

Strategic Equality Objectives 2023 - 2027



LEGAL CONTEXT

The Equality Act 2010 came into force on 1 October 2010 providing a legal framework that will protect the rights of individuals and advance equality of opportunity for all.

A major feature of the Act is the **public sector equality duty** (the 'general duty'), which replaced separate duties on race, disability and gender equality and this came into force on 5 April 2011. The aim of the general duty is to ensure that public authorities and those carrying out a public function consider how they can positively contribute to a fairer society through advancing equality and good relations in their day-to-day activities. The duty ensures that equality considerations are built into the design of policies and the delivery of services and that are kept under review.

Public bodies are required to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Act;
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not; and
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The general duty covers the following protected characteristics:

- Age;
- Gender reassignment;
- Sex;
- Disability;
- Pregnancy and maternity;
- Sexual orientation;
- Race – including ethnic or national origin, colour or nationality; and
- Religion or belief – including lack of belief.

It applies to marriage and civil partnership, but only in respect of the requirement to eliminate discrimination in employment.

The phrase 'protected group' is sometimes used to refer to people who share a protected characteristic.

Specific Duties in Wales

The broad purpose of the specific duties in Wales is to help listed bodies in their performance of the general duty and to aid transparency. The specific duties apply to listed bodies in Wales but not to non-devolved public authorities operating in Wales. The specific duties set out the steps that listed bodies in Wales must take in order to demonstrate that they are meeting the general duty.



The specific duties in Wales are set out in the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011. The specific duties in Wales came into force on 6 April 2011. The specific duties in Wales cover:

- Equality Objectives and Strategic Equality Plans
- Engagement and the equality duty
- Assessing impact and the equality duty
- Equality information and the equality duty
- Employment information, Pay Differences and Staff Training and the equality duty
- Procurement and the equality duty

The Children's Commissioner for Wales is subject to the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Regulations) Wales 2011 and this Strategic Equality Plan outlines how she will discharge those duties.



OUR ROLE AND CHILDREN'S HUMAN RIGHTS IN WALES

The Children's Commissioner for Wales (CCfW) is an independent children's rights institution established in 2001. There is a statutory requirement on the Commissioner to safeguard and promote the human rights and welfare of children, under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

Together with her team, the remit of the Commissioner is to:

- Support children and young people to find out about children's rights;
- Listen to children and young people to find out what's important to them;
- Advise children, young people and those who care for them if they feel they have nowhere else to go with their problems;
- Influence government and other organisations who say they're going to make a difference to children's lives, making sure they keep their promises to children and young people; and
- Speak up for children and young people nationally on important issues – being the children's champion in Wales.

The UNCRC is an international human rights treaty that applies to all children and young people aged 18 and under. It is the most widely ratified international human rights instrument and gives children and young people a wide range of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, which State Parties to the Convention are expected to implement. This convention underpins all our work.



The four general principles of the UNCRC are:

1. Non-discrimination;
2. the best interest of the child;
3. the right to life, survival, and development; and
4. respect for the views of the child.

OUR RIGHT WAY APPROACH

To enable us (and other public bodies in Wales) to integrate children's rights into every aspect of decision-making, policy and practice, we have developed a Children's Rights Approach with expert advice from the Wales Observatory on Human Rights of Children and Young People. We have set out our equality strategy under the five pillars of a children's human rights approach:

- embedding children's rights
- equality and non-discrimination,
- empowering children
- participation, and
- accountability.

Children's rights is embedded in all we do. So is participation. It means we listen to children and young people from across Wales, taking their views meaningfully into account.

Our equality strategy is based directly on the participation of children and young people in our recent large-scale consultation, Ambitions for Wales. Evidence from our updated 'Evidence Review on the Human Rights of Children in Wales, 2015 – present day' has also shaped our thinking.

For us, equality is about ensuring that every child has an equal opportunity to make the most of their lives and talents, and that no child has to endure poor life chances because of discrimination. It means treating all children fairly, and providing them with opportunities and resources according to their needs, equal with others, ensuring that they are able to develop to their fullest potential.

Non-discrimination is a right under the UNCRC (Article 2). There should be no discrimination against children as individuals or as a group. CCFW will ensure that this principle is reflected in our own service.

As a public body with statutory obligations to protect and promote children's rights, it means we also have obligations to be accountable to children in Wales for the decisions and actions we take which may affect their lives.

For transparency, we will commit to publishing this strategy, and include within our annual report an update on actions and progress made against our four strategic equality objectives



OUR VISION AND MISSION

The First Minister appointed Rocio Cifuentes as Children's Commissioner in April 2022 for a seven year term. The Commissioner has defined her vision 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'

Here's our organisation's mission:

'A CCfW office which effectively represents and reflects children and young people in Wales, empowers them, and enables their voices and concerns to be heard and acted upon, reflecting children and young people's human rights and welfare in Wales.

Equality is at the heart of this vision and mission.

OUR STRATEGIC WORK PLAN

Here's some more information about our current [strategic work plan](#):

During her term of office, the Commissioner will publish two strategic plans, outlining what the team will be working on to improve the life chances of children in Wales. These plans are developed from existing research evidence about children's access to their rights in Wales and from our own consultation with children and adults living in Wales. To help shape Rocio's first strategic plan as the Commissioner (2023-2026), we consulted extensively through 'Ambitions for Wales | Gobeithion i Gymru'. We split the consultation work — into two phases:

Phase 1 (Aug - Oct 2022): Meetings and face-to-face consultation work were undertaken by the Commissioner and the team with many organisations who work with children across all areas of their lives such as education, health, social care and many others. These included health boards, patient groups, child health specialists, academic institutions, community groups, as well as Commissioner's Ambassador groups, non-governmental organisations and children and young people aged 3+ attending the Urdd Eisteddfod. During this period we engaged with 644 children and young people and 127 professionals and used the information gathered to design our survey questions, for phase 2.

Phase 2 (Oct - Nov 2022): - Surveys for children, young people, parents/carers and professionals, seeking views about issues that are important to them, how they think some of them should be tackled and what they believe should be the focus of the Commissioner's work over the next three years. We received responses from 8,807 children and young people (8,375 completed the age 7-11, age 12-18, easy read and BSL online questionnaires; 416 children completed the under 7s activity and 16 children completed the activity for children with PMLD). We also secured responses from 1,383 parents/carers and professionals who work with children.



Outside these large-scale consultations to shape the Commissioner’s strategic plan, we also engage with children and young people to inform current work priorities, to ensure we are able to represent the widest possible range of views of young people in all our work. We do so via numerous methods, including face-to-face events and visits, virtual visits, our Ambassadors scheme which links to schools and community groups and via our independent investigations and advice team.



OUR STRATEGIC EQUALITY OBJECTIVES

As well as noting specific actions to help us deliver our strategic equality objectives, we've also highlighted the links to the focus areas from our strategic plan which will help deliver these ambitions. You can read a copy of our [strategic plan here](#).

STRATEGIC EQUALITY OBJECTIVE (1) – Establish a Leadership culture and Governance structure which values and understands equality, ensuring that equality objectives are embedded in all our planning, scrutiny and accountability processes

As an established national human rights institution, I will ensure that equality objectives are valued, understood and embedded in all our organisational planning, scrutiny and accountability processes:

- Self-accountability - Offer suitable learning and reflection opportunities for senior leadership including our staff team and external advisory groups to deepen and continually update their understanding of equality and inequality.
- Internal accountability to children and young people - The work of the Commissioner to be scrutinised and influenced by a children and young person's Advisory panel and an Adult Advisory panel which are diverse and effective. Panel members will be selected to ensure they reflect as wide a range as possible of Wales' diverse population.
- External accountability to children and young people- Seek opportunities for the Commissioner to become more accountable to children and young people, including through accountability to the democratically elected Senedd Ieuenctid (Youth Parliament) for Wales.
- Assess equality - Continue to develop and refine how Equality Impact Assessments inform all aspects of our work including our Investigations and Advice work, our Participation work and our Policy work, as well as our own internal work as an organisation.



- Embed equality - Embed consideration and monitoring of equality objectives into our planning and management processes.
- Manage equality - Ensure that information we process is managed responsibly.

STRATEGIC EQUALITY OBJECTIVE (2) – Deliver a public focused and effective service which is accessible, inclusive and responsive to the needs of all children and young people living in Wales

We will continue to improve the way we plan, organise and deliver our work to ensure that all our work with children and young people is inclusive, accessible and responsive to the needs of the diversity of children and young people living in Wales:

- Awareness of CCfW - Focus our work to increase awareness of the role of the Commissioner and her office, so that children know what the Commissioner does, how to access support from the office and are better able to exercise their rights including challenging discrimination.
- Promote children's rights - Work with others to plan and deliver a programme to promote awareness of children's rights throughout the year, including targeted work to those with protected characteristics.
- Communications - Review our communications strategy and ensure that our communications with children and young people is accessible to as wide a range of children and young people as possible, using Plain English, Cymraeg Clir, Widgit, BSL and the use of images that reflect the diverse nature of Wales, as well as using the most appropriate communication platforms.
- Engagement – Create and maintain an updated engagement strategy, which ensures that the voices and experiences of all children and young people are heard and inform our wider work.
- Evidence based – ensure our work is suitably evidence based including through our 3 yearly national survey to inform each 3 year work plan (including targeted measures to reach under-represented groups).
- Children's voice – Ensure all our work including our annual work-plan reflects the views of children and young people and provide opportunities for children and young people to influence.
- Equality Monitoring - Introduce equality monitoring into all aspects of our work in order to monitor how effectively we are supporting children with different protected characteristics and to enable us to identify and highlight patterns of inequality and discrimination.
- Equality in policy influencing work - Ensure we tackle equality and discrimination through our strategic influencing work so that every child in Wales has an equal chance to be the best that they can be.



How will we do this?



OUR RELATED STRATEGIC FOCUS AREAS FROM OUR THREE YEAR

STRATEGY: Our work in relation to our focus areas 'Here for all children' and 'A challenger' will also help us realise the ambitions set out above.

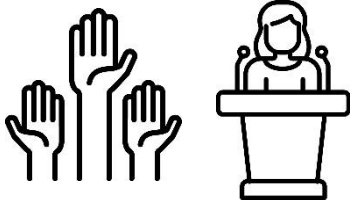
STRATEGIC EQUALITY OBJECTIVE (3) – Developing and promoting resources and knowledge about children’s rights and influencing for a rights-based approach and legislation to enable their rights to be realised

We will seek to advance equality of opportunity and challenge discrimination, harassment and victimisation for all children and young people including those with a protected characteristic. We will also develop and promote resources, understanding and knowledge about children’s rights to support this. We will place particular focus on seeking to understand and highlight the experiences and views of children and young people with protected characteristics. We will seek to foster good relations between those with a protected characteristic and those who don’t.

- Resources - Continue to publish accessible resources for children, young people and professionals that will enable them to utilise a rights based approach to working with children and young people.
- Influence - Influence the development of a children’s rights approach across all public bodies in Wales using our “Right Way” framework. This approach places equality and non-discrimination at the heart of public bodies’ work.
- Rights awareness for children and young people - Enhance children and young people’s ability to take up their rights and to recognise when their rights are being denied, through our ambassadors programmes.
- Projects - Undertake focused project work, based upon the views of children and young people, which will seek to influence a rights based approach to working with children and young people, and which will challenge discrimination, harassment and victimisation. There will be a particular focus on poverty, mental health and equality.
- Empower children and young people - Encourage and enable children and young people to engage in citizenship and the democratic process.
- Legislative basis - Work with government on opportunities to extend children’s rights in law, including further incorporation of the UNCRC into Welsh domestic law.



How will we do this?



OUR RELATED STRATEGIC FOCUS AREAS FROM OUR THREE YEAR STRATEGY:

Our work in relation to our focus areas 'A rights realiser' and 'A truth teller' will also help us realise the ambitions set out above.

OUR RELATED EQUALITY OBJECTIVE (4) – Employment, Pay and Training – Be an exemplary employer by creating a workplace culture that is supportive, inclusive and empowering through the promotion of people and performance management practices which are responsive to equality related evidence.

As an employer, I will ensure that I create a supportive, inclusive and empowering workplace through the promotion of exemplary people and performance management practices using equality related evidence:

- Promote - Actively promote opportunities to work at the Children's Commissioners office to those with protected characteristics, targeting currently under-represented groups.
- Value – Value diversity of lived experience and incorporate into job descriptions where relevant.
- Fair pay - Identify, analyse and if necessary put actions in place to overcome any gender pay difference/ gap at the Children's Commissioner for Wales office and to publish that information. Explore and address other emerging pay differentials.
- Accessible - Ensure that the office of the Children's Commissioner for Wales building is physically and culturally accessible to all, develop indicators to show this and ensure this is regularly reviewed.
- Flexible working model - Continue to refine our flexible working approach to ensure that working arrangements are equitable and accessible to all while meeting business needs.
- Learning - Provide a range of learning and development opportunities on an annual basis that will increase staff knowledge and understanding about working in a culturally sensitive way with diverse groups.
- Work placements - Offer a range of work placement, internships and training opportunities to children and young people and people from under-represented groups that will offer insight and experience of the work of CCFW, thus creating a pipeline of diverse future employees.
- Policies - Regularly update our employment policies and practices to ensure that they provide a working environment that respects and actively promotes and responds to the needs of those with a protected characteristic
- Data - Collect and publish comprehensive workforce information in line with expectations of the Equality Act and the EHRC or provide an explanation for why this is not appropriate.
- Ethical - Act in compliance with the Welsh Government's Ethical employment in supply chain and Modern Slavery policy.



- CCFW values the well-being of its workforce, working with Team members to prioritise physical and emotional safety, providing a working environment that aspires to do no harm – therefore we will continue to prioritise wellbeing and support and develop our Staff Wellbeing group;
- Ensure all staff are aware of our affiliated Trade Union PCS and the benefits of Trade Union membership.
- Ensure that equality and diversity is part of contract monitoring for all contracts.

How will we do this?



OUR RELATED STRATEGIC FOCUS AREAS FROM OUR THREE YEAR STRATEGY: Our work in relation to our focus areas ‘A challenger’ and ‘A truth teller’ will also help us realise the ambitions set out above.

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