

Programme for Government 2025-26: Impact Assessments

May 2025

Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (CRWIA) for Programme for Government 2025-26

Disclaimer

This document is a point in time assessment of the likely effects of the above-named proposal on the rights and wellbeing of children and young people. This impact assessment should be read in conjunction with other impact assessments prepared for this proposal.

Scottish Government acknowledge the importance of monitoring and evaluating the impact of strategic decisions and legislation on children's rights and wellbeing. Any information gathered during implementation of the legislation or strategic decision to which the impact assessment relates, will be used to inform future determinations of impact. Any new strategic decision or new legislation (including amending legislation) would be subject to a new CRWIA in line with the legislative requirements.

Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment Template

1. Brief Summary

Type of proposal:

- Decision of a strategic nature relating to the rights and wellbeing of children

Name the proposal, and describe its overall aims and intended purpose.

The Programme for Government 2025-2026 (PfG) is an outline of actions that the Scottish Government intends to take over the upcoming year to meet the four priorities determined by the First Minister:

- Growing the Economy
- Eradicating Child Poverty
- Tackling the Climate Emergency
- Ensuring High Quality and Sustainable Public Services

These four priorities span across portfolios and therefore contain actions from a range of directorates within Scottish Government and its Executive Agencies.

While this CRWIA provides a high-level overview and assesses the potential impacts arising from the Programme for Government, the approach to the delivery of commitments in the PfG should be informed by individual CRWIAs as required under

the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024.

Start date of proposal's development: 24 March 2025

Start date of CRWIA process: 1 April 2025

2. With reference given to the requirements of the UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024, which aspects of the proposal are relevant to/impact upon children's rights?

The PfG provides a clear articulation of the Scottish Government's priorities over the coming year, focussing on actions that we will deliver, with our partners, over the next 12 months. The combined set of commitments under each of the four priorities within the PfG are relevant to, and will impact upon, children's rights. In particular UNCRC Articles 2, 3, 5, 6, 9, 12, 13, 15, 16, 18, 19, 23, 24, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 33, 40.

3. Please provide a summary of the evidence gathered which will be used to inform your decision-making and the content of the proposal

Scottish Government portfolios were asked to provide an assessment of impacts of proposed commitments, including whether and how they would impact upon children's rights and wellbeing. The evidence provided for these actions relied on a mix of evidence from research and reports, feedback from stakeholders and consultation with children and young people.

In addition to this assessment, meetings were held to discuss the PfG with a number of organisations representing the views of children and young people, particularly in relation to actions on child poverty. Consideration was also given to priorities which have been highlighted by children and young people in direct discussion with the Scottish Government; to invest in and protect youth work services, end gender-based violence, and increase mental health training and education. These priorities align well with the Scottish Government's own priorities.

4. Further to the evidence described at '3' have you identified any 'gaps' in evidence which may prevent determination of impact? If yes, please provide an explanation of how they will be addressed

There were no gaps in evidence that prevented the determination of overall impact of the PfG. However, as decisions are made about the delivery of the commitments that are relevant to children's rights, further engagement with children and young people will be carried out and, as the details of the proposals develop, individual CRWIAs will be required in relation to relevant strategic decisions and proposed legislation at the appropriate time.

5. Analysis of Evidence

The actions set out within the PfG are likely to have a positive impact on a number of children's rights, as set out against each priority below.

Growing the Economy

We expect the actions set out within this chapter to:

- Remove barriers to parental employment.
- Provide multi-year funding to cultural organisations and increase availability of cultural opportunities for young children.
- Address inequalities in, and remove barriers to, the labour market.

While few of the actions set out within this chapter are expected to have a direct impact on children and young people, through the creation of more job opportunities and improvements to the overall economy of Scotland, these actions are likely to have a positive, indirect impact on children's rights.

Eradicating Child Poverty

We expect actions set out within this chapter to:

- Increase financial security and reduced parental stress, leading to improved family wellbeing and mitigating the impact of poverty for babies and newborns.
- Support healthy early child development.
- Support the provision of suitable accommodation, improve housing standards, and reduce temporary accommodation for children.
- Reduce child poverty through public sector reform approaches.
- Improve health outcomes for children.

Tackling the Climate Emergency

We expect the actions set out within this chapter to:

- Promote sustainable development activity and improve health, wellbeing and prosperity of individuals and communities.
- Contribute to alleviating fuel poverty.
- Bring benefits to Island communities, including economic benefits and improvements to housing.

Ensuring High Quality and Sustainable Public Services

We expect the actions set out within this chapter to:

- Take a whole family approach to our National Mission on Drugs.
- Provide neonatal services for women and babies.
- Improve mental health services, reducing the likelihood of trauma or negative experiences.
- Support early intervention to prevent violence and reduce its harm.
- Support work on anti-social behaviour.
- Support improvements to the criminal justice system.
- Improve educational outcomes for children and young people affected by poverty.

- Support increased take up of school aged childcare.
- Ensure children and young people are well educated and skilled.

6. What changes (if any) have been made to the proposal as a result of this assessment?

The content of the PfG has been updated to take account of relevant inputs as the document and assessment have been developed.

Conclusion

7. As a result of the evidence gathered and analysed against all UNCRC requirements, what is the potential overall impact of this proposal on children's rights?

Delivery of the actions contained within the PfG is assessed as having a likely overall positive impact on children's rights.

8. If you have identified a positive impact on children's rights, please describe below how the proposal will protect, respect, and fulfil children's rights in Scotland.

As set out above, our evidence suggests a number of actions set out under the four priorities will have a positive impact on children's rights by, directly or indirectly, furthering the realisation and enjoyment of children's rights in Scotland.

Growing the Economy

The commitments in this chapter have the potential to strengthen access to the following rights:

- Adequate standard of living (Article 27)
- Leisure, play and culture (Article 31)

Eradicating Child Poverty

The commitments in this chapter have the potential to strengthen access to the following rights:

- Non-discrimination (Article 2)
- Best interests of the child (Article 3)
- Parental guidance (Article 5)
- Life, survival and development (Article 6)
- Respect for the views of the child (Article 12)
- Parental responsibilities and state assistance (Article 18)
- Protection from violence, abuse and neglect (Article 19)
- Children with disabilities (Article 23)
- Health and health services (Article 24)
- Social Security (Article 26)
- Adequate Standard of Living (Article 27)

- Right to education (Article 28)
- Goals of education (Article 29)
- Leisure, play and culture (Article 31)
- Respect for higher national standards (Article 41)

Tackling the Climate Emergency

The commitments in this chapter have the potential to strengthen access to the following rights:

- Non-discrimination (Article 2)
- Best interests of the child (Article 3)
- Implementation of the convention (Article 4)
- Life, survival and development (Article 6)
- Freedom of expression (Article 13)
- Children with disabilities (Article 23)
- Health and health services (Article 24)
- Adequate Standard of Living (Article 27)
- Goals of education (Article 29)
- Leisure, play and culture (Article 31)

Ensuring High Quality and Sustainable Public Services

The commitments in this chapter have the potential to strengthen access to the following rights:

- Non-discrimination (Article 2)
- Best interests of the child (Article 3)
- Parental guidance (Article 5)
- Life, survival and development (Article 6)
- The right not to be separated from parents unless it is in the child's best interests (Article 9)
- Respect for the views of the child (Article 12)
- Freedom of expression (Article 13)
- Freedom of association (Article 15)
- Right to privacy (Article 16)
- Parental responsibilities and state assistance (Article 18)
- Protection from violence, abuse and neglect (Article 19)
- Children with disabilities (Article 23)
- Health and health services (Article 24)
- Social Security (Article 26)
- Adequate Standard of Living (Article 27)
- Right to education (Article 28)
- Goals of education (Article 29)
- Right to use the language, customs and religion of their family (Article 30)
- Leisure, play and culture (Article 31)
- Protection from drug abuse (Article 33)
- Juvenile Justice (Article 40)

9. If a negative impact has been identified please describe it below. Is there a risk this could potentially amount to an incompatibility?

No negative impacts have been identified. Delivery of the actions set out within the PfG should be informed by individual CRWIAs as required under the UNCRC Act. If any negative impacts are identified as the detail of the policies is developed, mitigations in relation to these should be considered and recorded in the relevant CRWIA

10. As a result of the evidence gathered and analysed against all wellbeing indicators, will the proposal contribute to the wellbeing of children and young people in Scotland?

Safe:	Yes
Healthy:	Yes
Achieving:	Yes
Nurtured:	Yes
Active:	Yes
Respected:	Yes
Responsible:	Yes
Included:	Yes

We have mapped the UNCRC articles to the Wellbeing Indicators and, in doing so, identified how each priority area will contribute to the wellbeing of children and young people.

Growing the Economy

The commitments set out to progress the Growing the Economy priority will support children and young people's wellbeing by contributing to the following indicators: Nurtured, Active, Included.

Eradicating Child Poverty

The commitments set out to progress the Eradicating Child Poverty priority will support children and young people's wellbeing by contributing to the following indicators: Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible, Included.

Tackling the Climate Emergency

The commitments set out to progress the Tackling the Climate Emergency priority will support children and young people's wellbeing by contributing to the following indicators: Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Included.

Ensuring High Quality and Sustainable Public Services

The commitments set out to progress the Ensuring High Quality and Sustainable Public Services priority will support children and young people's wellbeing by contributing to the following indicators: Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible, Included.

11. How will you communicate to children and young people the impact that the proposal will have on their rights?

A copy of this CRWIA will be published on Gov.scot. Care has been taken to use plain English in the drafting of this CRWIA so that it is published in an accessible format.

Policy teams will continue to meet with children and young people who engaged with the Scottish Government and ensure they are aware of the CRWIA.

Post Assessment Review and sign-off

12. Planning for the review of impact on children's rights and wellbeing

Ongoing monitoring of the impact on children's rights of the various commitments in the PfG will be undertaken, with an overview of plans for this set out in individual CRWIAs.

13. Sign off

Policy Lead Signature & Date of Sign Off: Strategy Division, 8 May 2025

Director Signature & Date of Sign Off: Lisa McGuinness, 9 May 2025

Date CRWIA team first contacted: 27 March 2025

Programme for Government 2025-2026: Consumer Duty Compliance Statement

The Scottish Ministers have been designated as a relevant public authority for the purposes of the consumer duty by the Consumer Scotland Act 2020 (Relevant Public Authorities) Regulations 2024. This means that the Scottish Government must meet the following four requirements of the Consumer Scotland Act 2020:

- When making decisions of a strategic nature, have regard to the impact those decisions have on consumers in Scotland
- When making decisions of a strategic nature, have regard to the desirability of reducing harm to consumers in Scotland
- Publish information about the steps taken to meet the duty
- Have regard to any Consumer Scotland guidance about the duty

The consumer duty seeks to ensure that consumers are at the heart of all strategic decisions within the Scottish Government. Authorities are encouraged by Consumer Scotland to take a flexible, proportionate, and targeted approach to meeting the duty.

As with similar publications of its type, the Programme for Government (PfG) collectively constitutes a 'strategic decision', even if each of the various policies contained within it may not. In meeting the duty, the Scottish Ministers have considered the overall potential impact of portfolio areas and the cumulative expected impact of the PfG.

The Scottish Ministers have complied with the requirements of the 2020 Act in deciding on the PfG for 2025-2026. This statement sets out the steps taken to comply with the duty. The following impact assessment has been carried out:

Stage 1 – Planning

1. Is this a decision of a strategic nature? **Yes**

The Programme for Government 2025-2026 (PfG) is an outline of actions that the Scottish Government intends to take over the coming year to meet the four priorities determined by the First Minister and sets out an offer to the people of Scotland to improve upon the areas reflected by the priorities. The overall aim of the PfG is to present a suite of actions that, when taken collectively, will address each of the four priorities. These four priorities span across portfolios and therefore contain actions from a range of directorates within Scottish Government. The priorities and their aims are as follows:

Growing the Economy is required as an immediate action to tackle the huge economic uncertainty faced by Scotland, and globally. The aim of this priority is to protect Scotland's people from the economic uncertainty they face and the disastrous impacts it can have on their lives.

Eradicating Child Poverty remains the central mission of the Scottish Government. The aim of this priority within the context of the PfG is to outline the actions that will impact on eradicating child poverty and addressing the key root causes of child poverty

Tackling the Climate Emergency, in the face of economic challenges and increasing climate scepticism, is more important than ever. The aim of this priority within the context of the PfG is to outline the actions that Scottish Government will take to address the climate emergency, and tackle the twin crises of climate change and nature loss.

Delivering High Quality and Sustainable Public Services is a priority for the Scottish Government as our public services are fundamental in delivering the action that will be taken to eradicate child poverty, grow the economy, and tackle the climate emergency. The aim of this priority is to equip public services to deliver for people when they need them.

As a key, high-level decision taken by the Scottish Ministers that sets out the Scottish Government's proposed actions to deliver on their priorities over the coming Parliamentary year, the PfG is considered to be a decision of a strategic nature.

2. Is the strategic decision likely to have an impact on any/all consumers? **Yes**

Consideration has been given to whether the PfG is likely to have an impact on any or all consumers. As the PfG comprises proposed actions to deliver on the Scottish Ministers' priorities, including as to the allocation of resources to public services, it will have an impact on the users of those public services. Users of public services are consumers for the purposes of the consumer duty.

Stage 2 – Evidence Gathering

3. What is the proposal trying to achieve?

As above, the PfG presents a suite of actions that, when taken collectively, are intended to address the four priorities of the Scottish Government.

In terms of gathering evidence, internal processes ensured engagement across the different policy teams within the Scottish Government. Each policy area was provided with information on the consumer duty and a commission was issued to gather evidence. The commission contained specific questions surrounding the cumulative impact on consumers, whether the consumer duty had been had regard to during the policy development process and any specific instances of potential harm to consumers.

The information received from this commission forms the basis of the analysis of impact set out below.

4. What are the impacts on consumers?

The PfG will impact upon how the public engage with essential services; how consumer data is used; consumer protections in place; the availability of information available to consumers; and making it easier for consumers to seek advice or raise complaints. Commitments to better align services, including for vulnerable families, may have implications for how consumers interact with public services and we will continue to assess how this will impact consumers as the policy is further developed.

PfG comprises a large number of proposed actions. Although every policy within PfG has been considered, the following examples illustrate how consumers will be impacted and have been considered in the overall assessment of the potential impacts.

We've committed funding this year to improve digital connectivity. This approach will support consumers in some of our hardest to reach communities by connecting their homes and businesses thus improving the overall service.

PfG commits to the abolition of peak rail fares permanently from 1 September 2025 to encourage more people to travel by train, reduce car journeys and help existing peak time rail passengers with the cost of living.

In social security, the provision of funding for free income maximisation and debt advice will improve the service for consumers, helping them get access to the advice they need to reduce their costs and increase their income from social security including:

- Supporting 105 organisations, in 33 partnerships, to provide financial advice for people in accessible settings like hospitals and community centres.
- Investing an extra £2.2 million to support the expansion of tailored advice on council tax debt across Scotland – building on a successful pilot that has already helped over 1,600 people with council tax arrears.

A number of commitments outline a specific focus on ensuring vulnerable consumers benefit from efforts to grow the economy. These consumers may be currently living in poverty, disabled, a racialised minority, a worker over 50, a woman or an elderly person living in a rural area. These commitments include:

- Investing in Communities Fund
- Specialist Employability Support
- Flexible working and support for disabled workers

By offering a more targeted support we're improving the experience of service users, particularly those vulnerable groups.

5. Is it likely that harm will be experienced by consumers as a result of this proposal?

It is considered unlikely that there will be any increase in harm to consumers as a result of the overall package of commitments in PfG. Where there is a risk that harm may result (as defined in the Consumer Scotland guidance on page 29) consideration has been given to alternative options that reduce that harm at a strategic level.

Stage 3 – Assessment and Improvement of Proposal

6. What is the expected impact of the strategic decision on consumers in Scotland?

Based on an analysis of the cumulative impact of all of the proposals comprising the PfG, it is expected that the impact of the PfG will overall be positive for consumers.

7. Has Scottish Government had due regard to the desirability of reducing harm to consumers in Scotland? **Yes**

Each portfolio area was asked to consider the desirability of reducing harm to consumers and consider whether the commitments put forward within their portfolio area meet the criteria required in the guidance.

All portfolio areas confirmed that there was no expectation of harm arising from any of the commitments put forward for inclusion in the PfG. Some, as detailed above, actively reduce harm to consumers.

From this analysis, the Scottish Ministers can be satisfied that due regard has been given to the desirability of reducing harm to consumers within the context of the PfG.

8. Is there a need for further engagement with consumers?

Further engagement will be needed as part of standard policy development. Individual policy areas are responsible for engaging with consumers in relation to their specific policy areas and commitments in the PfG.

Stage 4 – Decision

9. Has Scottish Government met the consumer duty for this decision? **Yes**

10. If yes to above, explain how?

In the process of carrying out this impact assessment, the cumulative package of commitments included in the PfG has been examined for potential impacts on consumers in Scotland. Regard has accordingly been had to the impact of the PfG on consumers in Scotland, and to the desirability of reducing harm to them.

This means that we have put consumer outcomes at the heart of our strategic decision making.

Stage 5 – Publication and Review

Section 23 of the 2020 Act requires public authorities to publish information about the steps which they have taken to meet the duty. The authority must publish the information no later than 12 months after the end of period to which it relates.

This statement will be published www.gov.scot on 14 May 2025

How will the process carried out be reviewed and evaluated?

The impact assessment carried out will be subject to review and evaluation within 12 months of publication using the [template](#) found at the Consumer Scotland website.

Programme for Government 2025-26

Island Communities Statement

With regards to islands impacts, the impact of policies on island communities is being considered as part of development of individual policies. Whilst regard has been had to the impact on island communities, it is the view of the Scottish Government that overall the Programme for Government 2025 is unlikely to have an effect on an island community which is significantly different from its effect on other communities. In relation to individual policy areas it is the view of the Scottish Government that, at the point of developing the Programme for Government 2025, any effects on an island community which may be significantly different from its effect on other communities (including other island communities) will be known in greater detail when the policies are developed.

For these reasons, an islands community impact assessment (ICIA) has not been completed and published for the Programme for Government 2025-26, however policy areas will continue to consider the impact on island communities and, if appropriate, carry out ICIA's for individual policies as these develop.

8 May 2025



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The Scottish Government
St Andrew's House
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EH1 3DG

ISBN: 978-1-83691-640-6 (web only)

Published by The Scottish Government, May 2025

Produced for The Scottish Government by APS Group Scotland, 21 Tennant Street, Edinburgh EH6 5NA
PPDAS1586294 (05/25)

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