# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE**  | **Marking the second anniversary of the publication of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child’s Concluding Observation report** |
| **DATE**  | **12 July 2018** |
| **BY** | **Huw Irranca-Davies, Minister for Children, Older People and Social Care** |

Two years ago, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child published its 2016 report on the United Kingdom’s progress in implementing children’s rights since it last reported in 2008.

The report was informed by evidence from all parts of the UK. At the time, the Committee took note of Wales’ progress in relation to children’s rights, for example, our Together for Children and Young People programme to support improved mental health for children and young people, and efforts on coordinating a better response to child sexual exploitation. The Committee also praised how the right to play is promoted in Wales.

Our work on children’s rights continues.

The Welsh Government is committed to putting the rights of children at the centre of our policy making. The UN Committee’s recommendations and concluding observations have given us another opportunity to review our work on children’s rights and consider how we can continue to improve.

The Committee’s recommendations cover a number of areas, including general principles such as respect for the views of the child; violence against children; family environment and alternative care; disability, basic health and welfare; and education, leisure and cultural activities.

Some of the recommendations sit in non-devolved areas, and, of course, we will work with and seek to influence the UK Government as it considers those.

In Wales momentum continues to build on a number of the areas where we have the powers to make a difference. I have highlighted below some of the key areas where progress has been, or is being made.

Both the Welsh Government and the Assembly Commission are taking forward the principle and objective of showing respect for the views of the child, by providing greater opportunities to participate in decisions which affect them.

Following a unanimous vote of support from Assembly Members on 19 October 2016, the Llywyd announced her intention to establish a Welsh Youth Parliament. Since then the Assembly Commission has worked with a Youth Parliament Steering Group to develop and consult on a proposal for a Youth Parliament. Elections to the Welsh Youth Parliament of the 60 young members will take place in November 2018, with young people electing 40 of their peers and the remaining 20 elected by partner organisations. This will ensure representation from diverse groups of young people from across Wales.

This will complement the work of Young Wales which engages with children and young people through youth groups, forums and councils, and through social media, enabling them to tell the Welsh Government their views on issues of their own choice. The Welsh Government, working with Young Wales, is currently consulting with young people on their hopes and concerns around Brexit.

Giving 16 and 17 year olds the vote is a key issue for young people who want to have a say in what happens in their local area and Wales as a whole. In July 2017 the Welsh Government consulted on votes for 16 year olds, as part of a wider programme of electoral reform, with a view to taking this policy forward~~.~~ Officials engaged with stakeholders and partners working with young people to ensure they had the opportunity to respond to the consultation.Welsh Government intends to take this forward in a Local Government Bill and will consider what awareness and education campaigns will need to accompany the extension of the franchise to inform young people of their right to vote. Engagement with stakeholders on this matter has already started.

It is my hope that we will see 16 and 17 year olds participating fully in the democratic process within the next few years.

The Welsh Government is committed to creating an inclusive education system for all learners, regardless of their needs and background, to ensure they are able to access a high standard of education and reach their potential.

This is the main aim of the Additional Learning Needs Transformation Programme which will ensure that learners are placed at the heart of the process. A fundamental aspect of this programme is the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 which received Royal Assent in January 2018. Implementation of the Act will introduce a single legislative framework for supporting all learners aged 0-25 with ALN, regardless of the severity or complexity of need. The framework will improve the planning and delivery of additional learning provision, through a person-centred approach to identifying needs early on and putting in place effective support and monitoring, and adapting interventions to ensure they deliver appropriate outcomes.

Narrowing the attainment gap between disadvantaged learners and their peers is a priority for the Welsh Government and we remain committed to the Pupil Development Grant for the remainder of this Assembly term. This long-term commitment will enable schools to make sustainable, long-term decisions on investment that help identify and address barriers to learning early.

In addition, the Cabinet Secretary for Education has agreed to provide over £8m in 2018-19 to support the education of minority ethnic, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners.

Our commitment to legislate to remove the defence of physical punishment of children is rooted in our determination to protect children’s rights. We have consulted on our proposal to achieve this and will publish the summary and analysis of responses shortly. This is part of a wider package of measures to support children and their parents byproviding information and advice on positive parenting techniques, whether through our programmes, collaboration with partners in the public and third sectors, or through our “*Parenting – Give It Time*” campaign.

Our early intervention programmes continue to work proactively with children and families to highlight and tackle issues before they become a problem.

In 2016-17 our Flying Start programme supported over 37,000 children and their families, exceeding our target of 36,000.The provision of high quality, part-time childcare for 2-3 year olds is a key element of Flying Start, and childcare is offered to parents of all eligible children for 2.5 hours a day, 5 days a week for 39 weeks. The childcare provision focuses on improving the outcomes for young children.

Wales led research is providing a focus on the potential impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), and I am considering how we can reduce the incidence of ACEs and help children to build resilience. As part of this work, the Welsh Government is supporting the work of the ACE Support Hub to enable professionals and organisations across sectors such as education, housing and the police to become ACE informed.

Together 4 Children and Young People, alongside its work to improve access to clinical service when required, is mapping and evaluating programmes for prevention and early intervention through its Early Intervention and Enhanced Support to Vulnerable Groups work stream. This includes the role of Local Primary Mental Health Support Services to ensure that children and young people in need of targeted support receive this in a co-ordinated fashion.

We are also investing in quality childcare, both to support families with employment choices, and to ensure children receive the care and help they need to develop the skills needed in later life.

A key commitment for this government term is the delivery of our childcare offer, which will provide 30 hours of government-funded childcare and early education to the working parents of three and four year olds for 48 weeks of the year. Bringing together early education and childcare, we are supporting children with the transition to full time school whilst simultaneously enabling parents to access employment and improve families’ prospects.

The Welsh Government will continue to take every opportunity to reinforce and strengthen our commitment to ensuring children and young people are able to live their lives in a way that allows them to flourish in a safe and nurturing environment. This will inevitably include all parts of government working closely together and with partners outside government, and I look forward to us making further progress in the coming years.

The UN Committee’s report is available on the Welsh Government’s website, a link is provided below. I ask everyone, especially those with an interest in children, young people and their families to take some time to consider the recommendations made and the ways in which every one of us can help make these rights part of the fabric of our society.

<http://gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/people/children-and-young-people/rights/?lang=en>