



## What we do in Wales

- We've persuaded the main political parties to publicly pledge to end child poverty
- We've helped the formation of schools councils across Wales
- We've helped 2,000 children learn decision-making skills
- We're helping young people get involved in local regeneration plans



More than one in four children in Wales live in poverty. Poor children are more likely to experience illness and delayed development, suffer accidents, and become pregnant as teenagers. Wales also has other vulnerable children such as homeless young people, children growing up in local authority care and those experiencing domestic violence, as well as Gypsy Traveller children and young refugees and asylum-seekers.

The Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) has expressed its commitment to reducing child poverty and to making sure that children have a say in issues that concern them. The first Children's Commissioner for Wales was appointed in 2001.

### Save the Children in Wales

We began working in Wales in the 1920s, assisting miners' families in poor areas. Today we work with vulnerable children and young people all over Wales, including refugee and asylum-seeking children, and those living in poverty. Save the Children is a member of a steering group evaluating the Children's Commissioner.

We lobby the WAG to put children's issues at the heart of its policy-making. Our campaigns have successfully attracted media interest and public support. During the past year the WAG has taken some welcome steps towards eradicating child poverty and protecting the rights of vulnerable children. However, there is still much to be done.

We also carry out research to back up our campaigns for better services for children in Wales. Through our support for several projects and community-based groups, young people are able to increase their skills and play a part in decision-making on issues that affect them.

## Key areas of work

### We're campaigning for an end to child poverty

We're appalled that more than 170,000 children in Wales live in poverty. Our film *Running on Empty* follows two young mothers, one in Ethiopia and one in Wales. The Welsh mother, just like her Ethiopian counterpart, struggles to feed her small children properly, and relies on cash benefits.

Together with children and young people, we've run a successful campaign on ending child poverty, called 'Missing Pieces'. At a special event in the Welsh National Assembly in December 2006 our young campaigners showed the film they'd made, *Missing Out*. It illustrated the impact of child poverty and set out what the young people wanted the government to do about it. They met with Rhodri Morgan, the First Minister of Wales, to highlight their issues of concern. Following this, each of the four main political parties in Wales made a public pledge to tackle child poverty. These pledges have now become part of their manifestos. But we must wait and see what direct impact they have on children.

We've successfully attracted funding from the WAG and the Welsh Local Government Association for a project to tackle child poverty at local authority level. We want local government to do more to make sure family incomes are increased and that children and young people have access to good-quality services. The project will run on a pilot basis for at least 18 months, in two local authorities. The idea is to develop a local action plan to combat child poverty in their area. Later, the lessons learned during this period will be published as a guide to be distributed to all local authorities in Wales.

We're working with the Welsh think tank, the Bevan Foundation, to look at what the government could do to help the poorest 10% of children in Wales. The WAG has given us a grant to carry out this research – showing that we've persuaded it to take this issue seriously.

### We're helping young refugees and asylum-seekers get their voice heard

In 2006 there were an estimated 7,500 refugee and asylum-seeking children in Wales. Of these, 1,500 were asylum-seeking children in families, and over 100 children separated from their families. We're determined that these children and young people should have their voices heard. This is why we launched a young asylum-seeker and refugee self-advocacy group during the year. With our support, 16 young people from the group visited the Deputy Children's Commissioner to discuss major issues affecting their lives. We also accompanied them for a similar discussion with the WAG Minister for Children.

During the year we gave evidence to the Wales All Party Parliamentary Group on Children at its meeting on asylum-seeker and refugee children in Wales. We also questioned the Head of Immigration and Nationality Directorate on how new plans for the asylum process would affect children in Wales.

As a result of our lobbying, the WAG has issued a Refugee Inclusion Policy. This includes provisions that meet many of our demands. Among them are improved methods of collecting data regarding these children, and better social services for them. Another is for children separated from their families to have independent advocates working on their behalf. We've been invited to sit on the WAG internal working group that will put this policy into practice.

The WAG has agreed to fund a refugee children's worker post at the Welsh Consortium for Refugees and Asylum Seekers. This is a direct result of our lobbying. The immigration authorities are funding childcare provision in the new asylum screening unit in Cardiff. We'd lobbied for this, jointly with the consortium.

### **We're making sure children's rights are respected**

Save the Children chairs the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) monitoring group in Wales. This national coalition monitors the government's progress on respecting children's rights as laid down in the UNCRC. In November 2007 we launched the Wales non governmental organisations' alternative report, *Stop, look, listen: the road to realising children's rights in Wales*, along with a young people's summary version. These reports will be submitted to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in March 2008 and in June the Monitoring group will be giving evidence to the Committee.

We're making sure children are involved in the UNCRC reporting process. For example, we've been helping Funky Dragon (the Young People's Assembly for Wales) to produce a report called *Our rights, our story*. This is based on research involving more than 8,000 children. We're also working to make people more aware of this reporting process, and of how children's rights are breached in the UK.

We've been commissioned by Cardiff City Council's Young People's Partnership to run the 'Turn on the Rights' project. This is designed to help young people in the Cardiff area to learn about children's rights. Over the past year we have supported young people to undertake research among their peers on issues that affect young carers, young disabled people and young people from deprived communities.

We've continued to play an active role in the UK campaign to end the physical punishment of children, Children are Unbeatable (CAU). We chair the campaign group in Wales.

### **We're helping children play a part in decision-making**

We want children and young people to be consulted on decisions that affect them. That's why we've been involved in setting up the Wales Participation Unit. This Unit works with children and young people across Wales. To date, over 2,000 have developed the skills they

need to become actively involved in decision-making. This has been through workshops, events and courses. At the same time they've helped to shape the Unit's work by telling it about their experiences and their view of how they can participate. As a result, the Unit has drawn up a set of National Standards for Children and Young People's Participation.

Children are being consulted on local regeneration plans under the WAG's flagship programme *Communities First*, thanks to our work. We've helped children and young people get involved in these plans in three areas. In Machynlleth they carried out an audit of existing local facilities for children and young people. As a result of their work, the *Communities First* project is asking the government to fund a youth forum and improvements to the facilities. The Gilfach Goch *Community First* action plan includes measures based on recommendations from a group of young people called the 'Gilfach Crew'. In Caia Park, a group has developed a website with our support, to give local young people information about getting involved in community regeneration. As a result of our advocacy work, the WAG is requiring all *Communities First* co-ordinators to take into account the recommendations made by young people's groups, as happened in Gilfach Goch.

Children and young people are also playing a part in planning services in the Ceredigion local authority area. They're doing this through the Give Us Support (GUS) group, which we helped to set up, together with the local Children and Young People's Framework Partnership. Young people have received training in budget planning and analysis, and in research methods. Through their involvement in GUS they've gained self-esteem and confidence and they've also increased their presentation skills.

By providing training sessions for young people, we've enabling young people to be trainers themselves. 'Young People Say...' is a team consisting of ten young people from across south Wales. They provide training to organisations on children's rights and participation. They've also produced a training pack for people who work with children and young people, *Young People Say...Why Wait to Participate*.

### **We're encouraging the formation of school councils**

In partnership with the WAG and Funky Dragon, we've helped schools to set up school councils across Wales. The School Councils website for Wales, which we support, has now gone live. The site gives information about starting and running school councils.

### **We're helping Gypsy Traveller children get a good education**

In Pembrokeshire we've supported Gypsy Traveller young people to get access to good-quality education. In 2003 the WAG Equal Opportunities Committee reviewed the issue of Gypsy Traveller children's access to education. We gave evidence to the Committee and enabled it to listen to the views of Gypsy Traveller children themselves. We carried out research to see how far the Committee's recommendations have been put into practice. On the basis of our findings, the Committee has drawn the attention of the Minister for

Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills to the lack of progress in this area, and asked that action be taken.



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