

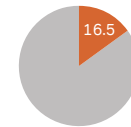
“ Country recommendation

Wales should take action to introduce legislation to fully and directly incorporate the UNCRC into Welsh law without delay.

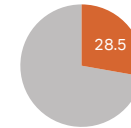
Country Profile 2023



Wales



Child population (0-15 years):
513,000
16.5% of total population (2021)



Child Poverty:
143,640
28% (2022)
▼ -3% compared to 2020

RESPONDENT ORGANISATION(S):

[Children in Wales](#)

Children's Rights in Wales

The priorities for the Welsh government are set out in its [Programme for Government](#). It includes reform of services for care experienced children, expansion of childcare and programmes for pre-school children, a revised child poverty strategy and implementation of a new schools' curriculum for Wales.

A supplementary [Children and Young People's Plan](#) was published in 2022 and provides more detail.

There is no named cabinet minister for children in Wales. Although Children in Wales and others have repeatedly [called](#) for this, it has been [rejected](#). The Welsh government consider it sufficient to have collective responsibility for children across the cabinet. The cabinet member responsible for children's rights is the Deputy Minister for Social Services.

Children in Wales identified several key areas related to children's rights.

Child participation

The Welsh government provides core funding to Children in Wales, the national umbrella organisation representing over 250 organisations and professionals who work with children and young people across a variety of sectors. This enables the voice of children, through the [Young Wales project](#), to be fed into the national policy debate on a regular basis.

Recommendations on strengthening child participation in Wales³:

- Ensure that national and local arrangements for children's participation promote a rights-based approach, are sustainable, embedded, adequately funded, and monitored against national

standards, and include opportunities for children to discuss the issues of importance to them.

- Ensure there are equitable opportunities for younger children and those most marginalised and vulnerable to participate at a local and national level.

Child safety and well-being online

The Welsh government has published a report, [Enhancing digital resilience in education: An action plan to protect children and young people online](#), and is working with the UK government to support the [Online Safety Bill](#), adopted on September 19 2023.

In its recent [State of Children's Rights in Wales report](#)⁴, Children in Wales provided a range of recommendations, including:

- Periodically review the Welsh Enhancing Digital Resilience in

Education Action Plan.

- Ensure that the UK Online Safety Bill is implemented without delay to improve protections for Welsh children online.

Child protection systems

The [Wales Safeguarding Procedures](#) support evidence-based and consistent safeguarding practices across agencies and across Wales. They include supplementary guides on children who may have been trafficked, child sexual exploitation and child criminal exploitation. There are also national plans on child sexual abuse, legislation on [violence against children](#), and guidance on keeping children safe in [education and schools](#).

The UK-wide Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse review included [six recommendations](#) for Wales.

³ Wales UNCRC Monitoring Group, State of Children's Rights in Wales, p. 26-27, 2023.

⁴ Online safety recommendations are on p. 31-32.

In a recent report⁵, Children in Wales provided a range of recommendations on child protection, including:

- Implement and apply relevant recommendations to Wales from the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse.
- Ensure that preventative and protection measures are strengthened to address all forms of violence against children.
- Ensure that children who have experienced abuse can access appropriate, child-centred therapeutic services when needed.

Children impacted by war and conflict

Wales has welcomed many children from the conflict in Ukraine (approximately 6,000 adults and children). The Welsh government has provided a wide range of support to Ukrainian people, many of these can be found on the [government website](#).

There is also a [Sanctuary](#) website created to help everyone to understand their rights. This website also provides information on Wales and where to find help. Information is also provided for children on a national helpline in Wales: [What's Happening Between Russia and Ukraine](#)⁶?

Children in migration and refugees

Asylum is a UK government responsibility. The Welsh Parliament refused to give consent to the (now) Illegal Migration Act in a parliamentary debate and vote and has been critical about it. Children in Wales provided a [written response](#) focusing on children's rights. Children in Wales points out the different approach that Wales is taking to welcoming refugees and asylum seekers, including the positive steps towards becoming a [Nation of Sanctuary](#), in comparison to UK government.

Climate change and environmental impacts

The [Young Wales's Report](#) to the UN (2023) identifies climate changes as a key priority with the following recommendations:

- Embed lessons, resources, and more campaigns on climate change into the curriculum to raise awareness of the reality now, what is being done, and what can be done with practical advice on how children and young people can make a difference.
- Provide clearer recycling bins, more safe walkways to school and support more outdoor activities such as gardening and litter picking.
- Reduce industrial impact on the climate and offer more incentives for eco-friendly industries.
- Listen to children and young people on climate change.

Children's mental health

The Welsh government published their [NEST framework for children's mental health and well-being](#) in 2023. The NEST framework aims to improve mental health and well-being services for babies, children, young people, and their families.

Mental health is a significant issue amongst children in Wales, aggravated by the Covid-19 pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis. The Children in Wales publication [State of Children's Rights in Wales](#) outlines the situation for children regarding mental health and provides eight recommendations for the Welsh government. These include:

- Invest in timely, appropriate, and universally accessible early intervention support for all children, alongside integrated multi-agency community-based support services for the 'missing middle'.⁷

⁵ See p.28-36 for child protection system recommendations in the State of Children's Rights in Wales report.

⁶ The service provided is independent from, although funded by the government.

- Publish a new mental health strategy that fully encompasses the specific needs of all children, including those with protected characteristics and experiencing poverty, and make infant mental health an explicit priority, alongside ensuring that reporting and accountability mechanisms continue to feature strongly.
- Publish statutory guidance to enable school staff to deliver the mental health duty as part of the new curriculum.
- Provide a well-resourced specialist Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), accessible at the point of need, with greater accountability through improved performance data collection, and implement consistent rights-based transitional planning arrangements to adult services.

Poverty and Social Exclusion – Experiences of children, families, and communities

Wales has a total child population of **513,000 (0-15 years)**, of which **28% live in poverty and social exclusion**. The children most in need are children in lone-parent households, some Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) families, children in a house with a disabled adult/child, non-working households, and asylum-seeking children.

According to Children in Wales, the most concerning groups of children are those in working families living in poverty, especially those who do not qualify for many benefits and have been hit hard by the cost-of-living crisis.

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 three 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%). Moreover, there was a 40% likelihood of people from a BAME group living in relative income poverty compared to a 22% likelihood for those 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.⁸ The services needed to tackle child poverty are free school meals as the number of families accessing food banks is growing,

family support, early intervention services, money advice, and financial support services. To help tackle child poverty and social exclusion, Children in Wales call on the Welsh government to prioritise:

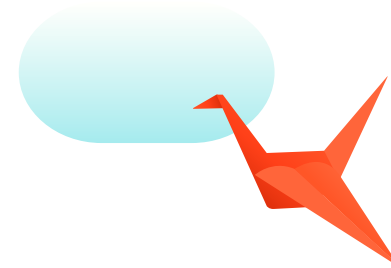
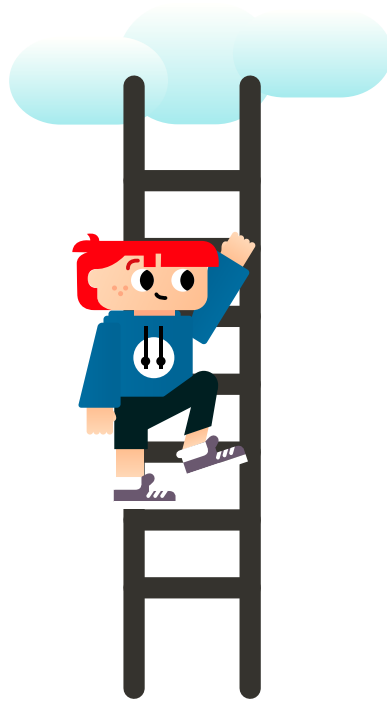
- automatic enrolment and extension of free school meals across all ages;
- implementation of statutory school uniforms and other school cost guidance;
- introducing a Welsh Benefits system and ensure that all families are receiving their full entitlement to benefits.

A recent example of an intervention demonstrating good practice where children, families, and communities have been supported, and poverty has been overcome or mitigated against is [*The Tackling the Impact of Poverty on Education Programme*](#). This initiative works across Wales with schools to help them identify and implement no and low-cost

⁷ The 'Missing Middle' refers to the lack of 'intermediate' service options, for children who fall between different levels of support. See *State of Children's Rights in Wales*, p. 53-56.

⁸ Welsh government, *Consultation on the draft Child Poverty Strategy for Wales, 2023*.

solutions to tackling child poverty. The [price of pupil poverty guide](#) sets out the steps schools can take, and the project offers bespoke advice and support, whole-school training of all staff and guidance for schools to develop their own action plans.



Eurochild advocates for children's rights and well-being to be at the heart of policymaking. We are a network of organisations working with and for children throughout Europe, striving for a society that respects the rights of children. We influence policies, build internal capacities, facilitate mutual learning and exchange practice and research. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is the foundation of all our work.



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the heart of Europe

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