

Jeremy Miles AS/MS
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Iechyd a Gofal Cymdeithasol
Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care

Dawn Bowden AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Plant a Gofal Cymdeithasol
Minister for Children and Social Care

Sarah Murphy AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Iechyd Meddwl a Llesiant
Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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Buffy Williams MS

Chair, Children, Young People and Education Committee
Welsh Parliament

9 December 2025

Dear Buffy,

Following the Children, Young People and Education Committee's Draft Budget scrutiny session on 19 November, we are writing to provide you with further information during the session.

A date when the Integrated Quality Statement on Children's Health will be available.

As stated in my letter of the 12 November, the Integrated Quality Statement for Children's Health will set out clear expectations for health boards to deliver high-quality, equitable and effective health services for children in Wales.

My officials are working closely with the National Strategic Clinical Network for Child Health to co-produce a draft Quality Statement. A period of stakeholder engagement will take place in early 2026. This collaborative approach will ensure the Quality Statement reflects the challenges and priorities for service development and supports a shared understanding of the changes needed, going forward.

I anticipate the final Integrated Quality Statement for Children's Health will be published during March 2026.

A list of policy interventions that affect children and young people, highlighting ones where change is needed to improve performance and delivery in a sustainable way and the areas where new investment is needed.

Work across this portfolio supports a range of interventions designed to improve outcomes for children and young people. These interventions align with the Children

and Young People plan to ensure that “all children should have the best start in life, including good early years services and support for parents or carers. They should be supported at home, in childcare and in schools, and when they move between these places.”

Examples of our key programmes include:

- **Flying Start** which includes four core elements: these being fully funded quality childcare, parenting support, intensive health visitor support, and support for speech, language and communication.
- **Flying Start Expansion** extends high-quality childcare for two-year-olds, prioritising disadvantaged communities. This phased approach addresses workforce and capacity constraints.
- **Families First** is designed to improve outcomes for the whole family, with a focus on protecting the rights and wellbeing of babies, children and young people. The inclusive programme uses a strengths-based approach, placing an emphasis on early help, prevention, and support, to encourage happy, resilient, empowered, and independent families
- **Early Years Framework for Action** developed by Public Health Wales, The Framework clearly identifies the key components of an effective early years system and defines what good looks like in each area.
- **The Talk with Me: Speech, Language and Communication Delivery Plan**, seeks to drive improvement in the way in which children in Wales are supported to develop their SLC skills.
- **Childcare Offer** provides 30 hours a week of government-funded nursery education and childcare for eligible parents of 3- and 4-year-olds for up to 48 weeks a year.
- **Baby bundles** are being provided on a targeted geographical basis to help reduce the financial pressure families face in some of the most deprived areas of Wales.
- **Childhood vaccination programmes** aim to protect children from preventable serious diseases. Increase vaccination uptake and protect children from an earlier age. The schedule is being changed from 1 January 2026 to deliver a chickenpox (varicella) vaccination programme that includes additional £2 million funding. The changes being introduced also support protecting children from an earlier age and provide an opportunity to increase vaccination uptake.
- **Healthy Weight Healthy Wales** delivery plan 2025-2027 focuses on supporting infants and children to have healthy weight and healthier lives
- **The Newborn Bloodspot Screening Programme** offers babies screening for rare but serious conditions that would benefit from early intervention, preventing serious illness or even death if not treated early.
- **The Newborn Hearing Screening Programme** identifies babies with significant hearing impairment so that support can be provided from an early stage.
- **The Healthy Child Wales Programme (HCWP)** provides the strategic framework for health boards to deliver a universal health visiting service to all families. It focuses on health promotion, developmental checks, and early identification of need. The HCWP spans from the handover of maternity services through the early years of schooling. The programme plays a crucial

role in promoting child health and well-being with the aim of reducing inequalities and improving health outcomes for children in Wales.

- **The Healthy Child Wales Programme for school-aged children** introduces a new unified model for school nursing services, ensuring planned universal health contacts for all compulsory school-aged children (5–16 years) in Wales, regardless of setting. This operating model builds on the existing Healthy Child Wales Programme, completing the age span from birth to the end of compulsory schooling and aims to provide a consistent, equitable health offer for all children and young people. The purpose of the model is to deliver a structured national programme of universal core contacts, prioritising prevention and supporting children and young people with their health and well-being throughout their school years.

All our programmes are monitored through a combination of clear outcome measures, regular data reporting, and independent evaluation/review to identify and inform areas for improvement.

This is not an exhaustive list of all our policy areas that support children and young people, and it is also important to highlight that around 95% of the MEG budget is allocated to the NHS who will set their own budgets for children's services, based on the needs of their population.

To improve performance and delivery in a sustainable way our focus will continue to be in the following areas:

- Workforce Capacity and Sustainability
- Integration of Specialist Support
- Prioritising prevention

Figures to demonstrate the progress made with the Designed to Smile programme in the most deprived wards.

Since submitting our evidence paper the D2S annual report for the academic year 2023/24 has been published. I'm pleased to report that it shows a real increase in activity, for example:

- Overall, (79% of eligible) nurseries and 531 (63% of eligible) schools provided a supervised toothbrushing programme in 2023/24. An increase of 17% on the previous year.
- 59,079 children participated in a toothbrushing programme at their nursery or primary school in 2023/24. An increase of 17% on the previous year
- There is high participation in the most deprived communities with 90% of WIMD1 nurseries and 82% of WIMD2 nurseries are engaged, alongside 72% of WIMD1 and 66% of WIMD2 primary schools — above or close to national averages.
- 167,695 toothbrushing home packs were distributed at nurseries and schools to children participating in Designed to Smile programme, to encourage toothbrushing twice a day at home
- 621 settings (75% of eligible schools) participated in the fluoride varnish element of the programme. An increase of 14%

- 40,997 children received a fluoride varnish application at their school. An increase of 15%
- Preventive interventions concentrated where need is greatest: Fluoride varnish uptake is highest in deprived schools (91% WIMD1, 88% WIMD2), with nearly 36,000 children receiving applications.
- 4,668 nursery and school staff received training from the Designed to Smile team, to deliver their toothbrushing programme.

In terms of impact, whilst it is difficult to attribute improvement in the oral health of children, the Wales epidemiological data indicates the slope index of inequality (measuring disease differences between people living in the most deprived and the least deprived areas) for dental caries prevalence has narrowed between 2008/09 and 2023/24. Our mission is to continue narrowing that gap with the support of programmes like Designed to Smile and by improving access to dentistry through dental contract reform.

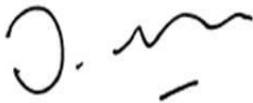
Updates on the National Board established to oversee delivery of the Healthy Weight, Healthy Wales delivery plan 2025 to 2027.

The Healthy Weight: Healthy Wales Delivery Plan for 2025-27 sets out new and clearer governance and accountability arrangements and commitments to strengthen and embed further whole system approaches at both a community and national level.

These new arrangements will enable clear accountability for progress towards our collective outcomes, supported by a new Healthy Weight: Healthy Wales framework of goals and indicators. New thematic working groups will be established, to include national and local partners, to help inform how we take forward the goals and actions in this delivery plan.

In addition to the thematic working groups, a new strategic overview group will ensure effective co-ordination, communication, monitoring and evaluation of our strategy and delivery plan goals. This will be the national board to assess progress and accountability within the system. We will use the five ways of working set out in the Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 to guide our approach.

Yours sincerely,



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