



Ein cyf/Our ref: MA - P/LG/0016/16  
Ann Jones AC/AM  
Chair,  
Children, Young People and Education Committee  
National Assembly for Wales,  
CF99 1NA

8<sup>th</sup> February 2016

Dear Ann

Following my attendance at Committee on 14th October 2015, I was asked to update the Committee regarding discussions with the Children's Commissioner on opportunities for her to have an early role in policy development. I wrote to you on 2 November to advise I would be meeting with the Commissioner to discuss this, as well as when and how we would be providing a full and final response to Dr Shooter's review.

I have since met with the Commissioner, and my officials have also been working closely with her office to ensure these issues are given due consideration.

From a Government perspective, we welcome the Commissioner's office's early involvement and actively encourage it through our Children's Rights Impact Assessment Process. There are numerous examples of the Commissioner's office being involved in early discussions and I believe legislation and policy are better because of it. In discussion with the Commissioner, she has stated she would be happy to provide her own response on this matter to the Committee.

I would like to take this opportunity to advise you we have now published our full and final response to Dr Shooter's review which is available on our website. A copy is attached for your information.

In addition, I would like to make you aware of our response to Young Wales' [report](#) which highlighted young people's concerns to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. Hearing the opinions and recommendations directly from young people is invaluable and this report deserved a full response, which I have provided. A copy is attached.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lesley Griffiths". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end of the name.

**Lesley Griffiths AC / AM**  
Y Gweinidog Cymunedau a Threchu Tlodi  
Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty



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Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Response to the  
Independent Review of the Role and Functions  
of the Children's Commissioner for Wales

February 2016

**Foreword by Lesley Griffiths AM,  
Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty**

Wales can hold its head high as a leader in promoting and protecting children's rights. Alongside the implementation of the Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011, the role and functions of the Children's Commissioner is another critical element of effectively implementing and upholding the rights of children and young people in Wales.

After continued calls from the then Children's Commissioner for an independent review, we commissioned Dr Mike Shooter to take this forward in 2014.

In December 2014, Dr Shooter published his report with recommendations which looked to ensure Wales has a Children's Commissioner whose role is as strong and effective as possible.

This document outlines our final response to the recommendations made for the Welsh Government and details our progress to address them. The Children's Commissioner has published her own response to the recommendations, which were for her consideration, available on her website.

There were also recommendations for the National Assembly for Wales and I wrote to the Presiding Officer to bring them to her attention.

We have worked with the Children's Commissioner in considering Dr Shooter's recommendations and, in doing so, we feel the review and its recommendations have allowed for open and honest dialogue. I would like to thank the Commissioner and her office for her continued work in responding in a constructive way to the review, and I believe the changes made will support her during her tenure as Commissioner.

*Lesley Griffiths*



**Response to the Independent Review of the Role and Functions of the Children’s Commissioner for Wales**

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## **1. Recommendations directed at the Welsh Government.**

### A. Related to the UNCRC

- The Welsh Government should develop a new comprehensive national awareness raising strategy for children's rights. The terms of the UNCRC and the work of the Children's Commissioner for Wales should form part of the training of teachers, social workers, health personnel and all other professionals working with children and young people and should be a mandatory part of the school curriculum.
- The Welsh Government should develop further its commitment to participation in its own work. The Commissioner should continue to hold it to account on the commitment.

We have revisited our national awareness raising strategy for children's rights and have worked with the Children's Commissioner, who is also under a duty to raise awareness of children's rights, and Children in Wales to ensure we are maximising our resources and opportunities for joint pieces of work.

We have adopted a number of approaches and campaigns, including a campaign aimed at parents, guardians and professionals who work with children and young people. This involved mixed media - through Google display and bus adverts, adverts within the Primary Times in Cardiff and Newport area and also a radio advert which will be aired by local and community stations across Wales. We distribute marketing materials widely for various age ranges and support local workers to raise awareness. We utilise Facebook, websites and leaflets aimed at parents as well as children and young people, and we have developed an app as well as a 'sponsor youth week' on S4C.

In addition, we have awarded contracts to external organisations to deliver bespoke training on the UNCRC to professionals who work with children, young people and their families. More recently, we developed a training strategy which will be delivered to 9 identified sectors which work with children and young people, including education, social care and health. As a consequence, awareness of the UNCRC and its impact on the sectors will increase. Working in partnership with sector representatives to develop the resources will not only provide fit for purpose material which improves the participants' experience, but will also give credibility. We have discussed our proposal with key stakeholders, including the Commissioner's office and Children in Wales. They have been supportive of our approach.

We continue to be fully committed to ensuring children and young people can participate, locally and nationally, and have awarded 3 year funding to Young Wales/Cymru Ifanc.

Young Wales / Cymru Ifanc was launched in March 2015 as a national and independent platform to enable the participation of children and young people and for them to have a voice in the workings of the Welsh Government. It aims to reach out across Wales to enable thousands of children and young people, including those who are marginalised, living in poverty, excluded or in challenging circumstances, to have their opinions heard and influence our work. They work with existing youth groups to influence legislation, policies and programmes. They also work to utilise social media in order to reach children and young people who are marginalised, shy, disadvantaged, unconfident, or secluded, enabling them to also have a voice and participate.

Young people, as part of Young Wales, decide on the priorities and shape the nature of the work through steering groups made up of cross-sections of young people both from marginalised and mainstream groups. For example, Young Wales were proactive in marking the anti-bullying week in November 2015, they have engaged with key agencies in the field of online safety for children, worked with the Live Fear Free campaign on promoting healthy relationships and have raised awareness of mental health and substance misuse issues.

Our commitment to participation continues to grow ever stronger in many ways. In 2015, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 was passed by the National Assembly for Wales and requires Welsh Government and other public sector organisations to think about the impact their decisions could have on everyone, including children and young people. Local Authorities are expected to have a local Youth Forum and information and mechanisms for children and young people to know how to participate and to get involved, should they wish. Ministers have issued clear guidance on what and how this should be done.

There is also a need to take into account the positive developments in youth engagement being taken forward by the National Assembly for Wales. We are very pleased with their public commitment to young people holding the Welsh Government and others to account, having their opinion on the issues which matter to them heard and valued at the heart of the Welsh Democracy.

## *B. Related to legislation*

- The legal background governing the Children's Commissioner for Wales should be consolidated and simplified in one piece of Welsh legislation. This legislation should make clearer the distinction between principal aims, functions, powers, duties and remits.
- There should be exploration of a more consistent approach to Commissioners in Wales, their purpose, funding, accountability and governance. This could be underpinned by a single Act, the possibility of which should be explored.
- The possibility of one single Act covering all Commissioners and the Ombudsman in Wales should be explored.
- The title should be changed to The Children and Young Peoples Commissioner for Wales.

Before committing to any new legislation, we would need to be convinced it was desirable, necessary and practicable. Currently, we believe the roles, functions, powers and remit of the Commissioner are already well-defined within the current legislation. The shape of any new legislation and the extent to which it would simply amend the existing legal frameworks governing the respective Commissioners is not clear. The case to consolidate or 'tidy up' current legislation is not of itself enough of a reason as the resources required to take such a piece of legislation through the National Assembly for Wales would be significant.

Whilst we see the rationale in having greater consistency and coherence between Commissioners, we are also not yet persuaded of the need for a single piece of legislation defining all Commissioners' roles and purposes, or amending existing legislation in order to bring greater consistency. It is worth bearing in mind many of the differences between the Commissioners reflect their respective roles and functions, which are specific to their remits and therefore should be maintained. Officials have therefore considered non-legislative means to improve consistency across Commissioners, in line with further recommendations below, while bearing in mind the need to respect their independence.

We have committed to undertake exploratory work on the requisite and practicalities of further legislation. Legislation would not be possible until the next Assembly term and timing would then have to be considered in the light of the Welsh Government's overall legislative priorities.

Whilst the title of the Children's Commissioner for Wales is defined in legislation, nothing would stop the Children's Commissioner from changing how she introduces herself or markets her role and office to different audiences. There are precedents for this. The 'Commissioner for Older People in Wales' (as the title is set out in legislation) markets herself as the 'Older People's Commissioner for Wales'. The decision whether to change the Children's Commissioner's working title or branding has therefore been left to the discretion of the Commissioner.



### *C. Related to scrutiny and accountability*

- The Children's Commissioner should continue to enjoy the independence afforded by "corporation sole". But this should not be at the expense of proper external accountability and internal governance.
- The office of the Children's Commissioner for Wales should be independently reviewed once in the course of every full tenure. This should be a statutory requirement.
- Ideally each of the Commissioners in Wales should also sit on an Advisory Panel/Board of one of the other Commissioners.
- The Children's Commissioner should be required to have an Advisory Board. Appointments to the Board should be led by the NAFW and governed by the Public Appointments Process, of which the Commissioner should be part.
- The Children's Commissioner should be required to produce two 3 year work plans during the course of her/his tenure. Her/His Annual Report should be used by the NAFW to assess progress against those work plans. Those documents should be written in a way that is amenable to scrutiny.
- Children and young people should be given greater opportunity to contribute pro-actively to the policies of the Children's Commissioner through the three-year work plan process. They should be part of the scrutiny of the Commissioners progress, either by contributing to the Annual Reports or by laying parallel reports of their own before the NAFW.

We are pleased Dr Shooter's review recognised the well-established independent relationship the Commissioner has with the Government.

Independence is necessary for the Children's Commissioner for Wales to exercise her statutory functions and promote and safeguard the rights and welfare of children and young people in Wales.

We agree any public body in receipt of public money should be accountable and answerable to scrutiny. There is no legal or practical reason why the Commissioner's status as "corporation sole" would be affected by increased scrutiny. However, we feel the requirement to have a regular independent review or for Commissioner's to sit on each other's Boards, as proposed, would be unduly prescriptive and onerous.

The Commissioner could establish and appoint her own Advisory Board and agree the Board's Terms of Reference setting out the Board's aim, structure and governance. We understand the Commissioner has decided to take this forward.

Dr Shooter made clear recommendations for the National Assembly for Wales to increase its role in scrutinising the work of the Commissioner and the Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty has written to the Presiding Officer bringing these to her attention.

The Commissioner's independence requires she is free to organise her work without external constraint. While the production of two three-year work plans might be good practice, this is a decision for the Commissioner to make and be accountable for via scrutiny. We are pleased to see from the Commissioner's own response she intends to take the recommendation of two 3-year work plans forward. We absolutely agree the involvement of children and young people is central to the development of the Commissioner's work, and her office should be leading by example as the Champion for Children's Rights.

*D. Related to efficiency, value and remit*

- Opportunities should be explored for joint enterprise between Commissioners and the Ombudsmen in Wales around common human rights issues. Greater clarity should be sought around their respective responsibilities where issues overlap their boundaries.
- Negotiations should begin to amalgamate some of the back office functions of the soon to be four statutory Commissioners and the Public Service Ombudsman in Wales, or to explore cost effective options.
- The remit of the Children's Commissioner for Wales should be extended to cover all matters whether devolved or not, that involve the welfare of children and young people who normally reside in Wales. The Welsh Government should work with its UK counterparts to find a way of expressing this principle in new legislation.
- The Commissioners remit should be extended to all children and young people up to the age of 25.
- There is no cogent reason for expanding the powers of the Children's Commissioner to include sanctions and several reasons why it would be counter productive to do so.
- Before any investigatory action, the Commissioner should be required to consult statutory investigative bodies to draw upon previous work and clarify roles. This should be a statutory duty to avoid duplication.

We agree, considering the difficult economic circumstances and financial constraints facing us all, there is a need to act swiftly where there is the potential for Commissioners to explore joint enterprise and cost effective options, work collaboratively, and amalgamate functions to make efficiencies and/or provide more effectiveness.

Following consideration of the Review by the full Cabinet, the Minister for Finance and Government Business agreed to take lead responsibility on behalf of Welsh Government in providing advice, support and encouragement to the independent Commissioners for Children and Older People to review their existing support services arrangements. The review began in early autumn 2015 and is focusing on the effectiveness, efficiency and value for money of current arrangements for non-frontline services which support the Commissioners' outward-facing roles, as well as exploring and considering a range of alternative options including collaborative arrangements.

The review is being undertaken in parallel with work to establish support services for the Future Generations Commissioner (designate) whose office will become operational at the beginning of April 2016. The Future Generations Commissioner (designate) has advised as a matter of principle she does not wish to establish any support service arrangements independently where there is a viable, more cost-effective alternative of securing them collaboratively.

The key output for the review will be preferred approaches for achieving efficiency savings. The Commissioners will be encouraged to agree their initial findings by February/March 2016, and to begin implementation of new arrangements during 2016-17. The review will also take into consideration, and inform, the longer-term work being undertaken on shared public sector back-office services.

In relation to extending the remit of the Commissioner to cover all matters, whether devolved matters or not, we fully support the recommendation. Extensive discussions have been had with UK Government but no resolution has yet been achieved. We will continue to work with UK counterparts to find a way of moving this forward.

The UNCRC defines children as any person under the age of 18. We considered extending our own duties under the [Rights of Children and Young Persons \(Wales\) Measure 2011](#) to cover all people under the age of 25 and held a consultation in late 2012 to gather views on the idea from the Welsh public. The response was strongly against the idea. We see no reason to change from this position in relation to the Commissioner. Furthermore, in relation to extending powers to include sanctions, we agree with the recommendation and are not considering a change.

We believe legislation is already clear on the requirement for the Children's Commissioner to consult investigative bodies in her work. The Children's Commissioner for Wales Regulations state the Commissioner may only examine a case once she has considered whether the issues involved have already been investigated elsewhere.

### *E. Related to appointment and funding processes*

- There are clear principles around independence of public bodies involved in human rights. The Welsh Government should acknowledge and adhere to them by transferring the appointment and funding of the Children's Commissioner to the NAfW.
- The appointment of the Children's Commissioner should continue to be by open public recruitment and by an appointments committee of cross party membership with stakeholder representatives, including children and young people.
- Any new legislation should be clear about the formal role of children and young people in the appointment of the Children's Commissioner.
- The successful applicant should be required to give up all existing posts with a perceived conflict of interest.
- Consideration should be given to a contract for the Children's Commissioner, to a "duty of care" to be contained in that contract, to the bearer of that duty, and to the inclusion of a provision for what should and shouldn't happen after leaving office.
- The Children's Commissioner for Wales should be appointed for a single, fixed term of 6 years, that period to cover two 3-year work plans
- The appointment of the Deputy Commissioner should be made through the Public Appointments Process led by NAfW and with the involvement of the Commissioner. The status of the Deputy Commissioner, tenure, circumstances in which the powers of the Commissioner might be delegated to him and the process for removal from office should be laid down in legislation.

We have consistently respected the independence of Commissioners and hence strong traditions, have been established, based on non-interference by Ministers. This is something all Ministers consider to be a major strength of all Commissioners and something the Commissioner herself acknowledges. As the appointing and funding body, the Welsh Government has always been extremely careful to respect the independence needed for the Children's Commissioner's office to carry out its work. Dr Shooter states in his report how the previous "Children's Commissioner [was] clear the First Minister has never subsequently interfered with the Commissioner's work in any way". Processes are already in place to ensure the Commissioner's funding arrangements do not impinge on her independence. Budget estimates need to be laid before the Assembly, which aid transparency and give the Assembly the opportunity to analyse and scrutinise them and we believe this works well.

It is unclear how a transfer to the National Assembly for Wales would provide a greater level of independence. Commissioners in Wales need to be operationally independent from both the Welsh Government and the National Assembly for Wales. Dividing responsibility for appointment and funding on the one hand and for scrutiny on the other, between the Welsh Government and the National Assembly for Wales, helps to ensure both the independence and the accountability of the Commissioner.

We therefore believe the effective independence of Commissioners is best safeguarded if responsibility for the appointment and funding of Commissioners continues to rest with the Welsh Government whilst the scrutiny function sits with the Assembly.

Current regulations require the First Minister to use an open public recruitment process to appoint a Children's Commissioner which involves various stakeholders, including children and young people. A panel of cross-party members and young people was established during the current Commissioner's recruitment. It worked well and there is no intention to change this process.

Whilst we fully support the Commissioner's office, the overriding consideration must be her independence and we would not wish to make any provisions which run contrary to her status as a corporation sole. The First Minister appoints the Commissioner and therefore the Welsh Government is the appointing body. It is not the body which holds the Commissioner to account. Welsh Government issues a letter of appointment which includes a clause requiring the Commissioner to give up all existing posts where there is a perceived conflict of interest. The letter additionally outlines expectations of what should and shouldn't happen after leaving office.

The Commissioner's seven-year term is defined in legislation. Changing the terms of the Children's Commissioner's employment would require new legislation and as with other recommendations related to legislation, a strong case would need to be put forward to show the benefits of this. Within this seven-year-term, the Commissioner has stated she does intend to work to two 3-year plans.

The Commissioner must be clearly and personally responsible for all actions of her office and we are therefore not willing to remove her right to appoint her own Deputy Commissioner.

## **2. Recommendations directed at the Children's Commissioner for Wales**

Fifteen of the recommendations, as outlined below, were considered as directed to the Children's Commissioner for Wales. Welsh Government has always been consistent in its respect for the Commissioner's independence and therefore it is not for appropriate for us to comment on these recommendations.

The Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty engaged with the Children's Commissioner for Wales, in writing and in person, asking her to consider these recommendations and advise on a way forward. A series of responses has been received from the Commissioner and we have been very pleased with her commitment to the review and with her consideration towards the recommendations and actions, as appropriate.

The Children's Commissioner for Wales has now published her final response to the review. A copy is available [here](#).

- The Commissioners budget estimates should be far more detailed than they are currently.
- The voice of children and young people should be central to the mandate and the scrutiny of the work of the Children's Commissioner for Wales and its impact. Their voices should be incorporated in the Commissioners Annual Reports or go to NAfW in parallel reports of their own.
- The participation of children and young people should be central to the work of the Children's Commissioner for Wales.
- The Commissioners and Ombudsmen for Children in the UK and Ireland are tackling common problems in different ways. The opportunity should be used to learn from each other and demonstrate how this has been put into practice.
- Recommendations made by the Commissioner in any of his reports should be more rigorously and systematically followed through to assess compliance and their possible impact.
- The Children's Commissioner should re-establish a formal regular Advisory Group of children and young people to inform his work, with a wider consultation process for that Advisory Group to check its own mandate.
- The Investigation and Advice service of the Children's Commissioner for Wales should have clearer criteria for taking on cases and closing them and more rigorous follow-up of those signposted elsewhere.
- There is a perception that CCfW is less accessible to minority groups than the rest of children and young people. The Commissioner should take more active steps to address this.
- Greater and more intelligent use should be made of data collected, of research and of the views of children and young people to inform the Commissioners policy. The IT system should be replaced to be more useful for this purpose.
- The Commissioner should continue to take account of equality legislation in the composition of his staff. Consideration should be given to funding a senior post to engage more fully with minority communities.
- The Commissioner should consider shifting the balance of his work towards a closer involvement in influencing Government policy formulation and legislation in ways which do not compromise independence.

- The Commissioner should adopt a life span approach in setting policy priorities. This should be reflected in work plans and Annual Reports.
- The Commissioner should consider whether the office in Llansamlet is too remote for effective communication with policy formulators. The viability and benefit of the Colwyn Bay office need to be reassessed. This should not necessarily mean losing the skills and experience of staff based there.
- The Commissioner should have a formal policy for the reserves he holds. Consideration should be given to how some of the current reserves could be better used for the children and young people he represents.
- The Children's Commissioner should re-examine whether current staff structures are working satisfactorily.



### **3. Recommendations wholly relating to the National Assembly for Wales**

The two recommendations below, directed at the National Assembly for Wales, primarily relate to accountability and the Assembly's role in scrutinising the work of the Commissioner. It would not be appropriate for Welsh Ministers to take a view on these recommendations.

The Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty wrote to Rosemary Butler AM, the Presiding Officer, listing these recommendations and asking for them to be considered by the National Assembly for Wales.

- There should be a more formal structure for the scrutiny of the Children's Commissioner shared between the appropriate finance and subject committees of NAfW. The members of those Committees may require training in the functions of the Commissioner in order to carry out their scrutiny.
- The Commissioner should be required to justify the balance of his work in scrutiny of his work plans and Annual Reports before NAfW and its committees.



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

[www.gov.wales](http://www.gov.wales)

# Welsh Government Response to Young Wales' Report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child



January 2016

Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.  
This document is also available in Welsh.

# RESPONSE FROM THE WELSH GOVERNMENT TO ISSUES RAISED BY CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

## Introduction

Making sure children and young people have a say on issues which affect them is an important right. We have a duty to consider all the rights set out in the UNCRC when making any decision. Last year we passed a law called The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 which requires Welsh Government and other public sector organisations to think about the impact their decisions could have on everyone, including children and young people.

On behalf of the Welsh Government I would like to thank the young people from Young Wales for raising issues which are important to children and young people, highlighted in their Wales report to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Our response focuses on responding to the issues and recommendations raised in their report and providing up to date information on some of the work we are doing to address them. I hope you find the response helpful and informative and I hope it provides you with an assurance your recommendations are always welcomed and considered carefully.



**Lesley Griffiths AC / AM**  
Y Gweinidog Cymunedau a Threchu Tlodi  
Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty

# Online Safety

## Recommendations

- **Keep children safe from harm when using the internet – children should know how to keep safe.**
- **Information about online safety to be more widely available through schools and educational programmes with up to date information on how to keep safe. Child friendly posters could be used as well.**
- **There should be better monitoring of unsafe websites, more restrictions on what is available to children and bigger penalties for those who break the law.**
- **Parents and carers need more education on how to keep children safe.**

## Welsh Government Response

1. Our approach to the use of social networking in schools is consistent with our overall approach to online safety. We agree that it is very important to teach children to use the internet safely under supervision while helping them learn the skills and knowledge to use the internet independently.
2. We have funded two key resources to help children be safe online. ‘360 degree safe Cymru’, and the ‘Digital Literacy and Citizenship Resource’ were launched by the Minister for Education and Skills in October, 2014 and are available from the Hwb website <http://hwb.wales.gov.uk>
3. A one-stop shop for information about e-Safety for teachers, parents and children and young people has been created together with an e-Safety zone on Hwb. This area contains resources specifically for schools including an award winning e-Safety self-assessment tool for schools and a comprehensive Digital Literacy resource as well as e-Safety updates and research findings. We are providing guidance to support schools through the e-Safety zone on Hwb. e-Safety has a key presence on the national Hwb website with a dedicated e-Safety zone and a reporting button linking directly to the Child Exploitation and Online Protection centre (CEOP).

4. To support Local Authorities and schools in allowing access to relevant educational websites, we have developed a set of web-filtering standards. The standards set out the direction local authorities and schools should be taking as a means of effectively safeguarding our young people and encouraging access to the full range of internet and social technologies for teaching staff, many of which are currently blocked in schools. The guidelines are here:  
<http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/publications/guidance/web-filtering-standards/?lang=en>

# Education

## Recommendations

- **There should be more support groups and counsellors in schools - adults don't take us seriously when we have problems and don't really listen.**

## Welsh Government Response

1. Although counselling is delivered in schools, it is Local Authorities who arrange for counselling services to be provided, so counsellors are completely independent of the school. This is particularly important if children and young people feel school is part of the problem or issue they are dealing with. Local authorities have to ensure counselling is provided to pupils from 10 years old (Year 6) to 18 year olds.
2. We have asked the Public Policy Institute for Wales to carry out two pieces of work for us. The first is looking at supporting the emotional health of children in primary schools. The second piece of work is arranging a meeting of experts to discuss providing support to pupils as they move through secondary school, including advice, support and guidance to help their overall wellbeing.
3. When these two pieces of work have been completed, we will ensure we take account of their findings as we develop our policies.

## Recommendations

- **There should be more education for children and young people on how they stay emotionally well and also activities to promote this.**

## Welsh Government Response

1. Our Personal and Social Education (PSE) framework for 7 to 19-year-olds in Wales provides schools and teachers with guidance on how to teach PSE. The framework provides a broad and balanced approach to PSE which covers many subjects and features a range of experiences to support the personal and social development and well-being of learners.
2. Schools, colleges and other learning providers maintained by Local Authorities should base their PSE lessons on the framework.
3. One of the key themes of PSE is health and emotional well-being and central to the process is giving learners the knowledge and skills to know where and how to access personal information and support.
4. Professor Graham Donaldson reviewed the Welsh school curriculum in 2014 and published his 'Successful Futures' report in February 2015. His report's 68 recommendations highlighted many changes were needed and the Minister for Education and Skills accepted all his recommendations in June 2015.
5. Professor Donaldson identified 4 purposes which set out what a learner leaving the education system should 'look like'. One of these purposes is learners should be "healthy, confident individuals" who are "building their mental and emotional well-being by developing confidence, resilience and empathy". Within Successful Futures, Professor Donaldson proposes a broad and balanced curriculum from age 3 – 16, delivered through six Areas of Learning and Experience. One of these is Health and Wellbeing which aims to give learners the opportunities to develop an understanding of social, physical and emotional health in their own lives.
6. The Minister for Education and Skills published a plan called 'A Curriculum for Wales, A Curriculum for Life' on 22 October. The plan sets out how the new curriculum will be developed with teachers and other education professionals across Wales, with the aim of it being available to schools by September 2018. The new curriculum which is being developed is another opportunity to address children and young people's wellbeing.

### **Recommendations**

- **Education around substance misuse should start in Year 7, not wait until young people have already experimented.**

### **Welsh Government Response**

1. We agree education on substance misuse should start early, and our Personal and Social Education (PSE) framework gives opportunities for learners at Years 2 to 6 to understand the harmful effects, both to themselves and others, of tobacco, alcohol and other legal and illegal substances.
2. Working with the police, we also fund the 'All Wales School Core Liaison Programme'. This programme delivers consistent substance misuse education to all ages of learners in over 99% of primary and secondary schools across Wales.

### **Recommendations**

- **There should be less emphasis on academic subjects and good qualifications and more on personal, social and life skills.**

### **Welsh Government Response**

1. The new Welsh Baccalaureate provides interesting opportunities for learners to develop life skills which are valued by many universities and employers.
2. The Skills Challenge Certificate includes components which are designed to develop and assess a wide range of skills. For example the Enterprise and Employability Challenge provides opportunities to develop life skills such as personal organisation, time management, setting priorities and team working.
3. The third recommendation in Professor Donaldson's review of school curriculum and assessment arrangements in Wales also reflects this recommendation. He said "the purposes of the curriculum in Wales should be so children and young people develop as ambitious, capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives" and they should be "healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society." The Minister for Education and Skills accepted all of Professor Donaldson's recommendations, including this one. Our plan, called 'A Curriculum for Wales, A Curriculum for Life' looks to improve learners' experience in Wales.



## Recommendations

- **There should be uniformed teaching of PSE across Wales. There need to be dedicated properly trained teachers.**

## Welsh Government Response

1. Teachers are required to have an understanding of the diverse learning needs their learners may have and do all they can to provide the best possible education for them to reach their potential, whatever their personal circumstances. Teachers are required to refer to the Personal and Social Education Framework and they can use support materials and resources to teach PSE.
2. Schools are able to invite guest speakers to deliver any PSE topic they may find difficult to talk about with young people or which they feel they lack the expertise to deal with fully and appropriately. Schemes such as the All Wales School Core Liaison Programme, which operates in 99% of primary and secondary schools, can deliver classes on difficult to discuss issues on their behalf.
3. We are currently in the process of changing Initial Teacher Education and Training for all new teachers, after a review of teacher training in Wales. We know the type of teachers needed to deliver the new curriculum for Wales. This will mean new teachers are trained to connect with their pupils and support their health and well being, so pupils have the opportunity and support to thrive and be involved with and enjoy their education. Existing teachers will also have the opportunity to develop new skills and teaching.
4. The new curriculum recognises the importance of health and wellbeing and is one of the six domains on which it is founded. The changes in relation to teacher education and training in Wales will ensure teachers will be fully equipped to deliver the requirements of the new national curriculum.

## Recommendations

- **(Young people) should be taught more about independent living and democracy and rights.**

## Welsh Government Response

1. We agree providing young people with the skills needed to live independently and to understand democracy and rights is important and we have tackled this in a number of different ways. These include:
  - The 'Active Citizenship' theme in the PSE framework gives learners the opportunity to develop their knowledge on politics, employment and their rights in a democratic society which reflects the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
  - The 'Preparing for Lifelong Learning' theme of the PSE framework includes opportunities to help learners understand the role and importance of money. The theme helps learners understand their role and responsibilities as consumers, appreciate the difference between paid and unpaid work and recognise the importance of acquiring the new skills essential in a competitive and changing world of work.
  - The Welsh Baccalaureate includes many interesting opportunities for learners in Wales to acquire life skills to prepare for university and employment.
  - Our National Youth Work Strategy for Wales supports young people to develop life skills and resilience. The strategy encourages Youth workers to build trust and retain a voluntary relationship with young people, and enables young people to share responsibility and become equal partners in the learning processes and decision-making. In this way, youth work seeks to encourage young people to be active citizens and participate in society, an approach which supports the principles of the UNCRC.
  - We have a duty to raise awareness of children's rights and the UNCRC and we do this in a number of ways including posters, flyers, websites, apps, Facebook and radio campaigns, attending events, and training professionals so they can tell children, young people and parents. We also provide funding for:
    - i. the Children's Commissioner who also has a duty to raise awareness of the UNCRC. She runs a school ambassadors scheme which creates the opportunity for pupils to discuss rights with the rest of the school.

- ii. An organisation called 'Children in Wales' to raise awareness of the UNCRC and for 'Young Wales' to give children and young people a voice and be heard by Government and others.
- 2. Separately from our work in the Welsh Government, the National Assembly for Wales, which is made up of 60 elected Assembly Members, also works to help children and young people understand democracy and rights. For example, their Democracy Challenge Badge encourages young people to explore and learn about the democratic processes of the United Kingdom, Wales and Welsh Local Authorities, to ensure they are better placed to make their own judgements in the future and to take part in democracy.

## Recommendations

- **"Consent" should be taught and better sex and relationship education, not just on the biological side and how to put on a condom. It should be part of the curriculum not an add on.**

## Welsh Government Response

1. We recognise sex education is an important part of growing up and all young people need to understand the physical and emotional aspects of sexual relationships. Schools play a central role in providing this. Since 2008, law requires Sex and Relationship Education (SRE) to be part of the curriculum in Wales.
2. SRE programmes must be relevant to learners and sensitive to their needs. Equally it is important young people recognise diversity and show respect for others regardless of their sexual orientation. Therefore we would expect teachers should deal with matters of sexual identity or sexual orientation honestly, sensitively and in a non-discriminatory way, providing factual information.
3. We are committed to ensuring healthy relationships education is provided as part of the curriculum and are providing support for projects to work in schools to teach children about healthy relationships, abuse and its consequences and where to seek help.
4. Under the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 we have provided guidance for schools and Further Education Institutions to help them make sure education settings are places where positive attitudes towards gender equality and healthy, respectful relationships can be fostered.

# Social Services

## Recommendations

- **(There should be) Better training for foster carers so they can better understand the challenges and stresses faced by children and young people.**

## Welsh Government Response

1. Every child has the right to live in a family where they get the care, support and help they need. Foster families across Wales provide this each and every day for thousands of children who cannot live at home.
2. All foster carers are checked at least once a year to make sure they are giving good care to the children placed with them. They will also have training and a supervising social worker will also visit them often to offer them advice and support.
3. The law says fostering services must provide foster carers with the training, information and support they need to give the best possible care to the children they look after. There are many good training courses foster carers can go on however everyone who wants to be foster carer must have training to:
  - understand what being a foster carer means
  - learn about the needs and stresses of looked after children and young people
  - become better prepared to be a foster carer.
4. *The Skills to Foster*, (developed by The Fostering Network) is a training course for foster carers who are getting ready to foster. It is used by nearly all of the fostering services in Wales. It includes all the skills which foster carers will need to care for children and young people. Once foster carers have done this course they are then checked and approved as foster carers. This means they have had lots of checks done on them by specially trained social workers and they have been trained on how to be a good foster carer.
5. All foster carers will have an individual training plan and have a chance to do lots of different training courses. This means when a foster carer is looking after a child or young person who has certain needs, the foster carer must have training on how to help them – for example, if the child is autistic or has challenging behaviour.

6. There are also lots of new training courses which help foster carers so they can better understand the challenges and stresses face by young people, and stop placements breaking down.
7. For example, *Confidence in Care* training teaches foster carers about parenting skills (good listening, understanding, praising, encouraging and being a good role model) and how to support their foster child with their education and dealing with everyday life. The Big Lottery Fund is funding *Confidence in Care* in Wales for five years from 2015 to 2020. This training will train 1,500 foster carers in Wales so they can better understand the challenges and stresses face by young people.

### **Recommendation**

- **Young people should have a say in who their social worker is.**

### **Welsh Government Response**

1. The Social Services & Well-being Wales Act 2014 sets out everything which local authorities (councils) have to do to help people in their area. The Act means everyone will have to work together to improve the well-being of people who need care and support from social services. This includes listening to the views and feelings of a child or young person about how care and support is provided to them when needed.
2. Social workers are allocated to work with individuals by the Local Authority and although there is no facility for a child to choose their social worker, young people must feel they are an equal partner in their relationship with those providing care and support to them. A key principle when providing care and support to a child is one in which the approach is child-centred. This means the well-being of the child is the main focus and the child should be able to contribute to meetings and assessments, voice their feelings or concerns and influence the choices which are made. An individual must feel they are an equal partner in their relationship with professionals. It is open to any individual to invite someone of their choice to support them to participate fully and express their views, wishes and feelings.
3. The assessment process must be designed around the needs of the child and the Local Authority should provide information on how the child can access advocacy support so they can be an equal partner in the assessment process. There are legal obligations also in place to support children and young people make enquiries or complaints about how the Local Authority is fulfilling its responsibilities towards a child. This includes providing children with the support of an advocate who

can help them work with a social worker so their views, wishes and feeling are heard.

4. Should a relationship break down between a child and social worker which impacts on the ability to protect and promote the interests of the individual, this is something which should be discussed with the Local Authority to help try and resolve.

## **Recommendation**

- **(There is) Practically no support for LAC leaving care at 18.**

## **Welsh Government Response**

1. Part 6 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act covers what Local Authorities have to do to support looked after children and young people leaving care. It sets out all the different type of support they should give, including:
  - arrangements for leaving care
  - plans for young people turning 16 so they know what is going to happen and plan ahead for when they leave care
  - the role of personal advisors in supporting them in leaving care
  - the support young people can get until they are 25.
2. Under the new Act, once a young person leaves care the Local Authority must appoint a personal adviser to support them. This adviser should act as the focal point to ensure the care leaver is provided with personal support to help them towards independence and adulthood.
3. In addition, in March 2015 we launched the 'When I am Ready' scheme to help young people in foster care who want to continue living with their foster family after they turn 18 until they are 21, or even up to age 25 if they are completing their education or training. This gives them stability while they are doing exams or looking for work, or while they get ready to move into more independent living. It means they can move on when they are ready, rather than having to leave when they turn 18.
4. From April 2016, when the new social services law comes into force, Local Authorities will have to ask a young person and their foster carer if they want to move into 'When I am Ready' when the young person turns 18. They will have to ask this when the young person turns 16, so there is plenty of time to prepare. If the foster carer cannot have the young person stay with them after 18, there will be time to move the young person to another foster placement or to make other arrangements.
5. Young people living in children's homes usually have to move on when they have left care. However, if they want to go into the 'When I am Ready' scheme the Local Authority could try to find them a foster placement when they are 16 or 17, which could become a 'When I am Ready' place when they are 18. We are looking into this matter further to see if there is more which can be done to support young people in children's homes when they leave care.



## **Recommendation**

- **(There should be) support and advocacy for LAC to give them the best chance in life.**

## **Welsh Government Response**

1. Local authorities are obliged by law to provide an independent professional 'voice' or advocate, for every looked after child and young person, care leaver and child in need, who wants to take part or comment on decisions about their lives. An independent professional advocate should also be provided if a child or young person wants to make a complaint.
2. We have asked Local Authorities to consider the findings of the Children's Commissioner's report on advocacy for LAC and bring forward proposals to improve the awareness, understanding and delivery of advocacy for children and young people who have a right to it by law.
3. The Welsh Local Government Association has set up a special group to look at this and develop a business case addressing the Children's Commissioner's recommendations. We understand the group, on which the Commissioner's office is represented, is progressing well. The outcomes of this work are on schedule to be presented to the Minister for Health and Social Services consideration by the end of January 2016.
4. The Code of Practice on advocacy under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, which reinforces children's rights and entitlements to advocacy, will come into force in April 2016. The Code of Practice sets out:
  - how advocacy helps give people the support they need to be able to have a voice, give an opinion and be involved in decisions which affect their lives
  - everyone including children and young people get the support they need to be heard
  - the different types of advocacy
  - how to let people know about advocacy services
  - how to make sure people get information and support to make decisions about advocacy
  - how to assess (check) how much advocacy and support someone needs
  - when advocacy should be paid for and when it should be free

The Code of Practice also explains when someone shouldn't be an advocate and when there's a need for an independent advocate.

# Bullying and Hate Crime

## Recommendations

- **Antibullying posters should be in parks, schools, shops, libraries, work offices.**

## Welsh Government Response

1. As part of this year's Anti-Bullying Week (16-20 November 2015) we made anti-bullying posters available on-line. Although aimed at schools these could be used in most locations. The posters were also included in resource packs made available to education welfare service within local authorities to be used at their discretion. Leaflets were also produced for children and parents. These were distributed to GP surgeries across Wales in 2015.

## Recommendations

- **Teachers should train children to know what to do if they were being bullied.**

## Welsh Government Response

1. Our set of anti-bullying guidance '[Respecting Others](#)' gives schools the necessary tools to develop and implement effective anti-bullying policies.
2. In 2015, we produced new anti-bullying advice for children, young people and parents concerned about bullying. The leaflet and poster; '[Are You being Bullied?](#)' is aimed at children and young people, while the leaflet; '[Is Your Child being Bullied?](#)' offers advice to parents about what to do if their child is being bullied. Both are available online. Hard copies of the leaflets were distributed to every primary and secondary school and every GP surgery in Wales.
3. Within the PSE framework for 3 to 19 year olds, there are five inter-related themes. These are
  - Active Citizenship;
  - Moral and Spiritual Development;
  - Preparing for lifelong learning;
  - Health and emotional well-being; and
  - Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship.

4. The personal and social development of learners is promoted both by what is taught in the curriculum and also by planned experiences in the general life of the school or college. A good coordinated programme will make use of discrete PSE sessions, opportunities in other subjects, and focused activities.
5. Bullying and the management of personal relationships are mentioned explicitly in the PSE framework and there are several contexts for schools to teach about these issues and other interpersonal skills. For example, the police have an All-Wales School Liaison Core Programme and deliver lessons on bullying to 90% of all schools in Wales.
6. Young people should also be given opportunities to develop their interpersonal skills including resolving conflict, and managing anger, frustration and aggressive feelings effectively.

## **Recommendations**

- **There should be anti-bullying programmes in all schools primary and secondary.**
- **Welsh Government should make it compulsory for schools to follow their anti-bullying policies.**
- **Every school should have anti-bullying ambassadors who should run anti-bullying meetings with help from teachers. Have check-ins during lunchtime and collect worry box ideas from children.**

## **Welsh Government Response**

1. We expect schools to adopt a zero-tolerance approach to all forms of bullying. Our focus is for schools to work towards developing positive and respectful relationships amongst children and young people.
2. All schools must, by law, have a school behaviour policy in place which should include measures which aim to prevent all forms of bullying. Effective anti-bullying strategies should be central to behaviour policies and be developed and put into effect by everyone in the school, including the pupils. This allows each school to tailor its behaviour policy so it is appropriate and responsive to local circumstances. It is the responsibility of schools to determine how they can best implement their own behaviour policies to address bullying behaviour. There are many good examples of how organisations, including schools, share best practice of anti-bullying policies, such as through the shared resources available on the Hwb website.
3. Behaviour policies in schools are inspected by Estyn. They will check if a school has one, and will look at the implementation of anti-bullying strategies more closely if they have been made aware there is a bullying issue at the school – for example, from the questionnaires which are issued to pupils, interviews with pupils and feedback from parents' meetings. Estyn asks pupils if they feel safe at school, and will check pupils know the procedures they need to follow if they are bullied. This enables Estyn to check on the implementation of the policy.

## **Recommendations**

- **(There should be) more education for teachers, pupils and parents about bullying including hate crime against protected groups and how to stop bullying.**
- **There should be stricter sanctions for people who bully children and young people.**

## **Welsh Government Response**

1. We take all bullying extremely seriously and we expect schools to do the same, making it clear it will not be tolerated. We will continue working with local authorities, schools and Estyn to ensure the anti-bullying message is put into practice.
2. Bullies may have a number of needs which have not been met and their frustration can show as aggressive behaviour. For this reason we address bullying in the wider context of behaviour management and emotional development. We have issued best practice information to help schools manage poor behaviour, such as the Behaviour Management Handbooks and guidance on nurture groups. It is for head teachers to determine measures on behaviour and discipline which form the school's behaviour policy, acting in accordance with the governing body's statement of principles.
3. We provide funding for the 'All Wales School Liaison Core Programme' which enables School Community Police Officers to support schools in reducing crime and disorder through education and promote positive citizenship in school and the wider community. This includes supportive school policing which assists schools, teachers and pupils to tackle hate bullying and cyberbullying. All School Community Police Officers are trained to deliver Restorative Practice methods to enable young people to repair the harm caused through hate bullying and cyberbullying. The Programme also has a website, [www.schoolbeat.org](http://www.schoolbeat.org) which provides resources and interactive activities for pupils, teachers and parents on preventing crimes which effect children and young people. The information provided includes advice and signposting to help and support agencies. In 2014-15 the Schools programme engaged with 3,259 children and young people with coverage across all 4 Police Force Areas on bullying specific topics across a range of ages and levels.
4. The All Wales Anti-Bullying Leadership Group (AWABLG) is developing areas of good practice for schools and Local Authorities to encourage strategic support and collaboration to tackle bullying. This includes exploring reporting and the distinctions among bullying, hate crimes and incidents. We are very happy to be working with Young

Wales, via the All Wales Anti-Bullying Leadership Group, to support their own [Anti-Bullying Network](#) too.

5. AWABLG provides a platform for a strategic approach to tackling bullying against children and young people in schools and in the community. It provides advice and guidance to Welsh Ministers on existing and emerging bullying issues; debates, clarifies, comments and makes recommendations on policies and guidance related to bullying; identifies issues, risks and gaps around the implementation of anti-bullying policies; and maximises opportunities for partnerships and information sharing.
6. Under the Equality and Inclusion Grant (2014 -17), we awarded funding to the 'Taking Flight Theatre Company' who have developed a theatre production to tackle disability hate crime - **Real Human Being**. This is a Forum Theatre project tackling Disability Hate Crime and encouraging recognition and reporting. The production aims to tackle Disability Hate Crime by reducing incidence, increasing reporting and seeking to educate young people about the impact on the lives of disabled people. It tours to Year 9 pupils in schools across Wales each Autumn. The project remains with the same group of pupils all day as they watch the play and then take part in interactive activities which encourages them to get under the skin of the issues, whilst also raising awareness of issues surrounding disability and access. Supporting materials, including a school pack, are also provided to schools to support the project and to continue to look at the issues of disability hate crime beyond the day. The theatre company have recently developed a similar production aimed at Year 6 pupils. The project held 32 performances in schools across Wales with 2691 children and young people.

# Domestic Abuse

## Recommendation

- **Children and Young People think there should be more awareness of what help is available for children affected by domestic abuse.**

## Welsh Government Response

1. We are committed to raising awareness about the help, advice and guidance is available to all children and young people in Wales who have been affected by domestic abuse. We have recently worked closely with Young Wales and the National Union of Students (NUS) Cymru to develop and introduce a Young Persons' Campaign, ensuring their involvement in its development and the language used would engage young people.
2. We also support Hafan Cymru to deliver the 'Spectrum' project across Wales. The Spectrum Project is an award-winning preventative programme which is delivered by Hafan Cymru in primary and secondary schools across Wales, to teach children about healthy relationships, abuse and its consequences and where to seek help. Each session is age appropriate and intended to promote discussion without prompting pupils to disclose personal experiences. Every session includes a discussion around where young people can go for help and support if they feel they need to.
3. In addition to raising awareness of abuse amongst children and young people, the Spectrum Project also delivers sessions to teachers and teaching support staff, youth workers, social workers and other interested professionals. We are aware it is only by raising awareness amongst young people and for them to understand healthy relationships, we will ultimately end violence against women and girls, domestic abuse and sexual violence and this is why our work in respect of education is key.
4. Through the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act, we are in the process of taking forward a broad programme of education related work. Some of this includes:
  - A Keeping Learners Safe – Everybody's Business - Conference – which is an all Wales safeguarding in education conference focusing on violence against women and girls, domestic abuse and sexual violence. This took place on 3<sup>rd</sup> December.

- The development of a toolkit to help schools to adopt positive attitudes towards gender equality and healthy respectful relationships called the Whole Education Approach Good Practice Guide which we've recently published.
  - A review of teaching resources on healthy relationships to ensure schools have quality materials to support individuals experiencing these issues.
5. In addition to this, we support the delivery of a Live Fear Free Helpline which provides a 24hour response to anyone who is a victim of domestic abuse, sexual violence and other form of violence against women. The Welsh Government's Live Fear Free website also provides a user-friendly resource for victims, survivors, family and friends as well as professionals.



# Substance Misuse

## Recommendation

- **Better education for children and young people on alcohol, drugs and tobacco, not just "don't do it" but proper lessons that include the long term effects of drugs, to be able to discuss and debate drug use.**
- **Children and young people need accurate, unbiased, up to date information delivered by people who know and understand drugs like youth workers.**
- **Create a fun and interactive way to teach young people about the effects of drugs and alcohol. Saying "it will kill you" isn't good enough.**

## Welsh Government Response

1. We are committed to ensuring children and young people have access to high quality education and information on drugs and alcohol. 'School Community Police Officers' (SCPOs) are funded to deliver lessons on alcohol and drug misuse as well as lessons on a number of our other agendas including fire and community safety as part of the All Wales Schools Liaison Core Programme (AWSLCP). SCPOs provide unbiased, up to date information because in their day-to-day roles, they have the experience of dealing with the consequences of drugs and alcohol at every level.
2. Substance misuse lessons were delivered in every primary and secondary school in Wales last year to children of all ages from foundation phase, through Key Stage 2, 3 and 4. The focus of the lessons they deliver is never 'Don't do it'. Instead, the risks and consequences of substance misuse and experimentation are discussed in terms of the legal position and personal effects – both long term and short term.
3. We are pleased to note 67% of the responses to your survey felt young people have access to clear and factual information and drugs and alcohol, including tobacco.

# Children and Young People's Rights

## Recommendation

- **Children and young people overwhelmingly believe that they should have their own, permanent democratic voice to access both Welsh Government and NAFW to enable them to participate in shaping government policy on subjects they have an opinion on.**
- **(They) want a forum where adults listen to them.**
- **The Welsh Government should strengthen its links with young people through Young Wales and find better ways to let young people know about their rights.**

## Welsh Government Response

1. We as a Government are responsible for proposing and implementing policy and laws which would apply in Wales and which aim to improve the lives of everyone in Wales. In doing so, we are absolutely committed to listening to the views of the people of Wales, including children and young people. To enable this to happen, we are providing a total of £1.8 Million over 3 years to Children in Wales to develop a Centre of Excellence for Children's Rights. This involves promoting and raising awareness of children's rights and facilitating **Young Wales** to enable children and young people to bring forward their issues and concerns.
2. We very much support Young Wales' aim to reach thousands of children and young people, working with existing and new youth groups, forums and councils to gather their collective voice to influence legislation, policies and programmes. We are also pleased it utilises social media in order to reach children and young people who are marginalised, shy, disadvantaged, unconfident, or secluded, enabling them to also have a voice.
3. In the first six months, Young Wales enabled over 418 children and young people to express their views directly through face to face consultation and engagement. It facilitated meetings between young people and Welsh Ministers. In addition the Young Wales website and responses to social media alerts have steadily risen. For example, there were 177,378 hits on the Young Wales pages and 22,162 on the Cymru Ifanc site during the year to date. We would be very happy to strengthen our links with Young Wales and would be pleased to meet with representatives to take this forward.

4. Local Authorities are also expected to have a local Youth Forum and information and mechanisms for children and young people to know how to participate and to get involved should they wish. Ministers have issued clear guidance on what and how this should be done.
5. In addition there is also a need to take into account the positive developments in youth engagement being taken forward by the National Assembly for Wales. We are very pleased with their public commitment to young people holding the Welsh Government and others to account, having their opinion on the issues which matter to them heard and valued at the heart of the Welsh Democracy.

# Environment

## Recommendations

- **More rubbish bins, more dog mess bins, dog mess bags should be in parks and on walks.**
- **More rubbish bins around and CCTV to give out fines to people who throw their rubbish on the floor or out of car windows.**

## Welsh Government Response

1. We also want everyone to keep their villages, towns, cities and countryside clean and free from rubbish and dog mess. One way in which we do this is by providing money to Councils in Wales who pick up rubbish and can buy things like bins for people to use. Normal bins can be used for both rubbish and dog mess.
2. We want dog owners to bring their own dog mess bags with them and always clean up after their pets. Dog owners can be fined if they are caught allowing their dogs to leave mess behind.
3. We also give money to community groups and Keep Wales Tidy so they can help people make their area cleaner, safer and tidier. The money given to Keep Wales Tidy can be used for campaigns to stop all types of rubbish, asking people to bin their rubbish, rather than drop it onto the street or throw it out of car windows. If people are caught dropping rubbish they can be fined up to £150.

# Transport

## Recommendation

- **More public transport in rural areas.**

## Welsh Government Response

### *Trains*

1. The majority of rail services in Wales are provided under the Wales and Borders franchise, which is managed by us. We provide around £180 million per year for the train services it provides. Arriva Trains Wales won the 15-year contract for the franchise in 2003.
2. We have added a number of additional services to the franchise in recent years, including several in rural areas such as increases in the frequency of trains on the Fishguard, Cambrian and Heart of Wales Lines.
3. We have started planning for the next franchise which is scheduled to begin in 2018. We are currently gathering the views of a large number of different groups, including young people, to help inform these plans.

### *Buses*

4. Approximately three quarters of all of bus services across Wales are provided by commercial companies according to their own analysis of demand, cost and profitability. It is important bus operators have the flexibility to respond to commercial pressures.
5. The remaining bus and community transport services are contracted (subsidised) by Local Authorities either using their own funding sources or monies provided by us under our Bus Services Support Grant. Each Local Authority determines which bus or community transport services they wish to support based on their assessments of local circumstances and priorities.
6. The Transport Minister has provided £25m to Local Authorities in 2015-16 (the same as in 2013-14 and 2014-15) under the Bus Services Support Grant to help them subsidise socially-necessary bus and community transport services, supplementing their expenditure on this from their own resources.

## **Recommendation**

- **Fund production of more eco friendly transport and lifestyle.**

## **Welsh Government Response**

1. The Welsh Government funds a wide range of activities which help people in Wales travel in an eco-friendly way and lead an active life. With the Active Travel Act, we have made a law which will help get more people walking and cycling more often. We also run 'Active Journeys', a project which works in schools across Wales to get more children interested in walking, scooting or cycling to school and in their free time, and we pay for new and better walking and cycling routes to be built in all parts of Wales. We are also working to make buses and trains better, for example with the Metro in South East Wales, which will make better connections between different types of transport and build new stations and routes.
2. The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The Act will make the public bodies listed in the Act think more about the long term, work better with people and communities and each other, look to prevent problems and take a more joined-up approach. This new law will mean, for the first time, public bodies listed in the Act must do what they do in a sustainable way. Wales took a bold step when we introduced this new law, but the UN's adoption of the Global Goals underlines we are not acting alone and can provide an example of what can be done.
3. The Eco-Schools programme is a voluntary international scheme which operates in over 60 countries and is licensed by FEE (the Foundation for Environmental Education). Keep Wales Tidy is funded by the us to operate the programme in Wales and 95% of both primary and secondary schools are registered on the programme, one of the highest participation rates in the world. The programme is child-led and pupils carry out practical projects on eight topics to learn about transport; energy; water; waste minimisation; healthy living; litter; biodiversity and global citizenship. Over 800 schools in Wales hold the prestigious Green Flag award. Wales's leading role in the Eco-Schools movement was recognised in December 2014 when an international meeting of all Eco-Schools operators was held in Cardiff to mark the programme's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

### **Recommendation**

- **(We are) concerned about the reduction in subsidised school transport being introduced by councils across Wales.**

### **Welsh Government Response**

1. Local Authorities have to provide learner travel under rules laid down in law. They are provided funds to do so.

# Play and Leisure

## Recommendations

- **Fund more youth groups and detached workers.**

## Welsh Government Response

1. We recognise quality youth work makes a real difference to young people's lives – whether it is through the fun experiences or the support it provides. We too are concerned about youth work provision across Wales. Sadly we have less money available so we need to think creatively to ensure young people can continue to work with youth workers.
2. In December last year the Youth Work Reference Group was set up to provide advice to us and to Welsh Ministers on ways to support youth work across Wales. There are four young people who are members of this group and their views and experiences are very important.
3. This group has looked at alternative ways we could run youth work across Wales. Recently, they recommended an independent chair should work with a small sub group of this group to look at what all areas of Wales should have as a minimum core offer of youth work. This group will be talking to young people about this soon too.
4. We are also looking at ways of strengthening and increasing the links between youth workers, schools and colleges.
5. In October the Deputy Minister for Skills and Technology informed Assembly Members (this is called an Oral Statement) about the importance of youth work and the youth service to the young people of Wales. The Deputy Minister also explained her intentions for making sure young people are able to participate in and access youth work wherever they live in Wales. Here is a link to the [Oral Statement](#) and here is the link to the written record of what the Minister said: [transcript](#).
6. To keep up to date with developments and with what WG is doing to support youth work click on the following link: [Welsh Government | Youth work](#)



### **Recommendation**

- **Children should have the opportunity to play more.**
- **Councils, parents, schools, community clubs and teachers should make more opportunities to play outdoors and join in activities.**
- **Lack of leisure opportunities for children and young people.**

### **Welsh Government Response**

1. We place great value on play and see it as being central to children's happiness, health and well-being. We are committed to improving opportunities for all children and young people to play in safety, and in particular to support improved access to play for disabled children.
2. To achieve the outcomes for children which play provides, we have placed a duty on Local Authorities to assess for and secure sufficient play opportunities for children in their areas. As part of the assessment they need to take account of children's views on what play and recreational provision they want in their areas; how they would like their neighbourhoods to be organised to provide the play opportunities they want; and what barriers stop them from playing. The Local Authorities are working with their partners to conduct their second Play Sufficiency Assessment during 2015 – 16 and these will be completed by March 2016. They will also develop Play Action Plans to increase and improve play opportunities.
3. We are funding Groundworks Wales under the Sustainable Play Project to deliver play activities for children in their communities. We have also worked with Play Wales to produce a toolkit to help head teachers, governors and local organisations to work together to consider making school grounds available to local children for play, out of teaching hours.

<http://www.playwales.org.uk/eng/schoolstoolkit>

# Health

## Recommendation

- **More doctors surgeries in rural areas and better opening times.**

## Welsh Government Response

### *Local Health Needs and Recruitment of GPs in Rural Areas*

1. The local health needs of the population are addressed through the development of local delivery plans produced by health boards in Wales. Health boards are faced with the challenge of an ageing population with increased complex health needs and an ageing workforce. Many parts of the UK face the same challenges and GPs are in short supply. Because of this, recruiting GPs to work in rural areas can prove difficult. We are working with NHS Wales and other partners on a range of actions to support and develop the primary care workforce in Wales, including the recruitment of GPs. These actions are set out in the plan for the primary care workforce launched by the Minister for Health and Social Services launched on 17 July.  
<http://gov.wales/topics/health/nhswales/plans/care/?lang=en> .
2. The plan includes a number of actions stabilise key sectors of the current workforce, including GPs. Overall GP numbers in Wales have increased by 10.5% between 2004 and 2014. There are now more GPs working in Wales today than there were 10 years ago, with over 2,000 GPs serving communities right across Wales.
3. In addition, health boards are working closely with GP practices to see if they are at risk of closing down or have to make cuts to services within the next 12 months. If so, a GP practice can apply to their health board for support. Any support a GP practice receives will be subject to local assessment, which may include management and workload support through, for example, healthcare professionals. Health boards can also consider financial support if need be.

## Access

4. The recent National Survey for Wales highlights nine out of ten people in Wales continue to be satisfied with the care they received from their GP. Also, research on access to GP services published in 2014 shows further improvement, with around four out of every five GP practices now open for daily core hours and offering appointments at any time between 5.00pm and 6.30pm.
5. Whilst it is our policy for health boards to provide evening and weekend appointments where there is a proven reasonable need, we accept more needs to be done and improving access to GP services is one of our commitments. We are working closely with GPs to identify ways to improve access to GP services, in particular improving the patient experience in accessing services in core hours and the first point of contact. This also includes access to appointments in evenings and on the weekend.
6. Saturday and Sunday access to unscheduled GP services are currently provided through GP 'out of hours' services. Improved access to GP services, where appropriate, will be delivered through groups of GPs working together, including the potential for access to GP services on a Saturday morning. This will maximise new capacity to improve access to GP services introduced through the investment for more healthcare professionals, such as pharmacists, nurses and healthcare workers. We will continue to provide access to GP services to reflect local need.
7. There is also a GP contract commitment for 2016/17 to consider making it a contractual requirement for GP practices to offer more online GP appointments using *My Health on Line* (a website which allows patients to do things like book appointments online), and we are seeking to improve GP 'out of hours' services through the 111 telephone service improvements. We will continue to work with health boards and service providers to ensure access to GP services reflect local need.

## **Recommendation**

- **Introduce a tax on unhealthy foods and make fast food much less available.**

## **Welsh Government Response**

### ***Tax on unhealthy foods***

1. The Chief Medical Officer recently said targeted tax could help reduce obesity in children along with other options through new laws. The Wales Act 2014 means there is now the potential for Wales to collect its own taxes, although the process would not be straight forward, and would have to take account of issues such as the impact on businesses, European law, and cross border issues with England. But most importantly, we would need to consider whether a tax would deliver what we wanted it to, and without unwanted consequences.
2. The most high profile of the calls for taxes on food has been for sugar, or specifically sugar in fizzy drinks. We have recently accepted the recommendations of an expert body to halve the recommended intake of sugar in the diet. The expert body also specifically recommended children's consumption of sugary fizzy drinks should be reduced.
3. The amount of evidence supporting a tax on sugar is growing but it is not yet clear how effective it would be in the long term. Denmark had to stop their tax on saturated fat because of the impact on their economy. More importantly, there is limited evidence as to whether introducing taxes on unhealthy food changes people's behaviours positively in the long term. It could just make them swap to cheaper alternatives or cut down on other (and possibly healthier) parts of their diet to maintain eating the less healthy, taxed product. Also any tax could unfairly affect those on lower incomes more than those with higher incomes.
4. Ultimately, a unified UK approach (rather than a Wales only approach) to any food tax would be more effective, having fewer complexities and reducing the risk of unwanted consequences. The Welsh Health Minister has written to the Health Minister in England to call for stronger action on sugar at a UK level.

### ***Fast food***

5. Fast Food provides easy access to cheap, tasty and energy-dense food, which is often lacking in nutritional value. There has not been much research into the link between food availability and obesity. However, there is a clear link with deprivation (which includes poverty), with the most deprived areas having more fast food outlets.

6. To limit the number of fast food outlets, Public Health in Wales could work more closely with the planning system to influence the current planning processes in Local Authorities
7. Some Local Authorities also try to work with fast food outlets and other food businesses in their areas to improve the healthiness of the food served, using the Wales Healthy Options Awards. The award has three tiers and rewards decreasing the amount of sugar, saturated fat and salt and increasing fruit, vegetables and fibre, through a wide range of actions.

### **Recommendation**

- **Have free government funded sports clubs so everyone can participate in exercise.**

### **Welsh Government Response**

1. We are very keen for young people to live healthier lifestyles and to be more physically active and through Sport Wales help to fund a number of programmes aimed at getting youngsters more involved in sport.
2. There are around 5,000 sports clubs linked to the various sports governing bodies in Wales so there is a wide variety of choice of organised sport for young people to get involved in and for many of these clubs participation for young people is free or at a relatively small cost.