

A Promise from the Children's Commissioner for Wales to Care Experienced Young People



A message from the Children's Commissioner for Wales

Every child and young person has 42 rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). These rights give children and young people what they need to grow up happily, healthily and safely. My job is to help ensure that all rights of children and young people in Wales are protected. My vision is for 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.

I know that some children and young people will need more support than others to enjoy the rights they have. This is why, I am sharing my Promises to care experienced young people.

These Promises set out how my team and I will be there for you.

We are committed to listening to you so we know what issues to champion on your behalf.

We are committed to helping ensure the services you use know about your rights and consider your rights when making decisions about you and the services you use.

We will support you to speak out about issues – good or bad – and make sure we encourage changes that will improve things for children.

We will always challenge others to realise your rights. 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.

This Charter sets out how my team and I will keep those promises to care experienced children and young people. To make sure we fulfil these promises, I will make sure my Management Team keeps track of all our actions by discussing them every three months and will report back in our Annual Report where we've got to.

I encourage all services who support care experienced young people to reflect on how they can strengthen their responsibilities and make clear to children and young people just how they will keep their promises as Corporate Parents.

Rocio Cifuentes MBE

A 'corporate parent' is the name given to an organisation or person who has special responsibilities to care experienced children and young people. As a 'corporate parent', they should carry out many of the roles a loving parent should. While they may not be able to provide everything a parent can, but they should still be able to provide the children and young people they're responsible for with the best possible support and care.

The Promises set out in the Wales Charter

1 We will take time to listen to all care-experienced children and young people and ensure their views, wishes and feelings are heard and actively considered in all decisions made about them.



2 We will treat all care-experienced children and young people with respect.



3 We will involve all care-experienced children and young people in decisions that are made about them.

4 We will keep all care-experienced children and young people informed about our involvement with them and explain our actions to them.

5 We will use straightforward language when we communicate with all care-experienced children and young people.

6 We will show compassion when considering the needs of all care-experienced children and young people.

7 We will work with all care-experienced children and young people to help them achieve their goals.

8 We will advise all care-experienced children and young people of the process to make a complaint should they feel we are not adhering to this charter.

9 We will advise all care-experienced children and young people that they have a right to access independent advocacy to make sure their views, wishes and feelings are heard during decisions being made or when they are unhappy and want something stopped, started or changed.



How we will keep these Promises



We will ensure the Commissioner and the team meet regularly with groups of children with care experience to ensure they are shaping the work we do.

We will do this on a strategic level and an individual level. On a strategic level, the Commissioner's Young People's Advisory Panel and Adult Panel will include people with care experience to provide us valuable feedback on our work and direction. We have committed in our engagement strategy to linking regularly with groups of care experienced young people to ensure we are listening to them and hearing about issues that affect them.

On an individual level, our team of case workers will always listen to you to understand what is important to you. With your permission we will help you to challenge services on your behalf to ensure your rights are upheld.

We will always commit to challenging all stereotypes of care experienced young people. Children and young people should not be defined by their care experience. We speak out if care experienced are not being treated fairly.

We will learn from care-experienced young people that we work with and cascade that learning across our organisation.

We will always ensure that care experienced young people have the opportunity to feed into our work, through our Community Ambassadors scheme meetings, group visits, advisory panels and case work. This helps to ensure we are listening to a range of views and experiences and reflecting this in our work.

Being accountable to children is hugely important. On a strategic level, we will report the actions of my Office in our Annual Report, to our advisory panels and to Senedd Committees.

We would like to go further. We would like my Office to be directly accountable to the Senedd Ieucid, and engage with the Welsh Government's Care Experienced Young People's Summit to set out how we have been working towards upholding our promises.

On an individual level, we will always let you know how we have taken forward the issues you raise with us. We do this with a case closure letter from my case workers.

As an Office we are committed to using Plain English / Cymraeg Clir whenever we write or say something.

We also commit to producing different versions of our resources and surveys in order to be accessible to all children and young people. We aim wherever possible to tailor this to the audience, including BSL and PMLD adapted content.

We will also support children and young people to challenge language which they do not feel is appropriate.

As part of our whole staff team learning and development plan, we undertake a regular programme of partner visits for all staff, to strengthen connections and increase our understanding of lived experience.

We will also continue to support public services in Wales to develop children's rights approaches, so they can better reflect the needs of children in the design of their services. We will do this through our Right Way Offer and rights workshops.

We offer a small number of work placements each year to young people from a diverse range of experiences, including care experienced children and young people.

My Investigation and Advice team is there to support any child who does not feel their rights are being met.

In my three year plan, I have committed to creating a model complaints policy for children, to help children escalate their concerns. I will commit to involving care experienced young people in its development.

Through our Investigation and Advice Service we will give children and those adults supporting them advice and guidance to ensure services are acting in the child's best interest and are following the due processes when making decisions.

We will always ask a young person if they are happy for us to advocate on their behalf. We will always share information with young people about the conversation we have had with their permission. We will always ask if a young person has an advocate, if they want one.

The Children's Commissioner has unique powers to promote positive change for children, including the power to review how specific services provide advocacy and support to raise complaints. The Commissioner is an independent champion for children and can give advice and support to children who may not be getting their rights. You can get this support via our Investigation and Advice Service.

The rights from the UNCRC this will help uphold

This will help uphold your right to express your views and opinions on issues that affect you (Article 13).

This will help uphold your right to be listened to and to be taken seriously (Article 12).

This will also help to uphold your right to privacy if you do not want people to know things about you (Article 16).



This will help uphold your right to non-discrimination (Article 2).

This will help uphold your right to an identity (Article 8).

This will help uphold your right to be listened to and taken seriously (Article 12).

This will help uphold your right to access information (Article 17).

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This will help uphold your right to access information (Article 17).

This will help to uphold the rights of children with disabilities to play an active role in our work (Article 23).

This will help to uphold the right for adults to act in your best interests (Article 3).

This will help to uphold your right to recover from trauma (Article 39).

This will help you to uphold your right to reach your full potential (Article 6).

This will help uphold your right to express your views and opinions on issues that affect you (Article 13).

This will also help encourage services to comply with their children's rights duties, and to uphold the UNCRC (Article 4).

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This will also help to uphold your right to privacy if you do not want people to know things about you (Article 16).



How this takes forward the five principles of a children's rights approach to our work¹

Embedding children's rights – putting children's rights at the core of planning and service delivery.

Participation – listening to children and taking their views meaningfully into account.



Equality and non-discrimination – ensuring that every child has an equal opportunity to be the best they can be.



Empowering children – enhancing children's capabilities as individuals so they're better able to take advantage of rights, and engage with and hold accountable the institutions and individuals that affect their lives.

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Accountability – authorities should be accountable to children for decisions and actions that affect their lives.

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