

## What we are doing about it

### Paying due regard to the UNCRC

In 2011, Wales became the first administration in the UK to enshrine the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in domestic law, through the [Rights of Children and Young Persons \(Wales\) Measure 2011](#). The Measure embeds consideration of the UNCRC and the Optional Protocols into Welsh law, and places Welsh Ministers under a duty to have due regard to the requirements of the UNCRC when making their decisions.

This means that seeking the voices of children and young people is integrated into the process for the policy decisions we make. As an example the [Exploring Radical Reform Summit](#) in 2022, brought together young people with experience of living in care and Welsh Government Ministers to explore wide-ranging reforms to care for young people in Wales. This resulted in the [Radical Reform Summit: Declaration](#), which sets out the commitments of Welsh Government and Young Ambassadors to work together to take forward our shared Vision for what radically reformed services should look like and should deliver for care experienced children and young people.

Our Children's Rights Impact Assessment (CRIA) provides a framework for Welsh Government to systemically consider and record how policy proposals impact on the rights of children as part of a wider Integrated Impact Assessment approach.

Wales was the first country in the UK to establish an office of the Children's Commissioner as an independent champion of children's rights. The role of the Commissioner is to act as an independent champion and safeguard and support

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the rights of children and young people, advocating their interests and making sure their voices are heard at local, national and international levels.

The Welsh Government funds **Young Wales**, a Children in Wales initiative that aims to ensure that young people have opportunities to raise issues that are important to them and to ensure their voices are heard by decision makers, policy officers, Welsh Government officials and Ministers. This work is underpinned by the UNCRC and the Children and Young People's National Participation Standards.

As an example of the work we do with Young Wales, we are currently collaborating with Children in Wales, Young Wales Project Board to co-produce a Young Person's version of the Budget Improvement Plan which will be published alongside our next Draft Budget in December 2023.

Through the engagement work to inform this draft strategy for consultation we have heard evidence from over 1300 children and young people. Moving forward we will agree ways to involve children and young people in letting us know if we are making progress on delivering against our objectives and priorities to tackle child poverty in Wales.

## **Delivering services with kindness and compassion**

Children, young people and their families told us that they feel stigmatised and judged by the services that they seek support from.

In practice all organisations and systems need to work in a trauma informed way. That is to understand behaviour as communication and recognise and understand the impact of cultural, gender and historic inequalities, and social justice. Our aim is to ensure that all services are non-judgemental, kind and compassionate and promote resilience. At the centre of this approach is the importance of establishing trusted relationships.

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The **Trauma Informed Wales Framework** helps us to understand the roles we have, and the difference we can make by simply being kinder, more compassionate and more understanding of each other.

We are already taking this approach forward in a number of ways. We are promoting child and person-centred services through policies such as the **Youth Justice Blueprint for Wales**, **Female Offending Blueprint**, through our plan for tackling **homelessness** and our **social care** legislation and policies.

## **Creating inclusive education environments**

The Welsh Government has provided a range of guidance and resources to support schools in understanding poverty and providing for the **education of disadvantaged children**. Including the **Price of Pupil Poverty Project** delivered by Children in Wales.

Our **Framework on embedding a whole-school approach to emotional and mental wellbeing** seeks to support good emotional and mental well-being by promoting a positive cultural environment in schools, where children and young people form positive relationships with staff and other learners, and relationships are strengthened between them and the wider community.

The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 and supporting **guidance** sets out the importance of taking time to undertake the ALN process in a person-centred way, putting the views of children and their families at the centre of the decision-making process.

As part of the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Act 2021, a duty has been placed on governing bodies and head teachers to promote knowledge and understanding of the UNCRC and the Convention on the United Nations Rights of People with Disabilities.

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As the new curriculum rolls out, all schools and settings across Wales will adopt a child's rights approach, placing emphasis on the central role of rights in developing our children and young people to become ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world.

Estyn inspections include inspecting how effectively maintained schools, Pupil Referral Units and local government education services reduce the impact of poverty on the educational attainment and well-being of pupils eligible for free school meals and/or those from low-income household. There are many **examples** of good practice.

## **Priority 4: inclusion (kind, compassionate and non-stigmatising services)**

We have already committed to promote relationship-based services with kindness and compassion to lift the mental burden of poverty.

Building on all our existing work to tackle child poverty, we will:

- accelerate work with the ACE Support Hub and Traumatic Stress Wales on an implementation plan for the Trauma Informed Wales Framework, which will include the identification of any additional resources required, including help and support for organisations
- urgently refocus our work with Estyn, our partners and wider stakeholders to tackle the barriers to implementing poverty proofing approaches and to consistently creating inclusive education environments which are based on the Rights of the Child, and anti-discriminatory values
- take a children's rights approach to the delivery of our Programme for Government, in line with the UNCRC, with tackling poverty and inequality as cross cutting policy drivers
- make sure that discrimination related protected characteristics do not make it more difficult for children, young people and their families to do well.

Retaining a clear focus on our policies to achieve this:

- [Anti-racist Wales Action Plan](#)
- [Advancing gender equality: action plan](#)
- [Action on disability: the right to independent living framework and action plan](#)
- [LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales](#)

## **Objective 5: to ensure that effective cross-government working at the national level enables strong collaboration at the regional and local level**

If we are going to deliver against our objectives in an effective way, we need to create the right conditions to enable change to happen. Given the limitations of our levers here in Wales, this will be a fundamental part of delivering our Made in Wales, Made for Wales approach.

To drive the change that is needed and have a tangible impact on child poverty, it is essential that the Welsh Government, local government and other public services in Wales work together to improve the lives of children and their families who are in poor households and to reduce poverty in the longer term. The third sector (voluntary organisations and charities) provides critical support to children, young people, families and communities in Wales and has a key role in tackling child poverty. The private sector (businesses) can also be key for supporting pathways out of poverty through their direct activity as employers and working in partnership with small and local charities, people and communities.

The Welsh Government will continue in our efforts to work in partnership with the UK Government to tackle poverty across Wales. We will continue to call on them to take further practical actions to make a real difference to those hit hardest

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under the current benefits system rules. Including for example on the two child limit, the benefits cap and on local housing allowances rates.

Our current Programme for Government commitments are being shaped and delivered with the need to combat poverty and inequality as a central driver. The message from people and organisations that work with and speak out on behalf of children and families in poverty is clear, we need to have greater integration across Welsh Government policies, programmes and investment. People told us that further strengthening the integration of cross-government work will in turn support stronger collaboration at the regional and local levels, so that planning and delivery are more efficient and effective.

We know that more streamlined and focussed budget decisions across the Welsh Government are needed to support cross-government working on implementation of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. We publish a **Budget Improvement Plan** on an annual basis. The Plan outlines our vision, including short and medium-term ambitions over the next 5 years, to improve the budget process in Welsh Government using the 2015 Act and the 5 ways of working to drive continuous improvement. We have established a **Budget Improvement and Impact Advisory Group** to provide advice, feedback and evidence from an equalities and inclusion perspective.

People working in public bodies and the third sector have told us we need stronger coordination and collaboration between organisations working at the local and regional levels on tackling poverty including child poverty.

At the regional level, **Public Services Boards** (PSBs), **Regional Partnership Boards**

(RPBs) and **Corporate Joint Committees** (CJCs) bring together local and regional partners to promote well-being through collaboration in a more effective way.



The **Marmot** approach can support local and regional partners in tackling inequity through action on the social determinants of health, the social and economic conditions which shape our health. Gwent Public Service Board are working towards becoming a **Marmot Region** and have sought the help of Professor Sir Michael Marmot and his team at the **Institute of Health Equity**.

As part of the Welsh Government's current Programme for Government, we have committed to reducing the administrative burden on local authorities (LAs), to allow them to get on with their vitally important work and not to be hampered by any unnecessary bureaucracy.

The Welsh Government Grant Centre of Excellence has introduced a longer duration of funding and benchmarking process, to allow longer duration of funding / multi-year funding where appropriate.

## **Priority 5: enabling collaboration (at the regional and local level)**

While organisations across Wales are working to address the same issues, there is a need for a stronger approach to enabling collaboration and shared learning to support effective solutions, adapted to local needs.

The **Socio-Economic Duty** came into force in Wales on 31 March 2021. It improves decision making and helps those who are socio-economically disadvantaged.

The Socio-economic Duty gives us an opportunity to do things differently in Wales. It puts tackling inequality at the heart of decision-making and will build on the good work public bodies are already doing.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission report **Evaluating the socio-economic duty in Scotland and Wales** (2021) considers how Wales are

implementing, or preparing to implement, the socio-economic duty (part of the Equality Act 2010). The report highlights how the duty can be implemented effectively, the barriers that get in the way, how the duty affects the behaviour of public bodies and the steps needed to ensure future success.

We will:

- strengthen the Welsh Government approach to integration of policy and funding aims to better enable longer term collaboration at the regional and local level on anti-poverty work
- work with public bodies to develop and share innovative examples of good practice and positive outcomes to highlight where the Socio-Economic Duty is relevant, identify new or existing areas of work that the duty could/should be applied to, and advocate for and support the relevance of the duty to wider efforts to tackle socio-economic disadvantage and inequalities of outcome
- identify the best approach, with partners, to providing additional capacity to support the coordination of anti-poverty efforts across regional partnership arrangements and to identify and advise on the options to better support collaborative working to tackle child poverty
- establish and support a Communities of Practice approach to provide a forum where colleagues from across public services and across Wales can compare learning and share good practice to support a joined-up approach to the funding, development and implementation of work to create a More Equal Wales including tackling child poverty

## How we will monitor and report on our progress

When the Welsh Government introduced the **Children and Families (Wales) Measure, 2010** it placed a duty on Welsh Ministers to set child poverty objectives and to report every 3 years on progress towards achieving those

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objectives.

This draft strategy has been co-constructed with the children and young people, families and organisations who have given their time to help us understand what will make the greatest difference to them. We are committed to continuing this way of working as we deliver the revised strategy.

The Well-being of Future Generations Act drives better decision making across the Welsh public sector and balances the needs of current and future generations. The **national milestones** measure our collective progress as a nation and progress towards these national milestones will help us deliver a more sustainable Wales for current and future generations.

**National Milestone:** tackling wider inequalities is a fundamental ambition of this government and we are committed to reducing the poverty gap between people in Wales with certain key and protected characteristics (which mean they are most likely to be in poverty) and those without those characteristics by 2035 and committing to set a stretching target for 2050.

We will provide progress updates against this milestone in the annual Well-being of Wales report, and other poverty related milestones, and will continue our conversation with stakeholders as part of our **Shaping Wales' Future** work programme. This will include further work on strengthening and refining the supporting data.

In addition to these broader national milestones, we will seek independent research advice on suitable national poverty indicators, data availability and a framework to monitor and demonstrate transparent accountability in reporting on our tackling poverty progress and on involving people with lived experience in telling us whether we are achieving. We will consult separately on these proposals.

## Annex: relevant legislation and policy

The **Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010** places a duty on Welsh Ministers to set child poverty objectives and to report every 3 years on progress towards achieving those objectives. Welsh Ministers must prepare and publish a child poverty strategy and keep it under review and may from time to time remake or revise their strategy.

In 2011, Wales became the first administration in the UK to enshrine the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in domestic law, through the **Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011**. The Measure embeds consideration of the UNCRC and the Optional Protocols into Welsh law, and places Welsh Ministers under a duty to have due regard to the requirements of the UNCRC when making their decisions.

The **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, 2015** is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. It makes the public bodies listed in the Act think more about the long term, work better with people and communities and each other, look to prevent problems and take a more joined-up approach. This is helping us to create a Wales that we all want to live in, now and in the future.

The **Equality Act 2010** sets out that those subject to the public sector equality duty must, in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to: eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act; advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not; and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The **Socio-economic Duty** came into force in Wales on 31 March 2021. It improves decision making and helps those who are socio-economically disadvantaged.

The Socio-economic Duty gives us an opportunity to do things differently in Wales. It puts tackling inequality at the heart of decision-making and will build on the good work public bodies are already doing.

## Consultation questions

### Question 1

Do you agree that the introduction to the draft strategy is clear and accessible?

### Question 2

In considering the requirement under the Children's and Families (Wales) Measure for the Welsh Government to set objectives for the contribution towards the eradication of child poverty, do you agree that Objective 1 should be an objective of the draft strategy?

Is the information about what we have heard and what the Welsh Government doing in relation to Objective 1 clear and accessible?

### Question 3

Do you agree that Priority 1 should be a priority for the draft strategy?

### Question 4

In considering the requirement under the Children's and Families (Wales) Measure for the Welsh Government to set objectives for the contribution towards

the eradication of child poverty, do you agree that Objective 2 should be an objective of the draft strategy?

Is the information about what we have heard and what the Welsh Government doing in relation to Objective 2 clear and accessible?

## Question 5

Do you agree that Priority 2 should be a priority for the draft strategy?

## Question 6

In considering the requirement under the Children's and Families (Wales) Measure for the Welsh Government to set objectives for the contribution towards the eradication of child poverty, do you agree that Objective 3 should be an objective of the draft strategy?

Is the information about what we have heard and what the Welsh Government doing in relation to Objective 3 clear and accessible?

## Question 7

Do you agree that Priority 3 should be a priority for the draft strategy?

## Question 8

In considering the requirement under the Children's and Families (Wales) Measure for the Welsh Government to set objectives for the contribution towards the eradication of child poverty, do you agree that Objective 4 should be an

objective of the draft strategy?

Is the information about what we have heard and what the Welsh Government doing in relation to Objective 4 clear and accessible?

## **Question 9**

Do you agree that Priority 4 should be a priority for the draft strategy?

## **Question 10**

In considering the requirement under the Children's and Families (Wales) Measure for the Welsh Government to set objectives for the contribution towards the eradication of child poverty, do you agree that Objective 5 should be an objective of the draft strategy?

Is the information about what we have heard and what the Welsh Government doing in relation to Objective 5 clear and accessible?

## **Question 11**

Do you agree that Priority 5 should be a priority for the draft strategy?

## **Question 12**

Do you agree that the section setting out how we will monitor and report on our progress is clear and accessible?

## Question 13

Does the Child Poverty Strategy adequately respond to the intersection between child poverty with protected characteristics (such as ethnicity, gender, disability and sexuality) and the experience of socio-economic disadvantage.

## Question 14

We would like to know your views on the effects that the Child Poverty Strategy proposal would have on the Welsh language, specifically on opportunities for people to use Welsh and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than English.

## Question 15

We would like to know your views on the Integrated Impact Assessment.

## Question 16

We would like to know your views on the Child Rights Impact Assessment.

## Question 17

We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them:



## How to respond

Submit your comments by **11 September 2023**, in any of the following ways:

- complete our [online form](#)
- download, complete our [response form](#) and email [TacklingPovertyAndSupportingFamilies@gov.wales](mailto:TacklingPovertyAndSupportingFamilies@gov.wales)
- download, complete our [response form](#) and post to:

Tackling Poverty and Supporting Families Division  
Welsh Government  
Cathays Park  
Cardiff  
CF10 3NQ

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- to (in certain circumstances) object to or restrict processing
- for (in certain circumstances) your data to be 'erased'
- to (in certain circumstances) data portability
- to lodge a complaint with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) who is our independent regulator for data protection.

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Data Protection Officer  
Welsh Government  
Cathays Park  
Cardiff  
CF10 3NQ

E-mail: [data.protectionofficer@gov.wales](mailto:data.protectionofficer@gov.wales)

## Information Commissioner's Office

Information Commissioner's Office  
Wycliffe House  
Water Lane  
Wilmslow  
Cheshire  
SK9 5AF

Telephone: 01625 545 745 or 0303 123 1113

Website: [ico.org.uk](https://ico.org.uk)

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as part of your response to the consultation. Welsh Ministers have statutory powers they will rely on to process this personal data which will enable them to make informed decisions about how they exercise their public functions. Any response you send us will be seen in full by Welsh Government staff dealing with the issues which this consultation is about or planning future consultations. Where the Welsh Government undertakes further analysis of consultation responses then this work may be commissioned to be carried out by an accredited third party (e.g. a research organisation or a consultancy company). Any such work will only be undertaken under contract. Welsh Government's standard terms and conditions for such contracts set out strict requirements for the processing and safekeeping of personal data. In order to show that the consultation was carried out properly, the Welsh Government intends to publish a summary of the responses to this document. We may also publish responses in full. Normally, the name and address (or part of the address) of the person or organisation who sent the response are published with the response. If you do not want your name or address published, please tell us this in writing when you send your response. We will then redact them before publishing.

You should also be aware of our responsibilities under Freedom of Information legislation. If your details are published as part of the consultation response then these published reports will be retained indefinitely. Any of your data held otherwise by Welsh Government will be kept for no more than three years.

## Further information and related documents

Number: WG47349

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