

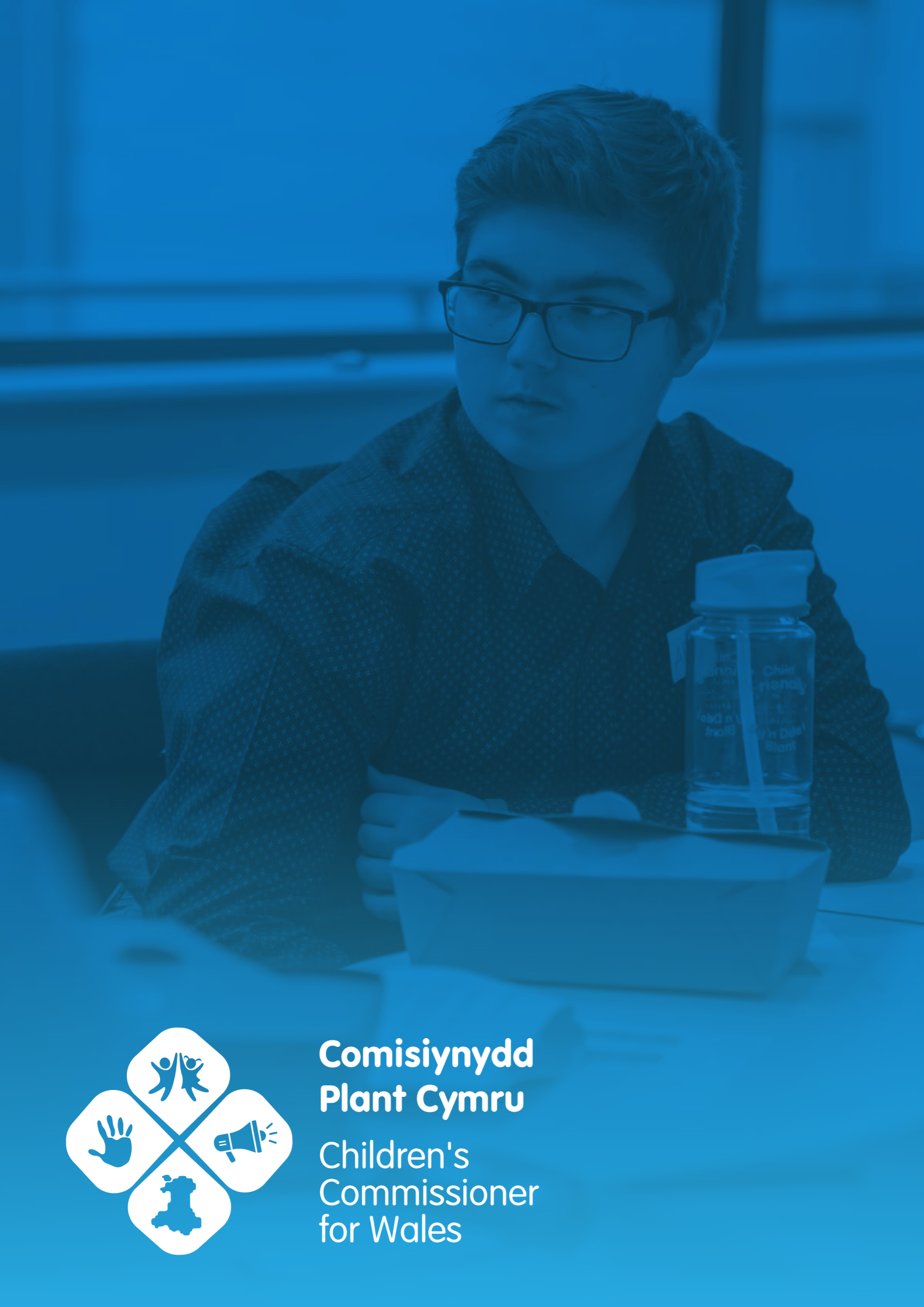


**Comisiynydd
Plant Cymru**
Children's
Commissioner
for Wales

Making Life Better for Children in Wales

Our three year strategy 2023-2026





**Comisiynydd
Plant Cymru**

Children's
Commissioner
for Wales

Welcome...



I have spent my first year as Commissioner listening to thousands of children and young people, as well as their families and professionals who work with and for them. Whilst I had ideas of my own about how children's lives could be improved in Wales, I wanted to hear from children and young people and those who care for them, about how we could make life better for children in Wales.

Whilst some of the priorities included in this strategy relate to my vision, and the way I want our team to work, the vast majority of the evidence which will shape our work over the next three years come from our large-scale consultation, 'Ambitions for Wales'.

In total,

8,830 children and young people

responded to this survey, including through specific formats we created for under 7s and those with profound and multiple learning disabilities.

We also heard from

507 professionals and **876** parents and carers

I want to say a big thank you to the

10,213 people

who took time to provide such a rich insight into their lives. We've listened, now's the time to take action.

Rocio Cifuentes MBE

Children's Commissioner for Wales

April 2023

Who we are...



A set of laws describes what the Children's Commissioner for Wales should do to protect and promote children's rights. We're allowed to work with every child in Wales who is up to the age of 18 or up to the age of 21 if they've been in care, or 25 if they've been in care and still in education.

There are certain national standards and duties that we must follow as an organisation, including the Welsh Language Standards, the Equality Act and the Biodiversity Duty. Although we're not duty-bound to do so, we're also very committed to the principles of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act. We report on how we comply with all these in our [Annual Report](#).

We are also a proud anti-racist organisation, a Living Wage employer, a Disability Confident employer and have signed up to the principles of the Plain English and Cymraeg Clir campaigns.

Delivering all our work is a staff team of 24, led by the Children's Commissioner for Wales, Rocio Cifuentes MBE. Rocio began in post in April 2022 and will be the country's children's commissioner for seven years.



Our vision

The Commissioner has defined her vision for her term as: 'A Wales where every child and young person understands their rights, knows the children's commissioner is there to stand up for those rights, and is able to access support for those rights to be realised'.



Our mission

We listen to and speak up for children and young people in Wales so that children's rights are protected, and we support, challenge and influence public services in Wales to make a positive impact on their lives.

Our purpose

We see ourselves as having **four purposes**, which enable us to deliver our formal remit of protecting and promoting children's rights in Wales.

They are:



1 Here for all children

We listen and make sure we're accessible to all children in Wales to ensure we can effectively speak out on their behalf and represent them in the most impactful way.

As a small staff team, we realise we can't work alone on building effective, trusting relationships with all children, so we'd like to work in partnership with people who do have those solid relationships with children and young people across Wales to find out what matters to them and what issues they'd like us to champion on their behalf. Making the most of information and data about children and young people is also important to us, and we'd like to make sure we're making the most of the rich data that partners collect on children's lives as well as gathering our own information.



2 A rights 'realiser'

We support and educate children and young people to know about and understand their human rights and we support and advise public services on promoting and protecting children's rights.

Some public bodies, including the Welsh Government, have statutory obligations to raise awareness of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in Wales and others have committed to doing so. We'd like to work with those bodies to make sure there's a coherent children's rights awareness raising strategy in Wales.

Public services, such as local authorities and health boards, in Wales also play a critical role in children's lives and therefore play a critical role in realising children's rights. We'd like to work with them to make sure children's rights feature front and centre in decision making and that we're enabling children in Wales to have the best possible chance of having their rights realised.



3 A truth teller

We will support and empower children to speak out and share their diverse experiences with decision makers. We will shine a light on specific issues and amplify unheard stories through our enhanced communications and engagement work.

Children and young people trust us with their experiences, good and bad. We need to make sure these experiences not only shape our work but play a central role in policy development and implementation in Wales. As their champion, we plan to make sure these experiences are shared effectively with public bodies in Wales to help influence change.

The Commissioner plays a key role in Welsh civic life and is in a privileged position to be able to speak first-hand to decision makers, governments and national media outlets. We want to make sure we use that position to best effect.



4 A challenger

We will challenge and support others to ensure children's human rights are realised. Although we want to work in partnership, we won't be afraid of continuing to call out poor services, poor decision-making and poor choices if they negatively affect children's lives.

We have powers to review a range of public services and won't be afraid of using those powers if we think it'll benefit children's lives. We won't shy away from difficult decisions, difficult conversations and difficult situations if it results in better outcomes for children. We'll challenge with evidence and with young people's voices.



What will we be doing over the next three years

Below we've included the changes we'd like to see happen for all children in Wales by 2026. We realise that these population outcomes are bigger than us, may take many years to materialise, and will require effort from all public services, but we think it's important we're as ambitious as possible and as clear as possible about the changes we'd like to see in children's lives.

We've also included details of what our role will be in helping to deliver these improvements. You will find further details about how we will deliver all this work in our annual work plans, which we publish here.

Over the next three years, we'll be focussing on the following priorities and activities:

Helpu ti i
ddysgu am
hawliau /
Teach you
about your
rights



Gwranddo /
Listen

Purpose: Here for all children



We will listen to and make sure we're accessible to all children in Wales to ensure we can effectively speak out on their behalf and represent them in the most impactful way.

Population outcome: All children are represented and heard in Wales

How we will drive outcomes?

Over the next three years, we'll be focussing on the following:

- Forging suitable partnerships to enable us to work in collaboration with others
- Making the most of data – are we making best use of the data we gather and are we effectively using others' data e.g. School Health Research Network (SHRN) and Sport Wales' large-scale surveys
- Plugging the evidence and engagement gap of perspectives from specific groups of children (including children in care) via a detailed engagement plan

- Reviewing youth participation structures in Wales to make sure they're as effective as possible in enabling children and young people to speak out and take part in decisions that affect their lives
- Exploring how we are accountable to children and young people including work to consider how do we work most effectively with Wales' Youth Parliament

We also want to make some changes to the way we work, to be certain we're here for all children.

These changes include:

- Increase the visibility of our organisation
- Increase the diversity of the team.



Purpose: A rights 'realiser'



We will support and educate all children and young people to know about and understand their rights and we will support and advise public services on promoting and protecting children's rights.

Population outcome: All children know about and understand their rights and for all public services to respect and uphold children's rights.

How will we drive outcomes?

Over the next three years, we'll be focussing on the following:

- Working with schools and education settings to effectively deliver the new duty within the Curriculum for Wales on children's human rights
- Reviewing and refining our 'Right Way' offer which offers a children's rights based approach to delivering public services
- Exploring the ambition of a 'Child friendly Wales', scoping possibilities of working in partnership to develop this with key stakeholder organisations
- Creating a model complaints policy for children, to empower children to have a voice about issues affecting their lives

- Pressing for necessary changes to our remit, including pushing for the commissioner to be appointed by, accountable to and funded by Senedd Cymru not Welsh Government
- Influencing Welsh Government to expand the Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure, extending the duty on other public bodies to consider children's rights in their decision making

We also want to make some changes to the way we work, to be certain we're an effective rights 'realiser'.

These changes include:

- Continuing professional development for our staff team will also support this ambition through a programme of in person visits and learning from community based organisations supporting children and young people across Wales.



Purpose: A truth teller



We will support and empower children to speak out and share their diverse experiences with decision makers. We will shine a light on specific issues and amplify unheard stories.

Population outcome: All children are able to share their stories and experiences and are listened to and respected.

How will we drive outcomes?

Over the next three years, we'll be focussing on the following:

- Making sure children and young people in Wales are supported to recover well from the Covid-19 pandemic
- Mental health of children and young people and pursuing the No Wrong Door model
- Convening an annual national child poverty summit to challenge and influence Government and services on action relating to child poverty
- Effectiveness and consistency of the implementation of the Additional Learning Needs Act across Wales
- Establishing why statutory guidance is seemingly not tackling bullying in schools
- Exploring broader inequalities, including disability, race and LGBTQ+

- Accommodation for children and their families: where do children live in Wales?
- Tackling the lack of provision of key services including specialist schools and education placements
- Address inconsistent practice in schools and local authorities relating to DBS checks and the implementation of Estyn's best practice advice in relation to this

We also want to make some changes to the way we work, to be certain we're an effective truth teller.

These changes include:

- Creating a clear engagement plan to make sure we're transparent about what we do, make every effort to reach out to a wide audience, that we celebrate and shout out about our work and that we have a team of officers supporting the Commissioner that is reflective of Wales' diversity
- Revamping our website and social media channels.



Purpose: A challenger



We will challenge (formally and informally) and support others to ensure children's human rights are realised

Population outcome: All children in Wales have a powerful and effective champion for their rights.

How will we drive outcomes?

Over the next three years, we'll be focussing on the following:

- Challenging the progress made in tackling the cost of living crisis and child poverty levels in Wales via annual, national child poverty summit to challenge and influence Government and services on action relating to child poverty
- Continuing to call for free public transport for children to tackle child poverty and the climate emergency
- Ensure the 'radical reform of current services for children looked after and care leavers' Welsh Government has committed to truly delivers positive changes in the lives of care experienced children and young people in Wales
- Exploring how safe are our children online
- Questioning how effective is the governance of our child protection procedures in Wales? Considering a review of child protection governance arrangements

- Highlighting where do children live in Wales. This work will focus on children and young people's experiences of accommodation and housing and will include exploring the use of unregulated and unregistered accommodation
- Challenging the lack of appropriate mental health support in matching needs of children and young people in Wales
- Challenging government efforts to tackle the climate change emergency, and giving voice to the desires of children and young people to take action on this now

We also want to make some changes to the way we work, to be certain we're an effective challenger.

These changes include:

- Refine and focus our influencing efforts so that we can be certain we're doing all we can to improve areas of children's lives they've told us need improving
- Improve how information flows internally within our organisation, so that we achieve the most impact from the evidence and intelligence we gather about children's lives.



How will we do this



We have a team of 24 staff led by the Commissioner. We work as one big team to deliver all our work. We have some specialisms as well; here's how it works day-to-day:

1

Here for all children:

our **participation team** deliver work across Wales, listening to children, working with those who work with children, supporting children and adults to find out more and understand about children's rights.

3

A truth teller:

our **communications work** makes sure that those in power hear children's experiences and make changes as a result. We shine a light on issues affecting children, using every opportunity to share children's experiences and views.

Helping us and making sure we're delivering all this work safely and in line with laws and regulations are our **IT, HR and financial** experts and **vital core** support staff.

2

A rights 'realiser':

our free and independent **investigations and advice service** is there for children, their families and professionals who think children's rights have been breached. We work to resolve those issues and feed in case work examples as evidence of wider changes we may decide are required to protect children's rights and improve children's lives in Wales.

4

A challenger:

our **policy work** sees us influence decision makers, including Welsh Government, to consider and uphold children's human rights in all its decision-making. When promises are made by public bodies, we'll make sure we follow up on those to make sure promises to children and young people are kept.

A final word from the Commissioner...

The Commissioner is also guided and challenged by **two Advisory Groups**:

- An Adult Advisory Panel, made up of 16 diverse adult professionals and experts by experience from across Wales;
- A Young Person's Advisory Panel made up of 40 children and young people aged between 11 and 18 with a wide range of experiences and protected characteristics from across Wales.

As well as being led by the voices, needs and experiences of children and young people, everything we do as a team is underpinned by our values, by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and by our Right Way principles of Embedding, Equality and Non-Discrimination, Empowerment, Participation and Accountability.

Increasing the visibility, diversity and accessibility of our organisation will also be key drivers, as well as ensuring that our work is focused, that staff remain connected to our purpose, and that we are making the best use of the evidence that we collect to inform our influencing work.

Furthermore, we've recognised that if we are to drive change and make life better for children in Wales, we must work in partnership with others, to amplify messages and increase impact, whilst also protecting the independence of this 22 year old institution. I have just six more years to make a difference. I'm looking forward to working with my team and with people from across the country to deliver tangible changes in children's lives.

www.childrenscommissioner.wales

T: 01792 765600

E: post@childcomwales.org.uk

Twitter: @Childcomwales

Facebook: @childcomwales

**Freephone Advice helpline:
0808 801 1000**



**Comisiynydd
Plant Cymru**

Children's
Commissioner
for **Wales**