

Children in Scotland

every child - every childhood

Making plans for the future - consultation questions:

Children in Scotland is Scotland's national agency for organisations and professionals working with children, young people and their families. It exists to identify and promote the interests of children and their families and to ensure that policies and services and other provisions are of the highest possible quality and are able to meet the needs of a diverse society.

Our response to the consultation will focus mainly on the implications for children and young people and also how they can be involved in the planning process more effectively. With this in mind we have responded to the relevant questions in the people make the system work section along with considering the next steps in relation to children's rights.

People make the system work - consultation questions

Key question

B: Do you agree that our proposed package of reforms will increase community involvement in planning? Please explain your answer.

Children in Scotland feel that the plans to engage with children and young people are a positive step towards increased involvement in planning, but cannot confirm whether the proposed package of reforms will definitely contribute to an increase in their involvement.

To ensure that children and young people's involvement in planning does increase, the reforms will need to be appropriately and effectively administered. This will mean bolstering them with good engagement practice on the ground that ensures that children and young people are involved in a meaningful way. We feel that effective enforcement of the reforms and also meaningful partnership work will be vital in ensuring the reforms contribute to an increase in children and young peoples involvement in planning.

We also feel that schools and other learning environments will have a vital role in building knowledge of community planning processes and also in building the confidence of children and young people to become involved and so must be supported to achieve this.

Optional technical questions

9. Should communities be given an opportunity to prepare their own local place plans?

Yes, communities should be given the chance to be involved in local place plans. The Scottish Government should be looking to build local capacity in relation to local planning to support communities to engage with all groups in the community and contribute in a meaningful and representative fashion.

Local communities should be obliged to include the voices and opinions of children and young people in these plans. Children and young people have the right under Article 12 of UNCRC to be heard in decisions that affect them and so any local place plans must involve them. Children in Scotland feels that their voice would give greater weight and depth to local place plans and also support greater community cohesion. Children and young people would feel like equal partners in decisions about not only them but the community of which they are part.

We feel this would be an improvement over current structures such as Community Councils that are not necessarily inclusive or encouraging of children and young peoples involvement.

9(b) Does Figure 1 cover all of the relevant considerations?

As raised above in Q9, Children in Scotland feels that there should be a statutory requirement for children and young people to be involved in any local place plans.

10. Should local authorities be given a new duty to consult community councils on preparing the statutory development plan?

Yes. They should be given a duty to consult not only community councils but also to reach out further to less represented communities when preparing statutory development plans.

They should be required to involve children and young people at this stage to ensure that they can contribute to the actual development plan and involve them in the 'corporate ownership' of projects. This would ensure that their voices are heard at the earliest stage and they can be involved in local development plans at a more strategic level allowing them to not only be involved but to help direct development planning.

10(a) Should local authorities be required to involve communities in the preparation of the Development Plan Scheme?

They should at least be required to reach out to communities and the children and young people who live there when preparing development plans. While we accept that they may not always wish to be involved, they should be given the opportunity wherever possible.

11. How can we ensure more people are involved?

The Scottish Government and local authorities should identify organisations that are already supporting the involvement of children and young people in the planning process. In line with this we are happy to see that the guidance identifies the work of Planning Aid Scotland, we feel their Youth Engagement in Planning (YEP) or IMBY projects that have looked to engage young people in the planning process will be vital to support the involvement of children and young people in the planning process.

The Scottish Government should seek to identify similar successful projects and support these across the country to further engage children and young people in planning.

We would suggest that one method to follow to ensure more children and young people are involved would be to use participative research methods such as those applied in the “Beyond 4Walls” project that Children in Scotland were involved in. “Beyond 4 Walls” gave children and young people to identify what they wanted from housing and identifies a method by which children and young people could be feasibly involved in the planning process.

Another would be to follow the model of the 2016 Making Space awards, this would give children and young people a role in deciding which plans were taken forward and to have their say in what would benefit the community.

There will also need to be a commitment to innovation and also funding to ensure these projects can reach more isolated communities.

11(a) Should planning authorities be required to use methods to support children and young people in planning?

Yes planning authorities should adhere to best practice to support children and young people in the planning process. Planning authorities need to ensure that engagement is meaningful and worthwhile and so should adhere to the 7 golden rules of participation developed by the Children and Young Peoples Commissioner Scotland with children and young people (CYCPS).

Planning authorities should also be encouraged to ensure staff are well trained in participation and engagement with children and young people. This will likely involve partnership work with organisations who have expertise in the engagement of children and young people and we are pleased to see that this is raised in the guidance, we hope that the requisite resources will be set aside to support this.

12. Should requirements for pre-application consultation with communities be enhanced? Please explain your answer(s).

Yes. We feel that pre application consultation with communities is vital to ensure that they are involved in the process from the earliest stage as this is where most value can be added and are happy to see a commitment to this in the reforms.

However, we would suggest that this also needs to go further than just consulting with community councils and should make an effort to reach minority groups within the community. This involves consulting with children and young people at this stage and allowing them to be active contributors at all stages throughout the process.

13. Do you agree that the provision for a second planning application to be made at no cost following a refusal should be removed?

Children in Scotland would advocate that rejected planning applications should have the opportunity for communities to have input to see if a viable solution which meets the needs of both the developer and the community is available. This may not always be appropriate but may help build trust between the communities and the developer and find common solutions. This should include a key role for involving children and young people with developers and working to find common solutions to benefit the community. To support this Children in Scotland would suggest adhering to the various suggestions made throughout this response.

16. What changes to the planning system are required to reflect the particular challenges and opportunities of island communities?

The voice of children and young people from island communities is often not heard in the policy process and we feel that the Scottish Government will need to pursue innovative strategies to ensure they are heard. We would advocate that the planning system needs to put in place requirements that children and young people from these island communities are consulted to ensure that their voice is heard. We would suggest that due to the fragility of island communities the engagement of children and young people could be seen as having a key role in terms of stabilising such communities. By engaging children and young people in planning we feel that communities are more likely to reflect their needs and so create an environment where children and young people feel more embedded in their community going forward. We feel this could be important in ensuring rural communities do not continue to lose young people and their skills to urban locations.

This could involve an increase in the use of digital consultation and also engagement with organisations that are already embedded within these communities. Schools will be vital in supporting this as they can provide a hub for engaging with children and young people in a situation where the population may be spread over a wide geography with limited transport.

Next steps - consultation questions

Optional technical questions

37. Do you think any of these proposals will have an impact, positive or negative, on children's rights? If so, what impact do you think that will be?

As previously stated under Article 12 of the UNCRC, children and young people have the right to be heard in decisions that affect them. Children in Scotland would suggest that if properly implemented these plans should have a positive impact on children's rights under article 12.

Ensuring that children and young people are at the heart of development plans is vital to promote children's rights and also to ensuring the success of development planning. We would also suggest that this should have the added benefit of increasing their investment in local communities and also contribute positively to their health and wellbeing and contributing to a reinforcing social and community environment.

However, this is a conditional endorsement. The Scottish Government must ensure that they, local authorities, developers and local community organisations place children's rights agenda at the heart of their development plans. They must ensure that children and young people are heard throughout the planning process and involved in directing this as opposed to merely consulted on plans that are made by other parties.

Further information, please contact:

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Bibliography

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