

Each year through my annual report I make recommendations to the Welsh Government, on the key policy issues requiring Government action. 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.

Each quarter I then report on the Government's progress, giving each recommendation a Red / Amber / Green rating. The colour rating is my own assessment based on engagement with key stakeholders. 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.

Whilst this reporting process has been in place for a number of years, the format of this paper has been amended following the May 2021 Senedd Election. The new format separates and organises areas into key themes and priorities. The intention is to make this paper more user friendly and effective, so we have kept to short and clear wording for readability. We would welcome any feedback on the format and contents of this document via post@childcomwales.org.uk

If you would like more information about any of the areas of work listed in this document, you can read our reports and find out more about our current work plan on our website [here](#) or you can contact our Head of Policy and Public Affairs Rachel Thomas on 01792 765600 or email post@childcomwales.org.uk

HEALTH

Topic	Years raised	Summary of recommendation(s)	RAG rating	CCfW recent work in this area	Where are we now?
<p>RPBs 'safe accommodation'</p>	<p>2017-18 2018-19 2019-20 2020-21</p> <p>See also our 'No Wrong Door' report here</p>	<p>Safe places for children in care with complex needs to live and receive suitable and timely support, in every region of Wales</p> <p>Action to ensure health and social care work together on continuing care arrangements</p>	<p>AMBER</p>	<p>We have met with the Deputy Minister for Social Services to discuss this work again following the 2021 election.</p> <p>We have re-visited all RPBs in Wales, and have published our follow up report based on those visits to scrutinise their progress. This report makes several recommendations to both RPBs themselves, and to Welsh Government</p>	<p>6 of 7 regions have plans for new provision, using the £2 million Welsh Government funding specifically for this. The new beds across Wales are very welcome and will provide new therapeutic options for children who require the input of both social care and mental health services</p> <p>However, at this stage the planned accommodation units are mainly assessment units providing short term support while a further placement is arranged. We think that there may be a need to develop some longer-term provision for those young people who cannot be successful supported to return home or to foster care.</p> <p>The Commissioner's visits to all RPBs in 2021 highlighted that disagreements over continuing care arrangements are an issue for all areas of Wales and,</p>

					despite Welsh Government guidance, these disagreements show no signs of being resolved
Advocacy services in health settings	2016-17 2017-18 2018-19 2019-20 2020-21	An offer of an advocate to every child who needs it when accessing health services, to have their voice heard	RED	<p>We have regularly followed this up with the Welsh Government but were advised that work was paused due to the pandemic.</p> <p>We have written to and met with Welsh Government again to re-raise this issue and seek urgent progress.</p>	<p>There has been little progress in this area since my office created the principles for this work, to assist the WG.</p> <p>The Welsh Government have made it clear that they have no plans to do any work on this area themselves.</p> <p>We want to see the Welsh Government recommencing work on statutory guidance for advocacy in health settings.</p>
Support following sexual assault	2017-18	Equal level of provision for all children across Wales who have suffered sexual abuse or violence, 24/7	AMBER	We've met with the new SARC programme Director who regularly attends our CSE/A Roundtable and provides all-wales updates on the service.	<p>Whilst some challenges remain in the provision of this service, we have seen significant improvements in how children access this hugely important service. Children are waiting less time for assessments and health and police are working effectively together to support children.</p> <p>Efforts must now focus on strengthening provision in South West Wales.</p>

<p>Health transitions</p>	<p>2018-19 2019-20 2020-21</p>	<p>Implement new guidance to make sure children are supported throughout their journey to being cared for by adult services, where this is needed</p> <p>Need for adequate resource for the new executive lead and key worker roles in every Health Board</p>	<p>GREEN</p>	<p>Following our organisation of meetings between the Royal Colleges in health, third sector representatives and Welsh government officials in 2019, we were pleased to see the development of guidance for health boards</p> <p>We responded to the consultation on the draft guidance. We have also participated in further working group discussions to try to get the support arrangements right for children and families.</p> <p>After a long delay, the guidance has now been published.</p>	<p>The transitions guidance was published in February 2022. The guidance was sent out to LHBs with a circular from the NHS CEO outlining Welsh Government's expectations. This is welcome.</p> <p>The guidance included a young person's version, and a video and one-page explainer setting out the key changes which include creating a new transitions and handover senior lead role in the health board, new named worker roles (whose job it is to help young people make a plan for transition involving all the relevant people involved in their care across services); and the creation of a Transition and Handover Plan, which is designed to be a passport for young people so that they don't need to repeat their needs every time someone new is helping them.</p> <p>We would have liked the guidance to create a stronger duty on coordinating all the agencies involved in children's care – particularly when they have complex</p>
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					<p>needs beyond health - but we are pleased to see the new roles which should mean a better focus on bringing services together to prepare better for transition to adult services.</p> <p>We expect all LHBs to be developing their plans for ensuring they are compliant with the guidance by the time of the first WG monitoring activity in 2024.</p>
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EDUCATION

Topic	Years raised	Summary of recommendation(s)	RAG rating	CCfW recent work in this area	Where are we now?
Mental health and well-being	2015-16 2019-20 2020-21	Support for children's mental health and wellbeing at school – a Whole School approach.	GREEN	<p>We participated in a working group to ensure that the WSA framework was published this year. We're continuing to scrutinise how this is communicated and rolled out to schools.</p> <p>We have also been involved in the implementation steering group, led by Public Health Wales.</p>	<p>We are pleased to see the publication of the guidance, and have heard positive anecdotal evidence of schools taking forward a whole school approach in line with the guidance. This has also been reflected in positive experiences of work towards a whole school approach reported by my young ambassadors during their autumn term special mission.</p> <p>We have been pleased to see the large financial commitment</p>

					<p>Welsh Government have dedicated to the implementation of the guidance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2021/22 - £2 m - 2022/23 - £5.2m - 2023/24 indicative budget is £7.4m <p>An evaluability assessment document was published in January 2022. The evaluability assessment's recommendations set out many of our priorities around effective implementation of the framework. We urge Welsh Government to ensure these recommendations are taken forward through the implementation work led by PHW</p> <p>We want to see resource translated into demonstrable strategic support for schools to implement the guidance effectively.</p>
Learner Transport	2015-16 2018-19 2020-21	New guidance for accessing school transport in every area of Wales, for children of all ages.	AMBER	<p>We have fed in to the WG review but have not seen any outcome or findings.</p> <p>We have asked for an update from the WG as we are</p>	<p>The interim report from the 2020-21 review work was published at the end of March 2022 but it does not contain much detail or any timescales for the next phase of work.</p>

				concerned at further delay to this work. We met the Deputy Minister in January 2022 to further discuss and request publication of the interim report.	This indicates further delays to the long-overdue changes that are needed to meet the needs of children and young people. We have written again to the Deputy Minister to seek clarity on the Government's planned work
Children's Rights in the Curriculum	2015-16 2016-17 2017-18 2018-19 2019-20 2020-21	Include the UNCRC in the Curriculum and Assessment Bill so that all teachers and children know about children's rights and experience this in the school environment. Ensure that there is national guidance and professional learning to support this.	GREEN	We have supported the WG to ensure that children's rights are written throughout the new Curriculum materials as well as to ensure a duty related to the UNCRC appeared on the Bill (now an Act). My team has updated our Right Way guidance for education to support the implementation of the duty in the Act.	Welsh Government have published guidance to support schools in incorporating rights into their curriculum design. Welsh Government are also planning a package of professional learning to support the implementation of the duty in the Act
Home education	2015-16 2016-17 2017-19 2018-19 2019-20 2020-21 See also this report of our formal review	New legislation is needed to make sure all children are seen and spoken to about their education.	RED	We have undertaken a formal review of WG's actions in relation to this policy and found a lack of due regard for children's rights and a lack of any meaningful process on the policy area.	Welsh Government has not accepted the key recommendation of my formal review, which is that primary legislation is needed to ensure the human rights of home educated children. Instead, Welsh Government are planning to pursue the development of new statutory guidance under existing laws, although substantive action

	from 2020 here				has not yet been seen on this since the election. This may make it more likely that children are seen and spoken to, but will fall short of the guarantees needed to secure children's rights, including their rights to education and safety.
Independent schools	2019-20 2020-21 See also this report of our formal review from 2020 here	New standards in Regulations that ensure all children in residential schools are kept safe and are well supported with their educational and pastoral needs.	AMBER	We have undertaken a formal review of WG's actions in relation to this policy. The pandemic clearly had an impact on this work but urgent action is required as the WG has been aware of loopholes in the safeguarding arrangements for many years now as the Review found. We responded to the public call for evidence and will respond to the further consultations on this topic.	Welsh Government have held a public call for evidence on independent schools, indicating a range of changes to regulations and guidance are under consideration. Welsh Government are also currently undertaking a public consultation on gaps in registration with the EWC.
Healthy Relationships	2017-18 2020-21	Further development of the draft Relationships and Sexuality Education [RSE] Code and Guidance must take account of the views and experience of young people. Wider recommendations of the 2017 Expert Panel must also be progressed, particularly professional learning and the development of whole school approaches to RSE.	GREEN	We have been observers to the stakeholder group on RSE and responded extensively to the recent consultation on the RSE Code. We've also had several meetings with officials aiming to strengthen the guidance.	The finalised Code and Guidance have been passed through the Senedd and are published available for schools. This took forward several of the areas recommended by my office. I am heartened to welcome the inclusive and rights-based RSE entitlements for all children in

					<p>Wales, as set out in the guidance.</p> <p>Welsh Government now needs to ensure professionals are supported with sufficient high quality professional learning to ensure children experience these entitlements.</p>
Exclusions in the Foundation Phase	2020-21	Welsh Government must review and amend statutory guidance on exclusion so that it includes specific considerations relating to the age of the child and to set out clear alternatives to exclusion. This should be supported with an action plan for early support for young children.	AMBER	<p>This policy recommendation was accepted by Welsh Government in their response to the 2020-21 Annual Report and the Commissioner has discussed this directly with the Minister for Education and Welsh Language in meetings in autumn 2021 and early 2022.</p> <p>We are also advising Estyn on how the inspection of local authorities can include issues around the exclusion of young children.</p>	<p>Welsh Government have agreed to review the statutory guidance on exclusion to better reflect the needs and rights of young children.</p> <p>Timelines for this work are not yet confirmed and our office will continue to scrutinise this area to ensure that a review is taken forward in a timely manner, and that revised guidance is informed by the needs of young children.</p>
Qualifications	2020-21	Young people need clear and accessible information available to them about how qualifications will be awarded in 2022, and they should be involved in developing these messages.	GREEN	<p>We are observers on the Welsh Government and Qualifications Wales' stakeholder groups in relation to qualifications 2022. We have advised Qualification Wales in setting up their own learner advisory panels, for General and Vocational Qualifications.</p>	<p>Welsh Government and partners (WJEC and Qualifications Wales) launched a specific website for young people in February 2022 / Lefel Nesa' / Power Up). Young people were consulted in the development of this resource, which includes signposting information about</p>

				<p>We have also enabled our Advisory Panel of young people to share their views and experiences of qualifications with Welsh Government, including to inform their communication campaign for qualifications 2022.</p>	<p>qualifications and wellbeing support.</p> <p>Increased funding has also been made available in order to enable individuals to access more support in their settings, including increased careers advice around next steps.</p> <p>As the academic year continues young people will continue to need clear and supportive messages about assessment and next steps.</p>
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SOCIAL CARE AND YOUTH JUSTICE

Topic	Years raised	Summary of recommendation(s)	RAG rating	CCfW recent work in this area	Where are we now?
Support for care leavers	2016-17 2017-18 2018-19 2019-20 2020-21 See also our Hidden Ambitions report here and follow up here	New legislation is needed to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure Personal Advisor support for all up to the age of 25 	AMBER	<p>We have regularly raised these issues with WG, seeking to secure the commitments they've made in response to our work and reports.</p> <p>We've participated in a number of working groups on support for care leavers. We submitted a joint letter to the DWP Minister seeking immediate changes to the Shared Accommodation Rate – which were secured.</p>	<p>CCFW will be presenting to Welsh Government's Oversight Board for Transforming Social Care for Children in March 2022 on our calls for Care Leavers.</p> <p>We also welcome early plans for WG to host a care leavers conference to hear directly from young people about the support they need.</p> <p>We have been informed that legislative time will be found in 2022/23 to secure PA</p>

					extension for young people up to the age of 25. This is particularly important as we have been made aware that access to this type of support has regressed due to a lack of statutory footing.
Support for care leavers	2016-17 2017-18 2018-19 2019-20 2020-21 See also our Hidden Ambitions report here and follow up here	Information on how to access financial support and entitlements to be published by WG	AMBER	<p>We called for improvements in published financial information back in 2017 and have continued to follow those calls up with WG.</p> <p>We have also maintained our My Planner resource with information and advice for care leavers.</p> <p>We met with the Money and Pensions Service to discuss the need for improved financial education for care leavers.</p>	<p>We are aware Welsh Government have provided some funding to Children in Wales and Voices From Care Cymru to develop resources for young people leaving care, available here: Getting Ready Project Children in Wales.</p> <p>The Money and Pensions Service are also being commissioned by WG to improve financial education for children and young people.</p> <p>We also welcome that Care Leavers will be involved in Welsh Government's Basic Income Pilot, but recognise the need of careful implementation.</p> <p>Despite small steps in this area, we are yet to see consistent access to financial information developed for care leavers. Access to PA</p>

					support is crucial to all of the above initiatives.
Sibling contact following adoption	2016-17	Embedding sibling contact into the care planning and review processes for all children in care	AMBER	<p>Through our role as observers on the National Adoption Service Governance Board we are aware of a growing commitment to explore on-going contact arrangements for adopted children with their birth families.</p> <p>We have published a new guide to a rights based approach to social work which you can read and download here</p>	<p>Voices from Care, Children in Wales and National Adoption Service have encouraged good practice and produced guides for young people on sibling contact. However, no changes have been made to legislation or guidance.</p> <p>We are aware that Scotland has strengthened its legislation in relation to sibling contact for care –experienced young people. As Wales progresses with its Corporate Parenting Reform and develops a Charter for looked after children, we hope greater emphasis will be placed on upholding this important right to family life for children.</p>
Support for young people leaving residential care	2016-17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement a protocol to prevent young people being criminalised for minor matters unnecessarily 	GREEN	<p>CCFW first raised concerns about the over criminalisation of care experienced young people in our Right Care Report published in 2016. Since then, we have worked with partners (such as NYAS and 4Cs) to lobby WG to address these concerns and for Wales to develop its own protocol to prevent</p>	<p>We are pleased that the Protocol to Reduce the Unnecessary Criminalisation of Children in Care was published in March 2022, along with funding to embed training.</p> <p>This will place an expectation on services involved in the care and support of care</p>

				<p>unnecessary criminalisation. We used our first Seminar on Children’s Rights in Youth Justice and Policing in 2021 to discuss the plan WG had outlined.</p>	<p>experienced children to have in place robust arrangements to avoid unnecessary episodes of criminalisation. It will be relevant to all care-experienced young people too.</p> <p>This would not have been possible without the many organisations in Wales involved in the support and protection of looked after children working so closely together.</p>
<p>Support for young people leaving residential care</p>	<p>2016-17 2019-20 2020-21</p> <p>See also our report The Right Care here</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equivalent support to the When I’m Ready scheme for those leaving foster care, so support for young people leaving residential care does not end abruptly at age 18 • Develop national standards to address concerns of quality, sufficiency and suitability for semi-independent accommodation for care-experienced young people up to the age of 25. This was proposed by the previous Welsh Government’s Joint Housing and Social Services Group, but progress has stalled. 	<p>RED</p>	<p>CCFW participate (or have participated) in a broad number of groups which explore these issues, such as the End Youth Homelessness Partnership, Welsh Government Housing and Social Services Group. However, we are aware that WG have now closed the Housing and Social services Group despite not having achieved many of the ambitions it set out to fulfil.</p> <p>It remains a concern that young people leaving care are required to live independently at a much</p>	<p>It is disappointing that progress to provide equivalent support to care leavers leaving residential homes has not progressed despite being accepted in 2016/17 by Welsh Government. Essential to providing this support is enhancing the support Personal Advisers can offer, and ensuring young people have access to range of good quality and safe accommodation options from which they can start their adult lives.</p> <p>WG must set out clear plans to address these long standing inequalities by improving</p>

				earlier age than their peers but support and access to good quality accommodation can be highly variable.	access to support and setting standards for good quality accommodation. We have not advocated for children to stay on in residential homes, but have suggested alternative models of accommodation and support are considered.
Reforming Corporate Parenting	2020-21	Strengthen Wales' corporate parenting role through legislation and guidance, to ensure Wales' care system is rights based and enables children to thrive in care. It is particularly important to progress this work, as large numbers of care experienced young people have so far been involved in the process and will have expectations that important changes are to be made.	AMBER	<p>We are members of Welsh Government's working group on Corporate Parenting and have been involved in the initial scoping workshop in 2020.</p> <p>We have highlighted the need for whole-school approach and No Wrong Door approach to service delivery to link with this important reform for children in care</p>	<p>We would like to see the development of a Charter for Care Experienced young people that promotes their rights and the principles of a children's rights approach.</p> <p>WG must reflect on amending guidance and legislation for corporate parenting to bring services closer together to uphold their duties to children. This must be built on the principle that we have a shared responsibility to support our children in care to thrive.</p>
Unregulated Accommodation	2020-21	Using data regarding current use of unregulated care for under 18s, consider what amendments may be required to the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act, to strengthen the inspection and regulation of care and accommodation provision for under	RED	We spoke with a number of organisations involved in the care and support of children (Llamau, CIW, All Wales Heads of Children's Services Chairs and Chairs of the Leaving Care Forum) about the growing concerns relating to the use of unregulated	We would expect WG to bring together a working group on this that considers the varying impact of unregulated placements on those under 16 and another on those aged 16-18. This is a complex area where terminology can at times cause confusion, so it is

		18s that does not currently fall under the remit of the Act.		care for under 16's and those aged 16-18. We have held back from supporting the approach taken in England where these placements have been outlawed as we want to see a pragmatic solution developed which supports children's many rights under the UNCRC. We are concerned that some young people can be placed in very vulnerable circumstances and this call must like to others we have made, such as extending PA support and developing national standards for accommodation.	important the distinct needs, rights and entitlements for each age group are considered and workable solutions are identified.
Profit in care services	2017-18 2018-19 2019-20 2020-21 See also our own 2021 manifesto calls here	Eliminating profit being made from children's care services, in line with the Labour party 2021 manifesto commitment	AMBER	We have submitted evidence to the Competitions and Markets authority inquiry into profit in care services and note the publication of their report in March 2022. We've also met with WG Ministers and officials, and other Senedd members to discuss taking forward the manifesto commitment within this Senedd Term; we are observers to the WG Board and workstream groups taking this work forward.	The clear commitment in Welsh Government's Programme for Government on this was extremely welcome. The work is likely to require legislative change and this is being actively considered and pursued with by the current working groups. In the meantime the Government will need to communicate its key messages and work progress

					clearly to ensure stability within the sector during this period of transitional change.
Youth Justice	2019-20 2020-21	Urgent progress is needed to achieve the aims and actions of the Youth Justice Blueprint	AMBER	<p>We've attended and coordinated a lot of meetings with the Government and youth justice bodies to try to encourage progress.</p> <p>This has included hosting two Seminars on Children's Rights in Youth Justice and Policing and a public lecture to offer widespread rights training. We are pleased to see progress across both the Youth Justice and Policing sectors to uphold the principles of a children's rights approach and better involve children in the design of their services. We have also hosted rights training for YOTs, Hillside SCH and Police.</p>	<p>We welcome the Blueprint but there hasn't been enough focus on progressing the youth justice element to date.</p> <p>We are pleased that agreements have been made between UK and Welsh Government to develop jointly commissioned accommodation in North Wales.</p> <p>We are also pleased that the Parc YOI retender has used the principles of a children's rights approach.</p> <p>We have been pleased that we have had such wide spread engagement from the sector to improve their awareness of children's rights. Welsh Government must build on this momentum to reform our services to deliver a rights based system. We would also like to see concrete progress on new accommodation for young people in custody within Wales.</p>
Young Carers	2020-21	Welsh Government should directly engage with children and young	AMBER	CCFW have been a member of the Welsh Government	As the Charter for Unpaid Carers is soon to be

		people with caring experience to ensure the Unpaid Carers strategy adequately reflects their needs and promotes their rights.		Ministerial Advisory Group for Unpaid Carers. We have been pleased to see the development of a Carers Charter, which promotes children's UNCRC rights. We have also advocated for the strategy to link with the whole-school approach to mental health developments to be sure young carers are able to access robust support in schools	published, we hope a children's and accessible version will be published alongside this to reiterate support for children and their UNCRC rights. WG will continue to engage with children in the development of the strategy.
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TACKLING INEQUALITIES

Topic	Years raised	Summary of recommendation	RAG rating	CCfW recent work in this area	Where are we now?
Child poverty	2015-16 2016-17 2017-18 2018-19 2019-20 See also our 'A Charter for Change' report here	A clear plan from WG setting out how they will support children and families living in poverty, and then delivering on this plan.	AMBER	We've participated in a working group and discussions with officials but would still welcome a clear plan on tackling poverty. We've also raised issues with the 2-child limit with the UK government, published here We've submitted evidence to the Welsh Affairs Select Committee inquiry on Benefits and Wales.	Ongoing work to maximise income and take up of welfare benefits is welcome and supports this work. We welcome the updates to the Programme for Government, that give priority to this area. We note the recent CPAG report on access to free school breakfast; this was an issue raised in our Charter for Change report but there has been no progress in

					<p>addressing this. It is particularly important in light of the current cost of living crisis.</p> <p>The ongoing impact of the 2 child limit and the removal of the £20 universal credit uplift continue to affect families in Wales; we have been unable to secure a meeting with the DWP to address this.</p>
BSL support	2016-17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sufficient status for BSL within the new curriculum, with accompanying guidance • Improving access to support in the community for families needing to learn BSL • BSL Charter 	AMBER	<p>We have hosted a roundtable meeting with d/Deaf organisations and individuals, and shared the findings with the Welsh Government.</p> <p>We have responded to the WG Curriculum consultations.</p>	<p>Progress has been made with curriculum:</p> <p>BSL videos have been integrated into the What Matters Statements for the Languages Literacy and Communication element of the curriculum.</p> <p>Also national sessions have been held for Teachers of the Deaf and BSL tutors; in addition regions are planning sessions after Easter for schools considering introducing BSL.</p>
Transport	2016-17 2017-18	Extension of full transport subsidies at least to all aged under 18	RED	We have met with officials and the Minister to discuss this issue, as well as with political parties in relation to their 2021 election manifestos.	We were disappointed not to see a commitment to full transport subsidies for under 18s in the Manifesto or Programme for Government.

				<p>We responded to the WG transport strategy consultation.</p>	<p>Alongside the learner Travel Review, we want to see more recognition of the impact of the costs of public transport for young people and progress towards achieving fairer policies for them in line with children's rights.</p>
Childcare	2016-17	<p>Enabling more children to access free childcare, from a younger age or even if their parents are in education/training/currently unemployed, so that all young children get the benefit of language and skills development that quality childcare can offer them.</p>	<p>AMBER</p>	<p>We have liaised with officials regarding childcare policies during the pandemic.</p> <p>We have welcomed provision for vulnerable children during the pandemic such as access to childcare hubs.</p> <p>We gave evidence to the Equality and Social Justice Committee inquiry on childcare and employment and welcome their recommendations to make the policy and delivery of the Childcare Offer more child centred.</p>	<p>Changes to the policy during the pandemic reflected that childcare can be offered based on the child's needs/vulnerability rather than parents' employment status.</p> <p>Changes to the Programme for Government to bring a renewed focus to the benefits of childcare for younger children are very welcome but there is still room for further improvement. We will continue to monitor this area closely.</p> <p>We welcome the recently announced uplift in funding for the hourly rate and food provision in childcare settings, in light of cost of living issues.</p>