



# Putting Children First: A Manifesto for the Senedd Elections 2021

**Wales has a proud tradition of demonstrating a commitment to promoting the rights and wellbeing of all children, and making a real difference to improving children's lives, including those most vulnerable.**

Legislation which places the UNCRC at the heart of the decision making process, and which gives children equal protection from assault under the law shows what can be achieved when children's rights are central and prioritised.

COVID – 19 continues to have a profound impact on the day to day lives of children and young people, as well as posing unprecedented challenges to their families and the services they access. Whilst experiences haven't been the same for all children, the pandemic has caused significant disruption to their daily lives, serving to exacerbate existing inequalities and highlighting the need for long-term investment in children and protection of their rights. Some children, who were already extremely vulnerable and experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, complex trauma, will have been badly affected. Financial pressures in the home will have also negatively impacted on children's wellbeing.

## **We are calling on all political parties to:**

- **Make** children a priority
- **See** children as part of the solution to COVID-19 recovery
- **Listen** to children and take account of what they tell you
- **Support** children by investing in the services they access
- **Value** children by prioritising early intervention, prevention & family support measures

## Our calls are aimed at ensuring that

- **All** children have access to their RIGHTS
- **All** children are SAFEGUARDED and PROTECTED
- **No** child experiences POVERTY
- **All** children have positive EMOTIONAL HEALTH and WELLBEING

We are calling upon all political parties to prioritise children and young people, and deliver the following **four priority areas**.

## Strengthen National Structures in Government and Parliament

- Appoint a Minister for Children with oversight of, and accountability for all policy areas which have an impact on children
- Establish a Cabinet Sub-committee on Children to ensure coordination and better scrutiny of children's issues
- Create an Implementation Group within the civil service, as a permanent structure to better coordinate activities on behalf of the Government
- Retain a Scrutiny Committee for children and young people in the Senedd
- Secure changes through legislation which transfers responsibility for the appointment, accountability and funding of the Children's Commissioner for Wales to the Senedd

## Enhance Local & Regional Structures

- Ensure that all local and regional structures, including the Public Service Boards and Regional Partnership Boards are sufficiently prioritising children and young people's distinct issues
- Improve monitoring, reporting and accountability arrangements to ensure that local and regional structures are delivering for children
- Ensure that children's third sector organisations are appropriately represented on local and regional structures



## Invest in Children

- Ensure that the maximum level of available resources are made available for children
- Strengthen compliance with the UNCRC both at a national and local level
- Prioritise sustainable funding of specialist VAWDASV services for children and young people, and invest in early intervention and preventative services more broadly
- Enhance arrangements to monitor budget allocations for children, and ensure that reporting is sufficiently accessible and transparent
- Ensure that transitions between services for different ages happens seamlessly, and that no child with a continuing support need is left behind
- Strengthen participation structures which enable the voice of children and young people to be heard in all matters concerning them

## Respond to COVID-19

- Vulnerable children, including those newly vulnerable as a result of the pandemic, receive the ongoing support they need to recover from traumatic experiences
- That the needs of all children, including those at risk of poverty, are sufficiently prioritised as lockdown measures are safely eased
- Ensure that the lessons learnt from the impact of COVID 19 on children and families inform future policy and practice arrangements
- Continue to inform and re-frame public service delivery, to facilitate and strengthen trauma-informed practice with children and young people impacted by ACEs and socio-economic deprivation
- Ensure that there is no regression in respect of positive policy and practice advancements made during COVID 19

Public services, including the vital role played by the Children's Third Sector, are facing serious challenges, with demand set to increase over the short-medium term coinciding with significant financial pressures at both a strategic and operational level. The impact of COVID-19 and successive failures to tackle the underlying causes of disadvantage and vulnerability, demand that better partnership and integrated systems of working are embedded, to achieve a whole system approach to delivering better outcomes for children.

**We ask that all political parties take steps to support our third sector services in Wales, so that they can continue to play a central role in safeguarding the human rights of all children, including those most vulnerable and disadvantaged.**



# Children in Wales Plant yng Nghymru

Credwch  
mewn plant  
Believe in  
children



**Barnardo's**  
Cymru



**Gweithredu  
dros Blant**

**NSPCC**  
CYMRU | WALES

**tgp** CYMRU  
PLANT A THEULUOEDD  
CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

**The  
Children's  
Society**



**Achub y  
Plant**  
Save the Children

**MYND  
AMDANI**



Prince's Trust  
Cymru

**START  
SOMETHING**



**nyas**  
cymru  
gwasanaeth eiriolaeth  
ieuenctid cenedlaethol  
national youth  
advocacy service