

Putting Children First

A Manifesto for Babies, Children and Young People in Wales: UK General Election 2024



Newid Plantyndod.
Newid Bywydau.
Changing childhoods.
Changing lives.



Disclaimer: The above organisations have distinct remits and areas of expertise. As such, this manifesto's calls are made as part of a coalition and do not necessarily reflect the views of all individual organisations listed above.

“The upcoming general election and a new incoming (Westminster) Government present a key opportunity to address the urgent issues facing babies, children and young people today. With coordinated prioritisation across Government, a commitment to listen to the voices of children, and the right policy interventions and investment, all children can have the chance to thrive.”¹

Children at the Table: A Roadmap for putting children at the heart of the next Government (Nov 2023)

As a coalition of children’s charities working in Wales, we are calling for all parties to prioritise babies, children and young people during and after the UK General Election. We ask that all political parties commit to ambitious policies which improve the lives of all children and families in Wales, especially the most vulnerable and disadvantaged; tackle climate change; ends child poverty and protects the human rights of all children.

We support calls for *“the next UK Government to put babies, children and young people at the heart of Government policy making, backed by a step-change in investment to transform childhoods across the UK.”¹*

This means:

- Committing to an ambitious cross-Government strategy and outcomes framework to drive improvements for babies, children and young people.
- A new approach to decision-making that places children’s needs, wishes and outcomes at its heart, involving children and young people every step of the way.
- Investing more of our national wealth in improving the lives of babies, children and young people and spending strategically on early intervention and prevention.

Wales has a proud tradition of demonstrating a commitment to promoting the rights and wellbeing of all children, and improving children’s lives, including those most vulnerable. The next Westminster Government must ensure children’s rights are central in all decisions and fully prioritised.

Our calls on political parties

While the Senedd and Welsh Government have powers over many of the policy areas affecting children in Wales, the next UK Government has the power to make important decisions in reserved areas which affect children in Wales².

We have identified a number of specific priorities that will deliver for babies, children, young people and their families in Wales.

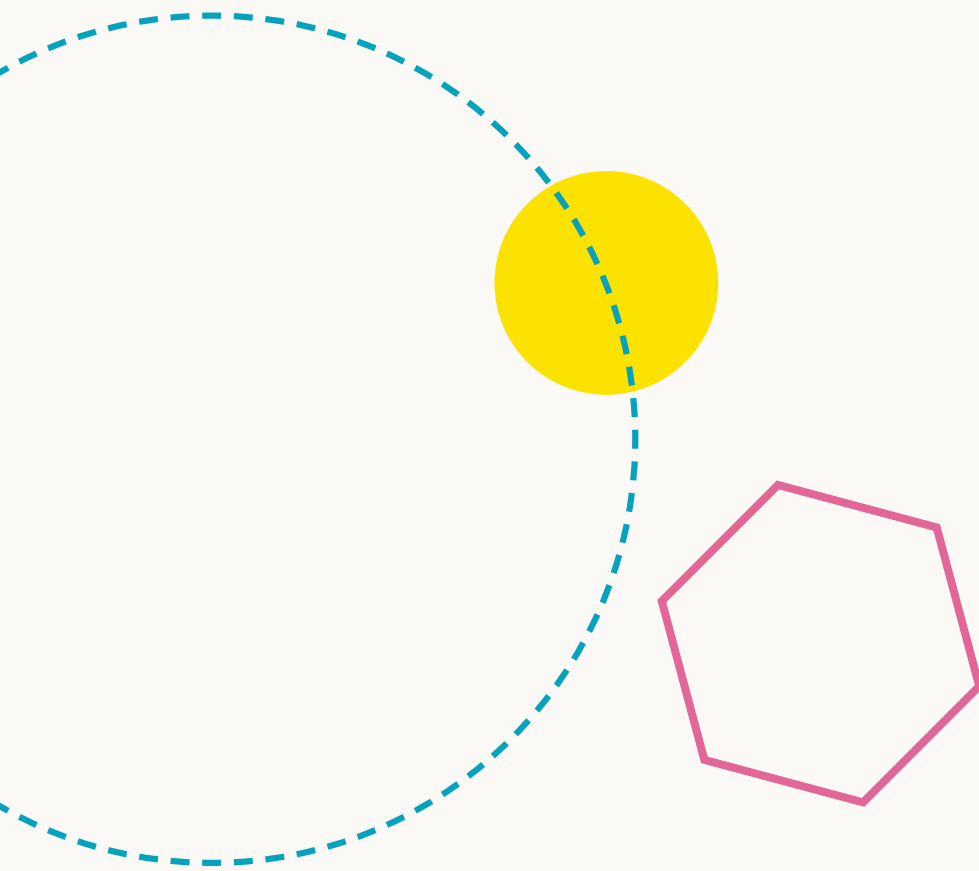
¹ Children at the Table: A Roadmap for putting children at the heart of the next Government (Nov 2023)

² The UK Parliament is responsible for legislating on matters which are non-devolved, including criminal and youth justice, immigration and social security. It also includes some aspects of transport, employment amongst others

Ending child poverty

We call on political parties to:

- Commit to making the elimination of child poverty at central priority, ensuring that a UK-wide Child Poverty Strategy is in place, with ambitious targets, measurable indicators and clear monitoring and accountability mechanisms. This Strategy must take full account and support the delivery of the Wales Child Poverty Strategy, respecting the powers devolved to Wales and be developed in collaboration with the devolved nations.
- Reform the UK benefits system to ensure that it provides the necessary ‘safety net’ for all children and families to live in dignity and lifts barriers to personal progression³.
- Abolish the two-child limit and benefit cap; reverse reductions in spending to social security payments and ensure that benefits are increased in line with inflation.
- Work towards an essentials guarantee for all families with children.
- Ensure that the needs and rights of children are central to all solutions to tackle the on-going Cost-of-Living emergency.



³ For example, current restrictions placed upon young adult who cannot claim Carer’s allowance if they study for more than 21hrs per week

Children's rights

We call on political parties to:

- To fully and directly incorporate the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) into UK law and to carry out Children's Right Impact Assessments on all policy decisions which impact on children in Wales.
- To ensure that all the existing protections in the Human Rights Act 1998 are retained, and any review of human rights legislation should strengthen, rather than reduce existing protection for children.
- Following positive developments in Wales, extend the right to vote and stand in all public elections from the age of 16.
- Ensure that there are sufficient opportunities for the views of children and young people in Wales to be heard on all policy decisions which are non-devolved, and that robust structures are in place and adequately resourced which support youth voice in the parliamentary decision-making process⁴.

Protection

We call on political parties to:

- To commit to prioritising the full implementation of the Online Safety Act 2023
- To ensure that children seeking asylum are treated as 'children first', are not discriminated against and have access to fully resourced support services and provision.
- Ensure that children in families and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) have safe and legal routes to apply for asylum in the UK.
- Develop (or refresh) legislation supported by comprehensive strategies on upholding the right to a healthy environment, which protects babies, children and young people from environmental harms, whilst ensuring that children are actively involved in solutions to address the climate as espoused in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

⁴ This follows the collapse of the British Youth Council who with partner organisations at the devolved level, coordinated opportunities for young people to engage in the parliamentary process through the UK Youth Parliament with central resource from the UK Government.

Investment

We call on political parties to:

- To review the present fiscal arrangements for Wales for the distribution of funds to better enable the Welsh Government to receive sufficient level of resources to deliver programmes for babies, children and young people in line with devolved policy areas and to be fully accountable to the Senedd.
- Prioritise investment in interventions which are reserved matters to Westminster, and which are delivering positive outcomes for babies, children, young people and their families in Wales, such as social security schemes, cross border transport arrangements and crime prevention.

Strengthen devolution

We call on political parties to:

- Ensure there are robust inter-Governmental engagement structures in place between the Westminster and Welsh Government to ensure the needs of babies, children and young people are political and investment priorities.
- Review devolved powers in some policy areas to Wales, with a view to ensuring the Welsh Government has the powers it needs to deliver on behalf of babies, children, and young people.

