



Taking Care of our Future: A Manifesto By Young People, For Young People

**NYAS Cymru's Manifesto for the
2026 Senedd Elections**

About NYAS Cymru

NYAS Cymru is a leading rights-based charity providing high-quality advocacy and legal representation for children, young people and adults in vulnerable situations who might be in care, subject to child protection plans or have mental health issues across Wales. Guided by Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), we influence and campaign to ensure that every child and young person can safely and freely express their views, wishes and feelings in all matters affecting them.

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Forewords

As the priorities for the next programme of Government are set, NYAS Cymru want to ensure the continued advancement of children and young people's rights are achieved, and make sure all children and young people in Wales are given every opportunity to thrive.

All policy makers should make sure that children and young people have their voices embedded at the most senior levels of our Government. NYAS Cymru's vision is for Wales to be a place where all children and young people, feel part of a country that protects and upholds their human rights.

Our Manifesto identifies four clear priorities that we believe must be at the heart of the next Welsh Government to make sure every child and young person in Wales has a happy and healthy life.

S. Lovell

Sharon Lovell MBE
NYAS Cymru Chief Executive



As members of the Young People's Advisory Group in NYAS Cymru, a group of care-experienced children and young people campaigning alongside NYAS Cymru, we want to help other children and young people. We believe if the Welsh Government listen to our Manifesto asks, it will help all the future generation of children and young people in Wales, not just those who go onto have experiences of care.

We want all children and young people in Wales to feel safe and able to have their voices heard. We want to make sure they do not feel like they are alone and that they are being listened to by decision makers.

This is a manifesto by young people, for young people that calls on the next Welsh Government to take care of our future. You can help take care of our future by supporting these four asks in the next Senedd Elections.

NYAS Cymru's Young Person's Advisory Group



Child and young person-centred policy making

Responsibility for children and young people does not sit with any one department in government. Instead, it requires a joined-up approach across all government departments and ministries. Embedding the views, wishes and feelings of children and young people at the heart of government decision making is not just the right thing to do; it enriches policy making and ensures it reflects the diverse perspectives and experiences of the population they serve.

As political priorities change and evolve, a commitment to listening to children and young people should never fall off the agenda. Policy makers must make sure children's voices are embedded at the most senior levels of government, representing their views, holding officials to account, and always asking, "Would this be good enough for my child?"

To achieve this in Wales, we are calling for the next Welsh Government to:

- Appoint a Minister for babies, children and young people to put the views, wishes and feelings of children and young people at the heart of Welsh Government.
- Review and expand the powers of the Children's Commissioner for Wales.
- Place a statutory duty on Welsh Government Ministers to annually publish targets to eradicate child poverty in Wales and monitor the progress of achieving this.
- Work with UK Government to devolve the youth justice system to give Welsh Government full powers to address child criminal exploitation and youth offending in Wales.
- Create more training and work opportunities for care leavers by developing paid internship and apprenticeship schemes across Welsh Government, the voluntary sector and public bodies in Wales.
- Establish a specialised service to provide support to all care-experienced children and young people to access to advocacy for any physical, mental or emotional health related issues.

Advocacy

Advocacy provides children and young people involved in children's services a voice in decisions being made about them, their lives and their futures, in line with Article 12 of the UNCRC and the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act.

Making sure all children and young people, but particularly those in vulnerable situations, have an opportunity to have their voices heard is a fundamental pillar of robust and effective safeguarding. Though the implementation of the active offer of advocacy has been achieved, good practice is not consistent and access to advocacy remains unequal across Wales. We want to make sure all eligible children and young people in Wales can access advocacy and have their voices heard by all professionals making decisions about their lives.

To achieve this, we are calling on the next Welsh Government to:

- Review the National Approach to Statutory Advocacy and create a system for all eligible children and young people to be referred automatically to an advocacy provider, with option to opt out.
- Place a duty on all registered providers of children's residential homes to make sure each home is assigned a residential visiting advocate so all children and young people residing in the home have access to an independent trusted adult to speak to.
- Create a statutory entitlement of parent advocacy for all parents across Wales who are at risk of entering child protection or are receiving care and support from social services.
- Develop a statutory active offer of support from Project Unity for all care-experienced young women are pregnant and/or have children in Wales.
- Create a statutory definition of early intervention and ensure the future of the Sustainable Social Services Third Sector grant by making it a part of core funding to provide a long-term funding commitment to critical third sector led projects and initiatives.

Rights

The UNCRC outlines the fundamental rights that every child is entitled to, supporting, and protecting them to make sure they can reach their full potential, and it is crucial that upholding this not just understood as a guiding principle.

For some children and young people, accessing their rights may be more challenging, so governments must make sure they are doing everything possible to remove all the barriers to this. Though the Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011 has made some progress in championing children's rights in Wales, we want to see the next Welsh Government further the advancement and empowerment of children's rights in Wales, similarly to the Scottish Government through the UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024.

To achieve this, we are calling on the next Welsh Government to:

- Fully and directly incorporate the UNCRC into Welsh domestic law and develop a comprehensive children's rights strategy for Wales.
- Make all public transport fares free for all children and young people up until the age of 25 in Wales.
- Increase the Tax-Free Personal Allowance to help lift young people out of poverty.
- Make the offer of an independent return interview a statutory entitlement for all children and young people in Wales after they return to home or care following a missing incident.
- Ban all forms of unregulated accommodation in Wales and regulate supported accommodation for children aged 16 and 17 years old to guarantee that children in care are cared for where they live.
- Provide a long-term solution to financially supporting young people transitioning from care by making the Basic Income available for all care leavers across Wales.
- Extend the right to an Independent Visitor up until the age of 25 in Wales to provide a reliable and consistent adult friend for care leavers as they transition out of care.
- Embed a housing and health entitlement for all care leavers in Wales within the Corporate Parenting Charter to ensure all care leavers can access specialised support services.
- Place a duty on local authorities to provide a rent deposit and act as a guarantor for any care leaver in Wales wishing to access a private rented property.

Equality and Empowerment

Our vision is for Wales to be the best place for all children and young people, where they feel a part of a country that protects and upholds their rights, empowers them as individuals and where there are equal and equitable opportunities to thrive and enjoy a safe, healthy and happy childhood.

We know that for some children and young people, they are more likely to experience inequality, discrimination, structural, systemic and intergenerational disadvantage throughout their lives. It is therefore imperative that these inequalities are recognised and understood at all levels of Government, and there are targeted policies in place to both reduce these inequalities and promote equity. We want to make sure no child or young person in Wales is prevented from achieving their best outcomes because of inequality or disadvantage.

To achieve this, we are calling on the next Welsh Government to:

- Continue to lobby the UK Government to make 'care' a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010 and continue to encourage every local authority in Wales to make care a protected characteristic at local level as part of their corporate parenting commitments.
- Undertake a review of the Corporate Parenting Charter by 2028 to understand who has signed up to the pledge, how it has been implemented in practice, whether signing up to the charter should be placed on statutory footing, alongside developing an accountability framework.
- Amend Section 4 of the Renters Rights Bill to make it illegal for landlords in Wales to discriminate against care leavers wanting to rent a private property.
- Create a statutory independent guardianship scheme for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children as soon as they arrive to Wales.
- Devolution of the benefits system to Welsh Government to help lift more children, young people and their families out of poverty.
- Commission an independent inquiry into the disproportionate rate of children from black, Asian and ethnic minority backgrounds entering the care system in Wales, and their experiences of the care system.
- Develop a strategy to implement the anti-racism plan into practice across Wales to specifically challenge racism and discrimination experienced by children and young people. This strategy should focus on advocacy, increasing participation and representation and ways to challenge racism and discrimination.
- Commission an independent inquiry into the disproportionate rate of children born to care experienced young women becoming the subject of local authority child protection proceedings.



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