

Respecting Children and Young People's Rights in Wales.

GOV.WALES. (2022), The legal and policy context surrounding the rights of children and young people in Wales is shaped by several key frameworks and legislative measures aimed at incorporating the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) into local law and practice.

GOV.WALES. (2022), UNCRC- Wales was the first country in the UK, to make the UNCRC apart of its domestic law, this was done in 2011. What is a Right? As defined by UNCRC, a Right is a legal, social or ethical entitlement or freedom. Rights are fundamental to society and are more than often the subject of social conflict.

GOV.WALES. (2025), And Welsh Government (2014). State that (The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014). This landmark legislation emphasizes the importance of safeguarding and promoting the well-being of children and young people. It requires local authorities to assess the needs of children and young people and provide support accordingly. The Act promotes collaboration among agencies to ensure a holistic approach to child welfare, emphasizing the importance of listening to children's voices.

(Safonau Cyfranogiad Cenedlaethol dros Blant a Phobl ifanc Children and Young People's National Participation Standards, n.d. (2016). Helps state that (The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal Wales Act 2018). This Act reforms the education system for children with special educational needs (SEN) in Wales. It aims to provide better support and resources for children with diverse learning requirements, ensuring that all children have equal access to quality education tailored to their needs. This legislation reflects a commitment to inclusive education as a fundamental right. In conclusion, this framework outlines the Welsh Government's strategic approach to improving the well-being of children and young people. It establishes goals and priorities for action across various sectors, including health, education, and social services. The framework emphasizes the importance of participation, ensuring that children and young people have opportunities to influence policies that affect their lives.

GOV.WALES. (n.d.). Helps state that, The Welsh Government has developed various strategies to support the mental health of children and young people, such as the (Together for Children and Young People) program. This initiative aims to improve access to mental health services, promote early intervention, and integrate mental health awareness into educational settings.

Child Poverty Action group (2024). The helps define the impact that poverty has on a child's rights. Recognizing the impact of poverty on children's rights, the Welsh Government has implemented various initiatives to tackle poverty and support vulnerable families. These strategies focus on providing resources and services that ensure all children have access to education, healthcare, and social support. Child Poverty Action group (2024) Also state that, "78% of children, missed out on days out., 72% of children, did not have a family holiday., 65% of children, could not partake in out of school activities". And there is a quote from, Child Poverty Action group (2024) that states that Amara, age:15, London, said." I skip meals to share with my mum...for example, I skip my meal to wait for her to come back and at least we can have the same amount of food... [We] starve together through the whole day, so at least we will have had something to eat".

Youth Sirgar. (2022). Wales has established mechanisms for youth participation in decision-making processes, such as the National Participation Standards. These standards guide organizations in engaging children and young people meaningfully, ensuring their voices are heard in governance and

policy making. Youth Sirgar. (2022) Quote that, "The National Children and Young People's Participation Standards are a tool to help you measure the process of children and young people's participation in the work that you do and how you can increase the participation of children and young people in decision-making in your organisation or service".

(Cultural Rights and Inclusion). Equalityhumanrights.com. (2025). Helps state that, The Welsh Government promotes cultural rights through policies that celebrate diversity and support children from various backgrounds. This includes language initiatives, cultural education, and community engagement programs that ensure children feel valued and included. (Digital Rights and Online Safety Policies). As digital engagement grows, the Welsh Government has developed policies to address online safety and protect children's rights in the digital space. Initiatives focus on promoting digital literacy, safeguarding young people from online threats, and ensuring their rights are respected online.

Equalityhumanrights.com. (2025) also helps state that, In March 2021, the Welsh Government initiated funding for the Hate Hurts Wales campaign and the Anti-Bullying Alliance to support Anti-Bullying Week. This commitment was furthered in 2022 and 2023, with additional resources provided, including Welsh language versions. In the same year, the Welsh Government established the Diversity and Anti-Racist Professional Learning (DARPL) initiative, a dedicated professional learning and resource hub aimed at promoting diversity and combating racism in educational settings. Following various recommendations, DARPL published a comprehensive guide in September 2024 that addresses strategies for eradicating racism within learning organizations. Furthermore, in January 2024, the Welsh Government released its "Peer-on-Peer Sexual Harassment in Educational Settings: Action Plan," which focuses on both the prevention of and response to incidents of sexual harassment among peers. This initiative reflects a growing recognition of the need for safe educational environments.

Equalityhumanrights.com. (2025). Helps define, The Curriculum for Wales was rolled out in primary schools in September 2022 and became mandatory for secondary schools from September 2023. The associated guidance emphasizes the importance of instilling respect for diversity across all curricular areas. Additionally, Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) has been mandated to ensure that students gain a thorough understanding of the social, emotional, physical, and legal aspects of harmful behaviours. This education aims to raise awareness of legal protections against discrimination, violence, abuse, neglect, and harassment, thereby fostering a safer and more inclusive educational experience for all students.

Due Regard and a Children's Rights Approach The duty of 'due regard,' as established under the Rights Measure and other pertinent legislation, has shown considerable promise in facilitating the integration of children's rights within policy development. This obligation mandates that relevant decision-makers consider the principles outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Additionally, the Children's Rights Approach, formulated by the Observatory on Human Rights of Children and endorsed by both the Children's Commissioner and the Welsh Government, offers a framework for public bodies to effectively translate children's rights into actionable practices.

Moreover, during a recent meeting with the NGO delegation in Geneva, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child expressed significant interest in the innovative methodologies employed in Wales concerning the promotion of children's rights. This dialogue underscores the increasing recognition of Wales as a leader in the implementation of children's rights, aligning with international standards and practices in the field.

Children's rights in Wales. (2020). There are certain barriers when it comes to implementing children's rights in school. Such as, Inadequate training, limited resources, curriculum constraints, cultural and societal norms,

insufficient support systems and fragmented policy framework. Addressing these barriers is crucial for successfully integrating children's rights into the educational framework in Wales. Ensuring that all students benefit from an environment that recognizes and upholds their rights.

There are also Case studies done on Rights respecting schools that tie in with the previous point. Children's Commissioner for Wales. (n.d.) (2025). Help talk about the case studies that were done. Heronsbridge is a combined primary and secondary special school that serves a diverse range of learning needs, including a dedicated department for pupils on the autistic spectrum. While many of the students are day pupils, the school is equipped with two residential houses on its grounds. Heronsbridge has adopted a comprehensive whole-school approach to embedding children's rights throughout its educational framework. All staff members have participated in training on children's rights, and the school's governing body is knowledgeable about the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and its application within the school community. The principles of the UNCRC are integrated into school policies and are actively utilized in daily practices, including assemblies, lessons, and various activities, ensuring that pupils are informed about and able to exercise their rights. The school recognizes the positive impact of embedding these rights, as promoting values such as respect, dignity, and non-discrimination enhances students' self-esteem and well-being. Students feel empowered in an environment where they know their voices are heard and that adults are committed to acting in their best interests. Children's Commissioner for Wales. (n.d.) (2025).

The Rights Respecting Schools Award provides students with a robust framework to articulate their thoughts and opinions on matters that affect them. Staff members assume the role of Duty Bearers, ensuring that children's rights are prioritized in all decision-making processes. This approach fosters improved relationships between students and teachers, built on mutual respect and acknowledgment of diverse perspectives. In a Rights Respecting School, all children are treated as equals by both their peers and the adults in the community. As a result, students become actively engaged in school life and the broader community, which cultivates their confidence to make informed decisions. They develop a moral framework grounded in equality and respect, which serves as a foundation for their growth into engaged, responsible members of society. Children's Commissioner for Wales. (n.d.) (2025).

Rights vs Needs for children and young people in Wales. The Welsh government prioritizes both the rights and the needs of children and young people, inserting the UNCRC into law through the rights of children and young persons (Wales) measure 2011, ensuring all decisions consider their best interests and rights.

For children, needs represent the essential requirements for survival and well-being, while rights serve as entitlements that ensure these needs are met, thereby imposing a responsibility on adults to protect and promote them. **Definition:** Needs encompass the fundamental necessities that a child requires to survive, thrive, and develop fully. **Examples:** These necessities include food, shelter, clean water, healthcare, education, and a safe environment. **Focus:** The concept of needs pertains to what a child requires to lead a healthy and fulfilling life.

Rights - Definition: Rights are entitlements that every child possesses simply by virtue of being a child, and they are recognized and protected by law. **Examples:** Rights include the right to life, the right to education, the right to healthcare, the right to protection from abuse and neglect, and the right to express opinions. **Focus:** Rights concern what a child is entitled to and the responsibilities of adults to ensure the provision of these entitlements. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) serves as a key international treaty that delineates the rights of children.

Obligation: While needs represent what a child requires, rights imply an obligation for adults and governments to ensure that these needs are fulfilled. **Entitlement:** Rights are inherent entitlements, meaning they cannot be earned or revoked; they are intrinsic to every child. **Framework:** Rights provide a structured framework for ensuring that children's needs are addressed and that they are treated with dignity and respect.

Responsibility: Children also hold responsibilities, such as respecting the rights of others; however, their rights remain paramount, particularly during their formative years.

The Labour party and how it affects the rights and education for children and young people in Wales. (The Labour Party, 2024) helps define this as, under a Labour administration in Westminster, the Welsh Labour Government aims to further invest in policies that dismantle barriers to educational success. This includes initiatives to recruit new teachers in essential subject areas across Welsh schools, thereby equipping students for future life and employment. Funding for these initiatives will be sourced from the proposed elimination of tax breaks for private schools by a UK Labour government, thereby directing additional resources to Wales.

A fundamental aspect of the vision for education in Wales is the development of high-quality teaching and leadership through a guaranteed system of career-long professional learning. The Welsh Labour Government is operationalizing this vision via the National Professional Learning Entitlement. In conjunction with fostering exemplary teaching, elevating educational standards requires exceptional leadership. The extension of the Attainment Champions pilot program will provide increased support for headteachers and school leaders through mentoring and the dissemination of best practices. Furthermore, the government is committed to facilitating collaboration among schools to promote a more uniform approach to enhancing educational standards.

(The Labour Party, 2024) also states that. The Welsh Labour Government is actively enhancing support for children and families through the expansion of childcare services for two-year-olds, facilitated by the Flying Start programme, which includes provisions for Welsh-language settings. Additionally, the government offers 30 hours of funded childcare per week for eligible parents of three- and four-year-olds, available for up to 48 weeks each year through the Childcare Offer. This Childcare Offer extends to parents engaged in training and education, as well as to foster and kinship carers, thereby broadening access to essential childcare resources. The Welsh Labour Government is dedicated to supporting children and their families during the critical first 1,000 days of a child's life, aiming to provide the optimal foundation for future development. Recognizing the importance of flexibility for parents in the early stages of child-rearing, the government plans to conduct a comprehensive review of the parental leave system within its first year in office. This review will evaluate the role of parental leave in fostering a growing economy and supporting families effectively. This is done through the act of (the flying start program). (Swansea, n.d.)

(ALN), and how it affects children and young people's rights in Wales. (GOV.WALES, n.d.) helps explain. The draft Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Code and accompanying regulations are designed to facilitate the implementation of the 2018 Act, which establishes a fair and equitable framework for supporting all children and young people up to the age of 25 with ALN. This framework ensures that every individual, regardless of the complexity of their needs, is provided with a statutory Individual

Development Plan. Additionally, certain provisions apply to children or young people residing in England who attend maintained schools or (FEIs) in Wales. The implementation of the draft (ALN) Code, the 2018 Act, and the associated regulations will ensure that every child and young person with (ALN), whether of compulsory school age or above and engaged in educational settings, is entitled to a statutory IDP to support their learning, irrespective of the severity or complexity of their needs.

(GOV.WALES, n.d.) and (Children's Commissioner for Wales, 2024) also explain that. The draft Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Code is designed to ensure that the voices of children and young people are central to the decision-making processes and planning efforts aimed at addressing their Additional Learning Needs. This framework builds upon the stipulations established by the 2018 Act, which mandates that the views, wishes, and feelings of children and young people be considered, particularly in the preparation and review of Individual Development Plans (IDPs). Specifically, Chapter 4 of the draft ALN Code delineates the responsibilities of individuals exercising functions under Part 2 of the 2018 Act regarding involving and supporting the child and their parent or the young person during the execution of those functions. This chapter provides guidance on the obligations set forth in Section 6 of the 2018 Act, emphasizing the need to consider: The views, wishes, and feelings of the child and their parent or the young person. The importance of enabling the child and their parent or the young person to participate as fully as possible in decisions related to the exercise of the relevant.

functions. The necessity of providing the child and their parent or young person with the information and support required to facilitate meaningful participation in these decisions. (GOV.WALES, n.d.)

In conclusion, the work being done in the last 10 years has made a crucial contribution to the implementation of children and young people's rights and needs in Wales, and that things will only improve. I believe that with more rights respecting schools, children and young people will have more of a voice in what happens and changes that are being made that will impact their social and educational standing. The Aim with this essay is to introduce the concept for children and young people's rights, not only in Wales but hopefully across the UK as well.

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