



Essential reading for Scotland's children's sector

February – March 2019 Issue 190

Children in Scotland magazine

Celebrating difference,
**CATALYSING
CHANGE**

From Scotland's
Sikh youth to
'face equality'
and LGBT
rights – how
campaigners
and young
people are
transforming
lives





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Scotland have an equal chance
to flourish.

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Welcome...



Caitlin Logan
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#CiSMagazine

The year ahead is set
to be a significant one
for children and young
people and for our work
at Children in Scotland.

With the EU exit date
fast approaching, the
Children and Young
People's Panel on
Europe, managed by
ourselves and Together,
will launch a report on
its recommendations for protecting children's
rights and opportunities post-Brexit. Scotland
is on the cusp of raising its woefully low age of
criminal responsibility from eight to 12, while we
have joined others across the sector in calling
for this to be increased to 16. The Children and
Young People's Taskforce on Mental Health is
beginning its work in earnest, and we will be
leading on one of its three strands.

We'll also be putting our 25 Calls campaign,
launched in October 2018, into action, and the
key themes of the campaign run through this
issue. We explore 'Challenging Inequalities' with
our features on Sikh Sanjog and Changing Faces,
and our lead comment celebrating progress on

LGBT equality. We discuss 'Improving Education'
with expert views on including children with
autism in mainstream education, ensuring high
quality training for school support staff, and
innovative approaches to working with children
who've experienced trauma. And we examine
'Supporting Children, Families and Communities',
highlighting the importance of the Care Review
Intentions, community support for women
offenders, and understanding the impact of
parental substance use.

This issue launches in the middle of LGBT
History Month (February), and with perfect
timing we have just been awarded LGBT Youth
Scotland's LGBT Charter Silver Award. We are
excited to reach this milestone and to reaffirm
our commitment to supporting the rights and
inclusion of LGBT young people. Overall, in
this issue, we aim to spotlight the work which is
celebrating difference and catalysing change for
all of Scotland's children and young people.

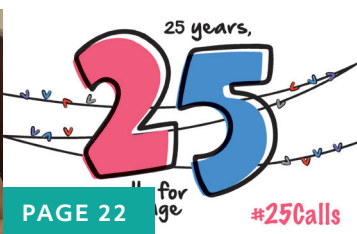
The magazine is an important part of our offer for
members, and we'd love to hear your feedback
on what's working and what you'd like to see more
of. With that in mind, please do drop me a line at
clogan@childreninscotland.org.uk.

Caitlin Logan

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"This is a place where imaginations and choices open up"

Satnam Singh, Community Development and Youth Worker at Sikh Sanjog in Edinburgh, says the charity has a vital role to play in breaking down barriers, building bridges and planting the seeds of independence in Scotland's Sikh youth.

Interview by *Caitlin Logan*

Satnam Singh started working for Sikh Sanjog as a Community Development Worker five years ago, after founding director Trishna Singh convinced her that she had more to offer the world than in her roles as a mother and daughter-in-law. Satnam had lived a traditional life, leaving school early and moving from her home in Doncaster to Scotland for an arranged marriage. When Satnam met Trishna, who had recently been awarded a degree at the age of 54, Satnam's fourth child had just started nursery, and she experienced a "turning point" moment.

"When I came into this organisation, I would say 'I have to do this', and Trishna said 'Why do you have to do this? You can still be a good daughter-in-law and a good wife, but you can be independent and you can work!'" It is this

knowledge which Satnam hopes to pass on to the children and young people she now works with through Sikh Sanjog's weekly youth club. Both boys and girls, aged 5-16, can attend the club, separated into age groups, where Satnam says their "imaginations start thinking about what they can do in their life".

This, Satnam explains, is particularly important for the predominantly Sikh members of the youth club, many of whom continue to face cultural barriers and struggle to navigate growing up between two cultures. "In Sikh culture, as you are moving into high school, that's where all the pressure lies because, for girls, you know you are working towards being a good daughter-in-law and a good wife. That's where all the training comes in. Parents will say, 'You've got





What next?

Youth Worker *Daphne McLellann* explains what Sikh Sanjog has in store for a busy 2019.



"This year is our 30th anniversary and we have lots planned. We're going to have a formal event in June and another event later in the year. We're going to make an exhibition which the young people are helping with, as well as possibly doing a performance.

"The exhibition is focussing on what it's like to grow up Sikh, so the young people are going to be filmed talking about what Sikh Sanjog has done for them and what they would like Sikh Sanjog to be like in the future, and the older generation will be talking about what Sikh Sanjog has done for them, so that you can compare across the ages. A lot of people don't really know what we do, so we are going to focus on what we're doing and why we're doing it.

"We are starting a homework club too, because some of the parents struggle to get the time to help their children with homework because they are living with extended families, and we are now applying for funding for a specific older girls' group because they have different needs, so we'd have a group around body image and issues like that.

"Our manager, Sabrina Tickle, is also working with the older kids about participation and things they can get involved in, because we want to empower them to speak up about their own issues."

to learn how to cook', 'You're getting old enough so you've got to wear a traditional scarf', and 'You don't go out playing with boys' – that's a no-no." This is difficult for young people living in Scotland, Satnam says, because they are "juggling two cultures"; for example, when their friends are socialising in mixed-gender groups and they want to join them.

Part of Sikh Sanjog's unique offer is the fact that its staff and volunteers have a firm understanding of both the culture and the religion of the Sikh community and, due to their work with women of all ages, are able to build bridges across generational divides. "As a parent, I know how hard it is for mums," Satnam says. "The parents have the fear in their head that their daughter might run away, or their son might run away, or they might just fall in love with someone else different from the culture, and they feel that tradition has to be followed. So it's about understanding and speaking to the parents and saying: it's okay, they're fine, you've just got to trust them a wee bit and talk to them."

Generational disconnect, Satnam explains, can be even greater between the older generation and their grandchildren, particularly due to language barriers where the grandparents primarily speak Punjabi and the children can only speak English. But through its health and wellbeing group, Sikh Sanjog also supports grandparents to strengthen these relationships. "We gently introduce the idea if you really want to reconnect with your grandchild – because it's the 21st century and you're still thinking phones are really bad – why don't you get Whatsapp or send emails or befriend them on Facebook, just to connect and to trust your grandchild?"

The importance of trust is a recurring theme. Much of the success of Sikh Sanjog's work hinges on the fact that families feel that they can trust the organisation to have the best interests of their children, grandchildren, and the wider community at heart. Established 30 years ago by Trishna Singh, a first generation Scottish Sikh woman appointed as Sikh Chaplain to Edinburgh University in 2013 and recently awarded an OBE for services to the community, the organisation's connections to the Sikh community in

Edinburgh are deep-rooted.

"For parents, Sikh Sanjog is a safe place for them to send their children. They're still being taught a wee bit about their culture and it's still about the Sikhism. We've got boys in the group as well and the parents are okay with that because it's a part of Sikh Sanjog." In contrast, Satnam says, many parents would be hesitant to send their children to another group. "If they send them to someone else's organisation they might meet someone, they might make friends with a boy, and that's like losing their child in a way. But they know that here, because it's Sikh Sanjog, they're fine."

The organisation is also helping to break down barriers for Sikh children with learning disabilities, autism, or mental health issues

Satnam feels that the young people, too, share this trust in the Sikh Sanjog team, partly because of their awareness of the culture, and partly because they create an environment where their concerns and questions can be discussed openly. "In my culture there's quite a lot of isolation – we're taught from a young age not to wash your dirty laundry in public, so you don't let anyone know you have a problem in your home. But that's changing now and that's why this organisation is here, so we try and get the kids to speak about it. They know this is a safe place."

Vital to this process, Satnam says, is creating opportunities for dialogue and education about the culture itself. "We introduce the idea of choices and explain the difference between culture and religion, so if they have any queries about this, we can help. People tend to mix the religion and the culture together and that's where the children get confused, thinking that it's our religion that 'we can't do this', or 'we have to do that'.

"The religion is totally different to the culture – culture is man-made, so you can add bits to it and you can drop bits



Hand-drawn Sikh Sanjog logo, by one of the youth group members

and you can still follow Sikhism. Without us telling them, the young people realise that themselves as they come into the group and they grow up a bit more."

The impact which this realisation has on the young people is transformative, Satnam notes. "Some of them were so shy when they came in, they didn't talk to each other, and now – they can talk! And you have to say 'right okay, let someone else speak'. It's nice when you hear them talk about themselves and saying, 'I want to do this, I want to be this', because you're opening up choices, and you watch their little faces light up. It doesn't matter if they're different, they can do what they want and the culture and the religion is not stopping them."

The organisation is also helping to break down barriers for Sikh children with learning disabilities, autism, or mental health issues, in a culture where such topics are still regarded as taboo. "It's so important when you have organisations like this and you can have one-to-ones and you can say 'well, my child has autism, where do I go?'. Someone might just go along with you to another organisation and explain the cultural barriers and lead you to the right information."

Such support can be a lifeline for parents, whose own family may have let them down, and who may fear anyone in the community finding out due to the associated stigma. "Even if we spot any signs that the children have got any learning difficulties we can actually address the parents, or if they've got any issues at school they can come to us as well and we can help them," Satnam adds.

Even the simple fact of seeing Sikh women working at Sikh Sanjog as Youth Workers, as Development Workers, as the Managing Director, sends a powerful message to the young people – and the parents – who step through the organisation's doors, Satnam feels. "That's all putting choices in their heads," she says.

"I've got a daughter who is 25, who is working, who is independent, who drives, who has studied at college and then university, and she's got a degree in Photography. If I had never come to this organisation, I wouldn't have fought for my daughter. Now, my favourite part of this job is watching when someone leaves from the group, knowing that they're going to go into a career."

> Find out more about Sikh Sanjog at sikhsanjog.com

"If I had never come to this organisation, I wouldn't have fought for my daughter"



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"Being an advocate was the only choice"

Reflecting on decades of progress on LGBT rights, *Lynn Gilmour* explains why achieving our Silver LGBT Charter Mark is so important to Children in Scotland



Lynn Gilmour is Children in Scotland's Communications Officer - Digital Lead

"Bunch of poofs." The words, shouted from the back of a taxi across Edinburgh's Princes Street, stung in the cold December air. They were directed at me, my family, my friends, and all those who had joined the vigil march for World Aids Day. That was the late 1990s, when Scotland's capital had already suffered a significant share of Hepatitis C and HIV infections and Aids-related deaths. This came largely as a result of the heroin epidemic that hit the city in the late 1980s, the one so vividly captured in 'Trainspotting'.

Almost 20 years on, one would imagine that things have changed irrevocably; that slurs and discrimination are a thing of the past. However, while great strides have been made in the past two decades, these have frequently been followed by a few steps backwards, meaning that the picture is still far from perfect.

The road to LGBT rights has been a long and arduous one, and one paved with fearless individuals, both from the LGBT community and heterosexual allies. In the 1960s, there were those who led the Stonewall Riots, including trans women often overlooked in historical reflections; in the 1970s, Harvey Milk was the first openly gay man elected to public office in the United States and fought anti-gay legislation in California; and in the 1980s, Princess Diana's handshake with an Aids sufferer changed attitudes. In 1989, Madonna shared 'The Facts about Aids' in every copy of her Like A Prayer album to distribute information openly after the singer lost several gay friends to

the disease. And in 2008, Cyndi Lauper, as a lifelong equality activist, co-founded the True Colors Fund in 2008, an American nonprofit to educate on LGBT issues and end LGBT youth homelessness.

Despite this high-profile activity, the Aids crisis and its association with the gay community cemented the singling out of LGBT people as frightening, as different. Central to this discrimination in the UK was Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988, which stated that a local authority "shall not intentionally promote homosexuality or publish material with the intention of promoting homosexuality". It was repealed in Scotland on 21 June 2000, one of the first actions of the new Scottish Parliament. This marked the first in a long line of LGBT-empowering activity by Scottish politicians, including the introduction of hate crime legislation in 2009 which included transphobic hate crime – a European first – and the legalisation of same-sex marriage in 2014.

By contrast with the champions of the past, my own LGBT advocacy story has not been fraught, frightening (noisy taxi passengers notwithstanding) or courageous. My path to advocacy began via LGBT friends whom I wanted to support and help keep safe, and via the experience of my mother, who received a life-saving blood transfusion in the mid-1980s that could, for the toss of a coin, have been infected with Hepatitis C or HIV and left our family potentially ostracised. I was raised never to stand back from hateful views, but to challenge them, to educate and inform. I went on 1 December vigils, I volunteered for an HIV charity when I was

in S6, I went on Pride marches, I was married on the day of Edinburgh Pride in 2017 and guests wore Waverley Care tartan ribbons.

For me, being an advocate hasn't felt like a brave choice; it's the only choice. That's my ambition for every young person, every teacher, every parent; that they feel informed, confident and supported to challenge discrimination and support equality. We may not be household names for our efforts, but we all have an important part to play in creating communities of respect, trust and openness.

At Children in Scotland, equality underpins our values and everything we do. It seemed, therefore, a logical step to begin our journey towards gaining the LGBT Youth Scotland Charter Mark. During our 18-month journey, we have spoken to advocates across Scotland, LGBT groups in schools, and organisations working to embed LGBT equality in their practice. We have updated our policies and practice in meaningful ways and offered staff LGBT training, which brought colleagues closer as we trusted one another to dig deep into entrenched or unexplored views.

We have championed LGBT rights on our website, in our office, in our magazine, and through the national conference we held in partnership with LGBT Youth Scotland last year to mark LGBT History Month. And, importantly, we have reflected on what we have learnt and will aim to continue the momentum for years to come. This tangible development was as welcome as being awarded the Silver Charter Award itself, which we achieved in December 2018.

When we look back in 20 years, the names of decades past will be joined by a roll-call of today's fearless advocates. Jordan Daly – named 2018's Young Scot of the Year – who launched the Time

for Inclusive Education (TIE) campaign along with Liam Stevenson. The Scottish Government, which recently accepted the LGBTI Inclusive Education Working Group's 33 recommendations and will oversee the embedding of inclusive education in all Scottish state schools. And activists leading the fight for trans rights, including Jade Reynolds, who contributed to our 25 Calls campaign to call for legal gender recognition for trans people to be made easier.

Alongside this have been the organisations working tirelessly for change, such as Waverley Care, originally set up in 1989 to build the UK's first purpose-built Aids hospice. Fergus McMillan and colleagues at LGBT Youth Scotland, who have provided direct support to young people for almost 30 years, all while working to ensure LGBT young people are included and supported in every aspect of their lives. The groundbreaking campaigners at Equality Network and its Scottish Trans Alliance project, which, in 2007, became the first trans rights project to be funded by a national government in Europe. Colin Macfarlane and the team at Stonewall Scotland – and the list goes on.

What are our hopes for the future? Here are mine. I hope sufficient progress is made that tomorrow's advocates no longer have to be prefixed with "brave" and "courageous". I hope the list of LGBT champions is too long to write. I hope LGBT equality is simply equality and that society takes it as a given; not with a sense of complacency, but with a recognition of the struggle that paved the way, the strength that it took to stay on track, and a determination to keep striding forward.

> **LGBT History Month is celebrated every February in Scotland. Find out more at lgbthistory.org.uk**

"My path to advocacy began via LGBT friends whom I wanted to support and help keep safe"



"My home is Seamab"

Residential school Seamab's success shows that thinking outside the box can help children recover from trauma. *Joanna McCreadie* tells us more in our members' spotlight

At Seamab we provide care and education for children aged five and older who have experienced significant trauma, abuse and loss. Our children have a wide range of needs and present many challenging behaviours, from aggression and violence to self-harm and poor emotional health. We think it's our job to gift all the children with relationships and experiences that support them to heal – and to grow into competent and confident adults.

To develop our approach, we started with what

we knew about children who have experienced significant trauma. We read about different ways of working and drew upon our own shared practice experience. As a multi-disciplinary team we used ideas from different professional disciplines. We thought we knew what would work and what wouldn't – but we also decided we were willing to try some new ideas and different ways of working so that we could achieve more for children.

This involved being willing to experiment, take risks, potentially fail and keep learning. As well as this, we enlisted the support of people outside Seamab, which included experts in working with traumatised children and a supportive health and safety advisor.

We also wanted to 'tell the story' of our work in a way that was accessible and engaging. To help us with this we

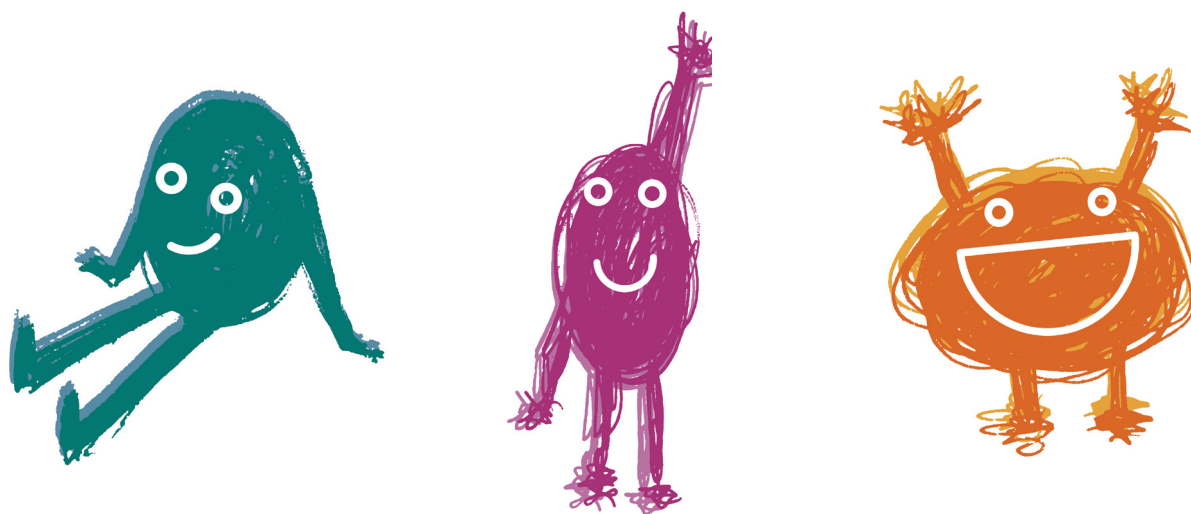
worked with a design agency, StudioLR, to develop a new brand for the charity. This resulted in the creation of the Sea Changers, characters who articulate the challenges, feelings and experiences of our children. The new brand also presents a positive story of change, achievement and hope, which is a vital part of our work.

All of our children have multiple difficulties but their emotional and mental health is often the most challenging. Each of them struggles with low self-worth, profound shame and regulating their emotions. A child usually arrives with us at Seamab feeling confusion, bewilderment and fear. Every child needs support in learning to identify, talk about and regulate their emotions. All need help to start to feel better about themselves. Some need specific support for particular emotional health issues. In our approach, we think about children's individual needs first, and then we think about their needs in the context of the wider group. We believe it's our responsibility to work out what each child needs and to respond flexibly. This means that we are prepared to make changes in **how** we deliver our service, as **what** we are doing to effect change is much more important.

Every child has consistent key adults who are highly skilled in developing warm and nurturing relationships. Using our therapeutic framework, Dyadic Developmental Practice, we accept unconditionally all aspects of the child, and persist in caring for them through whatever challenges the child presents. We use PACE (playfulness, acceptance, curiosity and empathy) as a way of being with children, teaching them that relationships can be a source of safety, love and achievement.

We can only offer children the opportunity to recover from trauma if we have a team of adults who are not only committed, but highly skilled, interesting, playful and fun. Whatever the role of the adult (from teacher to carer to fundraiser), they have to offer a consistent and caring experience, from which children can develop relationships. Because of this, we invest in developing





Seamab's Sea Changers characters representing 'calm', 'hope', and 'joy'

adult knowledge and skills. Training and development sessions in Dyadic Development Practice are compulsory and we have established a training programme in partnership with Children in Scotland.

We know that children who have experienced significant trauma often have movement, motor and sensory problems. These are often intertwined with their emotional and mental health difficulties. It is also common for our children to have delays in their development. We therefore create as many opportunities as we can for children to engage in movement and physical experiences that are fun and playful. These are carefully planned and structured when that's possible - but we're realists, so at other times we simply respond to a child's need.

"My home is Seamab. It's a place for people like me who have had a hard start in life. Seamab is a place where you can grow up better and achieve things beyond your imagination."
- Seamab pupil

We have a wide range of daily activities that include: climbing trees, mountain biking, playing on stacks of tyres with crash mats underneath, building dens, using the buildings and grounds to make parkour routines and challenges and playing games. Visiting specialists – external experts – deliver yoga, mindfulness and music. Our school dog supports children throughout the day with reading and play. Activities change with the seasons and as each child grows and develops. All of the children are encouraged to take risks and push themselves. Over time, they gain in esteem and confidence and extend their creativity and their engagement with

the world around them. All of this supports development of their interests, intellect and progress in learning.

Daily gains in resilience and emotional health mean that children can participate in increasingly exciting challenges. At Seamab we offer: skiing, white water rafting, surfing, gorge walking, rock climbing, wild camping and more. As each child builds their skills, they can keep progressing, taking part in outdoor adventures and challenges. A few of our recent 'epic adventures' have been summiting Scottish mountains, skiing in the Cairngorms and a week-long sailing trip off the Devon coast.

Through these experiences and being held in positive relationships with adults, children start to recover from trauma. They recognise their strengths, celebrate what they can do and learn that what happened to them does not have to define them or their potential. Last year, one of our children went on the week long sailing trip. He was, it's fair to say, resistant to going and expecting to fail if he did go. After the trip, and having learnt to sail, he told us: *"I learnt I could do anything I wanted if I try."*

Essentially, we tackle the challenges our children have in their social, emotional and intellectual development, and in their mental health through positive relationships and stimulating experiences. We build on the capacity children have to develop and the neuro-plasticity of their brains, to support children in regulating their emotions alongside adults and then succeeding in doing this independently as they make progress. Most critically, children learn that success is possible, and they can apply this to their learning and all aspects of their lives. As another of our children described it: *"Seamab changes your life in a good way. Just like it did to mine."*

Joanna McCreadie is CEO of Seamab

> Find out more about Seamab at seamab.org.uk

Benefits of Children in Scotland membership

"Membership is so valuable to us as an organisation. We know we are part of a wider community of people working to make a difference to children across Scotland and we benefit enormously from the expertise of the training team. I am also excited about the international conference on trauma that we are part of organising with a group of Scottish organisations and Children in Scotland."

Joanna McCreadie,
Seamab

> If you are interested in Children in Scotland commissioned learning opportunities, please get in touch with Svenja Schulz at sschulz@childreninscotland.org.uk