

**CHILDREN &
YOUNG PEOPLE'S**
Commissioner
Scotland

My
rights are my
safety on
paper

My rights
are my armour
to me

Love, protect,
promote, defend our
human rights

Children's rights are important,
inspiring and universal.

you're human
like everyone else.
Embrace it!

OUR PLAN
2020-24

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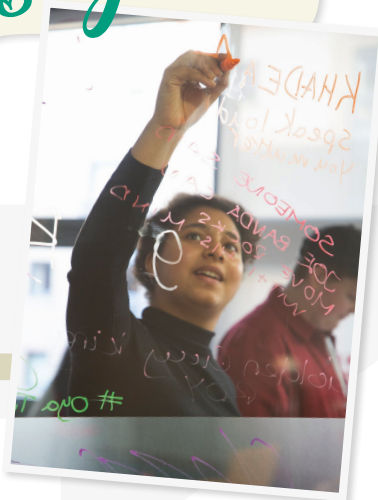


Rights are
bubbles to keep
children safe

*Rights are
help before you
even ask.*



Day
you are born =
you have
rights



Foreword



We are the Young Advisers Group who have come together to advise the Commissioner and his team on how to make sure their work is led by children and young people.

We are thrilled to provide the foreword for this strategic plan, but we want it to be known that this plan is our plan. It belongs to us, and all children and young people in Scotland.

Our group is diverse in gender, experience, culture, and from all parts of Scotland. What we all have in common is knowing that more needs to be done to protect the human rights of all children and young people in Scotland. The only way this can be achieved is by listening to children and young people and taking our views seriously.

We led the design and delivery of a Human Rights Gathering to bring even more young people together so that we could tell the Commissioner what we want him to prioritise; how to use his resources, and how to spend the money his office gets. We are pleased to see the key ideas raised are listed in this strategic plan.

We are pleased that the Commissioner and his team took our advice to consult widely to hear from the full diversity of Scotland's children and young people. We like that

there was lots of consultation, and that it was done in a creative way making it easier for us to have deep discussions about what's concerning us.

We feel we can rely on the Children and Young People's Commissioner to protect and promote our human rights because he's well informed on rights and legal aspects, and has our best interests at heart. The work is important to us because we need someone who is not part of our school or government, who can independently protect and promote our human rights without fear.

People talk about today's children and young people being tomorrow's ambassadors and future world leaders, but in reality we are today's leaders as well. The decisions that are made today affect us for the rest of our lives, which is why we are taking a stand.

Hope, Kaydence, Andrew, Maria, Eilidh, Zara, Ella, Beccie, Ailidh, Adam, Abigail, Violet, Coll, Jaymie.

Young Advisers Group

HOW CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WERE INVOLVED IN THIS STRATEGY

Young Advisers Group

We were guided by our Young Advisers Group, an amazing group of young human rights defenders from across Scotland who work with us advising us on all aspects of our work. The Young Advisers helped us come up with the key themes and structure of this strategic plan. Together we mapped out priorities, the work the office does, and the way we use our resources.

Workshops and survey

We ran workshops in schools and at events and created a survey for children and young people to share with us their views on what we should work on over the next four years. We worked with schools and groups from across Scotland that included early years, young care-experienced people, disabled children and young people, and those from culturally diverse backgrounds, with a variety of different life experiences.

Human Rights Gathering

At our annual Human Rights Gathering we worked with young people to review and build on our previous strategic plan (2018 to 2020). At the three-day residential in November, young people from mainland Scotland and from island communities worked with us using creative arts to share their experiences and raise key issues for us to work on.



Stand tall.
Be brave. Think big.
BELIEVE.

Disabilities don't hold me back, let's play

*You
don't have to
earn your
rights*

*get the ball
rolling with a kid*

*I am safe. Everyone
should be too.*



Events

Children and young people who participated in a range of events were instrumental in informing our strategic plan, including those at: the SeeMe Youth Learning Exchange, children from five areas in Scotland who contributed to our human rights defenders programme of work, a child poverty roundtable, meetings of the Scotland delegates for the European Network of Young Advisors, young people involved in the Independent Care Review, the 30th Anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child celebration at the Scottish Parliament, Gaelic-speaking early years and primary children from the Isle of Skye, the Who Cares? Scotland Summer Camp, the Edinburgh Rights Respecting Schools conference and the Children's Parliament Sitting in November 2019.

Creative campaign #7WordStory

We ran a creative campaign to appeal to all ages where we asked children and young people to share with us their views on children's human rights in a seven-word story. Younger children also shared seven picture stories with us. Over a thousand children and young people took the time to send us thoughtful stories that gave us an important insight into what was important in their lives. We also received stories from adult professionals, and parents and carers, each highlighting specific points of view.

We share some of the seven-word stories from children and young people here with you throughout this plan.

VISION AND POWERS

The vision of the Commissioner is that all children and young people in Scotland are able to enjoy their human rights.

Powers

The Children and Young People's Commissioner is someone with authority and powers to promote and protect the rights of all children and young people in Scotland. The role was created by a law passed by the Scottish Parliament in 2003, in line with principles set out by the United Nations.

The Children and Young People's Commissioner always makes sure the work his office does is led by children and young people. Children have asked us to be fierce champions for the rights of all children (this is everyone up to the age of 18) and young people (anyone care-experienced up to the age of 21) in Scotland.

What the law tells us we must do:

- Promote awareness and understanding of the rights of children and young people.
- Support children and young people's rights to be protected in the law.
- Promote best practice by service providers.



children should be
protected, listened
to, loved.

What children and young people have told us we must do:

- When asked what is important to them about their own Commissioner, children and young people's views often mirror the Act that created the office in 2003 and the Scottish Parliament's intention to create an influential and independent post for children. They have asked us to be brave, act independently, be respectful of their views, show leadership to make change happen, and make sure children and young people can participate.
- In our consultations for this strategic plan children and young people told us that promoting their rights is the most important thing the Commissioner can do. They also want us to listen and engage with them, and make sure we use the law to protect their rights.

FROM THE COMMISSIONER

Children and young people are at the heart of everything that we do. Our young advisers built upon the work of our young human rights defenders action group and the thousands of children and young people we have worked with in the last two years. Their message: they want their Commissioner to be a fierce champion for their rights, to use the power of the office to hold people in power to account, and to help build a culture where their human rights are understood and respected.

They tell us how frustratingly slow political, legislative and social change can be, especially in a world where technological change happens so quickly. Advances in technology and issues of climate change mean the world in which many of us adults grew up in is very different now for children.

They have identified key human rights issues for urgent attention including poverty, mental health, education, supporting human rights defenders particularly those working on climate justice, and making sure their rights are better protected in the law.

Our focus will remain on children whose rights are most at risk such as care experienced children, disabled children, black and minority ethnic children, children in conflict with the law, or whose liberty is being restricted.

Our work has highlighted the lack of human rights education. We will work at all levels, particularly early years to help nurture a human rights culture through education. We will develop further resources to promote awareness and understanding of children's human rights.

Children have a voice, listen to it.



Incorporation of the UNCRC is the single most important thing Scotland can do to protect children's human rights. It will give children and their families the ability to seek justice when children's human rights are breached and will focus the minds of decision-makers on ensuring they deliver on children's human rights. We recently celebrated the 30th anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the Scottish Government has committed to incorporate the UNCRC into domestic law by May 2021. A key part of this strategic plan will be ensuring that the new law is passed and fully implemented. New duties on public bodies will provide a framework for our work across Scotland for holding those in power to account and building a strong human rights culture.

Bruce Adamson
Children and Young People's Commissioner
Scotland

CHALLENGES

Food, shelter and education. They're all rights.

**What if rights didn't exist?
What if?**

Children and young people have reflected to us that the world can feel like a scary place with political uncertainty, national and global acts of terrorism and the climate emergency creating worry for children and young people of all ages.

We know that the needs of Scotland's children and young people are incredibly diverse depending on factors including their age, where they live geographically, and what life experiences they have.

We have identified the following major challenges that must be overcome to achieve our vision to ensure that all children and young people enjoy their human rights:

1. The political and economic power of children and young people is limited. Most are unable to vote and do not have their own financial resources.
2. Children and young people's human rights are not properly incorporated in Scotland's domestic legal framework.
3. Scotland has yet to fully embed a culture of children and young people's human rights. There are still too many occasions where existing legal rights are not respected, protected and fulfilled.
4. Political, administrative and economic systems are designed for the convenience of adults, not the needs of children and young people.
5. Children are not sufficiently informed and empowered to use their rights from an early age.
6. Approximately one quarter of children in Scotland live in poverty, which can cause poorer physical and mental health, impacting their education and access to other rights.
7. We also know that every day children and young people in Scotland do not get the help they need for mental health problems. Nearly a quarter of young people in Scotland experience two or more psychological complaints within any one week. Approximately 1 in 10 children and young people aged five to 16 have a clinically diagnosable mental illness with a lack of services to support them.
8. Many care-experienced children and young people experience significant stigma and are frequently let down or denied their rights to basic services.
9. Climate change is a reality that now affects every region of the world, and there has never been a threat to human rights of this scope.
10. When children challenge power to defend human rights they are not properly supported or protected from reprisals.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Our strategic objectives are shaped by what the law tells us we must do, what children and young people have asked us to do, and what we have learned from our work.

PRIORITY 1.

Nurture a culture of children and young people's human rights in Scotland

WE WANT
OUR RIGHTS.
WE WILL FIGHT

My rights give me
power, freedom,
courage.

PRIORITY 2.

Make sure that children and young people's human rights are at the centre of law, policies and practice.

rights develop
society and
so can you.

we've the
right to teach
you too

PRIORITY 1. Nurture a culture of children and young people's human rights in Scotland

- 1a. Make sure that children, young people and adults know about, and understand children's human rights.
- 1b. Address barriers that children and young people face when trying to access the rights, services and supports to which they are entitled.
- 1c. Make sure that people in power respect, protect and fulfil children's human rights.
- 1d. Challenge the participative deficit in decision-making, budgets and other systems which leads to children and young people losing out on service provision and allocation of resources.

- 1e. Improve practice by identifying and sharing examples of where adults take a human rights-based approach to their work.
- 1f. Support young human rights defenders by ensuring they have the tools they need and the protections they require in order to demand change.



your actions will speak louder than words.

my family, i love them the most.





PRIORITY 2. Make sure that children and young people's human rights are at the centre of law, policies and practice.

- 2a. Ensure that children's human rights are fully embedded into our laws through incorporation of UNCRC and other human rights standards.
- 2b. Review and address public bodies' compliance with their human rights obligations to children.
- 2c. Use legal powers to ensure that children's human rights are respected and enforced; challenge existing laws which are not compliant with the UNCRC or other international human rights standards.
- 2d. Develop rights-based approaches to mental health, child poverty, and climate justice, including with tools such as impact assessments and rights-based budgeting.
- 2e. Report to the United Nations and other international bodies on how well children's human rights are being respected in Scotland.
- 2f. Develop human rights standards, with international partners, to be directly applied in Scotland for the improvement of children's lives.

OUR WAY OF WORKING



We are fierce champions for the rights of all children and young people in Scotland.

- We will do everything we can to best involve the full diversity of Scotland's children and young people in our work.
- We will have an increased focus on younger children who are less likely to be included or listened to, and children and young people whose rights are most at risk.
- We will live our values. These are driven by children and young people, who told us they wanted us to be; brave, respectful, leaders, independent, and enabling children and young people to participate. The principles of public life are the foundation of professional conduct: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty, and leadership.
- There are many international laws which set out the human rights of children and young people, however the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is the one which directs our work the most. The UNCRC is special because it is the first legally binding international instrument that incorporates the full range of civil, cultural, economic, political, and social rights, as well as humanitarian law for everyone under the age of 18. It starts with the premise that children should grow up in a family environment of happiness, love and understanding.

- We will hold ourselves directly accountable to children and young people through our Young Advisers Group, Human Rights Gatherings, our various reference groups, and through our public reporting. We will also hold ourselves accountable to the public and the Parliament through formal reporting and budgetary scrutiny.
- We will strategically partner with other organisations who work with, and for children and young people. We will collaborate with the European Network of Ombudspersons for Children (ENOC) and other international human rights mechanisms.

**Every child's different,
smart, amazing and
unstoppable**



**My rights should be
respected not ignored**

OUR RESOURCES

We are 15 staff working across four teams. All of us have a responsibility to engage directly with children and young people to ensure that they are fully involved in our work.

- Our Strategy Team, which includes specific participation expertise, will engage with international human rights bodies and proactively influence Scottish and UK law, policy and practice. They will use human rights-based analysis and research and ensure children's experiences are heard to make sure that people in power respect, protect and fulfil children's human rights.
- Our Advice and Investigations Team will undertake formal investigations or when necessary take legal action to protect the human rights of children and young people. They will also engage directly with children and young people, as well as adults who care about them, to provide advice and information on children's human rights issues.
- Our Communications Team will create helpful and accessible information for children and young people. This information will encourage them to engage directly with our office to ensure they know there is a Commissioner and team who work for them. It will also make sure they can learn more about their human rights and the work we do on their behalf. The Team will also work to raise awareness and understanding of children's human rights with adult decision-makers, professionals and parents and carers.
- Our Corporate Services Team will make sure our office is well run and efficient. They will oversee our financial management and compliance, human resources, information systems and administrative support. Corporate Services provide internal support ensuring governance obligations and improving corporate policies, procedures and outcomes.
- The Commissioner and the Senior Management Team will oversee the governance and management requirements of our work, and the achievement and evaluation of our strategic and delivery plans.

**Fight for us
– we need your help.**

**Rights
should be
respected
and are
UNIVERSAL**



The office receives money from the Scottish Parliament to protect and promote children and young people’s human rights in Scotland. This money is available from 1 April of each year to 31 March of the following year. The table below shows how much money we expect to spend over the four years from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2024.

	April 2020 - April 2021	April 2021 - April 2022	April 2022 - April 2023	April 2023 - April 2024
Priority 1 Nurture a culture of children and young people’s human rights in Scotland.	£68,594.00	£71,473.26	£74,479.97	£77,620.01
Priority 2 Make sure that children and young people’s human rights are at the centre of law, policies and practice.	£102,891.00	£107,209.89	£111,719.95	£116,430.01
Staff Costs (Includes the Commissioner, 4 Senior Managers, and 11 specialists)	£958,989.00	£1,010,491.00	£1,050,832.00	£1,091,349.00
Staff Related Costs (Includes recruitment and selection, training, wellbeing initiatives, staff travel and subsistence)	£58,232.00	£59,979.00	£61,778.00	£63,632.00
Professional Fees (includes external auditor of accounts, legal fees, and professional subscriptions)	£35,007.00	£36,057.00	£37,139.00	£38,253.00
Running Costs (includes administration, insurance, IT, postage and telephones)	£84,957.00	£87,506.00	£90,131.00	£92,835.00
Capital Expenditure (For replacement of equipment)	£2,000.00	£2,000.00	£5,000.00	£2,000.00
TOTAL	£1,310,670.00	£1,374,716.00	£1,431,078.00	£1,482,119.00

We regularly review our spending and associated work programme to ensure they are cost effective. Our budget projections are based on the expected salary and cost of living increases. Through our recent co-location project we will continually review financial spend in line with our shared services agenda wherever is practicable in order to provide best value.

OUR THANKS



Thanks to all the children and young people who helped us create this plan. Thanks to our inspiring Young Advisers: Hope, Kaydence, Andrew, Maria, Eilidh, Zara, Ella, Beccie, Ailidh, Adam, Abigail, Violet, Coll, Jaymie.



Thanks to South Ayrshire Youth Forum for piloting our survey and to all the children and young people who took the time to tell us their views and ideas using it.



Thanks to all the parents, carers and supportive adults who helped children and young people engage with us at workshops and events.

*My rights give me
time to shine!*

*Small person,
but has a BIG voice*

*Rights make me
happy. what
about you?*



Thanks to the dedicated volunteers and support workers at our Young People's Human Rights Gathering in November 2019: Rebecca, Amy, Sarah-Louise, Jane, Katie, Ruth, Shannon, Carrie Ann, Clara, E.J, David, Julie, and Stuart.



Thanks to the pupils at Anderson High School, Broughton High School, Castlebrae Community High School, Corseford School, Craigie High School, Garnetbank Primary, Gracemount High School, James Gillespie's High School, Kingspark School, Leith Academy, Sciennes Primary School, St Andrew's Fox Covert RC Primary School, St Augustine's RC High School and Trinity Academy for enthusiastically taking part in our consultation workshops.



The Commissioner, Bruce would also like to thank his team for their committed hard work and dedication to promoting and protecting children's human rights. Together we are the fierce champions that children have rightly demanded that we be.

*I love rights.
Do you? I do.*

people deserve
ALL human rights.
Full. Stop.

You have
one life, make it
RIGHTS

If you're under 18, or a young person who is care-experienced up to the age of 21 please get in touch with us if you have any questions about your human rights, would like any of our information or resources, or just want to know more about what we do.

You can find us @CYPSCS on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, email inbox@cypcs.org.uk, Freephone: 0800 019 1179 or text us on 0770 233 5720 (Texts will be charged at your standard network rate).

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