

Impact Update: Autumn 2025



The Child Practice Review examining the crimes of Neil Foden is a crucial moment for child safeguarding in Wales.

In my latest quarterly impact paper, I consider its implications, the wider context, and present my own calls for change.

Also in this edition are my calls to all political parties ahead of the Senedd election: calls across 5 key areas that have the potential to make a significant positive difference to children's lives.



Children's Voices

Our **engagement team** puts children's voices at the heart of our work, hearing views and experiences from every corner of Wales.

Over the past three months we've engaged with over **5,000 children** and young people, worked with adults who support children, and listened to **over 3,000** children's views through our Monthly Matters surveys.

In the last 3 months, we've heard children's opinions on:



School Uniform



676 children and young people answered the questionnaire individually, and **583** as part of a group.



Key Findings:

- 23% of children said their parents 'find it difficult' to pay for things like school uniform, bags, and other things they need for school
- 35% of secondary school pupils had been told off for not having an item of uniform
- 54% of children said they could wear a jumper that didn't contain the school logo

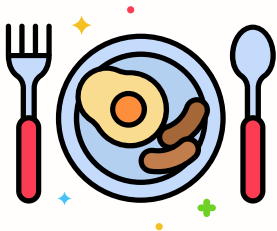
You can read the full answers on our website.

The answers will contribute to the Commissioner's ongoing policy work on child poverty and the cost of the school day, which includes a call for a new Welsh Child Payment to support families.

School food – Secondary



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for Wales



409 young people answered the secondary school questionnaire individually, and **370 as part of a group**. We asked young people about the cost of school dinners.

Key Findings:

- On average, young people said they need £5.50 a day to eat well in school
- 23% of young people said they don't have enough money to eat what they want in school
- 35% said they'd been refused dinner because their account has been in debt
- Out of 21 teachers who answered the question "Have staff ever brought food in for pupils who couldn't afford to eat?" - 8 said yes

The Commissioner will continue to call on the Welsh Government to fund free school meals for secondary school pupils in Wales, and for a new Welsh Child Payment to provide further financial support for families. **Read the full report-write up on our website.**



School Food - Primary

558 children answered the primary school questionnaire individually, and **638 as part of a group**.

We teamed up with **Food Sense Wales** and the **Future Generations Commissioner for Wales** to ask children about their favourite vegetables. The answers will help Food Sense Wales in their work of getting more locally grown vegetables on school dinner plates.



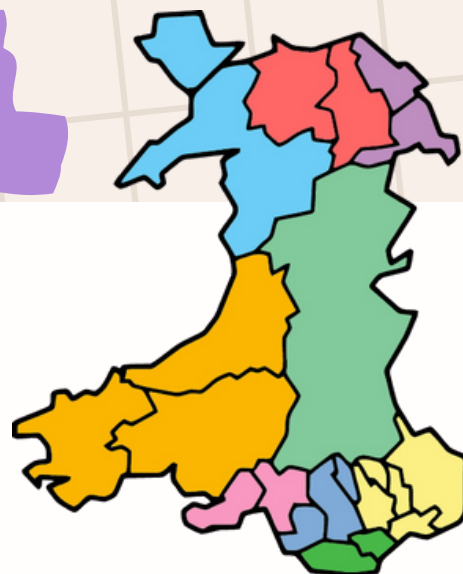
You can [read what children told us on our website](https://childcomwales.org.uk).

childcomwales.org.uk



Participation work across all local authorities

Our team has been busy visiting authorities across to Wales to hear about how they're supporting meaningful participation in their areas. It's part of our Wales-wide work to promote good practice and to highlight common barriers and issues.



It's been a pleasure to hear about the range of excellent work happening across the country, and valuable to learn more about the barriers to participation, including transport and pressure on resources.

By December, we will have met with all 22 local authorities. We'll be publishing a report sharing what we've learned in the spring.



Training

Our **participation team** have been busy delivering some successful training to a range of professionals lately including: Cwtch Addysg in Powys, Ty Hafan in Penarth & Social Care students in Bridgend. Here's what the team had to say:

We really enjoy and value the opportunity to meet and train practitioners who work with children and young people in all fields. Our training can be tailored to suit your organisation and includes revising the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), gaining a deeper understanding of the Commissioner and her Office's role as well as having time to discuss and reflect on your own practice and how you and your colleagues make rights a reality for the children and young people you work with.

"I have left with lots of ideas about how to bring awareness of children's rights into secondary school, in the context of pastoral work and behaviour management.

Thank you!"

Feedback from an attendee

If you'd like to find out more about our free rights training or would like to organise a session please get in touch by emailing post@childcomwales.org.uk





In October we welcomed 8 local schools to meet with The Children's Commissioner and The First Minister for Wales at our office to take part in a 'Sgwrs Mawr', where they shared their views with the First Minister and her team on mental health support, wellbeing and school transport. All the pupils had an opportunity to share their thoughts before having a Q&A session to end.

Primary pupils shared with us some of the excellent things their school are doing to help with pupils' wellbeing including: pupil voice groups, 'buddy bench,' wellbeing days, Big Bocs Bwyd project, music & yoga, daily mile, forest school and rainbow rooms.

One of the activities secondary pupils were asked to complete was to design a 'dream' mental health hub which would support their needs. They included big spaces for group therapy, youth workers, dim lighting and fairy lights, comfy seating areas, arts & crafts, cooking facilities & a fitness area.

They also had opportunities to share their concerns about transport provision with the First Minister and her team. The pupils thought the new '£1 bus fare' would have a positive impact - allowing them to travel places independently, giving them more opportunities to attend clubs after school and making it easier to meet with friends.

When asked '*Should all public transport be free for under 18s?*' the pupils answered yes but wanted to make it clear that availability of transport would need to be considered - they felt like there was not enough available transport in the areas they live in.



Safeguarding - A Focus

In November, the Child Practice Review (CPR) examining the abuse of Neil Foden was published. **This is a crucial moment for child safeguarding in Wales.**

The CPR is clear that, despite the changes to legislation that were introduced initially in response to the Clywch Inquiry, which was published by the Children's Commissioner in 2004, children have been let down by institutions there to protect them. Local implementation of some of these guidelines and procedures is not good enough; the oversight of the implementation of these guidelines and procedures is not good enough.

We've published a piece on our website looking at the context, the concerns, and the road ahead for safeguarding children in Wales. It contains a timeline of developments since the Clywch report, and the calls that have been made since then by Children's Commissioners and others.



READ THE PIECE

Our Annual Report 24-25

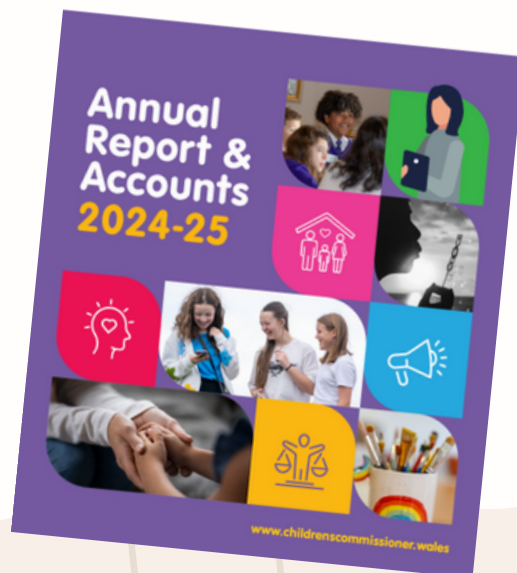


We're pleased to say that we've seen some significant successes across the team and secured some momentous changes to children's lives during this year. These include record awareness figures for the office; over 20,000 children and young people from every local authority in Wales having their voices heard through our '**Monthly Matters**' surveys; policy changes for care-experienced children as a result of our participation work; and supporting more cases via our independent **advice and assistance service**. We've also secured commitments from Welsh Government around issues including school complaints, that have the potential to radically improve children's access to their rights.



A critical part of the report is our policy recommendations for Welsh Government, which were discussed in a **Plenary debate last month**. Whilst accepting competing priorities and challenges, we maintain that children in Wales must remain a priority for this Government. What we see and hear makes it clear that too many children across the country are being failed and are being denied the opportunity to reach their full potential.

You can read the Commissioner's Annual Report and her recommendations to the Welsh Government [here](#).



Senedd 2026 election – Manifesto for political parties

Ahead of the Senedd 2026 election, the Commissioner is calling on all political parties in Wales to make commitments in the following areas:



- **Safeguarding**, including delivering on ICSA recommendations



- **Child Poverty**, including a new Welsh Child Payment
- **Education**, including a comprehensive review of school governing bodies



- **Transport**, including a full review of learner travel
- **Children's rights**, including fully incorporating rights into Welsh law

READ OUR MANIFESTO



Themes in our casework

Our Advice team helps children and young people in Wales to access their human rights.

With over 30 years' collective experience of helping children and young people in Wales to access their human rights, our Advice team is well versed in some of the biggest issues affecting families.

Over the previous quarter we've:

- Advised and supported parents, carers and professionals across **all 22 local authorities** in Wales, helping them to navigate issues affecting children's rights
- Dealt with **207 cases, with 325 issues in total**. This means we had an average of 1.5 issues per case, demonstrating the complexity of the enquiries we receive, with issues often interweaving.

Top issues:

ALN (20%)

Enquiries relating to Additional Learning Needs often focused on delays in securing IDPs (Individual Development Plans), disagreements over suitable placements, and access to specialist provision. Parents often told us that it's been difficult to find the information they need. One parent told our caseworker that she feels "no one is giving me the right information". Parents often present as distressed during these calls, having attempted to resolve the issue themselves independently before seeking advice from our team. Some parents are also unaware of the support available for ALN children – including their right to request a Person-Centred Plan (PCP). This points to a wider issue, where parents consistently flag of a lack of information and resources during advice calls.

Education (29% of all issues)

This includes parents and carers raising concerns about unsuitable placements, bullying, exclusion, and complaints. Themes of children experiencing poor mental health and wellbeing were also prevalent - often due to bullying. The overarching theme for issues around education was complaints. Many parents were complaining of reduced timetables, disagreements with complaint outcomes, and concerns about how bullying is being dealt with.

Social Services (21%)

Social services enquiries covered a wide range of issues, including placement changes, contact arrangements, and care planning. There were several cases where young people or their families expressed concern about a lack of communication or involvement in key decisions, particularly in relation to moves from residential care or foster placements.

Diolch || Thanks for reading!

**We'll publish our next
quarterly impact paper
in 2026.**



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