

## Agenda – Petitions Committee

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Meeting Venue:

Committee Room 1 – Senedd

Meeting date: 3 February 2025

Meeting time: 14.00

For further information contact:

Gareth Price – Committee Clerk

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### 1 Introductions, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest

(Pages 1 – 24)

### 2 New Petitions

2.1 P-06-1492 Maintain 24 hour access to the Minor Injuries Unit (MIU) at Prince Philip Hospital, Llanelli

(Pages 25 – 31)

2.2 P-06-1495 Create a structure within the Senedd to ban politicians convicted of intended deception.

(Pages 32 – 36)

2.3 P-06-1496 To make heart screening a mandatory requirement for membership of sports clubs and gyms in Wales

(Pages 37 – 41)

### 3 Updates to previous petitions

3.1 P-06-1272 Ban the use of 'no pet clauses' in tenancy agreements in Wales

(Page 42)

3.2 P-06-1389 Introduce a 30mph limit on the trunk road through the villages of Eglwys Fach and Ffwrnais

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3.3 P-06-1390 Stop all subsidies on food in the Senedd and for Welsh Government staff in general

(Pages 48 – 51)



- 3.4 P-06-1394 Intervene in the development of the Penrhos Coastal Park into a holiday resort in Anglesey  
(Pages 52 – 53)
- 3.5 P-05-1448 Stop pollution at Watchtower Bay and Ogmore by Sea  
(Pages 54 – 56)
- 3.6 P-06-1450 Welsh Government to take action to protect people from airborne infections in health care settings  
(Pages 57 – 67)
- 3.7 P-06-1478 Comprehensively review NRW and its failure to deliver its statutory obligations to protect Wales  
(Pages 68 – 72)
- 3.8 P-06-1485 Introduce a network of Toy Libraries around Wales  
(Pages 73 – 76)

#### **4 Papers to note**

- 4.1 P-06-1482 Ban smartphones in all schools in Wales with exemptions for exceptional circumstances  
(Pages 77 – 100)

#### **5 Motion under Standing Order 17.42(ix) to resolve to exclude the public from the meeting for the remainder of today's business:**

- 6 Discussion on the draft report – P-06-1482 Ban smartphones in all schools in Wales with exemptions for exceptional circumstances**

(Pages 101 – 133)

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# Maintain 24 hour access to the Minor Injuries Unit (MIU) at Prince Philip Hospital, Llanelli

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 3 Chwefror 2025  
Petitions Committee | 3 February 2025

Reference: SR24/10372

**Petition Number:** P-06-1492

**Petition title:** Maintain 24 hour access to the Minor Injuries Unit (MIU) at Prince Philip Hospital, Llanelli

**Text of petition:** Hywel Dda University Health Board are proposing that the Minor Injuries Unit (MIU) at Prince Philip Hospital (PPH) in Llanelli be downgraded to a 12 hour service from a 24 hour service.

As the largest urban population in Carmarthenshire and one of the largest in the Hywel Dda University Health Board area, Llanelli requires, at the very least, 24 hour access to the MIU at PPH.

A reduction of services at PPH will see a greater number of people seeking treatment at the A&E services in Morriston and Glangwili Hospitals, resulting in longer wait times at both locations.

It is not acceptable for the health board to reduce this service to just 12 hours a day (8am - 8pm).

To ensure that the people of Llanelli receive access to the medical treatment they deserve and to prevent overcrowding at other A&E departments nearby, this change at PPH must not be allowed to proceed.

This petition is calling on the Welsh Government to intervene on the decision by the Health Board and prevent this change from happening at Llanelli, thus protecting and maintaining a 24 hour MIU service.



## 1. Background

The Minor Injury Unit (MIU) in Prince Philip Hospital, Llanelli, treats patients over the age of one with a range of minor injuries. It is staffed by GPs and nurse practitioners and can treat patients with problems including muscle and joint injuries, burns and scalds, minor head injuries, minor eye injuries, and wounds.

An Acute Medical Assessment Unit (AMAU) staffed by senior doctors and nurses on the same site treats patients with a wide range of medical conditions, including strokes and chest conditions.

The MIU and AMAU were opened in 2016, following the closure of Prince Philip Hospital's accident and emergency department as part of a wider redesign of hospital services in Wales.

Health Inspectorate Wales (HIW) conducted an unannounced inspection of the MIU over 3 days in June 2023. HIW found that "significant pressure" on the unit was "impacting on the delivery of safe care."

While HIW say that "inspectors were assured that patients presenting with minor injuries were receiving a good level of safe and effective care from a skilled workforce" the inspection report highlights a number of significant concerns, including:

- Medical and surgical 'surge' patients were being accommodated on the unit beyond the lengths of stay associated with an MIU, some up to 5 days, due to a lack of bed capacity in both the Prince Philip Hospital and other acute hospitals.
- Surge patients were on trolleys for extended periods. These patients were generally older and acutely unwell and the available equipment did not provide the necessary comfort for long stays, which increased patient susceptibility to pressure damage and falls. There was only one toilet and no hygiene facilities available for patients on the unit.
- Inspectors were not assured that surge patients received timely care when awaiting a medical bed within the hospital or that those waiting

to be moved by the Welsh Ambulance Service Trust (WAST) to another acute site received timely transfers.

- Staff felt under pressure and professionally conflicted in their roles and responsibilities when expected to care for longer stay, non-minor injury patients.

On 26 September 2024, Hywel Dda University Health Board agreed that the MIU in Prince Philip Hospital should be closed overnight (8pm to 8am) for a period of six-months from 1 November 2024.

The overnight closure was agreed due to “the significant and continued lack of medical cover, leading to clinical concerns in relation to patient safety and the impact on staff welfare.”

The board heard that there was a “deteriorating ability to find suitably qualified doctors to cover the rota”, which meant that the MIU was led by nurse practitioners only on multiple occasions. This lack of cover was particularly affecting overnight shifts. The impact on the workforce was “high levels of stress, anxiety and the inability to do the job they are employed to do, plus increased risk to those patients presenting to the MIU without a suitably qualified doctor.”

## 2. Welsh Government response

The Welsh Government’s response to this petition emphasises that local health boards are “responsible for ensuring the provision of safe, good quality clinical services to their local population.”

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care says that he expects Hywel Dda University Health Board to continuously monitor the change and that Welsh Government officials will do the same.

The Cabinet Secretary also says that Hywel Dda University Health Board have commenced work on considering the future of the MIU and will undertake a “clinically led appraisal for the long-term model for the minor injuries unit.”

The health board must follow Welsh Government guidance on making changes to health services when considering these changes.

### 3. Welsh Parliament action

The overnight closure of the MIU has been raised by several Members of the Senedd in questions both to the First Minister and the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care.

For example, on 1 October 2024 Lee Waters MS asked the First Minister whether she would call on Hywel Dda University Health Board to “think again” about the change.

The First Minister responded:

The health board has attempted, as I understand it, to recruit qualified doctors to support the unit, but has been unsuccessful, meaning that the unit has become an emergency nurse practitioner-led service. And part of the problem was that, between February and July, there were 42 uncovered slots in the rota. Now, the primary responsibility of a health board is to make sure that the services they offer are actually safe. And so, that is what they are trying to do. But I think that it is important for the health board to make sure that they listen to the local population, and that they make efforts to make sure that the staff that are needed are in place. But the staff who are currently there are not equipped to deal with major issues, and the stress of people turning up with major issues is causing a significant number of absences. I do think that we have to be practical and realistic about the situation, but, of course, it's up to the health board to make a call.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.



Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1492  
Ein cyf/Our ref JMHSC/11065/24

Carolyn Thomas MS  
Chair  
Petitions committee

[petitions@senedd.wales](mailto:petitions@senedd.wales)

07 January 2025

Dear Carolyn,

**RE: No. P-06-1492 about Maintaining 24-Hour Access to Prince Philip MIU**

Thank you for your letter on 5 December about the above petition.

As you will be aware, health boards are responsible for ensuring the provision of safe, good-quality clinical services to their local population.

The temporary changes to the opening hours of the Prince Philip Hospital minor injuries unit were made by Hywel Dda University Health Board on the grounds of patient safety. These issues had been raised by Healthcare Inspectorate Wales following an inspection in June 2023 and by staff working at the unit. They stem from a significant and continued lack of medical cover, leading to clinical concerns in relation to patient safety.

Additionally, it has been shown that a significant number of people attending the unit had a higher acuity than the unit was intended to deliver a service for which resulted in 999 transfers to the nearest emergency department leading to a delay in treatment. This position was reinforced by recommendations following a Health Inspectorate Wales inspection visit and further correspondence from HIW requesting reassurance about patient safety issues.

Closure of the minor injuries unit overnight (8pm to 8am) will be for a six-month period from 1 November 2024. The temporary change will not affect the acute medical assessment unit, and very unwell medical patients will still be taken to Prince Philip Hospital, 24-hours a day, for assessment and treatment, as they have been prior to these changes. These cases typically come into the unit via ambulance or via GP referral.

I understand the health board has engaged with Llais and the public to explain why the changes are necessary. I also understand that work has commenced on potential longer-

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

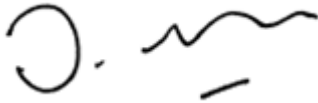
We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

term options for the unit and the health board will undertake a clinically led appraisal of the options for the longer-term model for the minor injuries unit.

I expect the health board to continuously monitor the temporary service change and to fully engage its local communities in line with [national guidance](#).

My officials will also monitor the temporary change to the opening hours.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large 'J' followed by a series of wavy lines and a short horizontal stroke at the end.

**Jeremy Miles AS/MS**

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Iechyd a Gofal Cymdeithasol  
Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care

## P-06-1495 Create a structure within the Senedd to ban politicians convicted of intended deception

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 3 Chwefror 2025  
Petitions Committee | 3 February 2025

Reference: SR25/10452-2

**Petition Number:** P-06-1495

**Petition title:** Create a structure within the Senedd to ban politicians convicted of intended deception

**Text of petition:** Adam Price MS aims to uphold integrity and accountability in Welsh politics. Lying continues to be a controversial issue in global politics, this initiative is a noble effort to confront it directly. To build trust among the Welsh people, further discussion is warranted. In any profession, dishonesty typically results in dismissal; thus, it is puzzling that politicians, responsible for public funds amounting to billions of pounds, would oppose such measures unless they have something to conceal.

Through an amendment to the Elections and Elected Bodies (Wales) Bill, Adam Price MS intended to introduce a mechanism that would disqualify Members of the Senedd convicted of being wilfully deceitful. The proposal to create an offence of deception should be introduced by the Senedd



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# 1. Background

## 1.1. Existing rules on truthfulness in the Senedd

Rule 2 of the Senedd Members' Code of Conduct states that “Members must act truthfully”. The Guidance on the Code of Conduct sets out further information on what may be considered as a breach of Rule 2. It states:

A white lie (e.g. claiming to be 'fine' when a Member is actually tired) or some other minor lack of truthfulness, would not be regarded as a breach of this Rule. Equally, while Members are expected to reasonably fact-check and verify their assertions, it is inevitable that sometimes 'incorrect, but honestly made,' statements will occur. For instance, a Member might inadvertently misquote a financial figure (“£60,000” rather than “£600,000”). Provided the Member has corrected the error at the earliest opportunity, complaints of such nature are likely to be considered frivolous or vexatious.

A complaint would normally be based upon an alleged lie. Amongst other things, the substantiveness of the consequences of a lie are likely to be a factor in the determination of sanction for such behaviour.

The Senedd is the only legislature in the UK that has a rule within its Code of Conduct which specifically requires members to 'act truthfully'.

## 1.2. Elections and Elected Bodies (Wales) Bill

The Elections and Elected Bodies (Wales) Bill (now Act), was introduced to the Senedd in October 2023. It introduced a range of changes to the administration of elections in Wales. During Stage 2 an amendment was agreed to the Bill that would have changed the grounds upon which a Senedd Member could be disqualified.

Section 64 of the Bill would have amended Schedule 1A of the Government of Wales Act 2006 to add committing an the offence of deception as a grounds upon which a person could be disqualified from being a Senedd Member or from standing as a candidate in a Senedd election for a period of four years.

Section 64 of the Bill, as amended at Stage 2, stated that a person must not 'wilfully' and 'with the intent to mislead' make, publish or cause or permit to be published on their behalf a statement of fact which they know 'to be false or deceptive' and would have made doing so a criminal offence for which the sentence would be disqualification.

Some exceptions to this general rule were provided.

Following discussion between the Welsh Government and Senedd Members who were supportive of retaining the offence of 'deliberate deception' within the Bill, an agreement was reached to remove the section on deception from the Bill at Stage 3 (2 July 2024) in exchange for a commitment from the Welsh Government to legislate on this issue by 2026. Speaking during stage 3 proceedings of the Bill, the then Counsel General stated:

...the Welsh Government will bring forward legislation before 2026 for the disqualification of Members and candidates found guilty of deliberate deception through an independent judicial process and will invite the committee to make proposals to that effect.

## 2. Welsh Government action

In evidence to the Senedd's Standards Committee, the Deputy First Minister, Huw Irranca-Davies MS, said the Welsh Government is committed to bring forward legislation on deception in the fifth year of its legislative programme. The Deputy First Minister has said that the Welsh Government will honour the commitment it made during Stage 3 of the Elections and Elected Bodies (Wales) Bill.

The Deputy First Minister has said that Welsh Government officials are 'working through the detailed issues' associated with introducing legislation on this issue to 'scope' policy decisions that will be required. He has said that in order to be able to introduce the legislation by 2026 'it is essential that all parts of the process are able to proceed at pace.'

The Deputy First Minister has said that:

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It is important that any system strikes the right balance between providing for an effective mode for member accountability, and not allowing the system to be used to prevent legitimate discourse.

In his response to this Committee on the Petition, the Deputy First Minister states, that the Welsh Government will be taking account of the work of the Senedd's Standard's Committee on this work.

### 3. Welsh Parliament action

On 13 March 2024, the Welsh Government's then Counsel General, wrote to the Senedd Standard's Committee Chair asking that the Committee give consideration to the issue of disqualification for the offence of deception as part of its broader inquiry into Individual Member Accountability. The Committee agreed to undertake this work and completed initial scoping work before launching a full consultation on Individual Member Accountability on 31 July 2024.

The Committee asked for views on three options in relation to deliberate deception:

- Option 1: The creation of a new criminal offence on deliberate deception.
- Option 2: The creation of a civil sanction on deliberate deception overseen by an existing investigative body and in independent Welsh Tribunal.
- Option 3: Strengthening the existing requirements on truthfulness in the Senedd Members Code of Conduct and sanctions attached to a breach of the rule.

The Committee also held oral evidence sessions with stakeholders between September 2024 and December 2024.

The Committee is due to publish its final report with recommendations for the Welsh Government to consider in February.

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Huw Irranca-Davies AS/MS  
Y Dirprwy Brif Weinidog ac Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros  
Newid Hinsawdd a Materion Gwledig  
Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate  
Change and Rural Affairs



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1495  
Ein cyf/Our ref HIDCC/10790/24

Carolyn Thomas MS  
Chair - Petitions committee  
Senedd Cymru

20<sup>th</sup> December 2024

Dear Carolyn,

Thank you for your letter following the petition your Committee has received, requesting the creation of a structure within the Senedd to ban politicians convicted of intended deception.

As you may well be aware, the Senedd's Standards of Conduct Committee (SoCC) is currently undertaking an inquiry into Individual Member Accountability, the scope of which includes:

*“gathering evidence on the merits of introducing further mechanisms for the disqualification of Members and candidates found to have deliberately deceived the electorate including through an independent judicial process.”*

As part of that inquiry, the SoCC has undertaken a public consultation which closed in September of this year and has held evidence sessions with a number of expert witnesses. In addition, I attended an evidence session with the Committee earlier this month to set out some of the Government's provisional views on individual Member accountability.

I understand that the SoCC is intending to conclude and report on its work in January 2025, and - as I set out in my correspondence to that Committee – the Welsh Government looks forward to the those reports so that our work can take account of the outcome and recommendations of the inquiry.

Yours sincerely,

**Huw Irranca-Davies AS/MS**  
Y Dirprwy Brif Weinidog ac Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Newid Hinsawdd  
a Materion Gwledig  
Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

# To make heart screening a mandatory requirement for membership of sports clubs and gyms in Wales

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 3 Chwefror 2025  
Petitions Committee | 3 February 2025

Reference: SR25/10452

**Petition Number:** P-06-1496

**Petition title:** To make heart screening a mandatory requirement for membership of sports clubs and gyms in Wales

**Text of petition:** Italy and other European countries have heart screening as a mandatory requirement for membership of sports clubs and gyms and we would like this to be imposed in Wales.

## 1. Background

Screening offers an opportunity to identify apparently healthy people who may be at increased risk of a disease or condition. [Public Health Wales](#) deliver a number of national screening programmes. Senedd Research have published an [article](#), which provides further information about the screening currently available in Wales.

Sudden Cardiac Death (SCD) is the sudden and unexpected death of a person caused by a problem with their heart. The causes in people under the age of 39



are often a thickening of the heart muscle or an electrical problem with the heart. In older people, SCD is more likely to be caused by a narrowing of the blood vessels that supply the heart (coronary heart disease).

Cardiac screening could identify heart conditions at an early stage, identify those at risk, and enable treatment to start earlier.

According to the charity Cardiac Risk in the Young, the European Society of Cardiology and International Olympic Committee recommend cardiac screening for any young person taking part in competitive sport. In Italy, screening participants in representative sports is mandatory.

## 1.1. Cardiac screening policy

The UK National Screening Committee (UK NSC) advises ministers and the NHS in the 4 UK countries about all aspects of screening and supports implementation of screening programmes.

UK NSC does not currently recommend systematic population screening of people under the age of 39 for cardiac conditions associated with SCD. The last review of this condition took place in 2019, and found that screening should not be offered for the following reasons:

- Most of the research is on testing of professional athletes, not the general population. So, the research might not provide a good indication of what they would find if all young people under the age of 39 were tested.
- The research on the tests did not report good accuracy. A high percentage of those receiving positive tests will not have a condition that may cause SCD. It was also not possible to estimate the percentage of people affected who may be missed by the test.
- The review did not find any research on effective treatments or interventions to prevent SCD in people identified as being at risk by the screening.
- An incorrect positive test may cause unnecessary anxiety and stop people participating in sporting activities.

UK NSC say that there is guidance on testing family members of people at risk of SCD and that “effective implementation of this guidance through a targeted screening programme may help prevent SCD in some groups of people who are at high risk.”

For older people, SCD is more likely to be caused by coronary heart disease. If a GP thinks a patient is at risk of coronary heart disease, they will carry out a risk assessment and a blood test, before referring for further tests to confirm the diagnosis.

## 2. Welsh Government action

The Welsh Government's response to this petition highlights that Ministers follow the "independent, expert advice" of the UK National Screening Committee.

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care says that he will await the latest advice of the UK NSC and "consider any potential changes as soon as this becomes available."

The Welsh Government published the Out of Hospital Cardiac Arrest Plan in 2017. This was followed by the launch of the Save a Life Cymru programme in 2019, which aims to improve survival rates in Wales following an out of hospital cardiac arrest by increasing provision and awareness of defibrillators and promoting CPR skills.

## 3. Welsh Parliament action

The Committee has previously considered two petitions on similar topics:

- P-06-1197 Heart screenings free for all 11-35 year olds who represent their school or county in sport
- P-06-1351 To bring in availability of heart-screening for all 11-35yr olds who play Sport

In both cases, the Committee noted the Welsh Government's strong emphasis on the importance of the UK NSC's guidance and agreed there was no scope to take the petition forward.

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Jeremy Miles AS/MS  
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Iechyd a Gofal Cymdeithasol  
Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref: P-06-1496  
Ein cyf/Our ref: JMHSC/11069/24

Carolyn Thomas MS  
Chair  
Petitions committee

[petitions@senedd.wales](mailto:petitions@senedd.wales)

07 January 2025

Dear Carolyn,

**Petition P-06-1496 To make heart screening a mandatory requirement for membership of sports clubs and gyms in Wales.**

Thank you for your letter about the above petition.

Like the other UK nations, the Welsh Government follows the independent, expert advice of the UK National Screening Committee (UK NSC), which advises Ministers about all aspects of population and targeted screening. It brings academic rigour and authority to what is an extremely complex area and is a world leader in its field.

The UK NSC does not currently recommend systematic population or targeted heart screening. There are uncertainties about the overall benefits of identifying people with risk factors and current tests are not reliable enough, so many people would be missed and provided with false reassurance, while many others would be given false positive results.

There is currently no agreed treatment for someone who has been identified as at risk. Receiving an incorrect positive test may stop people participating in sporting activities which would have a detrimental effect on their overall health, as well as considerable long-term anxiety. In these ways, screening can cause unintended harm.

The UK NSC keeps all its policy positions under regular review and the committee keeps under continuous review any new published evidence on the topic of sudden cardiac death, including for young people who play grassroots sports. The Welsh Government will await the latest advice of the UK NSC and consider any potential changes as soon as this becomes available.

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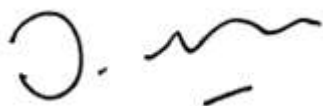
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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Yours sincerely,

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**Jeremy Miles AS/MS**

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Iechyd a Gofal Cymdeithasol  
Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care

# Agenda Item 3.1

## **P-06-1272 Ban the use of 'no pet clauses' in tenancy agreements in Wales**

This petition was submitted by Sam Swash, having collected a total of 857 signatures.

### **Text of Petition:**

The number of people privately renting is increasing year-on-year – currently many are prohibited from keeping pets because of clauses in their tenancy agreements.

The benefits of pet ownership should not be exclusive to homeowners. Those who rent should be equally as entitled to keep a pet as those who own.

### **Additional Information:**

According to the Dog's Trust, the single biggest reason for dogs being handed in to rehoming centres is because of a change of circumstances, such as being unable to live in a rented property with a pet. These clauses also stop large numbers of people coming forward to rehome pets; effectively prohibited from doing so by being a tenant. This means both tenants and pets suffer.

In January 2021, the UK Government introduced a new Model Tenancy Agreement which prohibited landlords from issuing blanket 'no pet' bans. Consent for pets is now the default position. In Wales, there is no such reference and therefore Welsh tenants are less likely to be able to keep a pet than their UK counterparts.

### **Senedd Constituency and Region**

- Alyn and Deeside
- North Wales

# Agenda Item 3.2

## **P-06-1389 Introduce a 30mph limit on the trunk road through the villages of Eglwys Fach and Ffwrnais**

This petition was submitted by Catherine Ruth Stevenson, having collected a total of 419 signatures.

### **Text of Petition:**

Many residential areas in Wales now benefit from a 20mph speed limit, with a strong evidence based rationale from Welsh Government. We do not feel it is safe that our villages of Eglwys Fach & Ffwrnais still suffer a 40mph limit. For over 30 years we have been campaigning for safer pedestrian access in these villages, with 2 fatalities during that time. We want Welsh Government to review the 40mph limits through the villages to enable residents to walk safely and improve well being.

### **Additional Information:**

The villages sit along the main A487. The majority of the road has no pavement so our residents, including children and young people catching school buses, residents visiting neighbours or attending events, older villagers catching the bus, all have to walk ON the main A487. In some places there is insufficient room for 2 cars to pass on the road so motorists have to slow down to a halt to avoid these walkers.

The rationale of the Welsh Government for the 20mph limits through residential areas is: "The evidence from around the world is very clear – decreasing speeds will reduce collisions, save lives and reduce injuries – helping to improve quality of life and make our streets and local communities safer for all."

Given the evidence we feel strongly that the speed limit through the villages of Eglwys Fach & Ffwrnais should be reviewed and reduced from 40mph.

### **Senedd Constituency and Region**

- Ceredigion
- Mid and West Wales



Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1389  
Ein cyf/Our ref KSNWT/10619/24

Carolyn Thomas MS  
Chair - Petitions committee

26 November 2024

Dear Carolyn

Thank you for your letter of 16 October regarding Petition P-06-1389 - Introduce 30mph limit on A487 through Eglwys Fach and Ffwrnais.

We note the specific risks to pedestrians in the communities of Ffwrnais and Eglwys Fach on the A487 and the concern raised by the community via the petition.

We are currently updating the Setting Local Speed Limits in Wales (SLSLiW) guidance, to reflect current Welsh Government policy including the national roll-out of [20mph speed limits](#) and to meet the ambitions highlighted in [Llwybr Newydd: the Wales Transport Strategy 2021](#).

It is expected that updated guidance will be published in late 2025. Following its release, Welsh Government will then review the speed limits across our Trunk Road Network. Until then, we are not making any changes to individual speed limits to ensure consistency with the new guidance.

The community will be aware that my officials have been investigating the possibility of providing a footway to provide for pedestrian movements along the trunk road, however this has proved impractical due to site constraints, and any resulting provision for pedestrians would require a number of crossing points, which would be unsatisfactory in managing the risk.

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:  
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Caerdydd • Cardiff  
CF99 1SN

[Gohebiaeth.Ken.Skates@llyw.cymru](mailto:Gohebiaeth.Ken.Skates@llyw.cymru)  
[Correspondence.Ken.Skates@gov.wales](mailto:Correspondence.Ken.Skates@gov.wales)

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

**Back Page 44**  
We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

My officials are now considering options to manage this risk which may include a lower speed limit. Once the preferred option is established, we will engage with the Community Council

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ken', with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke above the letters.

**Ken Skates AS/MS**

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Drafnidiaeth a Gogledd Cymru  
Cabinet Secretary for Transport and North Wales

## Dear Petitions Committee

Thank you for email of 21<sup>st</sup> January 2025 regarding our Petition for a 30mph limit through our villages of Eglwys Fach and Ffwrnais. We are grateful to the Committee for keeping this Petition open until we see some real commitment to action from the relevant Government department, to make our village a liveable place.

You suggested that we respond on the following issues:

### **What are your thoughts on the attached document:**

The attached letter from Ken Skates repeats the response from last year, that the Welsh Government will review the issue following the publication of the new Setting Local Speed Limits in Wales (SLSLiW) Guidance. Following the last response from Lee Waters, the Petitions Committee agreed with us that the Government is **NOT** meeting its commitments to its **current** Policies and Strategies, let alone any updated ones. We explained why in the last response and still feel we don't have an adequate answer to that question.

The latest letter from Ken Skates notes that the Welsh Government will NOT be providing a pavement for the village, stating that it is 'impractical'. The feasibility showed that it was perfectly practical, but expensive. It would be clearer to be honest with the residents of this village, who have been campaigning for over 30 years for this pavement.

Notwithstanding this, if a pavement is impossible then that makes a reduction in speed limits even more crucial. Our petition is to reduce the speed from 40mph to 30 mph, however, given that we have no expectation now of a pavement, it would be important to consider the possibility of a 20mph instead of 30mph.

Mr Skates notes that *"My officials are now considering options to manage this risk which may include a lower speed. Once the preferred option is established, we will engage with the Community Council"*. The Community Council would like to engage with these officials at the earliest opportunity, before any decision is made rather than afterwards.

### **Does it adequately address the issues that you raised?**

No, we do not think it adequately addresses the issues that we raised, against current or emerging future policy. We would like:

- a) A commitment to reducing the speed limit from 40mph based on current policy.
- b) A timeline for engaging with officials from the Transport and North Wales Section of Welsh Government.

### **Further questions**

We would repeat our key question to from last year, to Ken Skates “*Would you consider that the road situation in the villages of Ffwrnais and Eglwys Fach meets current Policy requirements?*”

*If not, will you recommend that there is a reduction in the speed limit through the village from 40 mph?*

We would refer you to our evidence set out in our previous correspondence with the Petitions Committee.

*We look forward to your response.*

*Yours Faithfully*

*Dr. Ruth Stevenson (on behalf of the Eglwys Fach and Ffwrnais communities)*

# Agenda Item 3.3

## **P-06-1390 Stop all subsidies on food in the Senedd and for Welsh Government staff in general**

This petition was submitted by David Morgan, having collected a total of 337 signatures.

### **Text of Petition:**

Given the recent announcement that Welsh Government is considering removing certain items from meal deals, in a bid to force the Welsh public what to eat, this petition calls for an end to subsidising food for Welsh MSs and their staff.

Why should the people of Wales have to suffer financially when those in the Senedd and Welsh Government enjoy a cheap meal?

### **Additional Information:**

People in Wales are sick and tired of the constant infringement on our lives by the busy bodies in the Welsh Government who want to tell us what and what not to eat while they enjoy subsidised food and meals.

<https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/390-fry-up-welsh-politicians-26304030>

### **Senedd Constituency and Region**

- Gower
- South Wales West

**Dr Andrew Goodall**  
Ysgrifennydd Parhaol  
Permanent Secretary



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Chair, Petitions Committee  
Welsh Parliament  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff  
CF99 1SN

10 September 2024

Dear Chair

**Petition P-06-1390 Stop all subsidies on food in the Senedd and for Welsh Government staff in general**

Thank you for your correspondence in relation to the above Petition.

Catering services are available at four offices on the Welsh Government's administrative estate and the catering provider is required to satisfy a complex and challenging set of operational criteria including exemplary standards in contract catering – especially in respect of the core contract objectives:

- The use and promotion of Welsh food and beverage products and Welsh food producers and suppliers;
- Health and wellbeing; and
- Support for Fairtrade.

The Welsh Government's catering contract is subject to robust competitive tendering to ensure it delivers value for money for both the Welsh Government and service users.

The Welsh Government contributes towards the cost of the catering service in order to maximise the wider positive social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being benefits to Wales whilst also being competitive with comparable services on the high street and affordable for service users. The contribution towards the cost of the service is in recognition of the importance of driving the wider social and economic benefits as opposed to discounting the tariff as a perceived staff benefit.

The catering contract is a conduit for Welsh SMEs to get their products accredited with recognised food distributors providing a gateway for them to supply other contracts



**BUDDSODDWYR | INVESTORS**  
**MEWN POBL | IN PEOPLE**

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CF10 3NQ Gwefan • Website: [www.gov.wales](http://www.gov.wales)

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi. Dilynwch y ddolen i gael arweiniad ar sut fyddwn yn trin a defnyddio'ch data, yn unol â'r Rheoliadau Diogelu Data Cyffredinol. <https://gov.wales/about/welsh-government-privacy-notice/?skip=1&lang=cy>

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding. Please follow the link for guidance on how we will handle & use your data, in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations. <https://gov.wales/about/welsh-government-privacy-notice/?lang=en>

(both in Wales and outside of Wales) and this also creates business opportunities with other companies using the food distributors.

Currently, expenditure on catering-related products and services which deliver wider benefits for Wales is around 80% of total contract expenditure. The catering contract also provides employment opportunities in the locality of our four offices with on-site catering – Cardiff; Merthyr Tydfil; Aberystwyth and Llandudno Junction.

If the Welsh Government were to cease contributing towards the cost of its catering service this would inevitably have a negative impact on the wider benefits it currently delivers for Wales – including the possibility of redundancies. The subsidy itself is not a means of securing cheaper deals for staff and those who use the contract, but for securing the best possible outcomes for small to medium enterprises across Wales by ensuring that money spent on the administrative estate is channelled towards them.

Catering services at the Senedd operate independently under the Welsh Parliament's catering contract and as such, they will need to respond in relation to their service.

Yours,  
Andrew Goodall

**Dr Andrew Goodall**  
Ysgrifennydd Parhaol/ Permanent Secretary  
Llywodraeth Cymru/ Welsh Government



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**Y Gwir Anrhydeddus Elin Jones AS**

Llywydd, Senedd Cymru

**Right Honourable Elin Jones MS**

Llywydd, Welsh Parliament

**Senedd Cymru**

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Carolyn Thomas MS  
Chair of Petitions Committee  
Welsh Parliament  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff  
CF99 1SN

17 December 2024

Dear Carolyn,

**Petition P-06-1390 Stop all subsidies on food in the Senedd and for Welsh Government staff in general**

Catering services at the Senedd are not based on price subsidies for food and items for sale but rather on the cost of providing the total cost of services across various catering outlets. The catering services are provided to all those using our estate including Members and their staff, Commission staff, Welsh Government Ministers and staff, public visitors and contractors working on site.

Details of our annual budget, including specific costs for catering are published in our Annual Budget: [gen-ld16061-e.pdf](#)

Yours sincerely,

The Rt. Hon. Elin Jones MS/AS

Llywydd

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg / We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English

# Agenda Item 3.4

## **P-06-1394 Intervene in the development of the Penrhos Coastal Park into a holiday resort in Anglesey**

This petition was submitted by Madison Lorraine, having collected a total of 11,992 signatures.

### **Text of Petition:**

History eventually repeats itself, in 1957 Welsh MPs fought against the erasure of Tryweryn and yet, the plan to turn the Welsh village into a water resource for Liverpool went ahead.

Today, Land & Lakes aim to build a new holiday park over the Coast that houses endangered species and was granted planning permission by the council. Despite long efforts by organisations and members of the community to prevent the development, the council has not revoked permission.

### **Additional Information:**

Penrhos Coastal park is a historic site in Wales, with parts of the forestry dating back to the 18th century and is home to a diverse species of flora and fauna.

The Coastal Park is a Site of Special Scientific Interest. The woodland houses badgers, foxes, newts, and red squirrels. In recent years, the native red squirrel has been in a state of rapid decline in the UK – habitat loss has aided in the decline. This is due to development plans destroying and separating the natural woodlands in this case, forcing the endangered species to a previous waste ground to which, we cannot guarantee the safety of these species.

Our land was promised to be protected back in 2021, it's now time to enact that promise. Welsh land and history is unique therefore, why are we allowing the destruction of the foundations of Wales?

### **Sources:**

– North Wales Chronicle. (2022). Anglesey nature reserve set to be 'relocated' to toxic waste dump to make way for holiday park.

– [www.penrhosholyisland.co.uk](http://www.penrhosholyisland.co.uk).

**Senedd Constituency and Region**

- Neath
- South Wales West

# Agenda Item 3.5

## **P-05-1448 Stop pollution at Watchtower Bay and Ogmore by Sea**

This petition was submitted by Robert Curtis, having collected a total of 894 signatures.

### **Text of Petition:**

Watch House Bay and Ogmore by Sea were both classified as new designated bathing waters in 2023.

Now both beaches have not met the minimum requirements for bathing water quality and were the only two bathing sites in Wales to be classified as 'poor' in what the Welsh Government has described as "disappointing".

Rather than putting up signs warning people not to swim at these beaches, the Council, Welsh Water and Welsh Government should be taking action to prevent this pollution.

### **Additional Information:**

We have been campaigning for a number of years about the sewage pollution entering the Old Harbour and Watchtower Bay in Barry.

We have identified human sewage outfall pipes and the outfall pipe from the Knap lake, which has a large resident population of swans and geese, as probably being the main cause of this pollution.

This water needs to be treated in retention tanks before releasing into the marine environment.

We need action to stop the pollution on both Watchtower Bay and Ogmore by Sea... just stop the crap!

We will be ending this petition on World Oceans Day on Saturday 8th June 2024...we desperately need to protect our Oceans!

### **Senedd Constituency and Region**

- Vale of Glamorgan
- South Wales Central

Hello Petitions committee,

Barry Action for Nature would like to make the following comments:

"We welcome the improved test results for Watch House bay but are very disappointed that Ogmore remains classed as "poor".

We would also express our frustration that all the beaches are tested only between May and September especially with the growth of cold water swimming.

We also believe that the test regime is very human dominated and makes no consideration of the effects of pollution on the wider marine wildlife.

We strongly believe that water quality tests should be carried out throughout the year with a consideration for the wider marine environment."

Thanks

Rob Curtis

Chairman

Barry Action for Nature

# Agenda Item 3.6

## **P-06-1450 Welsh Government to take action to protect people from airborne infections in health care settings**

This petition was submitted by Anna-Louise Marsh-Rees, having collected a total of 330 signatures.

### **Text of Petition:**

- \* Improve air quality in health & social care settings through addressing ventilation, air filtration and sterilisation;
  
- \* Reintroduce routine mask-wearing in those settings (as per WHO recommendation 20 Dec 2023), particularly respiratory masks ;
  
- \* Reintroduce routine Covid testing- it is asymptomatic;
  
- \* Ensure staff manuals fully cover preventing airborne infection;
  
- \* Provide public health information on the use of respiratory masks & HEPA air filtration against airborne infections.

### **Additional Information:**

Infections like Covid, flu, RSV, measles & TB are spread by inhaling tiny airborne aerosols hanging in the air like smoke. Key ways to prevent it are to improve air quality & wear well-fitting respiratory masks. Reinfection increases risk of long-term serious damage potentially for anyone, to brain, heart, immune system, etc. Care workers top the long Covid league. Repeated illness & job loss put avoidable pressure on services. The rate of hospital acquired Covid infection has been shown to be higher than in the community. Clinically vulnerable people often must use care but cancel essential health appointments. Transmission is often asymptomatic. Covid isn't seasonal. Routine testing is thus essential. There are many tools to protect health. Only one is being used: vaccination - unavailable to many, including some clinically vulnerable people.

We have:

\*met and corresponded with lead officials on masking, ventilation, vaccination and clinical risk

\* submitted FoI requests.

### **Senedd Constituency and Region**

- Monmouth
- South Wales East



Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1450  
Ein cyf/Our ref JMHSC/10425/24

Carolyn Thomas MS  
Chair  
Petitions Committee

[petitions@senedd.wales](mailto:petitions@senedd.wales)

18 December 2024

Dear Carolyn,

**Petition P-06-1450 Welsh Government to take action to protect people from airborne infections in health care settings**

Thank you for your letter of 10 October regarding this petition. I apologise for the delay in responding. I will address each of the areas of the petition in turn.

**Improve air quality in health and social care settings through addressing ventilation, air filtration and sterilisation:**

The most recent WHTM 03-01 was published in 2023. On 25 June 2021, NHS Shared Services Partnership – Specialist Estate Services (NWSSP-SES) issued a Specialist Estates Services Notification SESN 21/12 25/6 adopting HTM 03-01 which was issued by NHS England as an interim measure.

These are being implemented through the work of the Authorised Person for ventilation, the Ventilation Safety Group (VSG) and the Authorising Engineer-Ventilation (AE-V) and respective design teams in accordance with new build works and refurbishments. The Authorised Person for ventilation is not a new role; these have been a requirement since HTM 03-01 in 2017. The definition was changed in the 2023 Welsh Health Technical Memoranda (WHTM 03-01). Ventilation Safety Groups were a recommendation in HTM 03-01 in 2021.

The pandemic focused minds on the importance of ventilation and changes were implemented as soon as possible to improve ventilation systems. The VSG is an overarching governance forum within the health board, which is regularly reviewed and obtains assurances about ventilation matters. It is a multi-disciplinary group including clinical and technical representatives.

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[Correspondence.Jeremy.Miles@gov.wales](mailto:Correspondence.Jeremy.Miles@gov.wales)

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

The assessments are provided to the health boards and NHS trusts by NWSSP-SES or another alternative provider to consider and action as necessary.

In relation to the petitioner's request for a report on the current ventilation status by health board and hospital, NWSSP-SES does not hold this information centrally.

Poor ventilation is more of a risk in terms of the dissemination of airborne pathogens. This is why guidance is issued about the importance of effective and efficient ventilation.

Ventilation systems within hospitals are monitored via building management systems which report faults to the relevant estates departments and sometimes to the specific clinical areas depending on the system and service provided. Clinical areas are tested in line with the Welsh Health Technical Memoranda requirements, however specific CO2 monitoring is not currently included in the testing recommendations. Health organisations may undertake ad-hoc testing as required by the Ventilation Safety Group.

**Reintroduce routine mask-wearing in those settings (as per WHO recommendation 20 Dec 2023), particularly respiratory masks:**

Person-to-person transmission of Covid-19 primarily occurs through direct transmission (involving droplets which land on mucous membranes) or by airborne transmission. Fluid repellent surgical masks provide protection from splashes and droplets.

Public Health Wales risk assessments for use with patients who have an acute respiratory infection support healthcare professionals to manage the risks of infection in acute clinical, outpatient and community settings. The set of mitigation measures recommended are set out in priority order in accordance with the hierarchy of controls. The Standard Infection Control Precautions (SICPs) – of which there are 10 – and transmission-based precautions provide an incremental approach to managing the transmission risk in clinical areas.

Fluid resistant surgical masks are one element of PPE intended to provide protection against droplet transmission. If aerosol generating procedures are required for a patient with a confirmed acute respiratory infection or suspected acute respiratory infection, then FFP3 masks would be the recommended PPE in accordance with transmission-based precautions.

When universal masking is recommended for consideration, the type of mask would depend on a number of factors, including the type of infection and the nature of the clinical care or procedure being carried out.

**Reintroduce routine Covid testing - it is asymptomatic:**

Covid-19 has existed for more than four years and natural immunity has built up in the general public during this time following successive waves of infection. The combination of natural immunity plus vaccination, which was deployed from December 2020, has further increased immunity to the virus.

In its latest [advice](#) in August 2024, the Joint Committee for Vaccination and Immunisation states that “the current situation is one of very high levels of population immunity against the SARS-CoV-2 virus and the emergence of new omicron sub-variants that are not associated with increased disease severity compared with earlier variants.”

In accordance with our strategy of living alongside Covid-19, our [Guidance for employers](#) outlines public health control measures, which could be used to support workplaces with the management of risk from the most common communicable diseases, which includes Covid-19, flu and norovirus.

These measures provide advice for the workplace, including the risk associated with staff who have respiratory symptoms and how to manage this. Those who are considered to be most at risk of becoming severely unwell due to Covid-19, are eligible for testing and antiviral treatment.

With regards to staff sickness since 2020, the pandemic saw a significant rise in sickness rates among NHS staff, which have remained high. The National Workforce Implementation Plan includes several actions aimed at addressing sickness absence:

- **Flexible Working Policies:** The plan emphasises the need to create more opportunities for flexible working arrangements to help improve work-life balance for employees.
- **Enhanced Wellbeing Support:** There are a number of initiatives to improve mental health and wellbeing support for staff, including early intervention and sustainable return-to-work programs.
- **Optimised Workforce Models:** The plan includes efforts to redesign roles and team structures to help reduce burnout and sickness absence.
- **Absence Management Policies:** By implementing effective absence management and wellbeing policies we can support employees in returning to work and reducing the recurrence of absences.

### **Ensure staff manuals fully cover preventing airborne infection:**

The manuals can be found via the following web links:

[NIPCM - Public Health Wales \(nhs.wales\)](#)

[ARI - Acute Respiratory Infections - Public Health Wales](#)

### **Provide public health information on the use of respiratory masks and HEPA air filtration against airborne infections:**

In relation to the definition of effectiveness of the HEPA air purification trials, there needs to be an assessment at each individual location where ventilation is not deemed adequate. Testing has been done at a health board level. This is not centrally managed, and results would be available from the individual health boards.

The Surgical Material Testing Laboratory (SMTL) conducted testing of air purifiers between November 2022 and July 2024; 13 tests were conducted. There is no recognised industry standard for testing of air purifiers (limits for particulates or airborne bacteria reduction) but there are UKAS accredited test methods for particulates and airborne bacteria counts. There is no national approach to testing air purifiers, units have been tested when requested and we are unaware of any studies where infection rates are being monitored in relation to air purifiers

The Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) does not have a standing membership other than the UK Government Chief Scientific Advisor (GCSA). SAGE participants are scientific experts from within government, academia, and from a range of fields relevant to the nature of the emergency and the specific issues under consideration. Participants vary from meeting to meeting, depending on the expertise required.

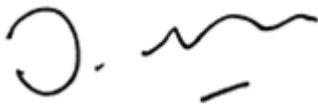
During the pandemic the Chief Scientific Advisor for Health (CSAH) in Welsh Government, the Welsh Government Chief Scientific Advisor (CSAW) and the co-chairs of TAG were participants.

Welsh Government would expect either the CSAW, the CSAH and/or the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) to be invited should SAGE be stood up again to provide independent scientific advice to support decision-making in the Cabinet Office Briefing Room (COBR) in the event of a national emergency relevant to the people of Wales, Wales or devolved competencies. The exact membership from Welsh Government, as per the guidance for SAGE, would depend on the nature of the emergency or incident.

Finally, with regards to nosocomial infections, while there are still some cases of hospital acquired Covid-19, overall admissions with any mention of Covid-19 has shown a decreasing trend with 6,574 admissions in 2023-24, compared to 19,196 in 2020-21.

There are well-established infection prevention and control measures in place in hospital settings to mitigate the spread of infection. For most people, Covid-19 is like any other common respiratory illness and should be managed accordingly. Those who are considered to be most at risk of becoming severely unwell due to Covid-19 are eligible for testing and antiviral treatment.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'J' followed by a series of wavy lines and a short horizontal stroke at the end.

**Jeremy Miles AS/MS**

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Iechyd a Gofal Cymdeithasol  
Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care

**P-06-1450 Welsh Government to take action to protect people from airborne infections in health care settings – Correspondence from the Petitioners to the Committee, 25 January 2025**

<https://petitions.senedd.wales/petitions/245982>

***Welsh Government to take action to protect people from airborne infections in health care settings***

=====

25 Jan 2025

Dear Senedd Petitions Committee

The response from Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice Cymru to the Cabinet Secretary for Health & Social Care's letter to the Petition Committee dated 18 Dec 2024

=====

The Minister's assertion that "for most people, Covid-19 is like any other common respiratory illness" and that any intervention is futile is the fundamental issue.

He is rejecting the precautionary principle which must be applied to a novel virus. He is also clearly ignorant of the immune suppression caused by SARS-CoV-2, its affinity for vascular and other cell tissue and the risk of Long Covid.

He is unaware that immunity to infection induced by 'natural infection' wanes quite rapidly:

[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/ebiom/article/PIIS2352-3964\(22\)00584-9/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/ebiom/article/PIIS2352-3964(22)00584-9/fulltext)

As does that provided by vaccination: "Doses offer time-limited protection, protection increases after each dose but then wanes over the following few months"

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccination-programme-guidance-for-healthcare-practitioners/covid-19-vaccination-programme-information-for-healthcare-practitioners>

For all these reasons, hospital-acquired infection should be avoided.

The comparison of current Covid admission statistics with those from earlier in the pandemic is unscientific and deeply flawed due to the changed criteria for testing. The testing of everyone on admission for surveillance purposes was universal in the early years, but since April 2023 testing has only been undertaken on admission

when deemed clinically necessary. So, the signal is not consistent across that change of policy.

Given that up to 50% of infectious people are asymptomatic he should double the currently published admissions figures for a more realistic number. This greatly tempers the Welsh Government's claim of decreasing levels of Covid admissions.

As Health Minister, he cannot be excused for not knowing the current level of nosocomial SARS-CoV-2 infection in NHS hospitals in Wales. The data used to be quite obscure, but it is now published in the PHW Weekly Influenza and ARI Report, which he must read regularly.

<https://phw.nhs.wales/topics/immunisation-and-vaccines/flu vaccine/weekly-influenza-and-acute-respiratory-infection-report/>

His response focuses solely on the risk to a healthcare worker (HCW) from an infectious patient, not the risk to the patient from an infectious HCW. His assumption that the cause of hospital-acquired Covid is patients with community acquired Covid is inaccurate. If that is the case, then the testing of patients on admittance and every 3 days then isolate would immediately address this. There must be recognition that infectious healthcare workers are transmitting Covid to patients. These patients who are already unwell & vulnerable, they have no way to protect themselves from Covid whilst in hospital.

The Minister has a duty to provide upfront protection of the already vulnerable in hospitals. Providing a test & treatment only when symptomatic is not adhering to the precautionary principle. The Minister & Welsh Government must act now to mitigate airborne viruses in hospitals.

We have provided further questions and recommendations to each point in the letter:

### **1. Airborne vs. Droplet Transmission:**

-There's an overemphasis on droplet transmission in the response. He states "Person-to-person transmission of Covid-19 primarily occurs through direct transmission (involving droplets which land on mucous membranes) or by airborne transmission" and focuses heavily on surgical masks for droplet protection.

- 'direct transmission' - is not a term not used to describe any form of transmission and has no scientific meaning

- See Professor Clive Beggs definitive and expert report to the UK Covid Inquiry on the physical sciences underpinning Covid-19 transmission and its implications for infection prevention and control in healthcare settings'

<https://covid19.public-inquiry.uk/documents/inq000474276-expert-report-by-professor-clive-beggs-titled-an-expert-report-on-the-physical-sciences->

[underpinning-covid-19-transmission-and-its-implications-for-infection-prevention-and-control-in-h/](#)

- **Improvement needed:** He must acknowledge that COVID-19 is predominantly airborne and adjust the protective measures accordingly:

- Prioritize proper ventilation and air filtration
- Emphasise the use of well-fitting respirators (FFP3 or to an equivalent standard approved by the HSE) as Cambridge did)
- Implement air quality monitoring more systematically eg Addenbrookes

## **2. Long-term Health Impacts:**

- There's no acknowledgment of Long COVID or chronic health impacts of Covid from even a mild initial infection and especially repeated infection.

- **Improvement needed:**

- Include risk assessment for long-term health impacts
- Develop protocols specifically aimed at preventing chronic complications
- Consider long COVID impact on healthcare workforce planning

## **3. Ventilation Monitoring:**

- Current approach seems fragmented:

- No centralized reporting of ventilation status
- CO2 monitoring not included in testing requirements
- Ad-hoc testing based on individual Ventilation Safety Group decisions

- **Improvement needed:**

- Implement mandatory CO2 monitoring and data-logging
- Create centralized reporting system for ventilation status
- Set minimum ventilation standards that must be met

## **4. Testing Strategy:**

- His position on reduced testing seems based primarily on population immunity. There is no immunity from Corona Viruses ever and a 'current' reduction in acute reactions but no change in long term chronic problems from a neurovascular chronic infection.

- **Improvement needed:**

- Reinroduce and mandate regular testing of HCWs and patients
- Stop HCWs working when infectious with Covid -both asymptomatic & pre-symptomatic
- Encourage HCW uptake of Covid vaccination as currently low in Wales
- Include asymptomatic Covid stats in nosocomial reporting
- Implement strategic surveillance testing
- Account for chronic virus persistence and to be proactive on new circulating variants

-Recommence the Wastewater in Wales -sampling weekly alerts. The award-winning programme was one of the best in the world, led by one of the currently most published scientists in Wales. It gave an indication of regional infection prevalence and variant dynamics across Wales, important both to inform NHS and Public Health policy in Wales, especially giving advanced warning of likely hospital admissions and feeding into global surveillance, as requested by WHO.

### **5. Air Purification:**

- The response indicates no standardized approach: eg CADR
  - No recognised industry standard for testing
  - No systematic monitoring of infection rates in relation to air purifier use
- Improvement needed:**
- Develop standardised testing protocols
  - Conduct systematic studies on effectiveness
  - Create clear guidelines for when, where and how much air purification is required for each level of risk.

### **6. Staff Protection:**

- Focus seems to be on managing sickness absence rather than prevention. This is already a huge problem, from viral persistence and immune T-Cell exhaustion (aka Leonardi effect)

**- Improvement needed:**

- Implement proactive protection measures inc regular testing
  - Provide high-quality respiratory protection i.e HSE requirements = FFP3 or equivalent, such as elastomeric reusable or Powered Air Purifying Respirators)
- Mandatory regular IPC training & not a reliance on manuals - they don't protect anyone.
- Regular risk assessments considering airborne transmission.

### **7. Nosocomial Covid Protection**

- Over the past year 60% or more of NHS inpatients in Wales with Covid acquired it in hospital. These are just inpatients who have been tested because their symptoms are of clinical concern to the Consultant. There will be many more untested. For example, 05 January 2025, there were 176 inpatients in Welsh NHS hospitals with confirmed Covid infection, 111 of which (63%) had acquired it nosocomially.

- The current IPC measures in place cannot therefore be described as effective when there are so many nosocomial cases of Covid, flu etc in hospitals in Wales

**- Improvement needed:**

- implement all the above plus:
- Introduce Welsh Government targets to reduce nosocomial infection

Regards

Anna-Louise Marsh-Rees

Group Lead

Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice Cymru

# Agenda Item 3.7

## **P-06-1478 Comprehensively review NRW and its failure to deliver its statutory obligations to protect Wales**

This petition was submitted by Alun Phillips, having collected a total of 376 signatures.

### **Text of Petition:**

For more than a decade, I believe that the agency mandated to protect the Welsh environment has seen a decline in its capacity to undertake its statutory purpose.

Polluted Welsh rivers (the arteries of the natural world) should be rescued and given a new lease of life.

A comprehensive review of failing prosecutions and inaction needs to take place in order to protect Wales for future generations.

### **Additional information:**

The vast majority of NRW staff work diligently to protect the Welsh environment with the resources they have.

Over complicating matters and undertaking unnecessary projects leads to reduced financial means and a lack of action in priority areas.

We call on the Welsh Government to undertake a comprehensive review of how projects are resourced and to eliminate wasteful spending to maximise results on the basic issues we face in the Welsh environment today.

This includes, but is not limited to, the protection and restoration of Welsh river systems for the benefit of the natural world and the people who enjoy them.

### **Senedd Constituency and Region**

- Bridgend
- South Wales West

Huw Irranca-Davies AS/MS  
Y Dirprwy Brif Weinidog ac Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros  
Newid Hinsawdd a Materion Gwledig  
Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate  
Change and Rural Affairs



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1478  
Ein cyf/Our ref HIDCC/10771/24

Carolyn Thomas MS  
Chair - Petitions committee

16 January 2025

Dear Carolyn,

Thank you for your letter of 6 December on behalf of the Petitions Committee regarding Petition P-06-1478 and a comprehensive review of Natural Resources Wales (NRW). Thank you also for sight of the petitioner's letter dated 11 November.

I wrote to you on 10 December and informed the committee of NRW's intention to extend the retail and catering facilities at the three visitor centres until 31 March 2025 and the expected interim measures beyond that date. NRW has provided assurances that it will continue its management of these sites and they will remain open for walking, biking, play areas, car parking and toilet provision.

All public sector organisations have experienced severe financial pressures and challenges. Acknowledging these, NRW took the difficult decision to embark on a comprehensive exercise to reshape the organisation recognising the delivery of its core functions and statutory duties must take priority within available budgets. The Welsh Government continues to support NRW to ensure the delivery of its front-line services and legal obligations as an environmental regulator.

The petitioner also refers to NRW's management of environmental incidents. I can assure you that every environmental incident is assessed and categorised by NRW to deem what actions are necessary and appropriate. When required, NRW will take legal action against an offender. The Welsh Government continues to support NRW's work in this area through regularly monitoring NRW's activity.

The petitioner's question around whether funds could be put back into the Welsh environment rather than into the UK Treasury is not a devolved matter as the responsibility for this rests with UK Government. However NRW is looking at developing efficient, more cost recovering tools to enhance enforcement.

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:  
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[Correspondence.Huw.Irranca-Davies@gov.wales](mailto:Correspondence.Huw.Irranca-Davies@gov.wales)

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

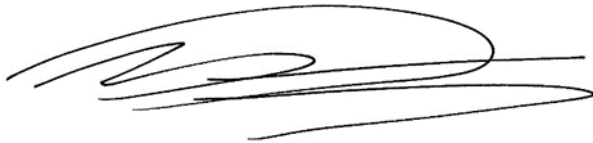
**Back Page 70**  
We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

The petitioner's final point asks for the Welsh Government to consider action to split NRW back into its original components. I can confirm that the Welsh Government has no plans to consider dividing NRW into its three original entities.

The Welsh Government meets with NRW at regular intervals to monitor and analyse its performance in achieving agreed aims and objectives contained within both its Annual and Corporate Plans.

Thank you for writing to me on this important matter.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several fluid, overlapping loops and lines, positioned above the printed name.

**Huw Irranca-Davies AS/MS**

Y Dirprwy Brif Weinidog ac Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Newid Hinsawdd  
a Materion Gwledig

Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs

Dear Huw Irranca-Davies AS/MS,

Thank you for your detailed response to Petition P-06-1478 and for reaffirming the Welsh Government's commitment to monitoring Natural Resources Wales (NRW) in its role as the environmental regulator for Wales.

I would like to raise several points of concern:

### **1. Investigations into Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water (DCWW)**

What is the Welsh Government doing to ensure that the 254 investigations considered by NRW into Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water result in appropriate prosecutions for environmental harm?

According to data provided by NRW, Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water appears to be the single largest polluter of the Welsh environment over the last three years. What is the Welsh Government doing to ensure this shocking number of investigations delivers results for the public who fund NRW? Currently, the successful prosecution rate is 1.6%. This clearly does not represent a good use of public funds.

Given the volume of sewage being discharged from DCWW assets in the Bridgend area, is the Cabinet Secretary aware that the recent failure of the bathing water status at Ogmores-by-Sea beach can be attributed to ongoing discharges from the Pen-y-Bont treatment works? Additionally, are you aware that Welsh Water is discharging billions of litres of untreated raw sewage directly onto a designated bathing water during the bathing season and in clear breach of their environmental permit issued by NRW?

By comparing the available EDM discharge data from DCWW with NRW's sampling data at Ogmores-by-Sea beach, there is a clear pattern of correlation. Furthermore, recent independent testing of water samples from the area surrounding the Pen-y-Bont treatment plant and pump assets closest to the bathing water has confirmed extremely high levels of *E. coli* bacteria. The findings indicate a significant public health risk, with contamination levels so severe that it is recommended environmental health authorities be made urgently aware of the situation. This constitutes a serious danger to public health and reinforces the need for immediate intervention.

Would the Cabinet Secretary agree to write to DCWW requesting an official response as to why two primary settlement tanks located at the Pen-y-Bont Waste Water Treatment Works have remained unused for decades? DCWW is fully aware of the volume of untreated raw sewage leaving the plant, as this information is publicly accessible. Alarming trends show an increase in discharges of over 300% in the last two years, raising grave concerns about the likelihood of a third year of poor bathing water at Ogmores-by-Sea beach.

Additionally, will you include in your letter to DCWW a request for detailed information on what is being done specifically to reduce the amount of raw sewage entering the Ogmores river and catchment?

I make these requests in light of the apparent lack of urgency or action from NRW on this matter, and in the hope that Welsh Government and NRW scrutiny will lead to positive change for the community and environment. The evidence highlights severe breaches of permitted activity and clear instances of environmental pollution.

## **2. NRW's Culture and Handling of Evidence**

There are ongoing concerns about NRW's internal culture and its handling of environmental issues. Specifically, NRW has stated—contrary to a global body of evidence—that the tyres in the Ogmore River pose minimal environmental impact, and it is not in the public interest to pursue further action against those responsible for depositing these tyres. When asked to provide evidence to support this position, NRW admitted none exists. Instead, they dismissed concerns, advising that “colleagues know best through experience.”

Do you agree that such an approach undermines public trust, fails to build constructive relationships with communities, and stands in stark opposition to evidence-based decision making? Will you please reassure the public that NRW does, and should use, all available scientific data and will you agree to contact NRW on this specific matter?

## **3. Leadership and Transparency at NRW**

Would you please confirm why Claire Pillman is no longer serving as CEO of NRW and why Ceri Davies has been appointed as interim CEO? Will this leadership change, along with any other potential board-level changes, be publicly announced?

## **4. Moving Forward**

As you have kindly confirmed that there are no plans to alter the framework of NRW, could you please outline what specific plans the Welsh Government has to ensure NRW remains fit for purpose into the future? Does this include potential changes to management or increased funding to enable the regulator to effectively carry out its duties? Lastly, could you confirm the Welsh Government's plans to retain funds from successful environmental prosecutions within Wales, rather than having them redirected to the UK Treasury?

Thank you for your time and attention to these important issues.

Yours sincerely,  
Alun Phillips

# Agenda Item 3.8

## **P-06-1485 Introduce a network of Toy Libraries around Wales**

This petition was submitted by Bleddyn Lake, having collected a total of 297 signatures.

### **Text of Petition:**

Children's toys can be expensive, are often used only for a short time, can add to the clutter in homes and often end up thrown away, even if they aren't broken.

Toy libraries are an established way of helping provide access to lots of toys that children might otherwise not encounter due to cost or even space limitations at home. They offer cost-effective alternatives to buying new toys, can act as community hubs to bring parents and carers together and can help reduce our use of resources.

### **Additional information:**

Parents and carers spend on average around £300 on toys every year. Lots of these are made from plastic. With most plastic being made from oil, it is estimated that unless we do something about it, by 2050, plastic could account for around 20% of all global oil consumption.

Toy libraries have their part to play in reducing waste, reducing plastic use, reducing climate emissions and also saving parents, carers and families money.

They would help deliver on Welsh Government's focus on a child's 'right to play' and the 'circular economy'.

We ask that Welsh Government work with all relevant groups in Wales to introduce a nationwide network of toy libraries.

### **Senedd Constituency and Region**

- Cardiff West
- South Wales Central

Huw Irranca-Davies AS/MS  
Y Dirprwy Brif Weinidog ac Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros  
Newid Hinsawdd a Materion Gwledig  
Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate  
Change and Rural Affairs



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1485  
Ein cyf/Our ref HIDCC/10810/24

Carolyn Thomas MS  
Chair - Petitions committee

16 January 2025

## Petition P-06-1485 – Introduction of a Toy Network in Wales

Dear Carolyn

Thank you for your further correspondence concerning the petition from Bleddyn Lake asking Welsh Government to work with all relevant groups in Wales to introduce a national network of toy libraries.

I am aware that my colleague, the Minister for Children and Social Care, has provided a comprehensive response on the collaborative work being undertaken and the Welsh Government support which recognises the great value we place on play and its importance in the lives of children in Wales.

Beyond Recycling set out our ambition to transition to a circular economy in Wales. This is why we have been supporting the rapid growth of repair and re-use facilities in Wales, with Repair Cafés, Benthylg 'libraries of things' and repair and re-use hubs being rolled out across Wales. These facilities are not only helping communities and individuals to tackle the climate and nature crisis, but also provide vital support from the cost-of-living crisis. Ultimately, we want to see re-use and repair as mainstream and as normalised as recycling is today.

Through our Circular Economy Fund we have supported a range of repair and re-use projects across Wales in collaboration with local authorities and third sector partners in recent years. The CEF has also helped deliver our Programme for Government commitments with the creation of over 50 repair and reuse hubs, which includes those located in town centres.

As we are moving towards national coverage of our re-use hubs at household waste recycling centres, we are in the process of evaluating the CEF fund and considering its future and the types of initiatives we would like to support. We are always open to hearing about ideas such the potential for a toy network in Wales.

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:  
0300 0604400

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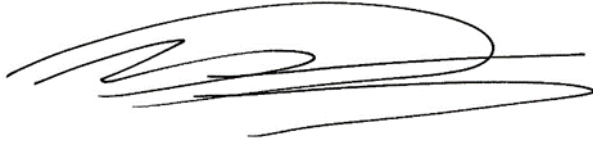
[Gohebiaeth.Huw.Irranca-Davies@llyw.cymru](mailto:Gohebiaeth.Huw.Irranca-Davies@llyw.cymru)  
[Correspondence.Huw.Irranca-Davies@gov.wales](mailto:Correspondence.Huw.Irranca-Davies@gov.wales)

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

I will ensure this suggestion is fed into the consideration being given to any future round of CEF funding.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several fluid, overlapping loops and strokes, positioned below the text 'Yours sincerely,'.

**Huw Irranca-Davies AS/MS**

Y Dirprwy Brif Weinidog ac Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Newid Hinsawdd  
a Materion Gwledig

Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs

**P-06-1485 Introduce a network of Toy Libraries around Wales - Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Committee, 28 January 2025**

Hi Kayleigh,

I hope you are well.

Many thanks for forwarding the Deputy First Minister's reply. It's encouraging. I'll follow up with him and officials now to see if we can get a meeting with them to talk more about the idea. As such, please thank the Committee for their time and interest in this issue. I don't have any further asks or comments at this stage.

All the best

Bleddyn



# WLGA and ADEW Response to Petitions Committee

22 November 2024

## Senedd Cymru Smartphones and Use of Mobile Devices in Schools

Sharon Davies, Head of Education - Sharon.davies@wlga.gov.uk

Claire Homard, Chair of ADEW - claire.homard@flintshire.gov.uk

### Welsh Local Government Association - The Voice of Welsh Councils

We are The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA); a politically led cross-party organisation that seeks to give local government a strong voice at a national level. We represent the interests of local government and promote local democracy in Wales.

The 22 councils in Wales are our members and the 3 fire and rescue authorities and 3 national park authorities are associate members.

#### **We believe that the ideas that change people's lives, happen locally.**

Communities are at their best when they feel connected to their council through local democracy. By championing, facilitating, and achieving these connections, we can build a vibrant local democracy that allows communities to thrive.

**Our ultimate goal** is to promote, protect, support, and develop democratic local government and the interests of councils in Wales.

#### **We'll achieve our vision by**

- Promoting the role and prominence of councillors and council leaders
- Ensuring maximum local discretion in legislation or statutory guidance
- Championing and securing long-term and sustainable funding for councils
- Promoting sector-led improvement
- Encouraging a vibrant local democracy, promoting greater diversity
- Supporting councils to effectively manage their workforce

### Introduction

This is a joint response from the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) and the Association of Directors of Education in Wales (ADEW).



## **Should there be a single national policy, or should schools decide for themselves?**

The general consensus is that a national position would be useful. Some suggest a single national policy should be established to guide schools from local authority level. National guidance would support heads and governors to make decisions in the best interests of students without being fearful of kickback. A single policy would remove the pressure from schools to make individual decisions, providing consistency.

A consistent, nationwide policy ensures clarity and fairness across all schools, removing ambiguities about what is permitted and what is not. This consistency would make it easier for schools to enforce the policy uniformly, creating a shared understanding and expectation among students, parents, and educators. Additionally, a national approach offers the strength and stability of a unified direction, reducing confusion and potential pushback that can arise when policies vary widely across schools.

A national steer/position from WG would be welcome in the same way as Scottish Government and UK Government have published guidance. This would support schools in taking the steps they see fit to limit the use of mobile phones up to and including a full ban on the school estate during the school day if that is their judgement.

Another advantage is that a national policy would eliminate discrepancies between schools, which could otherwise lead to frustration or complaints from parents and students about different rules in different locations. A standardised approach simplifies communication and supports schools in standing by the policy, as they can point to national guidance rather than isolated decisions. This shared framework can make policy implementation smoother and strengthen the sense that this is a public-interest matter, rather than a localised issue of individual school control.

Several European countries have now gone down the path of having national policies regarding the use of mobile phones / banning mobile phones in school. Schools would be appreciative of a national strategic direction that can underpin their rules, rather than feeling isolated in their decisions.

Some schools already restrict the use of phones in schools (we would suggest that restricting rather than ban would seem to be more suitable terminology).

Schools that have taken measures to restrict the use of phones in schools have reported improvements in behaviour and less issues relating to social media.

We offer some examples of current practice:

In Flintshire, several secondary schools that have enforced complete bans report positive changes as well. Administrators and teachers in these schools often feel that such bans contribute to a noticeable improvement in student engagement and



behaviour, supporting the idea that less distraction from personal devices allows students to focus better on schoolwork. Given these outcomes, the evidence indeed leans toward the benefits of a phone ban in enhancing the academic and behavioural atmosphere of schools.

Pembrokeshire has developed guidance for its schools, where all of its Secondaries have introduced measures. Primaries tend to generally not allow use of mobile phones but have mitigations such as exemption forms where needed. The LA worked closely with its schools in this process. In this case, the LA found that senior leaders were worried about implementing restrictions, but generally, post implementation, pupils, parents & staff welcome it.

Milford Haven High School has created a video outlining their experiences - [MHS Video](#)

We will provide under separate cover, Pembrokeshire's Draft Policy Guidance which encompasses '*a range of mobile and smart devices*' plus '*any electronic device that can pose a safeguarding concern*':

Some elements relating to the questions outlined are already covered in Pembrokeshire's guidance and are repeated below for convenience.

## **Is the evidence in favour of a ban compelling? Or not?**

The ubiquitous presence of mobile phones and devices presents significant challenges to how pupils behave and learn in school settings. Increasingly, there is mounting evidence suggesting that the unchecked use of mobile phones in schools is having a detrimental impact on pupils' mental health and academic progress, while also draining the energy of school staff who must manage resulting problems. These detrimental impacts have been highlighted by organisations such as PISA, UNESCO, and Estyn.

There is considerable evidence of misuse of mobile phones in school such as inappropriate messaging, accessing inappropriate sites, and evidence of data being taken and misused, photos and videos being taken, sexting, cyberbullying, blackmailing, etc.

There is a growing body of evidence to suggest that over-exposure to mobile phone use can result in limited concentration, unhappiness and isolation. For example, data from the [PISA 2022](#) survey showed a lack of personal resilience among students, with 45% reporting feeling anxious without their phones. Regarding lessons, 65% of students reported being distracted by digital devices in some Maths lessons, and 59% said their attention was diverted due to other students using phones, tablets, or laptops. The PISA data also underscores the correlation between digital device usage and learning outcomes, noting a significant drop in Maths scores among students who spent more than an hour per day on mobile devices. Regarding limiting the distractions caused by using digital device in classes, the OECD says



*“Students who spent up to one hour per day on digital devices for learning activities in school scored 14 points higher on average in mathematics than students who spent no time. Enforced cell phone bans in class may help reduce distractions but can also hinder the ability of students to self-regulate their use of the devices”.*

PISA data shows that in the 13 countries it surveyed, more than two thirds of students attend schools where mobile phone use is prohibited. It was found that the level of distraction in these countries were lower.

Similarly, in a 2021 report titled “We Don’t Tell Our Teachers,” Estyn identified five main issues associated with mobile phone use as reported by pupils. These include peer pressure for online popularity, online bullying, sexual objectification, catfishing, and negative attitudes towards female characters in digital games. Additionally, Estyn noted in a case study on a secondary school in South Wales that the eradication of mobile phones during the school day has led to significant academic and pastoral benefits.

There is also UNESCO data ([UNESCO calls for a ban on phones in schools. Here's why | World Economic Forum](#)) that supports the above. The UNESCO Agency says that even having a phone nearby when notifications are coming through is enough to break students’ concentration, with one study showing that it can take up to 20 minutes to refocus on learning - [Smartphones in school? Only when they clearly support learning | UNESCO](#)

A study from ParentKind found that 44% of parents are concerned about the impact of their children’s phone usage, particularly on their ability to form meaningful relationships. Half of families argue regularly about how much time their children spend on screens and the average screen time per day for a child is 3.3 hours - some spend more time online than in school. 50% of parents with secondary-aged children worry about the effects of excessive phone usage on their children’s social skills - [ParentKind National Parent Survey 2024](#).

Also, for consideration:

Jonathan Haidt: [The Anxious Generation](#): which makes a compelling argument that the uptick in time spent online has coincided with an alarming mental health crisis all over the world. One study found that the average teenager gets 192 alerts or notifications per day from social media and communication apps – the equivalent of 11 per waking hour, or one every five minutes. “No matter how hard it is for an adult to stay committed to one mental road, it is far harder for an adolescent, who has an immature frontal cortex and therefore limited ability to say no to off-ramps,” writes Haidt. He argues that the never-ending stream of interruptions “takes a toll on young people’s ability to think and may leave permanent marks in their rapidly reconfiguring brains”. [Screens and teens: How phones broke children’s brains | The Independent](#)

Research indicates that young people want to use their phones less, but often fail because they are addicted to the phone and that’s the way everyone communicates.



Research also indicates that mobile phones are addictive – if a pupil was addicted to anything else (e.g. vapes) that were health negative / causing harm, then adults / education would be expected to support, therefore mobile phones are no different. Mobile phone use at school also puts pressure on young people / families financially, having to buy the most up-to-date phone etc. Only in schools, can educators manage mobile phone use, therefore we have a responsibility to protect and educate our pupils, especially our vulnerable children and young people from trauma, exploitation etc.

Having a ban on mobile phones offers them an experience of not having to rely on phones and electronic devices during school hours, and it is hoped that it will support their education, relationships and overall wellbeing.

Consideration of the whole school sector is critical. A consistent approach in primary schools is also required to support transition. Permitting 6th form students to use phones may be positive but would need to be carefully planned.

Additionally, with the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into mobile phones and apps, there are significant risks related to privacy, data security, and ethical use, both socially and within educational contexts.

## **What would the downsides of a ban be?**

It depends on what's meant by the word 'ban'. There are a range of approaches that schools could take from trying to ban learners from bringing their mobile phones to school, through to restricting/banning use in school.

Considerations would include negative impacts on use of smart phone educational tools, social connection with peers, parental contact concerns, educational and language support needs, emergency communication, enforcement challenges, and limiting authentic mobile phone learning.

How schools manage their policies on a day-to-day basis would need to be a key consideration.

Managing certain medical conditions such as diabetes (smart patch) needs specific consideration.

A potential downside to a total ban is that it could limit the use of phones as educational tools. In some classrooms, teachers find that allowing controlled phone use can enhance learning, particularly for research or digital activities, for example online quizzes / low-stakes class assessments etc. In these cases, phones serve as convenient devices for accessing online information, educational apps, and interactive tools that support the curriculum. Banning phones altogether may remove this accessibility, potentially requiring schools to find alternative digital resources to ensure the same level of tech-based learning. Weighing these factors, the potential gains in attentiveness, safety, and overall behaviour often outweigh these drawbacks.



Some schools have developed teaching and learning activities that rely on pupils using their phones in class to access Google Classroom etc. Removing phones would impact on these effective and established processes.

The capacity to police and enforce a ban on smartphones is a huge undertaking. There would need to be back up for a policy such as this as it could see exclusions soar and/or lots of come back from parents etc.

Some families would find this approach helpful and be very supportive whilst others may view this as interference.

## **What would be the practical implementation issues?**

When drafting their policies, schools should consider any legal implications, such as those related to the [Equality Act 2010](#), [Children and Families Act 2014](#), as well as rights of confiscation and powers of searching for prohibited items under Sections 91, 93, and 94 of the [Education and Inspections Act 2006](#).

Practical implementation issues would include:

**Enforcement:** Difficult to ensure compliance, time-consuming, and may lead to conflicts. Enforcement of any measures is always cited as a challenge including use during break times etc.

**Storage:** Requires secure storage and logistical planning.

**Parental Concerns:** Parental opposition due to reliance on phones for communication.

**Learning and Medical Needs:** Impacts on educational or medical purposes.

**Consistency:** Challenges around to applying a uniform approach, impacting on a school's policy effectiveness. Consistent approach in primary schools to support transition.

**Resistance:** Potential disciplinary issues from learner/student resistance.

**Diminished Importance:** Would restricting mobile phone use in schools diminish the importance of continually providing learning opportunities through mobile phone technology by their very absence? How would learner-mindset be affected for mobile phone use when outside of school?

**Cost:** National Policy direction needs to be costed, and where necessary, funding should be provided. There could be cost implications should a school implement an in-school storage solution.

**Planning** - Planned and timely introduction / implementation with sound reasoning and supporting evidence.

**Policy** - The School's Acceptable Use Policies should reflect the school-wide strategy.

**Resources** - Information for in school discussions around reasoning etc.

**Support** - Use support from external agencies on dangers of mobile phones.

**Communication** - Communication will be key with learners, parents and all members of the school community and ensuring sufficient buy in. Clear communication with whole school community is required.



**Curriculum** - there needs to be a mesh with the Citizenship element of the Digital Eligibility Framework and this should fit with the School's Acceptable Use Policies.

These are outlined for convenience here:

**Health and Wellbeing:**

**CC1** - I am able to identify and use a range of digital media and devices from familiar experiences.

**CC2** - I am able to recognise the age and suitability limitations of digital media and devices, *e.g. understanding PEGI ratings, playing/watching inappropriate content/games, buying things on apps.*

**CC3** - I can understand the importance of having a balance between time playing games or screen time and other areas of my life, *e.g. considering the possible reasons why I am tempted to spend more time playing games or struggling to stop playing and the impact this has on my wellbeing.* I am able to identify the wider positive and negative influences of technology, *e.g. on my life, on society, on the environment.* I can identify marketing elements that are designed to distract me.

**CC4** - I am able to reflect on the role of digital media in my life and practice. I am able to practice healthy online behaviours and identify unacceptable behaviours. I can identify ways to report unacceptable online behaviour.

**CC5** - I can take reasonable steps to avoid health problems caused by the use of technology and suggest strategies to prevent or reduce the physical and psychological problems.

If schools have determined a ban for themselves, then they will have considered the implications and how to mitigate for this, whereas an enforced ban is a whole different ballgame.

Schools would likely need a lead-in period to communicate the new policy to students, parents, and staff. During this time, it would be essential to explain the reasons behind the ban, outline the expectations, and address any concerns. This preparatory phase would allow stakeholders to adjust to the new expectations and minimise resistance. Schools might also need to establish clear procedures for managing confiscated phones or addressing breaches of the policy. However, with sufficient planning, these logistics should not pose significant barriers. Many schools already have protocols for managing restricted items, and these could be adapted as needed. Training staff to enforce the policy consistently and providing resources for alternative tech access in classrooms would be useful steps in ensuring smooth implementation.

## **Specific view from Pupil Referral Units**

The ADEW PRU / EOTAS Network offers the following information specific to their area:

- Mobile phone use is a constant battle in PRU settings, particularly when they have a new intake



- Policies differ from outright ban to challenging when used inappropriately (mostly KS 4)
- Some colleagues encountering conversations between staff and pupil being recorded (and, in some cases, parents supportive of this)
- Some kick-back from parents who feel that they should be able to contact their children at any time of the day
- Colleagues felt they were encountering more issues with vapes than mobile phones/devices.

## **What would be your recommendation to Welsh Government on this petition/issue?**

- To develop a national position / policy for schools to implement with the support of their local authorities.
- Consideration of a transition period.
- Implementing a behaviour process to police a ban.
- Consideration of teaching and learning activities which have been developed using phones.
- Consideration of those pupils who travel or walk to and from schools where phones are useful for parents to contact/track where their child is.
- Consideration of the impact on children who would have specific exemptions.
- Implement pilot studies in a few schools to test the effectiveness of a mobile phone ban and/or use existing examples as case studies
- Consult children and young people (and parents and carers) to align and inform worries, concerns and risks.
- Highlight the importance of digital literacy development to promote health attitudes to smart phone use.
- Information sessions for pupils and parents on the risks and implications of excessive mobile phone use, how to use parental controls etc., and are offered nationally – to ensure buy in.
- Policy should refer to mobile phone use in general e.g. staff use of phones in school to ensure role models (and support staff wellbeing)

**-End-**



**Parents Voices in Wales**  
**Support Campaign Collaborate**

[Website : Parents Voices in Wales CIC](http://www.parentsvoicesinwales.org.uk)

**NATIONAL POLL DATA ON SMARTPHONE USE IN SCHOOLS**

**S ENEDD PETITIONS COMMITTEE ROUND TABLE**

**6 JANUARY 2025**

### About Us

Parent Voices in Wales CIC (PV) is part of the Neurodiversity Movement in Wales that works collaboratively across sector/agencies. PV has worked with the office of the Childrens' Commissioner for Wales relating to the No Wrong Door Approach Report, coproduced the NEST/NYTH Framework with T4CYP(2), worked with Welsh Government on the Whole School Approach Evaluation (Lynne Neagle MS, then Chair of the Senedd Committee for CYPE), Additional Learning Needs Reform (Kirsty Williams MS, then Minister for Education) and currently co-Chairs the Welsh Government Ministerial Advisory Group on Neurodivergence and trains schools and services in Neurodiversity and Inclusion.

### National Poll Data

In meeting the ambitions of the Whole School Approach, NEST/NYTH Framework and ALN Reform in promoting the Rights of the Child and the voices of learners and parents/carers, PV created an online poll for both professionals and parents/carers across Wales to collate views in relation to a possible smartphone ban to support the Round Table discussion on 6 January 2025.

1. Whether this should be blanket ban of smartphones in schools?
2. Whether this should be a national or local policy led development?
3. Whether accommodations should be considered for both Additional Learning Needs and/or Neurodivergent learners?

Participants were invited to comment after voting to share their views on limitations of practical implementation and what would be the downsides of the ban.

#### National Poll Data : Professionals

12 professionals (ie those working with children and young people in any capacity) responded to the poll.

Single National Policy	58%
Local School Policy	0%
Yes to accommodations for Additional Learning Needs	42%
No to accommodations for Additional Learning Needs	0%

No further comments were made by professionals.

#### National Poll Data : Parents/Carers of ALN/Neurodivergent Learners

134 votes were collected from the closed group poll.

Single National Policy	29%
Local School Policy	0%
Yes to accommodations for Additional Learning Needs	3%
No to accommodations for Additional Learning Needs	0%

The Poll was amended by participants by adding the following voting options

No to a ban	13%
Yes to Accommodations on a Needs Led Basis	55%*

\*(this includes Additional Learning Needs and Neurodivergent Learners)

Further comments made by Parents/Carers are shared below.

### Parent 1

I have two children in different schools (nowhere near each other) and I work. Without a phone how is one meant to tell me football has been cancelled and he needs collecting (neither can walk home). How do I inform an anxious child there's an accident and to stay put, I'll be along asap. Don't panic. Forgotten kit, run out of lunch money, laptop charger (on the IDP as essential equipment) has broken can you bring the spare? Let alone managing the anxiety via text at lunch and break.

### Parent 2

At my girls school they have banned phones. Teachers have said it's nice to see children talking more at lunch breaks.

My child used hers to listen to music in her headphones to help her regulate/concentrate so that's been difficult.

I know I wouldn't like to be a teen in this era of social media. It causes so many problems with bullying etc. Pro and cons either side of the argument. There was a programme on channel 4 last week about a school that banned them for a month and the families did it at home too. It made a huge difference to their mental health.

### Parent 3

My son used to message me when he had a panic attack. I used to text him instructions on how to breath and ground himself so he could manage his anxiety or before he would become overwhelmed. I can't imagine ever getting him into school if they'd not let him text me. Sometimes he would ring and text several times a day during break times until he found the confidence to manage himself. I think there needs to be accommodations for those who need support inside and outside the classroom. Staff know which learners are taking advantage and ones which need access to emotional support. My daughter used to take photos with her phone of the homework instructions as she has a poor working memory and ALN which meant she wouldnt remember what she had to do. We live in a digital age – why can't we use these constructively?

#### Parent (Teacher) 4

I think there should be a ban but ND pupils (and in fact all pupils) should have access to their own diverse set up to their own particular specific needs using accessibility tools. That's inclusion and makes education accessible for those who require it. I've seen some amazing examples of best practice, especially at one Yorkshire school where the children did a personalised programme for all maths and literacy. It would be cheaper than text books and exercise books and better for the environment. They can still use a stylus to learn handwriting but those who need it can use AAC, voice to text, type etc. but no social media below 16 for sure to eliminate cyberbullying and safeguarding concerns. In my opinion all children should have a device and should be taught to use them safely by school and parents working in coproduction as Ceri Reed does with the NHS services.

#### Parent 5

Our secondary school headteacher banned phones during the school day, it has been in place for over a year and a resounding success, it is being rolled out across the county now, instances of bullying has dropped dramatically, pupils concentration in class has also improved dramatically, alongside them engaging in the playground & joining in lunchtime activities clubs, chess & board games & in the leisure centre next door, this is a state/voluntary aided secondary school that has 25% of pupils with ALN. There are circumstances where some pupils can have them, but all phones are handed in & locked away in secure cupboards in their form rooms until the end of the school day. Pupil aggression & behaviour generally has improved including those already diagnosed with ALN. They're also using scientific calculators in class. The police used to visit the school regularly at least three times a week due to cyber bullying issues, there hasn't been one incident of such since. It definitely works for the better, with a few tweaks.

#### Parent 6

The school my children attended are no longer allowed their phones they are allowed in the bag but are to be switched off. If caught using them they are taken and given back at end of day it has made a massive difference to socialising break and dinner and less issues I'm all for no phone usage during school

#### Parent 7

I've found, as a foster carer, phones to be a huge hindrance rather than a help for many reasons. I would love to see children socialising more in the playground and believe children having phones in schools causes issues and anxiety around socialisation. I would prefer children to take their phones to high school so that they have them for emergencies but for a system to be in place where they hand their phones in on arrival to school and collect on leaving.

I was planning on not giving my children phones until well into their teens, and definitely not to be used at school but when my eldest was diagnosed with dyslexia and dyscalculia the Ed Psych recommended they have a smart phone as an aide, as a reader, voice to text etc functions. Until very recently their school were unable to use immersive reader software (Welsh medium education and full licenced version of MS word now has Welsh option, at last). So the smartphone has been extremely useful.

Parent 8

Absolutely NO BAN of smartphones in school! My daughter's school allow phones but no use age or sight of them during class times, and have regularly been able to communicate with school and my daughter via text and or call from and to her mobile to help regulate her whilst she's been with teachers and or pastoral staff, this in turn has aided re-integration into her main stream classes, thus benefits for both my daughter and school staff, However, the boundaries in school are set, are consistent and adhered to by majority. We must make allowances for those who need them and how can we trust the schools to get it right?

Parent 9

My eldest daughter suffers with extreme anxiety and undiagnosed tics made worse when anxious excited upset etc and the ban is help the school understand her needs a lot more I can still be contacted if needed but its definitely made a massive difference to her and us as parents as well as schools understanding and help provided I was so against it when it first come into force but honestly it has worked for the best

Parent 10

My daughter is allowed to phone me if she's feeling very anxious. It's made the difference to her managing to go to school or not. Her school do allow phones break and dinner time but only children with prior agreement like my daughter can use

them at other times. I think it is especially important not to be banning mobiles when so many local authorities are taking away school transport too it will put children walking alone/bullied children at higher risk.

Parent 11

Why have you asked the group this question? What is the purpose of banning phones and what is it expected to achieve?

I can't imagine how any 'ban' can ever work.

There are already such mixed messages.

Our Secondary schools allow pupils to have phones in school but they need to be on silent and remain in school bags. But then some teachers actually allow them to be used to support lesson topics. Conflicting messages.

Parent 12

I think yes ban them in relation to cyberbullying and given that a lot of schools just respond with 'it didn't happen on school property' this feels like shuffling the problem off their hands. If you have children using their phones inappropriately, ban them from having their phone, use detention or youth intervention team, conflict resolution, or something to actually address the issue. Banning phones outright isn't going to curb bullying, make those children accountable for/address their actions, or make poor parents magically start parenting appropriately. Where kids need to learn though and speak to parents for support then they should have access to them.

Parent 13

My oldest sons school allows kids to have their phones with them but they have to be on silent and they cannot take them out of their bags on school grounds. Unless of course they're given permission by teachers.

P-06-1482 Ban smartphones in all schools in Wales with exemptions for exceptional circumstances, Correspondence from Catrin Edwards of the Carers Trust to the Committee, 8 January 2025

Bore da,

Diolch for inviting me/Carers Trust to take part in the roundtable on Monday on the petition to ban smartphones from school.

I promised at that session to follow up with examples of guidance produced in England and Scotland that relate to restricting phone use, and the exemptions for young carers.

**Guidance from Department for Education in England:**

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65cf5f2a4239310011b7b916/Mobile\\_phones\\_in\\_schools\\_guidance.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65cf5f2a4239310011b7b916/Mobile_phones_in_schools_guidance.pdf)

Carers Trust's recent report on the experiences of young carers in schools in England, [Caring in Classrooms](#), quotes from the Guidance:

"The Department for Education's guidance on mobile phones in schools makes clear schools should be allowing flexibility for pupils such as young carers. It says: "Schools should recognise that a need for mobile phone access for some pupils may depend on their individual circumstances, including at home... Schools should allow flexibility in their policy for these pupils and consider including arrangements in other relevant policies (such as a young carers policy)."

**Scottish Government's Guidance:**

<https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/advice-and-guidance/2024/08/mobile-phone-guidance-scotlands-schools/documents/guidance-mobile-phones-scotlands-schools/guidance-mobile-phones-scotlands-schools/govscot%3Adocument/guidance-mobile-phones-scotlands-schools.pdf>

Approach on young carers "consideration of situations where mobile phones may be used by pupils with particular needs, for example, a young carer who is worried about the health of their parents." and "consideration is given to whether exceptions for individual circumstances are required. For example, exceptions for pupils: who are young carers and who require ongoing contact with family members"

If we were to see similar guidance or restrictions in Wales, Carers Trust would expect young carers to be named as an exempted group, and for reference to be made to a school's Young Carer Policy in their development of a school Mobile Phone policy.

Please do let me know if I can support with anything further.

Cofion gorau,

Catrin Edwards



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Dear Carolyn Thomas MS, Chair of the Senedd Petitions Committee,

**RE: P-06-1482 Ban smartphones in all schools in Wales with exemptions for exceptional circumstances – Supplementary Information on the NSPCC’s Position on Children’s Access to Smartphones and Social Media**

Thank you for inviting NSPCC Cymru to participate in the roundtable on 6<sup>th</sup> January 2025 which gathered views on P-06-1482 Ban smartphones in all schools in Wales with exemptions for exceptional circumstances currently under consideration by the Senedd Petition’s Committee. Following the invitation at that meeting to share further information and insights, we are pleased to provide some additional detail on the NSPCC’s position on children’s access to smartphones and social media.

We would like to start by acknowledging the significant public and political debate and concern about children and young people’s wellbeing and access to the online world. Recent discussions, including the petition currently before the Committee reflect on whether children should be able to use smartphones and social media at all because of concerns about the impact on their safety and mental health; and if children should use them, the appropriate age of access has been another key focus for debate.

The NSPCC is committed to ensuring that children can enjoy the benefits of the online world in a safe and healthy way. We urge policymakers to take a balanced approach to children’s access to the online world – one which draws on available research evidence and ensures tech companies take responsibility for children’s safety and wellbeing on their services. This should avoid unnecessarily blunt tools that would punish young people for the failure of platforms to embed safety by design.

In the context of the petition currently before the Committee, we believe the core building blocks required to achieve such as a balanced approach in schools are:

- **Supporting schools to deliver policies that work best for their pupils.** This could include the provision of evidence-based guidance to schools to support decisions and policies on restrictions on phones in learning environments. This should support a consistent approach that considers the needs of all learners. Any guidance should take a holistic and rights-based view of children’s wellbeing needs informed by equity and diversity considerations. Coherence with other policies and procedures concerning children and young people including safeguarding, is also crucial. Any policies around restrictions in schools must also be carefully considered and delivered in a way that does not damage the crucial link between school and children’s safeguarding. Children must be supported to understand school as a safe space to share and disclose harm and abuse.

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- **Provide funding, resources and support to help schools enforce such policies.** This could include funding for purchasing phone lockers, pouches or providing school-based access to devices other than phones to all children to support learning.
- **Continue to press for effective regulation and safety by design by tech companies.** This should include appropriate policies on and the enforcement of age assurance by regulated services and for platforms to implement safety by design to ensure age-appropriate experiences online and to mitigate the risk of harm to children.

### **Considerations on the issue of a wider smartphone ban for children and young people: building and sharing a balanced, evidence-based understanding of children’s use of the online world**

The online world is an integral part of children’s lives. Children and young people learn, play, and socialise online – they are clear that they enjoy many benefits from social media, messaging apps, gaming services and access to the wider online world. Many children do not distinguish between their ‘online’ and ‘offline’ worlds, with both parts informing who they are and their life experiences.

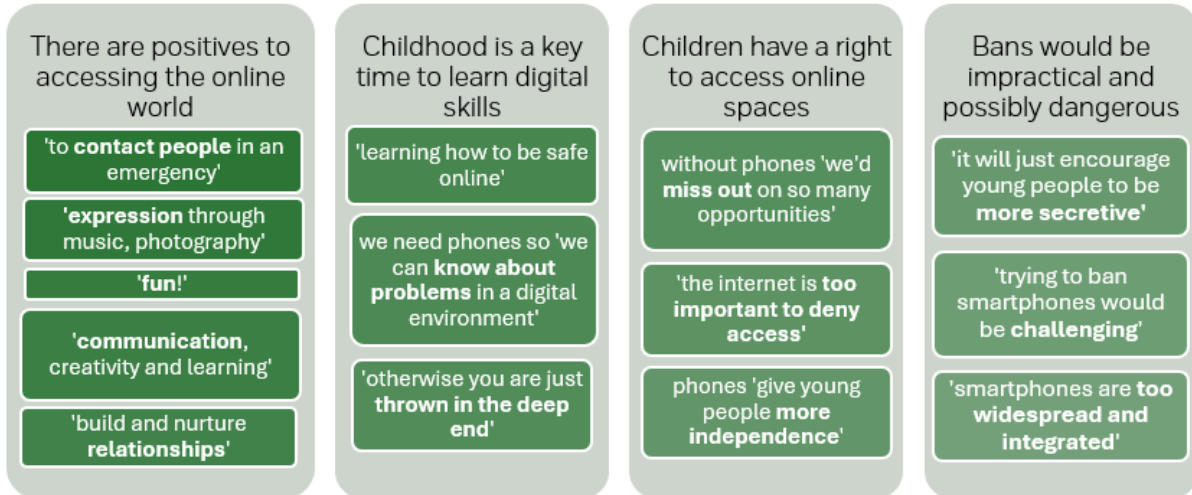
Ofcom recently shared research showing that around 7 in 10 children who use social media or messaging sites say these apps make them feel happy and closer to their friends.<sup>1</sup> Children consistently emphasise the importance of the online world to their lives. The [NSPCC’s Voice of Online Youth \(VoOY\)](#) cites key benefits including relaxing and connecting with friends, being involved in projects and social action, and finding new interests and ideas. When discussing proposals to limit children’s access to smartphones, the VoOY emphasised the importance of ensuring children have positive, safe online experiences and emphasised that removing access is a blunt tool that ignores the benefits and punishes children.

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<sup>1</sup> This research relates to 8-17-year-olds, who said they felt this most or all of the time. Ofcom (2024) Children and Parents: Media Use and Attitudes Report. Available at: [Children and parents: media use and attitudes report 2024 - Ofcom](#)

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**Figure 1: Voice of Online Youth's reasons for supporting under 16s access to smartphones**



Access to the online world is particularly important for some groups of children and young people. For example, for LGBTQ+ children, online spaces and online allies are an important part of their support network and help them to feel part of a community.<sup>2</sup> Neurodiverse children and young people benefit from using the internet to support learning and interacting with their peers.<sup>3</sup> Limiting access to these spaces for children risks further marginalising already vulnerable groups.

Under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, children and young people have fundamental rights which should be reflected in their lives – whether on or offline – including the rights to access information, to express themselves and their views, to have their privacy respected (as well as to be protected from harm so they are safe). The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has been clear that states (including the UK) must ensure “*all children have equal and effective access to the digital environment in ways that are meaningful for them*” and notes the risk that “*children may be discriminated against by their being excluded from using digital technologies*”.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Berger, M. et al. “Social Media Use and Health and Well-Being of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Youth: Systematic Review.” *Journal of Medical Internet Research* 24, no. 9 (September 21, 2022): e38449. <https://doi.org/10.2196/38449>.

<sup>3</sup> Cerebra (2015) [Learning Disabilities, Autism and Internet Safety: A Guide for Parents](#). The Society has partnered with NCB to understand the online experiences of neurodivergent children and young people.

<sup>4</sup> UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2021) [General comment No. 25 \(2021\) on children’s rights in relation to the digital environment](#). Contains 11 Principles for a child-rights approach

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The online world can also offer vital access to confidential advice and support. Almost three quarters of Childline’s counselling sessions take place through online messaging and emails. This approach allows children to feel more comfortable discussing their problems and disclosing harms. Using personal devices, like smartphones, can help children and young people to feel more comfortable discussing problems and disclosing harm.

### **As well as benefits, the online world also carries risks to children’s safety.**

The scale of risk and harm that children continue to face online is unacceptable. Many tech companies have rolled out apps and features without children’s safety in mind, meaning children continue to be at risk of sexual abuse and exploitation, and have dangerous and inappropriate material pushed to them through algorithms on a daily basis. There has been some research that explores on the risks and benefits of social media and smartphones to children’s mental health and the impacts of excessive use, but evidence remains inconclusive. Moreover, based on available evidence, the clearest risks to children’s mental health linked to social media and smartphones appear to stem from the types of content they see and from dangerous interactions. The implementation of the UK Online Safety Act will play a significant role in addressing these types of harm, as services will be required to ensure that children cannot access harmful material, including through algorithms and appropriate age assurance mechanisms. There is also significant scope for other risks posed by online services to be addressed through better regulation – such as tackling harmful design features like ‘endless scrolling’.

Considerations for bans are thus highly complex and must draw on and carefully consider existing evidence while simultaneously listening to children. As set out in Figure 1, the NSPCC’s Voice of Online Youth raised concerns that restrictions risk creating a more secretive culture around phone and social media use, that might mean more problems go unaddressed. A balanced view thus needs to carefully breakdown and consider:

- What exactly is putting children at risk and how? This must take a holistic rights-based view of children’s wellbeing;
- How social media and smartphones can be designed with their safety in mind and how can we regulate and enforce that regulation to ensure this is delivered?
- What practical steps can be taken by families and schools and what support do they need?
- What do children want and need from solutions to keep them safe?

The NSPCC is concerned that bans represent a blunt tool that could result in an array of unintended consequences including:

- Engendering secrecy and intensifying risk;
- Driving children and young people to less secure, unregulated or less regulated spaces which may expose them to even greater risks and harms;

## **MAE POB PLENTYNDOD WERTH BRWYDRO DROSTO EVERY CHILDHOOD IS WORTH FIGHTING FOR**

- Limiting access to educational resources and opportunities for shared learning, growth, creativity and exposure to new information and ideas;
- Disempowering young people and hindering their ability to develop crucial technological and digital literacy skills;
- Making children wary of or avoid reporting abuse online for fear of being in trouble.

We must not punish young people for the failures of tech companies to properly embed child safety into the services they design. Our concern is that placing an emphasis on bans risks diluting focus, letting tech companies off the hook and undermining steps towards greater regulation and safety by design. For more information on our key positions on the delivery and enforcement of robust regulation and additional measures required for safety by design please see details in our response to Ofcom's Protecting Children from Harms Online Consultation.<sup>5</sup>

I look forward to hearing the outcome and receiving the report and recommendations of the Senedd Petition Committee's consideration of [P-06-1482 Ban smartphones in all schools in Wales with exemptions for exceptional circumstances](#) on 20<sup>th</sup> January. Should the Committee require any further information or clarification, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



**Cecile Gwilym**  
Policy and Public Affairs Manager

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<sup>5</sup> Available at: [ofcom\\_protecting\\_children\\_consultation\\_NSPCC\\_exec\\_summary](#)

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Petitions Committee - **P-06-1482 Ban smartphones in all schools in Wales with exemptions for exceptional circumstances**

Barnardo's Cymru Written Evidence

Children can be subject to devastating harm online, including exploitation and abuse, and exposure to harmful and damaging content, which can harm children's mental health and perceptions of relationships and sex. There are also concerns about children receiving smartphones at a younger age, and spending longer on them. The average age that a child receives their own smartphone is around 10 years old<sup>1</sup> – when children start to transition to secondary school. However, Ofcom research has found that almost a quarter of children aged 5-7 years old have their own smartphone.<sup>2</sup> Children's screentime tends to increase as they get older, with children aged 7-8 years old spending on average 2 hours 54 minutes online each day, and 15-16 year olds spending on average 4 hours 54 minutes online each day.<sup>3</sup>

However, there are also a myriad of benefits that children can experience when online – including connecting with family and friends, for entertainment, developing their own identity, and as a tool for education.

- *Should there be a single national policy, or should schools decide for themselves?*

Barnardo's believes it is important that a nuanced approach is taken to ensuring children's online safety. We believe the onus needs to be put on technology platforms to make their services safe for children and remove harmful content. We would also support steps to make smartphones safer for children by adding default settings.

We urge political parties to listen to the voices and experiences of children and young people to understand how they would like regulation to look.

Barnardo's does not support a ban on smartphones for children as we do not believe it is enforceable or practical and also would not have much of an effect. Currently, in practice children cannot buy their own smartphones – they are unable to have a contract until above the age of 18, and so in the vast majority of instances it is their parents who purchase their smartphone. We are also concerned that 'bans' on smartphones could prevent children from seeking help from their parents/ carers or other trusted adults should they experience online harms.

We do think that options could be explored to ensure that phones are safer for children – for example the introduction of default settings and age assurance through App Stores to prevent children downloading apps that are not age-appropriate for them. However, this must ensure

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.kidscape.org.uk/news-and-blogs/2022/december/at-what-age-should-i-give-my-child-a-phone>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/news-centre/2024/a-window-into-young-childrens-online-worlds>

<sup>3</sup> <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/45128/documents/223543/default/>

safety for all children. We know that many children receive and use second-hand devices, for example, which would not be equipped with the new regulations to ensure online safety.

*Is the evidence in favour of a ban compelling? Or not?*

The evidence creates a compelling case for a wider conversation, ensuring that the voices and views of children and young people are central to this, but we are not convinced that this automatically leads to enough evidence to make a ban compelling. One clear omission from the discourse on smartphones in schools is the voices of children and young people.

*What would the downsides of a ban be?*

- There is the potential for unintended consequences, such as the implications for drawing a hard line between student's online lives and their lives in schools. We know that secondary school pupils told Estyn as part of the *We Don't Tell Our Teachers*<sup>4</sup> report that digital spaces were the most prevalent for sexual bullying and harassment to take place. However, they also shared that although this did not happen in schools but outside of school and was then taken in to school to teachers by children wishing to report their concerns. Barnardo's practitioners shared their concerns that a blanket ban may discourage children from taking anything linked to digital safeguarding into school, that they may see this as separate and not something they can or should seek support from education staff about.
- Impact on diverse groups of young people such as young carers and children and young people with medical or mental health needs. Young carers told us that they already feel uncomfortable disclosing their status as a young carer, losing access to their phone could make it even more difficult for them to attend school consistently if they cannot be in touch with family throughout the day as needed, and using the school office phone, often overheard by others, has previously made young carers feel uncomfortable.

*What would be the practical implementation issues?*

- What would the impact be on children living in rural communities whose families rely on them being contactable for long journeys to and from school which could include multiple buses or a long walk?
- Are schools resourced well enough to make a blanket ban work in practice? Would phones have to be stored during the day? How could this be done securely?

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<sup>4</sup> Estyn - We don't tell our teachers – Experiences of peer-on-peer sexual harassment among secondary school pupils in Wales. Dec 2021 <https://estyn.gov.wales/improvement-resources/we-dont-tell-our-teachers-experiences-of-peer-on-peer-sexual-harassment-among-secondary-school-pupils-in-wales-2/>



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Newid Bywydau.  
Changing childhoods.  
Changing lives.

- There would also need to be consideration around exemptions for exceptional circumstances; what are these, and how would they work practically? There could also be consequences for children allowed smartphones within their peer group, for example, if it identifies them as a young carer despite their wish not to be widely identified as such.

*What would be your recommendation to Welsh Government on this petition/issue?*

To take active steps to ensure that the voices of children and young people are central to the inquiry and Welsh Government's decision-making.

Ensure that any conversation about smartphones in schools runs alongside a conversation about regulating online spaces so that children can access the online world safely, with robust measures in place that safeguard them from dangerous and harmful content and communications. We cannot treat these two issues as though they are separate.

Ultimately, children's experiences online are nuanced. To ensure that children are safe online, it is therefore important that a **nuanced and balanced approach** is taken, which ensures the protection of **all children**. The onus of children's safety should be on the technology companies and platforms that have designed services that are not safe for children, rather than excluding children from vital technologies.

P-06-1482 Ban smartphones in all schools in Wales with exemptions for exceptional circumstances- Correspondence from Rob Davies of Pembrokeshire Council, 17 January 2025

Stats below from a survey of 52 staff and 212 pupils across 4 of our secondary schools:

- **Key findings from the staff survey:**

- 96% of staff reported improved pupil concentration during lessons.
- 94% observed fewer behavioural challenges in lessons.
- 63% noted fewer behavioural challenges during breaks, lunchtimes, and transitions between lessons.
- 88% believed the policy positively impacted the overall wellbeing of the school community.
- 33% felt that pupils' resilience had improved.
- 80% of staff reported feeling safer due to the policy.
- 92% observed positive reactions from parents regarding the policy change.
- 98% of staff agreed that the policy was a positive development overall.

- **Key findings from the pupil survey:**

- 48% of pupils felt that school was a better environment without phones.
- 64% reported talking to more peers during breaks and lunchtimes.
- 25% thought there was less bullying in school.
- 45% found it easier to concentrate in lessons.
- 65% expressed missing the use of phones for schoolwork.
- 30% reported feeling worried about not being able to check their phones.
- 50% said that their parents were pleased with the new policy.
- 40% felt that they learned better since the policy's implementation.

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