

Proposal for the Children's Rights Scheme

Child friendly version



A word from the Minister



I am Natalie Don-Innes, the Scottish Government Minister for Children, Young People and the Promise. The Scottish Government wants Scotland to be the best place in the world for children and young people to grow up.

This report will tell you about Scotland's very first Children's Rights Scheme - a new way to help us make sure that you are supported to understand and enjoy your human rights.

1. Introduction

What are children's human rights?



Children's human rights are written down in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The UNCRC is an important agreement between lots of countries who have made a promise to protect children's rights.

The UNCRC says:

- all children and young people under 18 years old have children's rights;
- adults must do what is best for children;
- children should be supported to live and grow; and
- children have the right to be listened to and taken seriously.

The UNCRC also explains what adults, governments and public authorities (like schools, councils and health services) should do to protect children's rights. You can find out more about the rights in the UNCRC on the [website of the Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland](#).

A group of experts called the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (UN Committee) helps countries to think about what more they could do to protect children's rights.

Scotland's UNCRC Act

In July 2024, the UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act became the law in Scotland. The new law is called the **UNCRC Act** for short. This means that rights from the UNCRC are now part of the law of Scotland.

The UNCRC Act says that the Scottish Government and public authorities must listen to children and protect their rights when making decisions.

Children and young people can already ask for help from public authorities if they are worried about their rights. The UNCRC Act now also means they can ask a court to help if they think their rights are not being respected when they are receiving some services.

What is the Children's Rights Scheme?

The UNCRC Act says that the Scottish Government must write a report called a Children's Rights Scheme, or **Scheme** for short. The Scheme must say what the Scottish Government is doing, or plans to do, to help all children in Scotland to experience their rights.

This report explains what the Scheme says about some of those plans, in a way that is easier for children and young people to read. In the next part of this report, we'll explain more about some of the things that the Scheme says the Scottish Government will do to support children's rights in Scotland.

The actions in the Scheme have been designed to be in place for at least 3 years.

Who helped the Scottish Government to write the Scheme?

The UNCRC Act says that we must listen to the views of children and young people and certain children's rights organisations when developing the Scheme.

As well as children and young people, we also listened to the Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland, the Scottish Human Rights Commission and other children's rights organisations when we were thinking about what to include in the Scheme.

You can read what children and young people told us in this report, which also includes a section that explains how we've responded.

2. Actions to help the Scottish Government and public authorities think about children's rights in everything that we do.

We will use Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessments to help us think about children's rights in our work

The UNCRC Act says that the Scottish Government must use a Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment – or CRWIA for short.

A CRWIA helps us to think carefully about children's rights and views when we are making new laws or big decisions that might affect children.

We already use CRWIAs for many decisions that affect children and young people. When we finish one, we put it on our website so that anyone can read it.

Public authorities can also use a CRWIA to think about children's rights.

Actions:

- We will make sure that people who work in the Scottish Government know how to use the CRWIA properly so they can use it when making new laws and decisions that might affect children and young people.
- We will encourage public authorities to use the CRWIA and to put them on their website so that everyone can see what they're doing to support children's rights.

We will think about children's rights when making decisions about Scotland's money

The Scottish Government already shares information about how money is being spent on things that will help children and young people. Using a CRWIA helps us think about children's rights when we are planning how to spend Scotland's money.

Action:

- Every year, we will use a CRWIA to help us make sure that we spend Scotland's money in a way that supports children's rights.

We will make sure that people who work in the Scottish Government and public authorities know about and understand children's rights

The Scottish Government and public authorities help run lots of important services that children and young people use every day – like schools, health services, libraries and youth clubs. They also provide other services that help children's families and their communities. We want everyone working in these places to think about children's rights in everything they do.

Actions:

- We will make sure that everyone who works in the Scottish Government and public authorities can learn about children's rights and have training if they need it.
- Our new Skills and Knowledge Framework is already helping public authorities to understand how they can respect children's rights in their work. We will keep this up to date so people always have the correct information about children's rights.
- We will share real stories about public authorities who are doing a good job of respecting children's rights to help others learn from them.

3. Actions to help children and young people understand their rights

We will help children, young people and their families to know about and understand children's rights

The UNCRC Act says that we must tell people about children's rights. We already give money to groups and charities that work with children and families. With their

help, we are working to make sure that children, young people, parents and carers across Scotland understand children's rights.

Actions:

- We will work with children and young people and children's organisations to write a plan to help children, young people and families learn about and understand children's rights.
- We will look out for and consider how to support groups of children and young people who might need extra help to understand their rights.

4. Actions to help make sure children and young people are listened to and that their views are taken seriously

We will involve children and young people in our work and the decisions that affect them.

Every year, children and young people meet with the Scottish Cabinet – this is the group of Government Ministers who make big decisions for Scotland. They also meet with the Scottish Government's Executive Team – these are the people who help run the Government day to day. At these meetings, children and young people talk about the issues that matter most to them. They speak on behalf of all children in Scotland and share six 'calls to action' – these are changes that they want the Cabinet and Executive Team to make.

We also have a new agreement called the Children and Young People's Participation Framework. This helps us to work with groups and charities who support children from lots of different backgrounds so that we can listen to more children's voices and views when making our plans.

Actions:

- The Scottish Cabinet and Executive Team will keep meeting with children and young people every year to make sure that children's voices are heard at the very top of Government.
- We will help people who work in the Scottish Government to learn more about how to support children and young people to give their views, and make sure they listen to children from all different backgrounds.

We will make sure that children and young people get information they can understand, and help them to share their views in ways that work best for them

The UNCRC Act says that children and young people should be given information in ways they can understand. They should also be supported to give their views in ways that work best for them. This is called 'inclusive communication'.

Actions:

- We will keep creating child-friendly versions of our reports and guidance so that children and young people can understand what we are saying about their rights.
- We are giving money to Scotland's youth charity, Young Scot, to help them share child-friendly information on their website about Scottish Government plans and other topics that children and young people might find useful.
- We will think about any extra support or training on inclusive communication that public authorities might need.

5. Actions to check if children and young people are experiencing their rights and to support them to complain if they think their rights are not being respected

We will look out for where children's rights are not being respected and try to help

In 2023, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child - the group of experts in Geneva who help countries to think about children's rights - gave the United Kingdom a list of ideas about where more might be done to make sure that children's rights are protected and respected. We are using these ideas to think about how to help children and young people in Scotland to experience all of their rights.

Children and young people helped to create their own [child-friendly version](#) of these ideas, known as 'Scotland's 'to do' list'. You can read this to find out what the UN Committee said.

Actions:

- In 2024, we wrote a [report](#) about the UN Committee's ideas and what we are doing to help children's rights in Scotland. We will write another report about this in 2026.
- Children, young people and children's rights organisations have shared their own ideas about how to make children's rights better in Scotland. We will share these ideas with others working in the Scottish Government, who can use them to make changes for children and young people.
- We will also ask the Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland and other children's rights organisations to tell us about children's rights issues that worry them most, and use this to help us think about our plans for children and young people.
- If we find out that there are any laws for Scotland that are bad for children's rights, we will make sure we try to fix them.
- We will think about how to collect better information to check whether the rights in the UNCRC are being respected across Scotland.

We are supporting children and young people to complain if they think their rights are not being respected



The [Scottish Public Services Ombudsman](#) (SPSO) helps people who are unhappy about their experiences with public authorities like schools, hospitals, and councils. We have given money to the SPSO to work with children to make it easier for them to complain when they think a public authority has not respected their rights. The new [child-friendly complaints guide](#) was published in July 2024.

The Scottish Government has also written a new guide to help children, young people, and the adults who support them, to understand how to complain and to seek support when they feel that their rights are not being respected. The information can be found on the [Scottish Government website](#) and a more accessible version for young people can be accessed on the Young Scot [‘Activate Your Rights’](#) webpage

The UNCRC Act says that children and young people can also complain to the Scottish courts if they think that their rights are not being respected when they are receiving some services.

Actions:

- We will collect information about experiences of raising a concern about children’s rights. This will help us to see where children and young people might need more support to speak out when they are worried about their rights.
- We will also give money to certain groups and charities who can help children and young people to complain in courts.
- We will look at ways to make it possible for children and young people to complain to the courts about more services if and when their rights are not being respected.

6. Actions to help make sure that everyone has an equal chance to make the most of their lives and talents.

We will make sure that we always treat everyone fairly and with dignity and respect

We are working on a new plan to help the Scottish Government and public authorities make sure that they respect people’s human rights and treat everyone equally.

Actions:

- We will place our new plan, called the Mainstreaming Strategy, on our website in 2025 so that everyone can read it.

7. Conclusion

The actions in the very first Children's Rights Scheme will help to make sure that children's rights are respected, protected and fulfilled in Scotland.

Every year, we will write a child-friendly report – called a Progress Report - about our work to deliver the actions in the Scheme.

The report will also share updates on our work with children and young people on their six calls to action for the Scottish Cabinet and Scottish Government Executive Team.

Our plan is for the first Progress Report to be ready in November 2026, in time to celebrate World Children's Day.

8. Helpful Links

You can see the [full version of the Children's Rights Scheme](#) on the Scottish Government website.

You can also find out more about children's rights on [the Scottish Government website](#).

Other organisations can provide information about children's rights. This includes:

- [Together \(Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights\)](#)
- The [Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland](#)
- [Children's Parliament](#)
- The [Scottish Youth Parliament](#)
- [Clan Childlaw](#)

9. Children and young people's views about the Children's Rights Scheme

Between February and March 2025, Young Scot helped the Scottish Government to ask children and young people for their views on the Scheme.

Young Scot used an online survey and workshops to ask children and young people across Scotland for their views.

Overall children and young people were happy with the actions in the [Scheme](#). This part of the report will say more about what children and young people told us.

10. Children and young people's views on actions in the Scheme

Children and young people said that the Scottish Government should:

- Talk to children and young people about how they are experiencing their rights.
- Make sure that children and young people are given information that they can understand.
- Help everyone to know about and understand children's rights. This includes children and young people, parents and carers and the people who work in public authorities and the Scottish Government.
- Support children and young people to complain if they think that their rights are not being respected.

Here are some of the things that the children and young people said:



“Scottish Government should speak directly to children and ask them if their rights are being protected.”

“Make sure the people of the organisations understand what the rights ACTUALLY mean.”

“Parents need to know [about children's rights] too.”

“Advertise how to raise complaints and how to get support and link child-friendly information to schools' websites and Young Scot's website.”

We listened carefully to what the children and young people told us and made sure that the Scheme includes actions to:

- help raise awareness of children's rights;
- support children and young people to participate in decisions that affect them and to help children to give their views in ways that are best for them; and
- help children and young people to complain if they think that their rights are not being respected.



We have also made sure that the Scheme talks about 'children and young people' rather than 'children' as this is what children and young people told us they would prefer.

Every year, we will write a child-friendly report about all of our work to deliver the actions in the Scheme.

11. Children and young people's other ideas



Children and young people suggested other actions to support children's rights. However these have not been included in the Scheme. This is because other work is already helping with these issues.

For example, children and young people said that they should learn about their rights in schools.

UNICEF UK's [Rights Respecting Schools Award](#) (RRSA) programme is helping children and teachers to understand children's rights. RRSA also supports schools to think about children's rights in all that they do. The Scottish Government gave money to UNICEF UK for 3 years to help more schools to join the RRSA programme.

Children and young people also said that they want us to do more to help protect their rights when they are online:

"Make sure these commitments apply to online too."

We will keep working with the United Kingdom Government and others to do all we can to protect children from online harm and uphold their rights.

We will also ask a group of Scottish Government senior leaders called the Online Safety Taskforce to help us think about what more can be done to keep children and young people in Scotland safe when they are online.

12. Children and young people's views about new actions in the Scheme

Children and young people also said that they should be asked for their views when the Scottish Government is thinking about new actions to include in the Scheme:

“We need to be asked, we need to be listened to. These are our rights in the hands of adults, they are making decisions about how WE get treated, we deserve to have a say.”

We know how important it is to involve children and young people in our work and the decisions that affect them, including about the Scheme. The UNCRC Act says that the Scottish Government must listen to the views of children and young people when they are thinking about new actions to include in the Scheme.

The actions in the first Children's Rights Scheme should be in place for 3 years. We will then ask children and young people, the Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland and other children's rights organisations to help us think about new actions to include in the Scheme.

13. Thank You!

We would like to say a very big thank you to all of the children and young people who told us what they thought about the actions in the Children's Rights Scheme. Your views are really important to us.

We'd also like to thank Young Scot who supported children and young people to give their views.