



Comisiynydd Plant Cymru

Children's Commissioner for Wales

The Right Way: Children's Rights Impact Assessment on Welsh Government's Supplementary Budget 2026-27

This Children's Rights Impact Assessment (CRIA) scrutinises the Welsh Government's First Supplementary Budget 2026 – 27 and considers its impact on children and young people and the realisation of their rights.

The assessment is informed by [The Right Way: A Children's Rights Approach in Wales](#), which sets out five principles for embedding children's rights in policy and decision-making: Embedding Rights, Equality and Non-discrimination, Empowering Children, Participation and Accountability.

EMBEDDING RIGHTS

Where does this policy or decision sit within a wider framework or strategy? Is the UNCRC overtly included in that framework / strategy?

- **If not, how can this policy embed children's rights at this point in order to ensure that decisions are taken in line with the UNCRC?**
- **If so, explain how this policy will continue to embed children's rights and how it'll deliver on your commitments to children's rights within a wider framework or strategy.**
- **Actively consider which children's rights may be fulfilled by this policy and which might be put at risk if mitigation is not put in place.**

The Supplementary Budget 2026–27 provides additional in-year funding to support the delivery of the new Welsh Government's priorities. In exercising its budgetary functions, the Welsh Government is required by the Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011 to have due regard to the rights and obligations contained within the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The supplementary budget therefore provides an opportunity to demonstrate how children's rights have informed decisions on the allocation of public resources and how those decisions contribute to the progressive realisation of children's rights in Wales.

The supplementary budget include several significant investments that are likely to advance children's rights. These include:

- £145 million to reduce NHS waiting times,
- £55 million to expand funded childcare,
- £40 million for school maintenance and repairs,
- £20 million for social housing,
- £15 million to continue extending free school meals to eligible secondary school learners,
- £8 million to pilot £1 bus fares for young people,
- £2 million for the Cynnal child payment, and
- £2 million to improve access to school swimming.

Collectively, these investments are likely to support children's rights by promoting children's best interests, improving access to healthcare, supporting children's development, strengthening

access to education, reducing financial pressures on families and increasing opportunities for play, recreation and participation in community life.

The additional investment in childcare, free school meals, affordable transport and housing is particularly significant in supporting children experiencing poverty and reducing barriers to accessing education and essential services. Investment in school maintenance contributes to safe and suitable learning environments, while additional NHS funding has the potential to improve children's timely access to healthcare. The Cynnal pilot payment is particularly welcome as it represents targeted financial support for children experiencing poverty. However, as a pilot, its long-term impact and sustainability will depend upon evaluation and any future decisions regarding wider implementation.

However, the supplementary budget proposals also provide limited evidence of additional targeted investment in areas where the realisation of children's rights continues to present significant challenges, including children's mental health, Additional Learning Needs (ALN), children's social care and support for care-experienced children. While these services may continue to receive funding through existing budgets, the proposals do not identify additional investment to respond to the current system pressures affecting children's mental health, Additional Learning Needs (ALN), children's social care and support for care-experienced children.

On ALN specifically, the legislative review of the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 acknowledged the need for additional funding. In addition, the [Audit Wales](#) report (published in April 2026) recognised concerns regarding the financial sustainability of the system and the lack of transparency surrounding allocation of funding.

Future budgets should consider whether additional targeted investment is required to address these pressures and better support children whose rights are least likely to be realised and clearly demonstrate how additional investment contributes to addressing those inequalities.

The Right Way makes clear that embedding children's rights requires more than identifying positive outcomes. It requires evidence that children's rights have informed policy development, decision-making, implementation and review. While the supplementary budget proposals identify areas of investment that are likely to benefit children, it provides limited evidence of how due regard to the UNCRC informed the prioritisation of spending decisions, how children's rights were assessed when balancing competing funding pressures or how children's rights considerations influenced the allocation of additional resources. A Children's Rights Impact Assessment published alongside these proposals would have been welcome.

Overall, the First Supplementary Budget 2026–27 is likely to make a positive contribution to the progressive realisation of children's rights through additional investment in health, education, childcare, housing, transport and financial support for families. However, the documentation provides limited evidence of how children's rights have been embedded throughout the budget-setting process or how the Welsh Government has demonstrated due regard to the UNCRC when determining the additional allocations. Providing greater transparency about how children's rights have informed spending decisions, how impacts will be monitored and how future budget decisions will be informed by evidence of outcomes for children would strengthen assurance that the budget reflects the children's rights approach required by the Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011.

EQUALITY AND NON DISCRIMINATION

- Does this policy apply to all children across Wales / the area you serve?
- Are there any groups of children that may be excluded, or disadvantaged by this policy, either directly or indirectly? Do any of these children fall within the protected characteristics as defined in the Equality Act 2010?
- What are the available options to extend this policy to a wider group of children (if relevant), and which of these will be taken forward?
- What mitigating actions will be taken for any children who are not included within this policy or may be disadvantaged by it?
- Is there potential for this policy to be extended in future, and if so how and when will this be reconsidered?

The supplementary budget includes additional investment that is likely to improve outcomes for many children across Wales. However, consistent with The Right Way, equality is not achieved simply by providing the same support to all children. A children's rights approach requires an equitable approach that recognises some children experience greater barriers to realising their rights and therefore require different or additional support to achieve equitable outcomes.

The supplementary budget demonstrates targeted investment in some areas where children experience disproportionate disadvantage. In particular, the £2 million Cynnal pilot payment for children living in poverty, together with continued investment in free school meals and funded childcare, recognises the impact of poverty on children's ability to realise their rights. These measures have the potential to reduce financial barriers to food, childcare and education. Similarly, the £8 million £1 bus fare pilot may improve access to education, healthcare, leisure and community participation for some children and young people, while additional investment in social housing has the potential to improve housing stability for families experiencing housing insecurity or homelessness.

However, the supplementary budget provides limited evidence of how the Welsh Government assessed the differential impact of the additional allocations on children who experience the greatest barriers to realising their rights. It does not explain how decisions were informed by consideration of disabled children, children with Additional Learning Needs (ALN), care-experienced children, young carers, asylum-seeking and refugee children, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children, children from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities or children living in rural communities. While some of these children share protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, others experience disadvantage because of their social or economic circumstances. Consistent with The Right Way, both groups should be considered when assessing whether children are able to realise their rights equally in practice.

The practical impact of the additional investment will also depend on implementation. For example, the benefits of the £1 bus fare pilot will vary depending on the availability of public transport services, particularly in rural communities. Similarly, funded childcare, free school meals and the Cynnal pilot payment will only contribute to reducing inequalities if eligible children and families are aware of the support available and are able to access it without unnecessary barriers.

However, the supplementary budget provides limited evidence of additional targeted investment in areas where inequalities in outcomes continue to affect many children, including children's mental health, Additional Learning Needs (ALN), children's social care and support for care-experienced children. While these services may continue to receive funding through existing budgets, the supplementary budget does not identify additional investment to respond to the

current pressures facing these services. Consequently, it is unclear how the supplementary budget will contribute to reducing inequalities or improving outcomes for children who continue to experience the greatest barriers to realising their rights. Future budgets should consider whether additional targeted investment is required in these areas and demonstrate how spending decisions are informed by the needs of children whose rights are least likely to be realised.

Overall, the supplementary budget is likely to have a positive impact on equality and non-discrimination, particularly through measures that seek to reduce the impact of child poverty. However, it provides limited evidence of how principles of equity informed the allocation of additional resources or how implementation will be monitored to ensure that children experiencing the greatest barriers to realising their rights benefit equitably from the additional investment. Greater transparency in these areas would strengthen confidence that the supplementary budget reflects the Equality and Non-discrimination principle set out in The Right Way and supports the progressive realisation of children's rights for all children in Wales.

EMPOWERING CHILDREN

- **How are children in your area or service given information about their rights and helped to develop the skills to enable them to participate in policy development?**
- **How have children been involved in developing these ideas and proposals?**
 - **If they haven't yet been involved, how will you enable this throughout the process? Think about who could support you with this work.**
- **Are the resources and materials accessible to children, to enable them to understand the proposals?**
- **How will you empower children to challenge the implementation of your proposals in the future (including accessible complaints structures)?**

A children's rights approach requires children to receive accessible information and appropriate support to understand decisions that affect them and to participate meaningfully in their development. The supplementary budget does not demonstrate how children and young people were informed about the proposals, supported to understand how the additional investment relates to their rights under the UNCRC, or enabled to engage with the budget development process. The supplementary budget note is primarily intended for a professional audience and is therefore unlikely to be accessible to many children and young people.

Future budgets should be accompanied by child-friendly information explaining proposed spending decisions, how they support children's rights and how children can contribute to budget development. They should also demonstrate how children have been supported to understand the proposals, participate throughout the budget process and access appropriate mechanisms to provide feedback and challenge implementation.

Overall, the documentation provides limited evidence that children have been empowered to understand, influence or scrutinise the supplementary budget. Strengthening these elements would better reflect the Empowering Children principle set out in The Right Way and support the effective implementation of the Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011.

PARTICIPATION

- **Have you gathered children’s views about these proposals from within your locality? If not, when and how will you do this?**
- **How can you ensure that children with a range of backgrounds and experiences will contribute?**
- **How can children participate, for example in recruitment and commissioning processes?**
- **How have you considered the National Participation Standards and applied them to this work?**

Meaningful participation is a fundamental element of a children’s rights approach. It requires children and young people to have genuine opportunities to influence decisions that affect them and for decision-makers to demonstrate how their views have informed outcomes. The supplementary budget does not demonstrate that children and young people were directly involved in identifying spending priorities or shaping the additional allocations. While several of the measures included within the supplementary budget address issues that children and young people have consistently identified as important, it does not explain whether children’s views informed the proposals, how participation was planned or resourced, or how the National Participation Standards were applied throughout the budget development process.

The documentation also provides limited evidence that children from a diverse range of backgrounds and experiences, particularly those whose rights are least likely to be realised, were supported to participate in developing the supplementary budget. This makes it difficult to assess whether the proposals reflect the experiences of children facing the greatest barriers to realising their rights.

Future budgets should embed participation from the earliest stages of budget development. This should include engaging a diverse range of children and young people before spending priorities are determined, demonstrating how their views have influenced decisions, applying the National Participation Standards throughout the process and providing feedback to children on the impact of their participation.

ACCOUNTABILITY

- **How will you communicate about this policy to children?**
- **How will you report on progress when the policy is implemented?**
- **How will feedback be gathered and used to inform future developments, and how will you show what you’ve done with feedback you’ve received?**
- **Do you have a mechanism for children and young people to hold you to account on your progress, e.g. a scrutiny panel?**

A children’s rights approach requires decision-makers to demonstrate how children’s rights have informed decisions, how commitments are being delivered and how children can hold decision-makers to account for progress. The supplementary budget provides transparency regarding the additional financial allocations. However, it provides limited evidence of how progress will be reported against outcomes for children or how the impact of the additional investment on children’s rights will be monitored and evaluated.

The document also does not explain how children and young people will be informed about implementation, how their feedback will be gathered and used to inform future budget decisions, or what mechanisms will enable them to scrutinise progress. While existing participation and scrutiny arrangements may provide opportunities for children to raise their views, these are not

referenced within the supplementary budget documentation. As a result, it is unclear how children will be supported to hold decision-makers to account for delivering the intended benefits of the additional investment.

Future budgets should demonstrate how progress against budget commitments will be monitored through children's rights outcomes, how children will receive accessible information on implementation, how their feedback will be gathered and responded to, and how existing participation and scrutiny mechanisms will enable children to hold decision-makers to account. Reporting should focus not only on expenditure, but also on whether investment has improved outcomes for children and reduced inequalities in the realisation of their rights.

CONCLUSION

- **Reflecting on the points noted above, does this policy proposal have a positive, negative or neutral impact on children's rights? Will it bring a benefit to more children across your area / will it specifically support children currently disadvantaged, to narrow any gaps in provision?**
 - **If negative what actions can and will be taken to amend the policy and/or how it is enacted?**
 - **If neutral, is there potential to adapt the plans to create a positive impact?**
- **Are there a range of options left to consider or have you narrowed this down to one preferred option?**
- **What is your advice to the decision makers as a result of this CRIA?:**
 - **Should the policy be enacted?**
 - **Are any changes required?**
 - **When will this policy be reviewed?**

The First Supplementary Budget 2026–27 is assessed as having an overall positive impact on children's rights. The additional investment in funded childcare, free school meals, health, housing, affordable transport and the Cynnal pilot payment for children living in poverty has the potential to contribute to the progressive realisation of children's rights by improving access to essential services, reducing financial barriers for some families and supporting children's health, development, education and wellbeing.

The assessment identifies several strengths in the supplementary budget. The additional investment demonstrates a continued commitment to supporting children and families through measures that are likely to improve outcomes, particularly for children experiencing poverty. The targeted investment in the Cynnal pilot payment, together with continued investment in free school meals and funded childcare, demonstrates recognition of the disproportionate impact that poverty has on children's ability to realise their rights. These measures are likely to contribute positively to reducing some of the barriers experienced by children and young people across Wales.

However, when assessed against the five principles set out in The Right Way, the supplementary budget documentation provides limited evidence that a children's rights approach has informed the development of the proposals. While the additional investment is likely to benefit children, there is limited evidence of how due regard to the UNCRC informed decisions on the allocation of additional resources, how principles of equity influenced spending priorities, how children were

empowered to understand or influence the proposals, how participation shaped decision-making or how implementation will be monitored and scrutinised through a children’s rights lens.

The assessment also identifies areas where future budget decisions could further strengthen the progressive realisation of children’s rights. The supplementary budget does not identify additional targeted investment to respond to current pressures affecting children’s mental health, Additional Learning Needs (ALN), children’s social care and support for care-experienced children. While these areas may continue to receive funding through existing budgets or other funding streams, future budgets should consider whether additional targeted investment is required to address persistent inequalities and demonstrate how spending decisions are informed by the needs of children whose rights are least likely to be realised.

Overall, the supplementary budget represents the Welsh Government’s approach to allocating additional in-year resources and should proceed. However, future budget development should provide greater transparency about how children’s rights have informed spending decisions, how children and young people have influenced budget priorities and how implementation will be monitored against outcomes for children. Reporting should demonstrate not only how funding has been allocated, but also whether it has contributed to improving children’s lives, reducing inequalities and progressively realising children’s rights.

Strengthening the application of The Right Way principles in future budget processes would provide greater assurance that the Welsh Government is giving due regard to the UNCRC in accordance with the Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011. This would support a more transparent, participative and evidence-informed approach to budget setting, ensuring that decisions are shaped by children’s rights and the lived experiences of children and young people across Wales.

UNCRC Article	Relevance to the Supplementary Budget
Article 2	Non-discrimination. Relevant to ensuring all children, particularly those facing disadvantage, benefit equitably from the additional investment.
Article 3	Best interests of the child. Budget decisions should demonstrate that children’s best interests are a primary consideration when allocating public resources.
Article 4	Implementation of rights. Particularly relevant as this concerns the allocation of public resources and the progressive realisation of children’s rights through budgeting.
Article 6	Life, survival and development. Relevant to investment in childcare, health, education and wider services supporting children’s development.
Article 12	Respect for the views of the child. Relevant because the published documentation provides limited evidence that children participated in developing the supplementary budget.
Article 23	Children with disabilities. Relevant when considering the absence of additional targeted investment for children with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) and disabled children.
Article 24	Health. Engaged through NHS investment, school swimming and wider health outcomes, including consideration of children’s mental health.
Article 26	Social security. Relevant to the £2 million Cynnal pilot payment for children living in poverty.

Article 27	Adequate standard of living. Highly relevant through free school meals, childcare, social housing and targeted financial support.
Article 28	Education. Relevant through funded childcare, free school meals, school maintenance and affordable transport.
Article 29	Aims of education. Investment in education should support children's full development and enable them to reach their potential.
Article 31	Rest, leisure, play and recreation. Relevant to school swimming and the £1 bus fare pilot, which may improve access to recreational, cultural and community activities.

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