

Children in Scotland Manifesto 2016 - 2021

About us

Our vision is that all children in Scotland have an equal chance to flourish.

By bringing together a network of people working with and for children, alongside children and young people themselves, we offer a broad, balanced and independent voice. We create solutions, provide support and develop positive change across all areas affecting children in Scotland.

We do this by listening, gathering evidence, and applying and sharing our learning, while always working to uphold children's rights. Our range of knowledge and expertise means we can provide trusted support on issues as diverse as the people we work with and the varied lives of children and families in Scotland.

Three priority areas

To achieve our vision this we believe there are three key areas where change is required over the lifetime of the next parliament: Participation and Inclusion, Early Intervention and Prevention, and Inequalities and Poverty.

While many actions could support change in these areas, we have focused on 10 priority calls (see right).

All are underpinned by children's and young people's rights and informed by research evidence and related work. Learn more about our work [here](#).

Our Manifesto calls are rooted in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the legally-binding international agreement which sets out civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights for every child.

Championing participation and inclusion

Children and young people have the right to have their opinions listened to and taken seriously. We call for parliamentarians, policymakers and those delivering services that support children and young people to support this right through:

1. MSPs signing up to the Child Rights Manifesto as a #childrightschamp and committing to taking action on behalf of children and young people that will improve their lives
2. Including active, meaningful and inclusive participation and engagement activity in all policymaking and delivery of services that affects the lives of children and young people.
3. Raising awareness of the spectrum of Additional Support Needs so every school becomes an inclusive environment for every child.

Removing inequalities and combating poverty

The Scottish Government must use its new powers under the Scotland Bill to support families and tackle income inequalities, which can have a detrimental affect in many aspects of children's lives including attainment, health and wellbeing. In addition we call for:

4. Creation of a roadmap to achieve a sustained reduction to eradicate child poverty, focusing on prevention
5. Commitment to no further reductions in local authority funding for 2016-21 to protect essential services for children and young people
6. Providing families with access to flexible, affordable and high quality childcare, supported by a financially transparent child account
7. Investment in affordable, safe social housing suitable for families which provides access to community resources, support and green spaces.

Prioritising early intervention and prevention

Too many children and young people still experience difficulties and barriers to accessing their rights. This could be avoided or lessened if the appropriate support and interventions were available earlier. Providing children with the best start in life requires concerted effort from the public sector, families, civic society and beyond. However, the Scottish Government would make a meaningful difference by:

8. Investing in mental health prevention and early intervention for children and young people to stop problems deteriorating to the extent they require specialist CAMHS services. Reflecting this pledge, the next Scottish Government should appoint a dedicated ministerial-level post with a mental health remit.
9. Introducing a Children's Food Policy to help counter Scotland's poor diet, obesity rates and food insecurity. It should include a focus on partnerships in communities to establish community-driven approaches to alleviate hunger and make healthy, affordable food an easier option for families.
10. Working to prevent the development of an attainment gap through partnerships with parents and families to support children's development and learning from birth.