

Annual Report Recommendations – REVIEWED in July 2020, published in August

Quarterly Updates for website

COVID-19: An update to this document was due to have been published in April 2020 following a full review across all areas in March 2020. After we had reviewed progress against each area, the country went into lockdown due to Covid-19 and as a result many pieces of Government policy work have been paused or delayed. Initially we did not publish a review in April as planned but we believe it is now important to publish the latest position in the interest of transparency. We have tried to reflect where possible if the work is currently on hold due to Covid-19 work.

Each year through my annual report I make recommendations to the Welsh Government, on the key policy issues that I would like to see action on in the following twelve months. During the year I follow these recommendations up through meetings with Ministers and Deputy Ministers, lead officials, and other stakeholders including children and young people.

Where recommendations have featured on the same topic in successive years, these are each listed under the same heading, in date order.

I have given each recommendation a Red / Amber / Green rating to measure the progress against the call that I have made. The colour rating is my own assessment based on the engagement with all key stakeholders. It is important to note that the rating is not an assessment of whether or not the Welsh Government agrees with the recommendation. The colour rating reflects whether or not there have been any policy and practice changes that improve children's lives in Wales and give further protection to their enjoyment of their rights under the UNCRC.

Red	No evidence of policy or practice changes since the recommendation was made. No improvement in children's experiences.
Amber	Some evidence of policy or practice change but the recommendation has not yet been successfully achieved in full.
Green	Recommendation implemented and notable differences for children and young people in receipt of a service or support.

	Recommendations	Current RAG rating	Comments
<b>Adoption support</b>	<p><b>2015/16</b> Welsh Government should work with the National Adoption Service and regional collaboratives to ensure increased provision of adoption support, providing extra resources where required.</p>	<b>No change</b>	<p>Positive steps are being made to address the support needs of many children and their families. In July 2019, Adoption UK published their "<a href="#">Adoption Barometer</a>" survey, which explored adopters' experiences of support, access to services and outcomes for young people in each UK Nation.</p> <p>The National Adoption Service, along with Adoption UK, announced the development of a range of adoption support services, supported by £2.3 million in additional funding from the Welsh Government. This will enable families in Wales to access Therapeutic Education Support Services for Adopters (TESSA) and children will be able to access child-specific support services. These support services are being rolled out across Wales and we will continue to monitor this through our position on the National Adoption Service Governance Board.</p>
<b>Advocacy</b>	<p><b>2015/16</b> The Government should work with ADSS and the WLGA to implement a national approach to statutory advocacy as a matter of priority, to ensure that all eligible children and young people across Wales receive an 'active offer' of advocacy and are supported to express their views on the care and support they receive.</p>	<b>No change</b>	<p>I am pleased to note that the National Approach is now live across all of the regions and children and young people are being actively offered the support of an advocate.</p> <p>Welsh Government have now published <a href="#">the National Standards and Outcomes Framework for Children and Young People in Wales</a>, which sets out what young people can expect from their independent advocacy service. Through the role of the task and finish group that my office was</p>

	<p><b>2016/17</b> I recommend that the Welsh Government monitors the implementation of the National Approach to Statutory Advocacy to ensure that the intended services reach all those who are entitled to receive it, increasing the prospect of positive outcomes for children and young people.</p> <p><b>2017/18</b> I recommend that the Part 10 Code of Practice is amended to give statutory force to the National Approach to Statutory Advocacy including all of the associated documents.</p>		<p>part of, the framework expressly recognises the UNCRC and its application to advocacy.</p> <p>Renewed <a href="#">Code of Practice</a> relating to advocacy has now been published, setting out young peoples' entitlements to advocacy, including those who come into contact with child protection procedures, care proceedings or require care and support from Social Services.</p> <p>We continue to monitor the roll out of the active offer, through our I&amp;A case work and position on the Advocacy Providers Group. We are aware that children in residential homes have faced challenges in accessing their statutory entitlement to advocacy. This has been raised in the recent <a href="#">thematic review of children's homes</a> by Care Inspectorate Wales, with further work being underway by TGP Cymru to determine consistent access to provision.</p> <p>I am aware that the Welsh Government National Approach to Statutory Advocacy for Children and Young People Task and Finish Group is coming to a close. Going forward, robust monitoring arrangements must be put in place to ensure the roll out of the Active Offer continues. Steps must also be taken towards the development of a National Commissioning Framework, in line with the Senedd CYPE Committee recommendation to monitor "annually local authority expenditure on statutory advocacy services". This would further help to ensure that access to high quality, independent advocacy can be universally accessed by vulnerable children and young, and would protect statutory advocacy services for children, as Wales enters its COVID-19 recovery phase.</p>
<b>Mental health</b>	<p><b>2015/16</b> The NHS Together for Children and Young People Programme should continue to receive adequate funding levels to fulfil its</p>	<b>NO CHANGE</b>	<p>I am pleased that the T4CYP Programme has been extended until at least March 2021. It will be a refocussed Programme, with 3 work streams of Early help and enhanced support, adopting a whole system approach through Regional Partnership Boards, and a whole-system approach to</p>

	<p>ambitions and should monitor whether children's experiences of mental health care are improving.</p> <p><b>2016/17</b> The Welsh Government should ensure that the T4CYP programme is continued beyond this financial year, until the programme has delivered on its ambitions. Before the national programme ends, the programme's improvements need to be sufficiently and consistently embedded at a local level so that the regional planning boards can then maintain progress and quality of provision for all children across Wales.</p> <p><b>2017/18</b> I recommend that the Welsh Government takes action to require Regional Partnership Boards (RPBs) to set up specific multi agency planning structures for children and young people that will report to the RPB. They should also require RPBs to take steps to integrate children's social care and mental health services into multi-disciplinary teams, that will respond to the needs of their local populations of children and young people who require emotional, behavioural or mental health support and treatment.</p> <p><b>2018/19</b> Welsh Government works as a matter of urgency to establish continuation</p>		<p>neurodevelopmental services. While I am pleased that the Programme has been continued, some concerns have been expressed over the now more fragmented structure where work streams which previously would have sat under T4CYP are accountable to different bodies. I will be seeking reassurances from Welsh Government that a robust accountability mechanism is established to ensure that there is a single body with oversight of the children and young people's mental health landscape. Of particular concern to me is that the specialist CAMHS work stream will be led by the All Age mental health network, and not by T4CYP. I will be monitoring this situation to make sure that the separation of specialist CAMHS from primary CAMHS and the early help and enhanced support work does not mean that the focus is lost on moving to a more seamless 'step-up/step-down' to or from specialist CAMHS.</p> <p>During this pandemic period, my team and I have been in touch regularly with the two mental health inpatient units for children and young people in Wales, Welsh Government Ministers and officials, and the NHS Mental Health Incident Group, set up in response to the pandemic. Over this period, I have had concerns over the capacity of the inpatient units, and the 'surge' beds made available through independent providers. My understanding is that these surge beds were only used a couple of times over this period, but this does demonstrate, more than ever, the lack of spare capacity in the system. While the community CAMHS services across Wales have managed to maintain a service, I am also concerned that for most young people, their mental health provision has moved from face-to-face to video calling, or just telephone calls. My concern is that some children and young people may not feel the connection to the professionals supporting them that they had before and that this could affect their commitment to the arrangement.</p> <p>I am also keen that we learn the lessons of providing mental health services at this time, which includes where the different forms of delivery, such as video calls, may be preferable for some young people.</p>
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	<p>arrangements for the important work currently being delivered through the Together for Children and Young People Programme.</p>		<p>As we move into a recovery period, the need for a responsive, wraparound, service is more evident than ever.</p> <p>The new T4CYP(2) programme will play a vital role in ensuring that any gaps in CAMHS provision resulting from the circumstances related to Covid-19 are identified and that work takes place to ensure equitable access to mental health services across Wales.</p> <p>I am pleased to see that some RPBs have included multi-agency children and young people's services in their bids to the Welsh Government's Transformation Fund, and that some of these have been approved. I am pleased that the recently published Part 9 Statutory Guidance includes a definition of children with complex needs which is broader than some RPBs had been interpreting it; a recognition of the duty for RPBs to have due regard to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child; the extension of the local authority section 12 duty (participation of children and young people) to RPBs; an expectation that RPBs should establish multi agency sub-groups to discuss children and young people's needs; and an expectation that RPBs should consider developing regional commissioning strategies and pooled fund arrangements for residential care for children and young people with complex needs.</p> <p>Our work to report on the effectiveness of RPBs in integrating services for children with complex needs has now been concluded and published after a short delay due to the Covid-19 outbreak. <a href="#">The report</a> sets out recommendations to RPBs and Welsh Government which we hope will assist both in implementing this statutory guidance effectively.</p>
<b>Mental health and</b>	<p><b>2015/16</b> The curriculum review programme 'Successful Futures' should work closely with</p>	<b>No change</b>	<p>I believe that the Whole-School Approach work has been shaped since its inception through the Joint Ministerial Task and Finish Group, and believe there is a better understanding that the whole-school approach must</p>

<p><b>well-being in schools</b></p>	<p>the NHS's Together for Children and Young People programme to promote evidence-based, whole school approaches to healthy relationships, mental health and wellbeing.</p>		<p>involve every agency and actor involved in children's lives at school, at home, and in the community. Notably, in the draft framework, there have been signs of a recognition of the importance of the new curriculum, the role of youth work, and the new Welsh Government guidance on bullying.</p> <p>However, I continue to have concerns about several elements of the draft framework, including the need for the guidance to be applicable to further education institutions, and for children and young people educated other than in school; the need for clarity on how schools' performance on this agenda will be monitored; clearer links between the framework and other guidance for school staff, including the new curriculum; and whether accountability lies at a local or regional level for providing the localised 'menu of options' of interventions / programmes for schools.</p> <p>In my view, this work is now going in the right direction and I look forward to the implementation of a whole-school approach.</p> <p>The latest draft of the Framework was much improved, and I am pleased that comments from myself and other stakeholders have been taken into account. However, there are still outstanding questions over whether this guidance will be statutory. It is firmly my belief that it should be, and that the role of lead coordinator in schools is mandatory. The latest framework does discuss accountability more clearly than before, but it is still unclear entirely whether the regional consortia or RPBs will be expected to be the regional body to which schools are accountable. Public Health Wales and Welsh Government are developing a toolkit for schools to access evidence-based interventions, which is very much welcome. This work will be key to the success of the whole-school approach, to ensure that schools can straightforwardly access the right interventions for their circumstances.</p> <p>As the pandemic has impacted upon services and the capacity of Welsh Government, the consultation on the whole school approach framework,</p>
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<p><b>Transport</b></p>	<p><b>2015/16</b> Welsh Government should review the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008 and associated statutory provision and operational guidance, to ensure that all journeys to and from school are safe and that local authorities are quite clear about their responsibilities for ensuring that this happens.</p> <p><b>2018/19</b> The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 applies to young people up to the age of 25. Government must ensure that there is a statutory duty that requires all children and young people covered by the Act to be provided with safe transport to their place of education.</p> <p>Welsh Government should therefore reconsider their response to my 15/16 annual</p>	<p><b>CHANGED FROM RED TO AMBER</b></p>	<p>Welsh Government rejected the calls from my 2018-19 report, but advised that they were commencing a review of post-16 learner travel.</p> <p>I was concerned that the scope of the review would be insufficient to meet the needs of young people to travel safely to their place of education.</p> <p>I am therefore pleased that the Welsh Government has now announced an expanded scope for this review and that they will work closely with my office and the Welsh Language Commissioner on this, with the work to be completed by March 2021.</p> <p>I look forward to seeing more details of this work urgently and to this work commencing; my team will engage closely with this work.</p>

	report recommendation to review the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008 and associated statutory provision and guidance.		
<b>Additional Learning Needs</b>	<p><b>2015/16</b> Welsh Government should introduce new legislation and a robust Code of Practice that delivers on its commitment to children and young people with additional learning needs.</p> <p><b>2016/17</b> The Welsh Government should introduce a duty upon all relevant bodies under the Act to pay due regard to the UNCRC and UNCRPD and to place this duty on the face of the Bill.</p>	<b>No change</b>	<p>The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 passed with due regard to the UNCRC and UNCRPD on the face of the Bill.</p> <p>The draft Code of Practice and Regulations was subject to consultation in spring of 2019. In September 2019 Government announced a delay to the implementation of the Act. I am continuing to engage with Government to emphasise how the new Code can more fully embed children's rights across their educational experience.</p> <p>I also welcome Government's plans to give some financial boost to the current system next year. This investment is essential so that children and young people can be supported immediately and it will also help to increase capacity across Wales before the new law is implemented. I hope this additional investment is not a one-off, and will be continued as the new system develops.</p>
<b>Additional Learning Needs</b>	<p><b>2015/16</b> Welsh Government should strengthen the coordination, provision and support provided to children and young people with additional learning needs, including the introduction of statutory duties on LHBs and NHS trusts to provide support and to strengthen the powers of the Education Tribunal for Wales.</p> <p><b>2016/17</b></p>	<b>No change</b>	<p>The Educational Tribunal will now have powers over health bodies under the Act, including the ability to request evidence and reports for appeals.</p>



	The Welsh Government should also strengthen the powers of the Education Tribunal for Wales by extending its remit over health bodies.		
Child poverty	<p><b>2015/16</b> The Welsh Government should demonstrate clear and strong leadership to eradicate child poverty, by engaging positively and collaboratively with the UK Government, and public and private bodies across all sectors, including employers.</p> <p>To tackle child poverty, Welsh Government should put in place and monitor a specific child poverty delivery plan, with clear targets and milestones, to drive the implementation of national strategy to ensure that no child is disadvantaged in realising their rights under the UNCRC.</p> <p><b>2016/2017</b> The Welsh Government should use all available levers to alleviate child poverty including use of new tax raising powers. It should support local authorities to offer further relief in specific areas known to cause pressure on the poorest families, including holiday hunger, school uniform costs and high domestic fuel bills.</p> <p><b>2018/19</b></p>	No change	<p>The Minister for Housing and Local Government, with responsibility for the coordination of measures to mitigate child poverty, has provided a formal response to the recommendations in my <i>Charter for Change</i> report.</p> <p>I acknowledge that in 2019 funding was provided to enhance and extend PDG access, introduced free sanitary products in schools and FEIs and launch a holiday hunger playworks pilot. I note that the Welsh Government's budget committed additional funding to these programmes. In addition, the final budget provided additional funds for a new pilot secondary school breakfast scheme in 2020/2021.</p> <p>However, the Covid-19 crisis has meant a reallocation of funding to meet needs arising from the pandemic. As a result, these pilots are on hold. I am disappointed that there is no indication that there will be scope to broaden eligibility for free school meals.</p> <p>I am encouraged that Government is taking forward a child poverty focused review of funding programmes and that my recommendations will be taken into account as part of this. I have met with the officials concerned to emphasise the importance of analysing the impact of their programmes and taking a children's rights approach to this work including involving children and young people. They have also assured me that it will be child focused. I have contributed evidence to the review. Recommendations from this work were due to be discussed by Ministers in March 2020 but have been delayed due to Covid-19. Recommendations need to be published as soon as possible to ensure that this work can be taken forward within the remaining Senedd term. I</p>

	<p>Welsh Government need to take account of the recommendations of the Charter for Change report, and publish a delivery plan setting out in detail how departments across Government will take practical steps to mitigate and tackle the impact of child poverty.</p>		<p>would still like this work to be outlined and driven by a child poverty delivery plan. It should also take into account the support that this group of children and young people will require following the outbreak of the Coronavirus and learning from programmes adapted and/or developed over this period.</p> <p><b>Covid 19</b>  Welsh Government has taken a positive step in response to the pandemic, to provide resources to secure free school meals for eligible children particularly over the school holidays. Some funding has also made available to provide learners with appropriate internet connected devices and connectivity along with an injection to the Discretionary Assistance fund which families may apply to at a time of crisis. I have engaged with Ministers and officials at this time to emphasise the importance of ensuring that these schemes are reaching the children that they are intended for and monitoring provision through local authorities and other agencies to ensure this is the case. I have also raised with Government during this period concerns about the inconsistent practice by local authorities of closing green spaces given that many families are likely to be living in homes that provide no or little outdoor space.</p>
Curriculum and UNCRC	<p><b>2015/16</b> Human rights education, including knowledge about children's rights should have a firm footing in the new 'Curriculum for Wales – a Curriculum for life'.</p> <p><b>2016/17</b>  The Welsh Government should make children's human rights education a compulsory aspect of the curriculum. The Curriculum Reform programme should embed learning about the UN Convention on</p>	Changed from Amber	<p>I am profoundly disappointed that Government have rejected my call for a due regard duty to the UNCRC on the Curriculum and Assessment Bill. In this rejection, Government made the erroneous assertion that such a duty is unnecessary because of the Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011.</p> <p>The claim does not hold: the new curriculum proposes a subsidiarity model in which decision-making about curriculum design and assessment processes will take place at a school level. The Measure does not ensure that individual school settings take account of children's</p>

	<p>the Rights of the Child across all parts of the new curriculum. This should include linking the Digital Competency Framework to children's rights and support children and young people to understand they have the same rights online as they do offline.</p> <p><b>2017/18</b> I recommend that the Welsh Government ensures that the long-term needs and welfare of children are safeguarded by ensuring that the new curriculum is overtly underpinned by a Children's Rights Approach and that learning outcomes support all children to know their rights under the UNCRC.</p> <p><b>2018/19</b> To ensure an enduring commitment to the human rights of children the Welsh Government should introduce a duty upon all relevant bodies to pay due regard to the UNCRC in the delivery of the curriculum. This duty should be placed on the face of the Curriculum and Assessment Bill.</p>		<p>rights in their curriculum and assessment planning now, and it certainly will not do so in the future when settings have increased autonomy.</p> <p>Largely due to the commitment of individual professionals, some schools in Wales have led excellent work embedding the human rights of children into decision-making. But this is certainly not the experience of every child. This is shown by instances that include off-rolling, isolation of children, discrimination, and a lack of participation opportunities. Children's human rights should not be left to chance in this way.</p> <p>Although the UNCRC and a children's rights approach was included in draft curriculum guidance, this will be subject to change and without legislation that includes children's rights there is nothing that guarantees that children and young people's experience of the new curriculum will be informed by their human rights.</p> <p>Government claim that, "Children's rights are at the forefront of our ambitions for the new Curriculum for Wales". If this is true, I see no reason why Government are not taking the opportunity to include this in law and I will continue to push for this important safeguard for children's human rights through the published Bill's Stage 1 inquiry process.</p>
<b>Young people's participation in curriculum reform</b>	<p><b>2015/16</b> Welsh Government should ensure that arrangements are in place to support children and young people's participation in decision making processes relating to education reform.</p>	<b>No change</b>	<p>Although it was late in the consultation period, Welsh Government did respond to calls from myself and others to ensure young people had meaningful opportunities to participate.</p> <p>I was particularly pleased to see that Government ensured children and young people with protected characteristics were involved in this</p>

	<p><b>2017/18</b> I recommend that the achievement outcomes of the new curriculum ensure that all children and young people learn about their rights and that a children's rights approach underpins the guiding principles of curriculum delivery. The participation of children and young people should be systematically built into the next stage of curriculum development.</p>		<p>consultation and that there was an opportunity for young people to participate in different ways, including through a survey and face to face workshops. I was also pleased to see that young people were asked a range of broad and specific questions.</p> <p>It is important that Government ensures that children and young people can continue to take part in planning their curriculum. I am pleased to welcome the specific section on involving learners in curriculum design in the overview to the curriculum in the documents published on Hwb at the start of 2020. I also welcome the accompanying information about human rights education and the UNCRC in these documents.</p>
<p><b>Elective Home Education</b></p>	<p><b>2015/16</b> The Government should strengthen requirements for parents to register as electively home educating their children and for every child who is electively home educated to be seen by a professional at least annually so that they can express a view about their educational experiences.</p> <p><b>2016/17</b> It remains my view that the Welsh Government needs to amend the current guidance to give it statutory force and include a compulsory register for all home educated children to ensure they do not end up "off the radar" from even universal services. It is also important that the revision of the guidance includes clear powers for local authorities to ensure that they are seeing children and</p>	<p><b>Changed from amber</b></p>	<p>The Welsh Government response to my annual report for 2017-18 was published on 30<sup>th</sup> November, accepting my three tests for this policy.</p> <p>In autumn of 2019 Welsh Government consulted on statutory guidance and a handbook for home educators. I responded comprehensively to this consultation, highlighting strengths of the guidance in addition to areas where it could be strengthened in order to meet my three tests.</p> <p>Subsequently in January 2020, Welsh Government published a consultation on draft regulations for local authority databases, which included new duties for health boards and independent schools to share information so that local authorities can identify all school-aged children and young people in their area.</p> <p>Again, I responded fully to this consultation and made several suggestions as to how the proposals could be strengthened to ensure that no children slip under the radar of universal services.</p> <p>I am profoundly disappointed that on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2020 the Government announced that they would no longer taking forward planned work on</p>

	<p>speaking to them directly about their own education.</p> <p><b>2017/18</b> I recommend that the Welsh Government brings their updated policy forward to consultation this year, with the aims of meeting the following three tests in full:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Firstly that all children in Wales can be accounted for and that none slip under the radar of universal services, and society in general.</li> <li>• Secondly that every children receives a suitable education and their other human rights including health, care and safety.</li> <li>• This cannot be achieved without the third aim, that every children should have the opportunity to be seen and their views, including their views about their education, and experiences listened to.</li> </ul> <p><b>2018/19</b> Welsh Government must implement statutory guidance giving effect to my three tests in full in 2020, to ensure children's rights are being respected wherever they are educated.</p>		<p>the Statutory Guidance or Database Regulations this term. This is despite the huge amount of work that had already been undertaken on this area, with the 2019/20 consultations timed so that new statutory changes could be implemented in May 2020.</p> <p>Statutory changes are also long overdue: the Government's response to the tragic death of Dylan Seabridge is inadequate without the introduction of new measures with statutory force. This view is shared by the National Independent Safeguarding Board's commissioned report in 2017 and highlighted by the Child Practice Review report for Dylan Seabridge.</p> <p>I have recently received correspondence from the Education Minister in relation to the decision not to proceed with this work due to pressures of Covid 19. While I acknowledge the enormous pressure that the education division in Welsh Government has been under during the pandemic, I feel that this work should be regarded as a cross-governmental priority.</p> <p>I retain the option to use my formal powers of review to ensure children's rights are being protected and upheld wherever a child is educated and I am considering this position very carefully at this stage before responding further to the Government.</p>
Equal protection	2015/16	No change	I am delighted that the Assembly has now passed the Children (Abolition of the Defence of Reasonable Punishment) (Wales) Act 2020. This change

	<p>A bill should be introduced to the Welsh assembly as soon as possible to remove the 'reasonable punishment' defence.</p> <p><b>2016/17</b> No new recommendation was made on this topic in this year; however it formed a large part of our core policy and influencing work during the year.</p> <p><b>2017/18</b> I recommend that a Bill should be introduced as soon as possible to make sure that the Government's commitment is followed through.</p>		<p>in the law will provide clarity to professionals and parents, and provides a clear message that, in Wales, it is not acceptable to use physical punishment. This law change has been called for by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child for many years, and brings Wales into line with over 50 other countries worldwide, as well as the Republic of Ireland and Scotland, in making this change.</p> <p>I will continue to work with the Government through the implementation period to ensure that clear information and support are available to all in relation to this change.</p>
<b>Youth Parliament</b>	<p><b>2015/16</b> Whilst I have no legislative remit to make recommendations to the national assembly for Wales, I want to reaffirm my intention to press for a reinstated national democratic space for young people, in the form of a youth assembly. I am fully committed to working with young people and the national assembly to realise this ambition.</p>	<b>No change</b>	<p>The Senedd Ieuencid / Youth Parliament sat for the first time in February 2019 and has commenced its annual cycle of meetings. This is a hugely positive development to ensure young people's participation and representation at a national level.</p> <p>My team continues to engage with the Assembly team that supports this work, to explore the best means through which the Senedd Ieuencid can scrutinise my work, and so we can align our priorities where possible to ensure maximum scrutiny of the Government's work.</p> <p>In October 2019 I had my first discussion session with the Senedd Ieuencid, focusing around the topic of mental health and hope members continue to scrutinise and inform my work in this way.</p>
	<b>2016/17</b>		These recommendations have been achieved, in part.

<p>Young people leaving care</p> <p>"Hidden Ambitions" report</p>	<p>The Welsh Government should fulfil all of their commitments set out in the Hidden Ambitions report, including equal support for all care leavers whether they have come from foster care or residential care, funding for personal advisors to support for all care leavers up to the age of 25, publishing clear information for care leavers on finances and guaranteeing financial support for care leavers entering higher education. The Welsh Government should actively report on their progress against these commitments to local authorities and directly to children and young people themselves.</p> <p><b>2017/18</b></p> <p>I recommend that the Welsh Government works with care leavers and local authorities to produce clear financial information that is available nationally, to help young people and their personal advisers access the range of grants, benefits and entitlements that are available when leaving care.</p> <p><b>2018/19</b></p> <p>Welsh Government should amend legislation and guidance for the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 to secure all care leavers entitlement to a Personal Advisor up to the age of 25.</p> <p>Welsh Government should make more definitive progress on extending the</p>	<p>No change</p>	<p>I welcome the Welsh Government's investment in support for care leavers, in response to my Hidden Ambitions report. In particular the creation of the St David's Day fund and allocating additional funding to Local Authorities to provide personal advisors to all eligible young people up to the age of 25. I am pleased that a high number of young people have already accessed these measures of advice and support. We further welcome the commitment from Welsh Government to place Personal Advisor support on a statutory footing. However, we are conscious that lack of statutory change to bind this extension in law will not guarantee continued access to this support in the future.</p> <p>In January 2020, my team met with the Care Leavers Forum, to undertake a follow up analysis of the implementation of Hidden Ambitions recommendations, such as access to financial advice, education and employment support and pathways to safe and appropriate housing. Many local authorities have developed innovative support schemes to help young people thrive after care, however, access to suitable housing, employment schemes and clear financial information varies from area to area.</p> <p>My team has shared this information with the Welsh Government to inform the work of the Joint Housing and Social Services Group which seeks to progress the extension of equivalent support to young people leaving care who are not in a "When I'm Ready" placement. The group will also consider developing a set of "standards of support" that can be expected by each young person leaving care, to help ensure consistency in what young people can access. However the work of this group has been paused due to the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>Whilst these intentions have been welcomed, we have not seen a widespread shift in improved provision for young people. Too often care</p>
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	entitlements of the 'When I'm Ready' scheme to provide an equivalent level of support for young people leaving residential care. This should be secured on a statutory basis.		<p>leavers are placed in inappropriate, or short-term accommodation after care with inconsistent access to support.</p> <p><b>COVID-19:</b> I am conscious the COVID-19 crisis is impacting adversely on Care Leavers, who are amongst some of the most vulnerable young people. Many will be living independently and may be experiencing financial difficulties and social isolation. I have heard of positive examples of LAs and young people adapting well to new types of virtual support, as well as organisations such as Voices From Care offering enhanced support to young people during this time.</p> <p>I am liaising regularly with Welsh Government, Local Authorities and Voices from Care Cymru to monitor this situation. We have issued guidance for care leavers on our Information Hub website. <a href="http://www.childcomwales.org.uk/coronavirus">www.childcomwales.org.uk/coronavirus</a></p> <p>I have welcomed Welsh Government's decision to update the guidance of the St David's Day Fund in the wake of the Coronavirus crisis. The Fund can now be used to fund basic necessities for care leavers and support them with any housing costs or potential loss of employment.</p>
Young people leaving care Council Tax	<p><b>2016/17</b> The Welsh Government should progress their work to exempt young people leaving care from paying council tax up to the age of 21 to assist with alleviating poverty amongst care leavers.</p>	No change	I am pleased that this recommendation has been achieved. All Care Leavers are now exempt from paying Council Tax until the age of 25.



<b>Adoption and sibling contact</b>	<p><b>2016/17</b> The Welsh Government should work with the National Adoption Service (NAS) to ensure that siblings' rights to contact are fully considered during adoption care planning.</p>	<p><b>No change</b></p>	<p>I am pleased that <a href="#">guidance</a> has been published by the National Adoption Service and others on sibling contact which makes clear reference to children's rights.</p> <p>The Adoption Barometer survey revealed that 60% of recent adopters in Wales had indirect contact agreements in place with siblings living elsewhere. However, it is unclear if arrangements are in place for all adopted children and children who may be in care and have siblings that have been adopted.</p> <p>Children and young people raise this issue with me regularly when I meet them. Improving contact arrangements between siblings is also a key priority for Voices from Care Cymru. <b>I have also been encouraged by the work of the Sibling Alliance, who are exploring this issue in greater depth.</b> Many children may have not seen any shift in policy or practice yet, which is why this is still rated Amber.</p>
<b>Residential Care</b>	<p><b>2016/17</b> The Welsh Government should deliver against the work plan of their Task and Finish group, set up in response to my recommendations in The Right Care report.</p>	<p><b>No change</b></p>	<p>This recommendation had previously been rated as Green because the work of the Welsh Government was on track. However, I have become increasingly concerned at the lack of tangible progress and change for children and young people.</p> <p>The Group published its implementation plan for 2019-20, which has led to the creation of a number of specific groups to take forward elements of the work plan, such as Extending the Principles of "When I'm Ready", Secure Accommodation, the reinstated Task Finish Group on Corporate Parenting and provision of Remand and PACE placements, all of which are attended by representatives of my policy team.</p> <p>Despite there being a number of positive research publications arising from the work of the Group which is helping inform this complex area of work, it remains a concern that little has been achieved in regards to</p>

			<p>delivering improvements in provision or policies for this particular group of young people who still do not have equivalent access to continued support schemes like "When I'm Ready".</p> <p>I continue to be concerned about the unnecessary criminalisation of children in care and those who go "missing" from care. We have been working with NYAS Cymru as part of their "Missing the Point" campaign working group to raise awareness of the issue and to call for the implementation of an all-Wales protocol to reduce the unnecessary criminalisation of care experienced children, as is in place in England.</p>
British Sign Language (BSL)	<p><b>2016/17</b></p> <p>The Welsh Government and local authorities should ensure appropriate state support for the communication needs for Deaf and hearing impaired children and young people and their families, including accessible and affordable BSL learning opportunities at a range of levels and the employment of staff in schools who are fluent communicators of BSL, to meet individuals' needs.</p>	Changed from Red to Amber	<p>I have cautiously changed progress in this area to Amber on the basis that some work in this area has taken a step forward. This includes the establishment of an expert stakeholder group who will develop curriculum and schools guidance in respect of BSL and the initiation of work in respect of a BSL charter. However, this remains a pressing issue particularly in respect of the availability of affordable BSL learning opportunities for families. I would expect to see momentum in this area particularly now that the Independent Review of BSL Provision for Adults in Wales has been published. As part of this work a clear and costed action plan, which includes work around school workforce planning, would provide a clear steer and transparency in respect of when children, young people and their families can expect to experience change. I will be monitoring progress in this area over the next year, which will include engaging with Welsh Government officials and stakeholders.</p> <p>A face to face engagement session which was intended to take place over this period has not been able to go ahead during the pandemic. As Government begins to consider work to resume in the coming months I would like them to ensure that work on this issue is taken forward.</p>

			Over this period my office has promote resources from the National Deaf Children's Society which includes a free online family sign language course.
Health Advocacy	<p><b>2016/17</b> The Welsh Government should ensure that health related advocacy for under 18s is available and accessible to all who need it.</p> <p><b>2017/18</b> I recommend that the Welsh Government undertakes an audit of the provision of advocacy in health settings for under 18s and takes forward measures to ensure that any gaps identified are filled.</p> <p>I also recommend that the Putting Things Right patient information is updated to direct young people and their families as to how they can access face to face advocacy in health settings across Wales.</p> <p><b>2018/19</b> Welsh Government should establish national standards for health-related advocacy for all children and young people who require it and monitor health boards' progress towards commission sufficient advocacy, and their promotion of it.</p>	No change	<p>In August 2019 I responded to the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee's consultation on the NHS and Social Care (Quality and Engagement) Bill, where I noted that the Bill demonstrated a missed opportunity to clarify and formalise an advocacy offer for children and young people across health and social care.</p> <p>However, I am pleased that the Welsh Government has now hosted two meetings of a Health Advocacy group, which includes representatives from all health boards in Wales, and representatives of advocacy providers in Wales.</p> <p>I believe that the new guidance needs to have a statutory footing so that it is properly implemented by health boards. In these uncertain times, I recognise that this will be difficult within this Senedd term. I therefore would like to see the Welsh Government take forward the plan suggested by members of the advocacy group; Firstly to continue with consulting on guidance which is non-statutory for the time being and which will be sent out as a Circular from the Minister. Secondly for Welsh Government to write to all local health boards to ask them for full details of their current health-related advocacy provision and to request they develop local guidance (with support from the advocacy group) to plug gaps in commissioning arrangements. Thirdly, to consider renewing the part 9 partnership</p>

			<p>arrangements guidance to look at how we can have a joint approach to health-related advocacy provision.</p> <p>The new guidance for consultation should be based upon the guiding principles which were agreed at our Annual Child Health Seminar in 2019, and discussed with the Welsh Government health advocacy group.</p> <p>This work should take place within the remainder of this Senedd term.</p>
<b>Transport subsidies</b>	<p><b>2016/17</b> I urge Welsh Government to ensure that public transport subsidies for children are available up to age 18 with no change in eligibility at age 16.</p> <p><b>2017/18</b> I recommend that the new scheme should as a minimum ensure that the child fare is extended to the age of 18.</p> <p>I also recommend that a CRIA is undertake on proposals for revisions to the MyTravelPass scheme to identify any potentially excluded groups such as young parents and carers, care leavers undertaking work place training or apprenticeships, and those engaging in voluntary work.</p>	<b>No change</b>	<p>I am pleased that the MyTravelPass scheme has been relaunched and now covers an extended age range.</p> <p>There were 2,300 applications for discounted bus travel from the launch date of 14<sup>th</sup> February to 12<sup>th</sup> May 2019.</p> <p>I note that the First Minister indicated his wish to enrol all 16-18 year olds into a youth concessionary travel scheme to ensure that the discounts reach all eligible young people. My office has met with officials to discuss my support for this plan, which I anticipate would boost take up of this scheme, and I understand that officials had planned to put advice to Ministers towards the end of the year although this will have been affected by the Covid-19 response.</p> <p>During the pandemic, transport arrangements have been re-organised and my Investigation and Advice team have been offering support to families in order to make sure they have transport to access education and services. I will continue to support individuals and also to scrutinise this area as the response to the pandemic develops and changes. Safe and available transport for children and young people is essential for many to access and experience their rights.</p>

<p><b>Childcare</b></p>	<p><b>2016/17</b> The Welsh Government should ensure through the childcare offer pilot and any subsequent scheme that the children of non-working parents do not miss out on the increased childcare being offered to children of working parents.</p>	<p><b>No change</b></p>	<p>The Childcare Funding (Wales) Act does not apply to children of non-working parents and parents whose work arrangements do not meet the prescribed criteria.</p> <p>I gave evidence to the Committee during stage 1 and have also published a position paper on this, which can be found on my website <a href="#">here</a>.</p> <p>I am disappointed that despite the representations of myself and others that some of those children who I believe would benefit significantly from the childcare offer will be unable to access it based solely on their parents' circumstances.</p> <p>I have cautiously welcomed that Welsh Government has committed to exploring whether the offer could be extended to children whose parents are in training or in the process of returning to work. However, this falls short of ensuring that every 3 and 4 year old in Wales has an equal opportunity to access the offer, particularly those who may benefit from it most.</p> <p>I also note the launch of the Welsh Government's Early Childhood Education and Care approach and look forward to seeing how this work progresses to enable more children to access the early support they need to develop and fulfil their potential. The progress is welcome but as yet this has not led to tangible changes for children which is why this remains rated as red.</p> <p><b>Covid 19</b> In response to public health concerns and through the powers afforded to them under the Coronavirus Act 2020 Welsh Government significantly changed the nature and availability of childcare.</p>
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<b>Bullying</b>	<b>2016/17</b> The Welsh Government's review of the 'Respecting Others' Guidance should pay attention to the direct experiences and perspectives of children and young people on the impact of bullying and the effectiveness of current policies and practices. It should clearly set out how it intends to prevent and tackle bullying	<b>Change from amber</b>	<p>I am delighted that the recently launched anti-bullying guidance for schools, Rights, Respect and Equity, is statutory for Governing Bodies and Local Authorities.</p> <p>At consultation stage, this guidance did not have statutory status and my response called clearly for Government to re-think this in order for the guidance to have the necessary impact on the experiences of children and young people.</p>

	<p>nationally and outline how this work will influence curriculum reform and teacher training.</p> <p><b>2017/18</b> I recommend that the Welsh Government's 'Respecting Others' guidance should require schools to integrate robust anti-bullying strategies informed by children and young people into a whole school approach to wellbeing.</p> <p><b>2018/19</b> Welsh Government should ensure that schools' self-evaluation incorporate a record of all incidences and types of report bullying. Schools should be expected to use this information to plan, monitor and evaluate their preventative and responsive anti-bullying work, in line with the approach described in the re-drafted Respecting Others, and the impact of this should be assessed as part of school inspection.</p>		<p>I congratulate Government for taking this step and for introducing new statutory requirements for schools to develop robust anti-bullying policies informed by children and young people, which set out how bullying will be recorded and monitored, and how anti-bullying will be embedded into the curriculum.</p> <p>In addition, the guidance as a whole advocates a whole school approach to anti-bullying informed by children's rights and in which participation is a central element. It is informed by the perspectives of children and young people throughout, in particular drawing on my Sam's Story report.</p>
Child Sexual Exploitation	<p><b>2016/17</b> The Welsh Government should ensure consistent collection of data in relation to CSE across Wales to provide a national picture of our challenges in relation to CSE. It should thoroughly analyse and act on challenges and gaps identified by the national data.</p>	No change	<p>Welsh Government led a pilot data gathering exercise to try to standardise the information that is being collected however has not yet resulted in steps being taken to secure a consistent national data picture. I have been assured that other steps would be taken to address this recommendation but have not seen any further progress.</p> <p>The review of Child Sexual Exploitation statutory guidance provides opportunities to address this recommendation in full and I have</p>

			<p>responded to the consultation to this effect. I have also continued to raise this matter at my CSE/A roundtable.</p> <p>It was suggested that the new arrangements under the Measuring social services performance: code of practice could potentially address this matter, a proposal to which I also provided a written response. The final guidance has now been published and local authorities will now be required to report how many strategy meetings have been held following a child being identified as at risk of child sexual exploitation. This is likely to assist with indicating a degree of prevalence here in Wales and is an improvement compared to existing arrangements. However I will now be looking for assurance from Government that they can either evidence that it has a sufficient national picture to inform planning (through data collection and/or other sources) or has a clear plan of how it will address gaps in consistent national data collection accompanied with a timeline.</p> <p><b>Covid 19</b> In order to respond to the immediate challenges of the Coronavirus outbreak Welsh Government have paused work in respect of this recommendation. I will however expect this to be resumed at the earliest opportunity to ensure a national picture is available and used to inform planning and decision making within this Senedd term.</p>
<b>Sexual abuse and exploitation</b>	<p><b>2017/18</b> I recommend that the Welsh Government ensures that Sexual Assault Referral Centre provision for each health board area should include 24/7 access to a rota of suitably trained paediatricians and forensic medical examiners, so that no child has to wait for many hours or even days for an examination, and that sufficient counselling</p>	<b>No change</b>	<p>Provision is still variable across Wales which is affecting children's experiences.</p> <p>However, I acknowledge that positive progress has been made, led on by Cardiff and the Vale LHB, in respect of securing an interim service for these areas. Initial evaluation data suggests this is likely to have had a positive impact on the experiences of children under 14 years of age, compared to previous arrangements. I am pleased to hear that following a discussion with myself that children and young people's views have</p>



	and recovery services for victims are available throughout Wales.		<p>been sought as part of the evaluation. Whilst training and experience of relevant professionals is not something that can be addressed overnight I will be continuing to press those concerned about the safest but also timeliest route to ensure those age 14 and over and have access to appropriately trained health professionals including the option of paediatric support.</p> <p>I will continue to monitor the current provision available here in Wales particularly this year where I understand further work will be taken forward in terms of the future delivery of therapeutic provision and other elements of the SARCS service. There are also commitments made related to the delivery of therapeutic provision in year 3 of the Government's National Action plan: Preventing and responding to Child Sexual Abuse. With this in mind I will be engaging with those concerned to ensure work programmes are coordinated and focuses on the best use of resources to deliver the best possible outcomes for children. This should include exploring learning from the child house model. I welcome that in March 2020 Welsh Government hosted a practice exchange to discuss the work here in Wales and hear from professionals working in the child house pilot in London and look forward to seeing what follows as a result of this information exchange. However shortly after this event was held Welsh Government work has focused on the response to the safeguarding needs of children during the pandemic and pausing on discussion re future planning. As lockdown restrictions are lifted I will expect an update from Welsh Government and the SARC project board about their future work.</p>
<b>Healthy Relationships</b>	<p><b>2017/18</b></p> <p>I recommend that the Welsh Government takes forward the recommendations of their expert Panel's report, and makes healthy relationships education a statutory part of the</p>	<b>No change</b>	<p>The Welsh Government Curriculum and Assessment White Paper included Relationships and Sexuality Education within the proposed primary legislation for the new curriculum. I welcome this inclusion and I also welcome the emphasis on healthy relationships within the draft Health and Wellbeing AoLE.</p>

	new curriculum. Healthy relationships education should be rights-based and informed by learner involvement in the design.		<p>I also applaud Government's intention to ensuring access to RSE in the Curriculum and Assessment Bill, which removes the parental right to withdraw children and young people from RSE. I strongly support this as an essential step to safeguarding children and ensuring all children and young people get age-appropriate information in order to make healthy choices and stay safe.</p> <p>Welsh Government is establishing a Relationships and Sexuality Working Group to support the development of guidance. This is much needed as a previous draft of this guidance (consulted on in Spring 2019) was lacking in detail and content. My office has accepted an invitation to join this group and will work to ensure that guidance produced reflects a rights-based and participatory approach.</p>
<b>All Wales Schools Liaison Programme</b>	<b>2017/18</b> I recommend that the Welsh Government takes action to agree a funding model with the four police forces to ensure that all schools in Wales continue to have the benefits of a positive relationship with a police liaison officer, and that the programme's role in contributing to the Health and Wellbeing Area of Learning and Experience in the new curriculum is coherent and future-fit. An assessment on the impact on children's rights of any decision on the future of the Programme should be carried out.	<b>No change</b>	<p>Following a proposal to reduce the funding for this programme, the Government and Police forces have agreed to reinstate this money for 2019/2020. The Welsh Government <b>budget has confirmed</b> that funding for the programme will be maintained for 2020/2021.</p> <p>Whilst this is positive, I await sight of the report undertaken in 2019 to look at the content, reach and impact of the Schools Liaison Core Programme and I will continue to have an oversight of the programme through my Child Sexual Abuse roundtable.</p>
	<b>2017/18</b>		

<p><b>Mental Health/ complex needs residential provision</b></p>	<p>I recommend that Welsh Government takes concrete steps towards commissioning new provision that can meet the care and mental health needs of the small number of young people with very challenging behavioural and emotional difficulties, for whom there is currently very little suitable residential provision in Wales.</p> <p><b>2018/19</b></p> <p>Welsh Government should ensure new ring-fenced funding specifically for the purposes of jointly commissioned mental health and social care residential provision for the small number of children and young people with the most complex needs in Wales.</p> <p>Welsh Government should also act to ensure that the existing mental health in-patient units in Wales make changes necessary to extend the range of young people who can safely be cared for there.</p> <p>Welsh Government should take action to develop secure mental health provision in Wales for the very small number of children who require this care.</p>	<p><b>No change</b></p>	<p>In July 2019, I met with Welsh Government and representatives of organisations including WHSSC, HIW and the Association of Directors of Social Services. At this meeting it was agreed that Welsh Government would explore a potential programme of work to establish such provision.</p> <p>Following this meeting, a Task and Finish Group was set up to explore the evidence and make recommendations on the need for such provision. In a letter of 18<sup>th</sup> June 2020 the Deputy Minister confirmed that the Task and Finish Group work has concluded with key conclusions that will underpin the next phase of work. I met with Welsh Government and RPBs early in July to discuss the Group's findings and the proposed way forward. There was strong agreement that this safe accommodation provision needs to be put into place as a priority. Welsh Government must now take the lead in ensuring that proposals are fully costed, and that provision meets children's needs, close to home.</p> <p>The recently published draft Part 9 Code of practice includes an expectation for RPBs to have a regional commissioning strategy for residential care for children and young people with complex needs, which is welcome.</p> <p>The new service specifications for the existing Mental Health In-Patient units include new provision of High Dependency Units which should mean that some of those young people who could not previously be cared for at the in-patient units may now be able to. However, it is unclear currently whether this will be the case in practice, and I will be keeping a close eye on this.</p> <p>While the Welsh Government accepted my recommendation to develop secure provision in Wales, I have seen no evidence of this taking place.</p>
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Profit in care	<p><b>2017/18</b> The Welsh Government should ensure that local authorities deliver their duties under Section 16 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act to involve children and young people in the design and delivery of services and increase the range of not for profit services so that money invested in social care services can be spent on improving outcomes for children rather than providing returns for shareholders.</p> <p><b>2018/19</b> Welsh Government must commit to taking concrete actions within the next year towards reducing and ultimately ending profit making</p>	No change	<p>I am aware that Welsh Government commissioned Professor Andrew Pithouse to explore how care services for children can be "rebalanced", which has explored the current commissioning landscape in Wales for foster and residential placements and alternative models of care.</p> <p>*I am aware that the current Coronavirus crisis has resulted in a pause in this policy work for Welsh Government.</p> <p>To date I am not aware that the Welsh Government has consulted with children and young people to hear their views on this topic. In the meantime, however, I have been approached by young people who have themselves expressed concern that their providers are receiving a lot of money and they are unsure where this is going.</p>

	in children's care services, without detriment to children and young people's current care arrangements.		<p>I have given evidence to the Public Accounts Committee during the last year on this subject, as have others including a group of care experienced young people.</p> <p>Some Local Authorities are bringing some elements of their provision in house but this is taking place individually in the absence of a national directive. CIW's thematic review of Care Homes for Children revealed that just 19% of homes are managed voluntary or by the Local Authority.</p> <p>While I recognise that the stability of the sector must not be undermined by any sudden changes, I believe that work towards a longer-term policy goal of eliminating profit would be warmly welcomed by young people and those commissioning services alike.</p> <p>We recognise the complexity of this work and would not want any child who is doing well in a placement to be undermined by these calls. Many homes and providers in Wales are delivered by small firms, and Welsh Government should consider how best they can support these to transition to become registered third sector or social enterprise providers. This would ensure greater transparency on the costs associated with placements and give greater assurances to children, staff and carers alike that companies are not profiting from public spending on vulnerable children.</p>
<b>Health Transitions</b>	<p><b>New for 2018/19</b></p> <p>Welsh Government should ensure that health boards have effective guidance that will lead to children and young people having access to coherent multi-agency pathways for transition to adult services. Children and young people should be directly involved in the creation of their care plans.</p>	<b>New addition</b>	<p>I am pleased that the Welsh Government has developed draft guidance, which is currently out for consultation. I am particularly pleased that Welsh Government have taken on board several of our suggestions, and that the draft guidance has under-pinning principles informed by children's human rights. The draft guidance also recognises the issues faced by 16 and 17 year olds accessing health services for the first time</p> <p>However, there are several elements of the new draft guidance which we will be seeking clarity on. Particularly, this involves accountability of health</p>

	<p>This guidance should also ensure that 16 and 17 year olds accessing health services for the first time, including emergency care, have a clear pathway to age-appropriate care.</p>		<p>boards to deliver this guidance, and the need for all health boards to have a named individual who is given the time, space and resource to undertake a coordinating role across transitions to adult services.</p> <p>This guidance will need to demonstrate it will improve:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. the experience for children and young people and young adults who we know are not currently getting the sensitively managed, multi-agency approach they need to help them get through moving from children's to adult services in as smooth a way as possible, reactive to issues emerging</li> <li>2. between children's and adult services, where both are jointly responsible for the care of that young person as they move between children's and adult services</li> <li>3. assigning responsibility to an individual / individuals to ensure young people's care doesn't 'stall'</li> </ol>
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