

# **Children and Young People's Voices Matter: Progress Report - March 2022**

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Cabinet members and children and young  
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#### **1. Introduction**

The sixth annual meeting of Cabinet members and children and young people was held virtually on 1 March 2022. In attendance were 7 Members of the Children's Parliament (MCPs) and 7 Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament (MSYPs). At this meeting MCPs and MSYPs represented children and young people's views from across Scotland and talked about issues that were important to them.

Seven Members of the Children’s Parliament (MCPs) attended. They were Rida (11), Aberdeen; Tate (10) Aberdeen; Sam (11) Western Isles; Chiara (12) Western Isles; Michael (10) Clackmannanshire; Harry (11) Clackmannanshire; Waldah (11) Clackmannanshire.

Seven Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament (MSYPs) also attended. They were: Josh Kennedy, Chair, Renfrewshire North and West; Sophie Reid, Trustee, Girlguiding Scotland; Rosie Sumsion, Trustee, Midlothian North and Musselburgh; Cameron Garrett, Convenor, Argyle and Bute; Mollie McGoran, Convener & Trustee, Inverness and Nairn; Jack Bell, Convener, Perthshire South and Kinross-shire; Wiktoria Orlicka, Trustee, Motherwell and Wishaw.

The Cabinet Takeover meeting is an example of the Scottish Government’s commitment to Article 12 within the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) which states children and young people have the right to be heard and influence decisions on matters that affect them. The Scottish Government remains committed to the incorporation of the UNCRC as far as possible within devolved competence and to doing that as soon as practicable. We have made significant progress across many areas set out in the: [Progressing the human rights of children in Scotland: action plan 2021 to 2024 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#). An update on progress made was included in our standalone [Position Statement](#), which was published on World Children’s Day in November 2022. A [child-friendly version](#) of this report was also published at that time.

Everyone agreed on a set of 9 Commitments for the year ahead which have been taken forward by the Scottish Government. This report highlights the main areas of progress on these commitments; however, it does not include all activity that has taken place. We would like to thank everyone who has supported this important work over the last year.

## 2. Agreed Commitments

1 - We will continue to engage and keep children and young people fully up to date with the timing of the UNCRC Bill and its implementation.

The Minister for Children and Young People [wrote](#) to all children and young people to coincide with World Children's Day and reinforced our commitment to bring the UNCRC Bill back to Parliament.

The timetable for bringing the Bill back to Parliament for Reconsideration Stage cannot yet be confirmed but preparations are well underway. Preparations for Reconsideration Stage include engagement with UK Government officials on proposed amendments to bring the Bill within legislative competence and to reduce the risk of another referral to the Supreme Court. We keep children and young people up to date on progress.

2 - We will continue to make awareness raising of children's rights a high priority.

Awareness raising of the UNCRC is being delivered to children and young people through UNICEF UK's Rights Respecting School Award, national funding that is currently provided by the Scottish Government as part of the UNCRC Implementation Programme. Young Scot have supported a social media campaign, run, and delivered by young people. We have also worked with young people from Parent Network Scotland, Partners in Advocacy, Renfrewshire Youth Services and Young Carers to develop an animation on how their rights might be met by public authorities. [Children's Rights and the UNCRC in Scotland: An exploration of rights in our communities](#)

A new resource [Children's rights | Parent Club](#) designed by parents' organisations was launched. It gives simple and clear messaging around children's rights specifically aimed at parents, carers, and families.

The Scottish Government is working to ensure public authorities are fully aware of their duties under the UNCRC Bill. It has provided a range of resources and funded the Improvement Service to provide resources through their Knowledge Hub and run training and professional peer support networks for local authority UNCRC leads and Elected members.

3 - We will consider practical ways in which we will translate Children's Rights into reality, with particular reference to: mental health of young people; and promoting gender equality in schools.

In Summer 2022 the Scottish Government ran a public consultation on school uniforms. SYP and CP held workshops to gain views from children and young people which informed what could be done to help with the cost of uniforms, and how pupils can be treated equitably in relation to school uniform policy.

We worked to broker direct engagement with Scottish Women's Football (SWF) and Children's Parliament. A letter from Aileen Campbell (SWF Board) to MCPs outlined

their vision for Football in Scotland, underpinned by the values of respect, fairness, and kindness.

In 2022 we provided £10 million to support summer holiday activities and childcare for low-income families and those who would most benefit. Summer holiday activities and childcare are part of a wider system of school age childcare. This gives children and young people access to lots of different activities, where they can try out new things, play in a safe place, learn new skills, grow their confidence, and meet and get to know other children and young people and adults who they can trust to support them. It also helps their parents and carers to work, learn or rest.

We will be designing changes to this system by working with the children, young people and adults who will use and deliver it. So far, we have asked children and young people from different parts of Scotland to write a Children's Charter for school age childcare. The Charter describes what children and young people want and need before school, after school and during the school holidays, and the changes to the system that they would like to see. We will share it in early 2023.

The Gender Equality Taskforce in Education and Learning welcomed the publication on 7 October 2022 of the reports developed in collaboration by The Collective, the Children's Parliament and the Scottish Youth Parliament. The [Theory of Change report](#) shines a light on the systemic gender inequality which girls and young women continue to experience in schools today. It was tested against the work conducted in parallel by the [Children's Parliament](#) and [Scottish Youth Parliament](#) on how we can ensure the Scottish education system is truly gender equal. The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, Shirley-Anne Somerville has taken up the position of Taskforce Chair, helping to drive forward systemic change, based on the recommendations made in the reports. In due course she will co-chair the Taskforce with a young person.

The [Learning Estate Strategy](#) and its guiding principles provide a platform for investment in the learning estate across Scotland and sets out our strategic approach for managing the learning estate.

The Strategy also makes clear that outdoor learning and the use of outdoor learning environments should be maximised and that good consultation about learning environments, direct engagement with learners and communities about their needs and experiences, and an involvement in decision making processes should lead to better outcomes for all.

[4 - We will continue to engage with the Scottish Youth Parliament and other youth partner organisations on the Gender Recognition Reform \(Scotland\) Bill as it progresses through the Parliament and will work to ensure a positive and respectful debate around it.](#)

We meet regularly with representatives from LGBT Youth Scotland as part of our liaison with key stakeholders. We have also engaged in discussions with the National Registers of Scotland with a view to gain input from young people during the design phase of the required application forms and processes. This work ran in

parallel to the parliamentary progress of the Bill and will continue now that the Bill has passed.

The Scottish Parliament debated and passed the Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill on 22 December 2022, with a large majority vote of 86 for, 39 against, with no abstentions. Members across all political parties supported the Bill.

Throughout the Parliamentary process, the Scottish Government agreed to ensure that appropriate support and signposting to resources would be made available. The Scottish Government supported amendments at Stages 2 and 3 which provided reassurance that appropriate information and support will be in place for young people aged 16 and 17 seeking legal gender recognition, without introducing unnecessary barriers to them accessing their rights.

We are aware that the Secretary of State for Scotland has made an order under section 35 of the Scotland Act 1998. The Scottish Government is confident in the legislation as passed and maintains the position that there is a clear and pressing need for gender recognition reform.

[5 - We will do more to challenge behaviour that results in abuse, harassment and attacks against women and girls; think more about how women's safety can be incorporated into our planning decisions; and as outlined in the Programme for Government, we will consider and act swiftly on Baroness Helena Kennedy QC's report on misogyny.](#)

The impact of misogyny is felt by women and girls across Scotland. In March 2022, Baroness Kennedy QC published a report which made clear the negative impact misogyny has and recommended creating new criminal offences relating to misogyny. In April 2022, the Scottish Government responded by announcing a full consultation on these proposals. In the first half of 2023, a Scottish Government consultation will be published. Feedback will be used to shape a piece of legislation to be brought before the Scottish Parliament before the end of this session of Parliament (before 2026).

[6 - We will continue to engage with SYP on the issues related to Assisted Dying as and when appropriate.](#)

Liam McArthur MSP lodged his final proposal for Assisted Dying for Terminally Ill Adults (Scotland) Bill on 8 September 2022. The final proposal is for a bill to enable competent adults who are terminally ill to be provided at their request with assistance to end their life and to provide for the collection and reporting of relevant data.

A report of the public consultation outcome was published alongside the final proposal. With over 14,000 responses, it includes many shared experiences of people who have cared for family and friends at the end of their life. Mr McArthur has secured sufficient cross-party support to introduce the Bill.

Liam McArthur MSP also invited a group of senior healthcare practitioners to form a working group (Medical Advisory Group) to advise and inform the process ahead of the final bill being drafted. Dr Sandesh Gulhane MSP (Chair of the Medical Advisory

Group) submitted a report in November 2022, which can be found here: [Assisted Dying Consultation – Consultation on Assisted Dying for Terminally Ill Adults \(Scotland\) Bill](#). The Scottish Government will carefully consider the substance of any Bill that is introduced.

7 - We will continue to address the drug deaths crisis as a Public Health Issue, and we commit to working together to ensure that the voices of young people are heard as we take forward our National Mission to save and improve lives. We will continue to engage with the detail of the Member's Bill as it progresses.

The Scottish Government are working with an expert group to improve services for young people who use drugs. We have sought their preferences for accessing support and the barriers they face in getting help. We are working to engage with young people, using a co-design approach, to develop standards of service specifically tailored to meet the needs of children and young people.

The Scottish Government will give the proposals for a Right to Recovery Bill a fair hearing and will consider the detail of a draft legislation once it is made available.

We support the need to get more people into treatment and recovery that is right for them. As well as progressing the reconsideration of the UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill, the Scottish Government is developing a new Human Rights Bill which will give effect (as far as possible within devolved competence) in Scots law to a range of internationally recognised human rights. Both Bills will incorporate the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.

In January 2022, the First Minister appointed Professor Alan Miller to lead on establishing a National Collaborative which will bring together people affected by drugs and alcohol, including families, and those with responsibility to provide services to integrate human rights into the design, delivery and regulation of drug and alcohol policy and services.

8 - We will continue to put children and young people's voices at the heart of our approach to assessment in Education.

The Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment has committed to engage with learners throughout the lifetime of the Review and is actively seeking the views of children and young people on the future of qualifications and assessment in the senior phase. Two MSYPs are members of the Independent Review Group (IRG) and have attended and actively participated. The MSYPs have also developed a young person's 'Collaborative Community Group' (CCG), which brings together young people from a range of different backgrounds and ethnicities across Scotland. The CCG has met twice during which the young people discussed Phase One of the Review; Vision and Principles and Phase Two of the Review; Options. The Independent Review will also be running some bespoke young people events, scheduled for March 2023, as part of the wider engagement to inform Phase Three of the Review.

## 9 - We will ensure engagement and participation of children and young people in our efforts to tackle Climate Change.

The Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero, Energy and Transport met with members of the Scottish Youth Parliament in April 2022 to discuss youth engagement on climate action following COP26.

The Open Government network on climate change was launched to improve participation and engagement on climate change policy. Different organisations, including those representing children and young people, will help the Scottish Government involve the public in climate change policy development. This includes the Scottish Youth Parliament (SYP) who gave us feedback to make sure the network was conducted in a meaningful way. As a result, we have ensured that the online platform can host separate sub-groups for children and young people where they can receive additional information and discuss topics in a shared space, with relevant support and safeguarding.

The Scottish Government is engaging with a number of representative organisations of children and young people in the development of the next Climate Change Plan including YouthLink, SYP and Fuel Change. This included a workshop in January 2023 to look at overall visions and routes for reaching net zero.

We continued funding for the Climate Action Schools initiative for 2022/23 in schools for children and young people from nursery age to adulthood. It helps to engage children and young people on Scotland's transition to a net zero nation and the ongoing implementation of Learning for Sustainability.

The Scottish Government is working with partners, including Scotland's Climate Assembly members, to review and strengthen its action plan on Learning for Sustainability. This includes work with the Children's Parliament and the University of Dundee to gather ideas from children and young people and their educators to improve the delivery of Learning for Sustainability.

We continue to fund the Fuel Change initiative to deliver climate education to young people, and match 16- to 24-year-old graduates and apprentices with real climate challenges from businesses.

Scottish Government funding for the 2050 Climate Group continues to empower young people aged 18 to 35 years to lead climate action. The 2050 Climate Group also have a Policy Engagement Subgroup who have engaged with government policy teams on the biodiversity strategy and the circular economy bill.

Transport Scotland worked with the SYP to gain feedback on the 20% reduction in car km route map, and the Scottish Government have worked with SYP to explore how best to communicate the changes required to heat and power our homes. Findings from SYP's #WhatsYourTake survey will be used to inform the Heat in Buildings Public Engagement Strategy and tactics, to be published in 2023.

We consulted with young people on the design of the draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan and will continue as we refine the plan. Engagement has included

SYP and workshops involving YouthLink, the University of Strathclyde and X-Academy.

We continue to ensure the voices of young people, particularly those from the Global South, influence debate and action during climate negotiations. This includes funding the climate youth negotiator programme which will help to give young leaders the skills, networks, and resources to participate in climate change negotiations.

The Scottish Government directly funded thirty-five youth negotiators to travel and participate in the COP27 negotiations on behalf of their countries.





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