



## Children & Young People's Participation - highlighting good practice across the sector



### FEATURES

Young Wales' annual  
Festival

Deaf young people  
campaigning for change

Transforming young lives  
through music

#### PLUS...

Adoption UK Cymru

NCPHWR

Save the Children Cymru

Neath Port Talbot Council

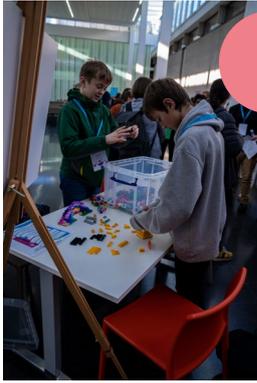
National Museum of Wales

Blaenau Gwent CBC

Pro-Mo Cymru

Credu

Clybiau Plant Cymru



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# Welcome from the Policy Director

Hello and welcome to the Winter edition of the Children in Wales magazine which focuses on Children & Young People's Participation. We are delighted to share with you many good practice examples from across the sector and our membership.

Every child has a right to be heard in all decisions that affect them or has an impact on their lives. Children and young people's right to participate not only enables them to engage as social actors, it is also instrumental in helping them achieve their other rights across the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

In Wales, there is a shared commitment to promote and support children's right to participate, through local and national structures, with the UNCRC acting as the foundation and enabler to inform ways in which children can engage and make change. The National Participation Standards for Children and Young People is in place as the tool to help organisations to facilitate children's right to participate in meaningful and effective ways. More and more organisations are adopting the Standards to inform their engagement work, and working closely with Children in Wales by signing up to the Standards Charter to demonstrate their commitment and begin evidencing change.

This edition provides a snapshot of ways in which children and young people are participating across a range of different organisations and sectors, and how their engagement is strengthening services and providing adults with a better understanding of their priorities. There are examples from national third sector organisations, such as Save the Children and ProMo Cymru; local authorities and other Welsh public bodies such as the National Museum for Wales, as well as examples where particular groups of children are being engaged by Credu, Adoption UK Cymru and the National Deaf Children's Society. There are also examples from our projects working with a diverse range of children and young people here at Children in Wales.

It is encouraging to see the strength of practice and commitment throughout Wales to involving children and young people in service design, planning and delivery, particularly now and ahead of the forthcoming examination of the UK and devolved governments actions to realise children's rights by the United Nations, which will be taking place later this year. More on this in future editions!

Thank you to all those who have contributed to this magazine, and to others equally committed to involving children and young people in your work.

**Sean O'Neill**  
Policy Director

## Children in Wales Membership

Membership has now been made easier for you - the power is in your hands to access and manage your own preferences using our membership platform. You'll be able to access a wide range of benefits through this platform, including your membership number, training course discount code, resources including Children in Wales Members' and Eurochild's ebriefings, back copies of this Magazine, members-only networking events, and other exclusive opportunities.

To see the full range of membership benefits, please visit our new [platform here](#).

# “The culture of children’s rights was flowing” - Celebrating Universal Children’s Day at the Young Wales Festival 2022

## Children in Wales/Young Wales

On Saturday, 19 November 2022 Children in Wales celebrated Universal Children’s Day at our annual Young Wales Festival event at St Fagans, Cardiff. The event was open to all children and young people in Wales and provided an opportunity for them to engage directly with decision makers, including the Deputy Minister for Mental Health & Wellbeing, Lynne Neagle MS, the Children’s Commissioner for Wales, Rocio Cifuentes, and Senior Civil Servants from Welsh Government. The event was kindly supported by the National Museum of Wales, Amitech IT, Limegreen Tangerine, Citrus HR and Darwin Gray LLP.

Our young volunteers, acting as Chairs and Presenters, had this to say about the event overall:

“It was about connecting young people and decision makers. The culture of children’s rights was flowing through the event and grounding the conversations.”

“It was nice to meet young people from other parts of the organisation and hear about what they have been working on.”



The day began with some amazing performances from Anthem. Music Fund Wales’ young people and the bussling exhibition area was full of stands that had something different to offer and share with everyone.

Throughout the day, our Young Wales volunteers gave presentations on key priority areas to the audience and officials from Welsh Government. Attendees also had the chance to ask the volunteers and officials questions about the issues raised after the presentations.

UN Committee Report group members talked about the United

Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the survey that the group co-created with Young Wales staff, which gave children and young people across Wales an opportunity to have their say on a range of important issues. If you would like to learn more about the UNCRC and Children’s Rights in general, please follow this [link](#).

The National Participation Standards Young Inspectors discussed what their roles mean to them, and their experiences of being Young Inspectors. After the event, one young inspector said “I enjoyed meeting different people and the Welsh Government.” If you would like to learn more about the Standards, please follow this [link](#) or email [elaine.speyer@childreninwales.org.uk](mailto:elaine.speyer@childreninwales.org.uk).

Education and Social Justice Special Interest Group (SiG) members spoke about the SiG’s main priorities – **mental health, poverty and gender identity and discrimination** - as well as Welsh Government consultations that the group have been involved with.



**Health and Social Services SIG/National Youth Stakeholders Group (NYSG)** members discussed the groups' priorities and suggested next steps to Lynne Neagle MS, on how to improve mental health support for young people. One young person who delivered in this session said "It was good showing everyone that was there what we had been working on, like the **COVID 19 toolkit** and the **Reading Well List**." The young person Chair of this group said "It was fun to network and talk to the Ministers and show Lynne what we have been working on around mental health."

The delegates also attended interactive workshops delivered by experts on issues relevant to young people. Some saw how young people have influenced the focus of St Fagans, whilst others learnt more about the UNCRC from the Young Wales team. Following this, some heard about the impact of nature on health and how they can protect and engage with nature, while others discussed the concept of global citizenship and its relationship to issues like climate change.

The Welsh Government Children and Young People's Plan, released in March 2022, was the focus of the **Young Wales exhibition stand**. Complete with a big colourful target, a bouncy ball, and lots of fun prizes, our Bullseye game explored the 7 young-person-centred goals of the CYP plan. The stall opened up conversations with young people about the UNCRC, as well as the work carried out by Young Wales and Children in Wales. It even led to more in-depth discussions with visitors to St Fagans about volunteering opportunities at Young Wales.

Our exhibition stand was one of many that young people could visit during the day to learn more about the various charities, projects and programmes that support children and young people in Wales, including our Museum Project display. Young people from across Wales submitted their photography, poems and artwork to the project, all based on the theme, 'What do children's rights mean to you?' Our Young Wales volunteers presented the fantastic submissions to Rocio Cifuentes and Welsh Government officials and showcased all the hard work that young people from across Wales had put it.



Overall, the Young Wales Festival offered a wonderful day out in honour of Universal Children's Day. It provided our volunteers with a platform to share their amazing work, get involved in some great workshops, and a chance to meet significant Welsh decision-makers. Most importantly, it celebrated the rights of children and young people, ultimately resulting in a **"good day, a good experience."**

# Connect

Ann Bell, Adoption UK Cymru

I have a right to understand that it is not my fault my birth parents could not look after me

I have a right to understand why I could or could not live with my brothers and sisters

When thinking about what I need, professionals will think about the whole of my childhood not just the here and now

I have a right to expect any decision making and outcomes to take account of my particular experiences as a black or minority ethnic child and to respect my ethnicity, language and cultural heritage

These are just some of the rights set out in a new Adoption Charter written by members of CONNECT, a national service for adopted children and young people living in Wales. CONNECT is delivered by a collaboration led by Adoption UK (one of three voluntary sector adoption organisations in Wales) working alongside staff in the five local authority owned regional adoption services. This collaboration between statutory and third sector organisations has allowed the service to develop quickly and offers opportunities to bring in additional funding from grants which are only available to the third sector.

To find out more see [Children and Young People Service | Connect Cymru](#)

Wales is the only country in the UK to have a nationwide service for adopted young people. At the end of 2022 there were 275 young people registered to attend the service and 18 local Connected Groups across Wales meeting monthly where young people aged between 16 and 18 can meet with others of a similar age and enjoy activities together without having to explain adoption or answer tactless questions.

*Anna's story "...I contacted Connected and I got invited to the 18+ group and then got involved in the social and the website group which became the Youth Council, I took part in the hustings, really enjoyed that and my Youth council involvement. I worked with youth workers trialling a focus group to gain young people's opinions on what Adoption UK should aim to offer young people back in February and then worked with them to make it more young people friendly before they did their research in Wales, Scotland and England.*

*The support around the Connected and Youth Council groups*

*given by the youth workers is the reason I keep coming back- if I didn't feel supported I wouldn't have bothered. They understand and make it safe – it makes us able to speak about our pasts. It's really difficult when you feel like you haven't got a voice but with this group, I feel like I have got a voice. I can use my experiences to help the next generation. I hope to see a lot of change in the future the aim is to use my voice and my experiences to help the younger ones.*

The whole service is based on youth work principles and has been awarded the Participation Kite Mark in recognition of the genuine participation of children and young people across the whole service.

As well as the Connected Youth Groups, the CONNECT service supports two Adoption Youth Councils who have been working hard throughout 2022 to raise awareness about adoption and provide information for adopted young people in a form that works for them.



Youth Council members met with the Deputy Minister for Social Services and the Minister for Education and presented them with copies of the charter.

# Children in Wales Spring Magazine 2023

## Supporting children and families during the Cost-of-Living Crisis - highlighting good practice across the sector

Children in Wales' Spring magazine will focus on highlighting good practice across the sector to support children and families impacted by the current cost-of-living crisis. We are acutely aware that more families are facing financial hardship and struggling to provide the basics and essentials for their children, as the numbers in low-income families continue to grow and children's wellbeing is compromised.

We know that many organisations across Wales are stepping up to this challenge and doing all that they possibly can to support and protect children and families during this challenging period. We are keen to capture and share your experiences and actions, and would be delighted to receive articles from our members with details of any work you are undertaking in relation to this theme. This may include:

- \* Examples of activities you are delivering, or changes you have made to support families impacted by the cost-of-living crisis
- \* Case examples of how the cost-of-living crisis is impacting on children and families
- \* How you are engaging with children and families with lived experience of poverty
- \* What has worked well in helping to better protect children and families, and maximise their income
- \* Good and promising practice of mitigating the impact of the crisis
- \* Examples of coproduction and joined up working with other services
- \* Anything else which is having a positive benefit for struggling children and families



Articles should be between 500 and 750 words; be available in both English and Welsh; have a title and author and include one good quality JPEG photo (optional).

The deadline for articles will be **30 March 2023.**

Please email [louise.oneill@childreninwales.org.uk](mailto:louise.oneill@childreninwales.org.uk) to book your space.

# Centre puts co-production with young people at the heart of their research

Michaela James, National Centre for Population Health & Wellbeing Research



Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Child (UNCRC) states that children and young people have the right to be listened to and taken seriously. It states that they should be considered when making decisions about things that involve them and that we should not dismiss them based on their age. In research, this is often overlooked. We, as adults, believe we know what's best. We believe we know what's essential to research, what questions need to be answered and how we should communicate our findings. However, we should involve children and young people in the research process.

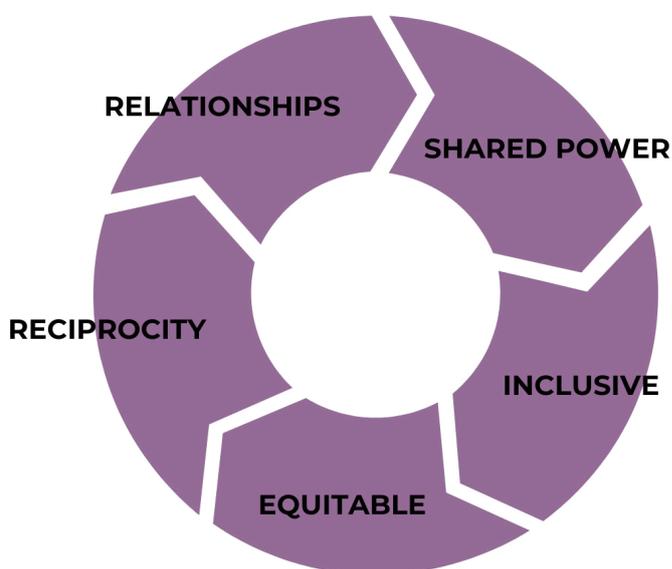
At the [National Centre for Population Health and Wellbeing Research \(NCPHWR\)](#), our work with this age group is underpinned by a rights-based approach and has co-production with young people at its core. Research projects such as [ACTIVE](#) and [RPlace](#) highlight this. Encompassing Article 15 (the right to be associated with spaces) and Article 31 (the right to participate and play), these have been informed by young people from inception to delivery to outputs.

ACTIVE began with young people telling us that accessibility was the main barrier to being physically active. It led to the co-design of an intervention to overcome this, with young people receiving activity-enabling vouchers and the opportunity to have a say on what activities they would like to do. As a result, we found that they want more choices to do [fun, unstructured and social activities](#) in their local communities and, in doing so, [we can improve fitness, heart health and motivation](#). However, conversations with young people still told us access to local spaces is limited. This led to the development by the team of RPlace, a mobile app where young people can rate and review their local spaces. Young people have designed this for young people, with feedback sought at every stage of the development. The aim is to influence change in local communities via a citizen science approach, with young people collecting and disseminating findings to local groups such as the council.



Co-production is now a prominent part of the NCPHWR. We have now developed Co-production of Research and Strategy (CORDS), a standard operating procedure (SOP) for co-production, acknowledging that co-production in research should not be a 'one size fits all' approach. The core values of the centre's approach to co-production include:

- **Inclusivity:** Everyone is important and is an asset. Taking into account different experiences, backgrounds, beliefs & cultures
- **Flexibility:** Embracing the messiness of working in different systems and being able to adapt and amend approaches where needed based on the wants and needs of the user group
- **Authenticity:** The process is authentic, where everybody benefits from engagement. It is in-built and ingrained in the research process
- **Reflectivity:** Being able to reflect, refine & repeat. Acknowledging that you are not the expert & can always learn



*Key Principles of Co-Production via CORDS*

### Key Principles of Co-Production via CORDS

Our aim is not to provide a complete guide. Instead, the SOP aims to give some clarity based on evidence and examples from previous projects co-produced by members of the public that NCPHWR researchers developed. We highlight that co-production can happen at any stage of the research. For instance, we have recently developed a survey to explore young people's experiences of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and how they would like to be supported. Young people have been involved in helping to advertise the survey by helping us develop an advert for social media and providing feedback on ways to make the survey inclusive and engaging for their age group. So, co-production can happen right from the start. Or, like ACTIVE, co-production can help form the next steps of projects and future direction.

What is essential is that co-production needs to be authentic. This is to ensure that young people are represented fully, and the purpose of it is clear. The research team ensures that different perspectives, experiences, skills, and knowledge are included in the process. Everyone's time and contributions should be valued so that everyone should benefit from working together.

Young people are the experts on matters that affect them, and we should be giving them a voice.



# Transforming young lives through music - Anthem Music Fund Wales & the Atsain Fund

**Rebecca Rickard, Anthem Music Fund Wales**

**Anthem Music Fund Wales believes that every young person deserves the opportunity to engage and explore what music can do for them. Our mission is to enable access to music, generate more opportunities and nurture diverse talent to take the next steps to musical careers.**

Anthem is a catalyst, funding work that will create change, making connections to widen partnership working, and enabling best practice to flourish. Currently we are working on strategic projects that help young people, support the new National Plan for Music Education, and advocate for the value of music to young people.

Our keynote fund, Atsain, backed by investment from Youth Music, People's Postcode Lottery, and Welsh Government, makes grants of up to £10,000 to projects that break down barriers to music for young people. The barriers are many - poverty, lack of provision or transport, identity, background, language and more. We support projects that propose new ways of breaking down these barriers, particularly those involving cross-sector partnerships and in which young people can lead how the work is done.

In our first year we have awarded £240,000 to 27 organisations across Wales. One is the Wilderness Trust in Llanidloes which has worked in the field of biodiversity for more than 30 years. The charity uses the environment, art, social inclusion, and education to help communities learn, experiment, connect, enjoy nature and grow. It has converted two derelict chapels in Llanidloes into a community eco-hub with an indoor garden and a community cafe, where it hosts groups, activities and events for a diverse range of people.

Its Atsain-funded project 'Music Circle at The Hanging Gardens' provides local music activity where previously there was none. It runs bilingual music workshops and concerts for babies and toddlers, instrumental lessons for young children and music sessions for young people with disabilities.

The young people involved have created connections with others, made friends and gained in confidence. According to the project manager, Luc-Antoine Bonte: "Atsain helped us to diversify the audience and the groups we can reach - because of that we have seen a lot of people who have never been into the space before, who are now participating in other activities such as the sewing group, craft workshops or young parents' group.' The Trust is now looking to expand the music provision to meet the increasing demand.

Canolfan Gerdd William Mathias in Caernarfon provides music training and performance experiences to young people. Its Atsain-

funded project, Canfod y Gân Iau, delivers music workshops to children who have disabilities and additional needs. The project has helped the Centre develop new partnerships in the region, including with Gwynedd Council's Youth Service, Social Services children team and STAND North Wales, a parent-led organisation which supports children and young people with speech, Language and Communication Needs, Additional Needs and Disabilities. The project works in small groups so the young people can develop their creative voices and work at their own pace. 'The project will help young people identify their own musical pathways,' explains Meinir Llwyd Roberts, the Centre's Director, 'That's so important for anyone who starts out on a musical journey - no two journeys are the same. In our Canfod y Gân projects the tutors give the individuals the tools...it's co-creation rather than a lesson.' The tutors are also developing their skills as a result of the project, which Meinir hopes will help to reduce barriers to music for more young people in the future.

Anthem also runs the Atsain Network for any organisation working with young people and music, which meets regularly online. The network enables knowledge sharing and fosters collaboration, covering topics such as how to encourage a strong youth voice, cross-sector partnerships, evaluation, funding and making projects accessible.

Both the Atsain Fund and Network exist to develop a multi-sector, strategic approach to breaking down barriers to music for young people. Still in its first year, Atsain is already making a tangible difference to young lives. But we have only been able to fund a proportion of the organisations that need our support. The high demand for our grants shows that more funding, support and strategic thinking is needed in the future to ensure that all young people in Wales have the chance to reap the benefits that music can bring.

For more information about Anthem and the Atsain Fund and Network, visit [www.anthem.wales](http://www.anthem.wales) or email [rebecca.rickard@anthem.wales](mailto:rebecca.rickard@anthem.wales)

# Hope – Girls’ Rights

**Darren Bartley, Neath Port Talbot Council**

Established during the pandemic in 2020, ‘Hope’, are a group of care experienced girls from the Neath Port Talbot area. The group consists of around 10 girls between the ages of 12 and 18



who come together to champion girls’ rights. Supported by Neath Port Talbot Council and Neath Port Talbot Children’s Rights Unit staff, members are encouraged and supported to raise issues that are important to them.

Meeting fortnightly, the girls have the opportunity to get together to socialise, take part in fun activities to build their confidence, and have their voices heard on their experiences of being in care. They are passionate about improving their own emotional health and wellbeing, as well as tackling issues that girls coming into care may face. Hope have enjoyed quad biking, afternoon tea, a visit to the Alpaca Sanctuary, Pamper day, supporting the Children’s Commissioner for Wales, fitness sessions, martial arts, music production and so much more. In August the group enjoyed their first residential! 15 girls enjoyed the wilderness for 3 nights where they climbed cliffs, went gorge walking, team building, axe throwing, Stand Up Paddle Boarding, cycling and a whole lot more fun. The residential really bonded the group and improved their emotional health and wellbeing.

Members of the group have been open around sharing their experiences of being in care and over the past 12 months have been raising awareness of period dignity for care experienced girls. The health and well-being of girls and young women is also a basic right. Article 6 UNCRC reads ‘You have the right to be healthy’.

Through their endeavours, and working with professionals who can make a difference, ‘Hope’ wanted to ensure that young girls entering the care system would be provided with the basic toiletries they need and also the support of trusting adults to discuss their health. Firstly, Hope developed a postcard with a message of support to girls who are moving to live with a foster family. The postcard also advised Foster Carers on what toiletries to have in the event of a girls arrival at short notice. The postcard was delivered to every Foster Carer in Neath Port Talbot. To further educate Foster Carers Hope created an animation video. The animation highlights the anxiety and uncertainty of moving to a Foster Family whilst stressing the additional worry of being on your period with no toiletries and no trusting adult to have this private chat with. It also includes the great work that Hope have undertaken and invites girls to join the group. The animation is now included in Foster Carer training in order to educate Carers on the health and wellbeing needs of care experienced girls, to be prepared with some basic toiletries and offer support. Members of Hope presented their work to over 200 professionals at the NPT Children’s Services Staff Conference in September.

Hope have received recognition and won awards from the High Sheriff of West Glamorgan, NPTCVS Volunteer Awards and NPT Children’s Services ‘Outstanding Contribution’ for their work.

# Blaenau Gwent Youth Forum - launch outgoing Mayor's priority around Bullying

Lissa Friel & Chloe Lines, Blaenau Gwent CBC

Blaenau Gwent Youth Forum elect a new Youth Mayor and Deputy Youth Mayor annually. After a year of serving as deputy Chloe Lines became the Youth Mayor for 2022. Chloe's priority focus was bullying and encouraging children and young people to talk about their experiences, which was achieved through a short film.

This is Chloe's journey in her words.....



## Chloe Lines

**My name is Chloe Lines, I am 21 and live in Ebbw Vale. For the last year I have had the privilege of being the Youth Mayor for Blaenau Gwent. I have been part of Blaenau Gwent Youth Forum for 4 years. Since being part of the Youth Forum I have gained confidence and have been presented with many opportunities to represent not only myself but all children and young people in Blaenau Gwent.**

My priority as Blaenau Gwent Youth Mayor is very close to my heart - I wanted to do something to raise awareness of the impacts of bullying and encourage young people to talk. I feel this is an important subject as I was bullied and I understand the impacts it has not only in school but beyond.

I am pleased to say we have developed the campaign which I hope will encourage other children and young people to talk as well as recognising some of the signs. I would like to thank the other youth forum members who were instrumental in supporting me with this campaign which could never have happened without you.

**I will continue my journey with the Youth Forum for as long as I can, as well as supporting the new Youth Mayor and Deputy Mayor.**

Tackling bullying and encouraging children and young people to talk: <https://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/en/council/youth-forum/tackling-bullying-and-encouraging-children-and-young-people-to-talk/>

Over the years I have been involved with the Youth Forum I have taken part in consultations, attended events such as the Police Commissioners Question Time event and have taken part in many campaigns such as International Women's Day, White Ribbon Day as well as many more.

This year I was pleased to accept an award presented by the Gwent Association for Voluntary Organisations (GAVO) for our commitment to supporting children and young people on behalf of the Youth Forum, which was a lovely experience for myself, Deputy Youth Mayor Mara Moruz and Rhianna Lewis UK Youth Parliament Member.



# Promoting children and young people's participation in Out of School Childcare Settings

**Alex Fudge, Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs**

**1500 Out of School Childcare Clubs provide nearly 45,000 childcare places for school aged children across Wales. Through child led play and child focussed practice, underpinned by the principles of child participation, Out of School Childcare Clubs empower children to be confident, communicate opinions and make decisions, supporting their autonomy, sense of belonging and growing a resilient and capable next generation.**

Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs is the voice of the sector and supports children's right to play and quality childcare that is sustainable and affordable. With this remit, we have always understood, supported and promoted the importance and value of involving children in all aspects of Out of School Childcare Clubs, from choosing how they spend their time at club, what they play with and what they eat, to influencing clubs' policy and practice and being involved in staff and committee recruitment and induction.

It is paramount that childcare and playwork settings support and heed the child's voice and help children understand their rights as set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child to help them grow up feeling happy, healthy and safe. This belief underpins all of the support we offer to the sector, through the Playwork qualifications and other training we deliver, our webinars and resources and our representation of the sector.

We believe that children and young people should play a significant role in decision making and in the governance of their settings.

- We have developed a series of '10 ways' resources, succinct guides for clubs providing support on a wide range of topics including engaging older children, supporting children's rights and how the child's voice can shape the setting
- To enable children to influence club policies and practice and keep them at the heart of what clubs do, as well as support them to understand their rights in practical ways, we have also developed a series of guides 'Supporting My Rights in My Out of School Club'. These follow the Children's Commissioner for Wales' calendar approach to promoting Children's Rights on a monthly basis. Each resource includes a link to the Children's Commissioner's Office children's right of the month video and some examples of how this right could be supported within the setting. There is plenty of space for children to add their own ideas and opinions and additional guidance to help Playworkers facilitate this

process e.g. a consultation methods resource. An example can be found here: [My Rights in My Out of School Club: 'to follow my own religion' resource - Clybiau Plant Cymru \(EN\)](#)

- We also create activity resources intended to be used directly by children in settings if desired and often incorporate the buddying concept where older children buddy up with younger children for peer support
- Settings registered with Care Inspectorate Wales are required to implement a system of monitoring, reviewing and improving the quality of care provided, which includes seeking the views of children. We have delivered webinars and guidance relating to this Quality of Care Review and how to involve children in the process to assess and improve the quality of their care and outcomes as part of a continuous improvement cycle
- We deliver a range of Playwork qualification and CPD. The foundation of our delivery is that play is a process that is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. Play is a child's fundamental right and we always promote the value of children gaining first hand experiences through their play, which will in turn ensure they have fun, socialise, develop the skills needed to keep themselves safe and to manage risk in their play for themselves. In other words what children do in club should be guided by them
- More specifically, within our delivery of qualifications, we focus on how Playworkers interact and consult with children to identify play needs (e.g. the need for fresh air, to understand risks and to communicate) and preferences, how they choose to meet that play need (e.g. playing on a climbing frame outside, or making a den). This informs a flexible play space, enabling children to direct what they do in Out of School Clubs. This includes discussion and analysis of an array of different consultation methods

For more information about our support, resources and training visit: [www.clybiauplantcymru.org](http://www.clybiauplantcymru.org)

# Deaf young people campaign for change

**Claire Berwick, National Deaf Children's Society**

In November 2022, a group of deaf young activists from Wales took their passion for change to the very heart of Welsh Government. The eight, hailing from all over Wales, paid a visit to the Senedd as part of a day of team bonding and campaign building organised by the National Deaf Children's Society. They're all members of the charity's ChangeMaker programme, a wonderful group of very motivated deaf young people who are supported and mentored by the charity's Participation team to drive positive change.

The day was designed so that the young people could get together and channel that passion into action, with the aim of enhancing the lives and prospects of deaf children, not just in their local communities, but all across Wales. With this in mind, the group learned about the important work of the Senedd and explored how to get their campaigns onto the Welsh Parliament's agenda.

## Accessibility emerged as the dominant theme

Their busy day started when the group assembled at the Urdd Gobaith Cymru centre opposite the Senedd, where, after getting to know each other, they took part in intensive workshops and set out their campaigning objectives. The issue of accessibility, in all its forms, clearly emerged as the dominant theme in their discussions. The group quickly decided that this would be central to their plans. As well as the pressing need for greater deaf awareness and more deaf-friendly learning resources in schools, and greater accessibility across wider society, it soon became clear that the woeful lack of subtitled cinema showings was a particular annoyance to all those assembled. Why should a deaf young person be forced to miss out on one of the formative experiences of their childhood by a simple lack of subtitles?

## They already had an influential ally

In regard to this particular grievance, the group discovered that they already had an influential ally inside the Welsh Parliament itself. Deaf young person Dan Downton, from Barry, has been a Member of the Welsh Youth Parliament since December 2021. In his inaugural address, Dan highlighted the barriers to learning experienced by deaf school students: "Not all children are lucky enough to have the type of support I get at school and I think it's important that they do. Deaf children have to work harder just to hear, meaning the school day can be quite exhausting. Having a quiet space to go to, to have a break from the noise and focus on work, is really helpful. More support is needed to help deaf children achieve their potential." In addition, Dan shares with the Changemakers a passion for subtitled cinema and the National Deaf Children's Society is supporting Dan to highlight this issue with key decision-makers. In fact, Dan recently made a special feature on this very topic for BBC TV's Newsround programme this year, in which he eloquently set out the issues.

## A powerful voice for deaf young people

The Welsh Youth Parliament was devised to give children and young people a say on the issues that matter to them and the presence of Dan in their ranks gives the 2,329 deaf children and young people in Wales a powerful voice in their call for positive change. It may still be early days, but Dan Downton and the Welsh ChangeMakers are already proving themselves to be great champions for the deaf children and young people of Wales. We put deaf young people themselves at the heart of our campaigning work and empower them to push for the changes they need. We just give them the tools – they do the rest.

The National Deaf Children's Society is the leading charity dedicated to creating a world without barriers for deaf children and their families. For advice or support, call our freephone Helpline on 0808 800 8880 and for more information, click [here](#).



# Youth, Activism, Heritage

**Sarah Younan, Amgueddfa Cymru**

**Bloedd is Amgueddfa Cymru's youth collective, which has grown, evolved and gained in influence across Wales' national museum with the support of the National Heritage Lottery's 'Kick the Dust' grant. Over the last 5 years, Bloedd has grown organically from guided youth forum meetings to a collective group of young people that co-produce, challenge and help to guide decision making at the museum. 2023 will see Bloedd become part of Amgueddfa Cymru's core projects.**

So what has happened? Too many projects, collaborations and takeovers to name all. Examples include:

**Bringing beach plastic into Amgueddfa Caerdydd and 'updating' natural diorhama displays to show what plastic pollution is doing to our natural environment.** 'Queering' displays and tours, curating exhibitions exploring LGBTQ+ identities, and creating safe peer-led spaces to get together, get creative and explore queer heritage. Reframing colonial narratives, including the high-profile reframing of Lieutenant-General Sir Thomas Picton. Youth-led training for museum staff, workshops, conference presentations, blogs and articles, events, exhibitions and our own Instagram account; @Bloedd\_AC.

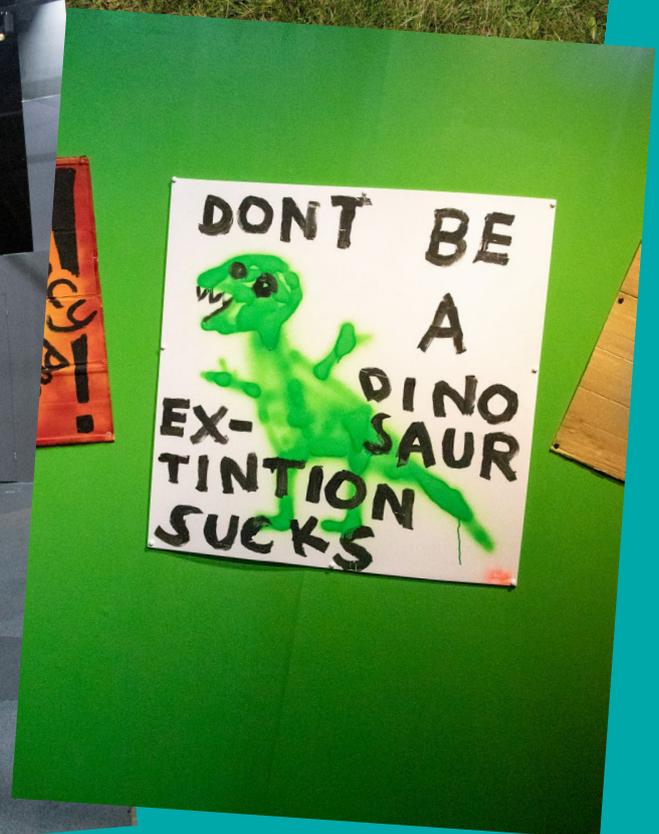
Of course there were challenging moments and lessons learnt. A museum is a slow beast, traditional ways of working and procedures can get in the way of young people's natural drive and sense of urgency. Bloedd grew through action and activities, and as we used the museum as our toolbox, delivering projects, collaborating with staff across different departments, some things shifted, rules and processes were changed. Young people shared their ambitions, activism and energy with the museum, and staff did their best to be enablers; to share their knowledge and treat young people with respect, understanding that they have much to teach us, and that they bring value, energy and innovation to the museum. Change is not easy; Bloedd weathered a pandemic along the way, heard the call of Black Lives Matter protests, and continues to grapple with the ever present threat of the Nature and Climate Emergency. Some of our projects have been the target of hateful online campaigns. Bringing activism into heritage spaces can be emotionally challenging work and we have a duty to protect and look after the mental health and wellbeing of young people and staff.

## What next for Bloedd?

Bloedd members have let us know that the Nature and Climate Emergency is a key concern for them, so 2023-24 will see Bloedd focusing on the Nature Emergency. Our Ambitions are to be a Voice for Nature across the museum. We'll be developing youth-led forums for discussion and mobilization. There will be opportunities to learn more about well-being and mental health and take part in self-care activities. We'll do our best to deliver sustainably, using recycling, upcycling and carbon-tracking for all our projects and setting up volunteering activities to 'give back' to nature. We'll use the museum to explore how we can become 'Good Ancestors'; what lessons can we draw from the Past, what can we do in the Present, how can we imagine, plan and push for a sustainable Future? From the suffragette movement, to anti-apartheid campaign posters, banners from miners' protests and the Greenham Common women's march, there's plenty of inspiration. Wales' national collections are testimony to this nation's appetite for protesting, sometimes with a side order of drag – just look at the Rebecca Riots! And of course there will be opportunities to let our hair down, to create, celebrate and enjoy.

Bloedd means to shout, and that's a promise – Young People's voices will continue to be heard at Amgueddfa Cymru.

Want to find out more about Bloedd and how to get involved? Check out our posts and the links in the bio of our Instagram page @Bloedd\_AC



# Thousands Listen to Talented Budding South Wales Musicians

Megan Lewis, ProMo Cymru

A talented group of young people in Blaenau Gwent have released their very own single, 'Summer of Love' by KRU (ft. Kidz R Us), and it's already hit over 5.5 thousand YouTube views and over 3000 streams on Spotify!

ProMo-Cymru worked in collaboration with music producer Nick Brine (Oasis, Stone Roses) at their Community and Cultural Centre, the [Ebbw Vale Institute \(EVI\)](#), to enable an inspirational group of young people from [Kidz R Us](#) in Blaenau Gwent to write, create, record, and promote their very own single - funded by the Welsh Government's Summer of Fun scheme through CWVYS.

ProMo-Cymru joined KRU and Nick Brine at their state-of-the-art recording studios in EVI for the recording session of their original single, 'Summer of Love'. Find out how they got on!



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AAkbaEQOWqY>

'It's been an amazing experience from start to finish. We've had so much fun and learnt so much!' - KRU Member

An uplifting and upbeat song to get you through the colder months. Take time to listen and support them by watching on [YouTube](#) and listening on [Spotify](#).



# Starting Strong at school: What children want us to do to help

Rachel Wrathall, Save the Children Cymru

The early years are a critical stage in children's development. Yet, we know that right now too many children in Wales don't have what they need for a fair start in school. We know from speaking to schools, early years settings, parents and to children themselves that the transition into primary is an important but sometimes difficult time. We've heard that progress made to engage with parents and children in the early years was sometimes lost when children moved into statutory provision and that information about children's needs and families' circumstances was not always shared.

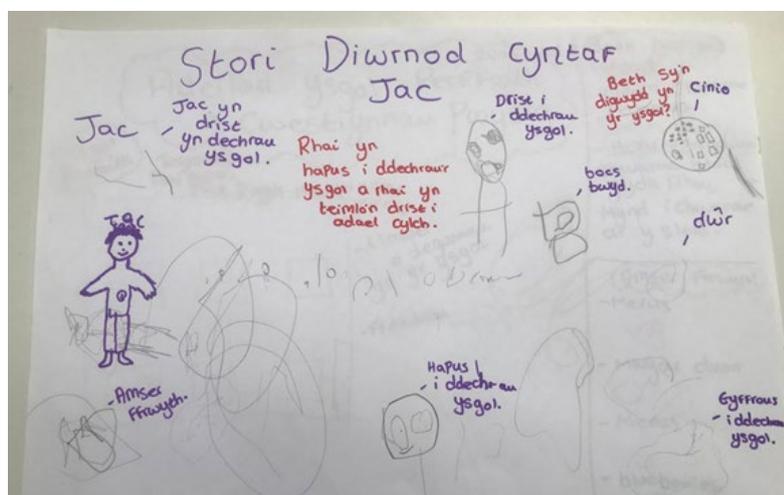
The aim of our Starting Strong project is to help young children adapt to the big change of starting school and making sure that they and their families have the right support around them at this critical point in their young lives. We wanted to find out what tools, techniques and approaches can support the transition into primary schools, particularly for those children living in areas of high deprivation in Wales.

## So how did we go about it?

The answer for us was always going to start with speaking to children themselves. We identified a group of 21 dedicated and innovative schools, nurseries and early years settings located in areas that record some of the highest levels of child poverty in Wales to take part in the year-long research project. The research took place during a time when the impact of the pandemic was still felt by families and when the early stages of the cost-of-living crisis was becoming a reality. In total, we spoke to 117 children in a series of workshops and explored three key questions:

- \* What do children think could be done at home to help them to prepare for starting school?
- \* What do children think could be done at school to help them to feel settled?
- \* What do children think they need to know about school in advance of their first day?

The workshops took place in the schools and nursery settings and were facilitated by teachers, early years specialists and Save the Children staff. We provided children with positive resources to generate ideas and discussion ensuring opportunities for meaningful participation. In turn, a range of activities were used to explore the research questions including group discussions, voting games, and drawing.



## What did they tell us?

It was no surprise to hear that starting school was a big event in their young lives, with most feeling excited, sad or nervous or all these emotions. Children are naturally inquisitive and wanted to know everything about the place and its routines and rules. They wanted to know about the people they'd be meeting such as other pupils and teachers before they started. Children were also keen for teachers to know about their likes and dislikes. The children who had recently started school and took part in the research were empathetic and showed a desire and ability to help others who were about to go through the same transition. Participation can strengthen young children's self-esteem and confidence and adults have a great deal to learn from young children if they take the time to stop and listen. A century ago, Save the Children's founder Eglantyne Jebb wrote the world's very first declaration on child rights in 1923, and ever since the charity has a long history of championing the right for children to have a say on matters that affect them. Much later, Save the Children Cymru's Participation Unit led on the development of the National Participation Standards for Wales which are still used by organisations across Wales today. What children told us as part of this 'Starting Strong' project will hopefully help shape the interventions that school design and deliver to help children prepare for this big step in their lives. And we're really excited to be sharing the learning from the whole exercise even wider this spring.

For more information about the Starting Strong Project please contact [r.wrathall@savethechildren.org.uk](mailto:r.wrathall@savethechildren.org.uk)

# Young Carers Peer Mentor Project

Sally Duckers, Credu



Young Carers and Young Adult Carers are becoming leaders and role models in their communities. Young Adult Carers (Yacs) in our Wrexham, Conwy and Denbighshire project (WCD) have been telling us that they want to 'give something back' and support the younger carers in Credu. They feel that having a peer who 'gets it' and can be there for them to be listened to is invaluable alongside the great support they get from their outreach workers. So Credu responded and has been running Peer Mentor training with almost 20 Yacs having completed the course which has been delivered both online and in-person.

The course is broken into three sessions; the first session covers good communication with skills of reflective listening, open questions and good body language all covered, the second session goes into how the mentor can support the young carer making a change in their life by supporting them to find their own solutions and the third session covers their own well-being, boundaries and the importance of understanding safeguarding. The course is a mix of real-play practice sessions, thoughtful discussions and practical tools. We have found that those who complete the training take on the role seriously and recognise the importance of reliable warm relationships when working with young carers. The young people have stepped up into senior roles in their groups, supported on trips and residential and some are supporting young carers in 1:1 relationships where they feel ready for this.

*'I love doing what I do. I love volunteering. Yeah, It can be tricky, but it is THE best thing I've ever decided do. I absolutely love it. Watching new young people walk through the door and find that's it an amazing environment full of safe people, is priceless. And man I have received a handful notes, cards and origami cranes and a fair few random things. But I keep every single one. Each one reminds me how lucky I am to be volunteering! The respect I have for these humans!! ' said Ffion*

But not everyone wants to be a peer mentor, so young carers and yacs find other ways to get involved by sharing their voice. In all our projects in WCD, Powys and Ceredigion we have incredible young people doing incredible things and they offer to share their stories to others to help raise awareness of young carers and to maybe support that one person who can resonate with it and help them find the optimism to look forward. Some of our young carers have been filmed in Credu commissioned film:

[https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLxbui6rV\\_-OhhyK4oaLlqiTpJzsXiScP1](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLxbui6rV_-OhhyK4oaLlqiTpJzsXiScP1)

Some have been interviewed by the BBC or other media outlets:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p08gkcc0> whilst others attend meetings with our commissioners and Heads of Service in the council. They speak out as young advocates at school, support the Outreach staff on stands outside supermarkets or even start new groups for Carers at their Universities. Credu has one young adult carer who manages to find time to sit on our Board of Trustees despite attending University full time. We believe in Young and Adult Carers and we believe their voices should be heard in all matters that affect them as is the Right of the Child Article 12 (respect for the views of the child). Moving forward Credu has a new project called Making Young Carers Count which aims to co-produce supportive materials for schools, colleges, Universities and Health settings to help their staff and institutions better understand the challenges Young Carers face and find ways to support them so that they can have the same life chances as anyone else. We believe that the young carers alongside the frontline supporting staff in these institutions are the experts at knowing what is achievable, sustainable and supportive for young carers. We are building on the learning from our peer mentor programme to build a team of ambassadors and champions to create our campaign of Making Young Carers Count.

