

Response ID ANON-5VM7-GT42-G

Submitted to **Progressing Children's Rights in Scotland - An Action Plan 2018-21**

Submitted on **2018-09-26 06:54:12**

Questions

1 Do you agree that the Action Plan should include:

Yes

Yes

Yes

Where you answered 'No' to any of the above questions – please provide your reasons why you did not agree.:

2 Do you agree that the 4 proposed overarching strategic actions are appropriate and will help to take forward the principles of the UNCRC?

Yes

Yes

Yes

Yes

3 Are there ways in which the proposed strategic actions listed above could be further strengthened? Please specify.

Are there ways in which the proposed strategic actions listed above could be further strengthened? Please specify.:

Having read the proposed strategic actions we believe them to be helpful in ensuring the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is further embedded into Scottish life. We have some recommendations as to how these actions might be further strengthened, these are outlined below.

1) "Development of a dynamic Participation Framework for Children and Young People":

The ambition, stated within the consultation document, that the participation of children and young people should become mainstreamed and that young people should have a say over issues of national significance, are both to be welcomed and resonate well with the UNCRC (particularly Articles 12 and 42).

We note that, when exploring some of the methods by which participation might be increased, the consultation document makes reference to digital methods and platforms. While such methods and platforms should undoubtedly be utilized, we would wish to emphasize that they are not an adequate replacement for face to face interaction. This may require additional physical and human resources to those that already exist. In this regard, we would be interested to hear further details about the proposal for a central resource and the means by which businesses, the third sector, and Scottish Civil Society might further contribute to the participation framework for Children and Young People.

Furthermore, while acknowledging that children's rights are for all children and young people, we would also wish to ensure that the participation framework maximises the participation of those children and young people facing multiple levels of disadvantage (on the basis of economics, race, religion, gender etc.). To this end we would encourage strong connections between this framework and the Child Poverty Action Plan.

2) "Ambitious delivery, through co-production, of the 3 year children's rights awareness programme":

We are encouraged by the proposal for a three year children's rights awareness programme. We feel that the greatest benefit to this programme will come through the involvement of parents, carers and young people. Engagement with such groups can be done through statutory bodies but may also prove more effective when more informal networks, such as community groups etc. are utilised. We are aware that across Scotland individual congregations host a wide variety of community groups and activities, including a great deal of work with children, young people and families. The Church of Scotland would be happy to assist in this work as and when appropriate.

3) "Progressing the comprehensive audit on the most effective and practical way to further embed the principles of the UNCRC into policy, practice and legislation, including the option of full incorporation into domestic law":

This audit is a positive step. In the consultation document it states that "work around the audit will seek to include the views of children and young people." We question whether the wording "seek to include" is strong enough and believe that there should be a firmer commitment that children and young people will be directly involved in the audit.

Evaluation of the Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (CRWIA).

We believe that such an evaluation would be useful and would seek to ensure that the perspectives of young people were central to such an evaluation.

4 Are there additional or alternative strategic actions that the Scottish Ministers should consider? Please specify.

4Are there additional or alternative high level strategic actions that the Scottish Ministers should consider? Please specify. :

We do not have any additional strategic actions, though we note a number of specific actions that we would wish to see included in the Action Plan.

5 Are there any specific actions - not currently being progressed within a wider Scottish Government action plan, framework or other initiative - that should be considered for inclusion within the Action Plan?

Are there any specific actions - not currently being progressed within a wider Scottish Government action plan, framework or other initiative - that should be considered for inclusion within the Action Plan?:

We feel that if Scotland is to take seriously a commitment to be the best place to grow up, be educated and to bring up children and young people, there are a of three specific actions which we believe should be given further consideration. These are:

1) A five pound top up to child benefit:

Currently, one in four children in Scotland are affected by poverty. By increasing child benefit by just £5 a week for every child the Scottish Government could lift 30,000 children out of poverty. Poverty is fundamentally about a lack of income, and this move would improve families' incomes. Article 18 of the UNCRC states that Governments must support parents by creating support services for children and giving parents the help they need to raise their children, while Article 27 states "Every child has the right to a standard of living that is good enough to meet their physical and social needs and support their development. Governments must help families who cannot afford to provide this."

If we are truly taking Article 3 (The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all decisions and actions that affect children), and the First Minister's commitment seriously then we feel this would be a positive step.

2) Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs):

While we are aware that the government has committed to taking action to prevent ACEs, we believe that the significance of Adverse Childhood Experiences, and their impact on the life outcomes of young people should merit specific mention within the action plan. Particular consideration might be given to how the progressing of children's rights might contribute to a reduction in ACEs.

3) Removing the defence of justifiable assault:

At present parents in Scotland can claim a defence of "justifiable assault" when punishing their children. We believe that this provision gives adults greater protection under the law than children and young people when it comes to physical assault. The Church of Scotland has formally backed John Finnie MSP's private members bill and would encourage the Scottish Government to consider such a move as part of this action plan.

Our over-riding concern is that children and young people must be involved in the process and that particular steps must be taken throughout to ensure that children who face the greatest challenges are able to participate and shape change.

A great deal has changed in the 2000 years since Jesus' earthly ministry; children and young people are now much more naturally seen as a vital part of our society. In a revolutionary act at the time, Jesus took a child, placed that child on his knee and told the audience of powerful adults who were listening that none of them were more significant than that child and that they needed to follow the behaviours of children if they wanted to have life in all its fullness. The Church of Scotland believes that this is still the case.

About you

What is your name?

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Are you responding as an individual or an organisation?

Organisation

What is your organisation?

Organisation:

The Church and Society Council of the Church of Scotland

The Scottish Government would like your permission to publish your consultation response. Please indicate your publishing preference:

Publish response only (without name)

We will share your response internally with other Scottish Government policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for Scottish Government to contact you again in relation to this consultation exercise?

Yes

Evaluation

Please help us improve our consultations by answering the questions below. (Responses to the evaluation will not be published.)

Matrix 1 - How satisfied were you with this consultation?:

Slightly satisfied

Please enter comments here.:

Matrix 1 - How would you rate your satisfaction with using this platform (Citizen Space) to respond to this consultation?:

Slightly satisfied

Please enter comments here.: