



Children in Scotland **Manifesto for 2021-26**

Theme 9 of 10
Environment



Giving all children in Scotland an equal chance to flourish is at the heart of everything we do.

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.

Introduction

Our Manifesto sets out Children in Scotland's policy priorities for the next five years. It outlines the changes we think are necessary to improve the lives of children, young people and families living in Scotland, and reflects our vision that all children in Scotland have an equal chance to flourish.

In producing our calls, we've endeavoured to be aspirational but realistic. Our asks of Scotland's political parties span a wide range of areas that affect the lives of children, young people and families. They are designed to cover both shorter-term goals and longer-term ambitions. We hope you find here principles, evidence and calls to action that you can champion.

The Manifesto has been structured into 10 themes covering the priorities that emerged from our consultation process and reflecting our own strategic aims and project findings. The extract you're reading focuses on the theme of *Environment*.

The standard version of the Manifesto, covering all themes, can be accessed [here](#). Additionally, we have produced a [version for children and young people](#).



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Photography: Belinda Lawley – belindalawley.com





Vision *We avert the climate crisis and create a Scotland which has a sustainable, biodiverse, safe environment for all children, young people and their families*

Introduction

The climate crisis may be the most critical issue affecting our world today. But to date, despite emissions targets being set, progress towards tackling climate change has been alarmingly slow.

Climate change is a social justice issue. Children and young people and the most disadvantaged families in our society will be among those most adversely affected by climate change and environmental damage. Even now, these groups are already disproportionately experiencing the negative impact of pollution. We know that poor air quality is particularly prevalent in spaces used by children, and this can have a **significant impact**¹ on children's health and growth.

Children in Scotland's leadership and representation role within the children's sector on this issue is an important one – the climate emergency is often not within the scope of our members to engage with in any detailed way while they are dealing with significant day-to-day challenges including housing, health and food insecurity, particularly within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. But a green recovery from the pandemic is vital to ensuring positive outcomes for all children, young people and families, and specifically those most disadvantaged.



“We stand with children and young people, including the Youth Climate Strikers, in urging the Scottish Government to ensure a fair and just transition to a greener society”

In recent years, the environment has become an issue that has galvanised children and young people nationally and internationally. It is also a key issue for Children in Scotland's young people's advisory group **Changing our World**.² Action is required to ensure that all children and young people are engaged in this issue.

The climate emergency requires a societal response. As such it must be embedded within the curriculum to ensure everyone learns about the scale and social justice context of the crisis and is able to take positive action.

We stand with children and young people, including the **Youth Climate Strikers**,³ in urging the Scottish Government to be more proactive in their response to the climate crisis and ensure a fair and just transition to a greener society.



Our obsession with wealth is killing our planet"

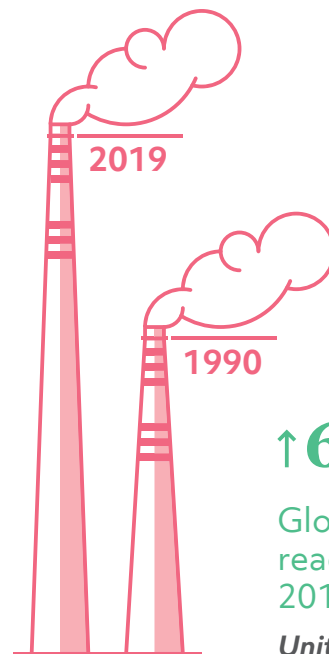
Coll McCail, member of our children and young people's advisory group
Changing our World

Quote from *Children in Scotland Magazine*, April 2020



Protesters at the young people-led Global Climate Strike march, Edinburgh, September 2019.

Picture: Jemma Tracey



↑ 62%

Global fossil CO₂ emissions reached a new record high in 2019, 62% higher than in 1990

United in Science 2020 report⁴

1/3

1 in 3 children in the UK are growing up breathing unsafe levels of air pollution

A Breath of Toxic Air report, UNICEF⁵



"In responding to the Coronavirus outbreak, [global leaders] have proven that they can act in a crisis. Now, they must apply that urgency and level of action to the climate and ecological emergency"

Holly Gillibrand, young climate change campaigner

Quote from *Children in Scotland Magazine*, April 2020



UNCRC Articles

Article 24 Health, water, food, environment
Article 28 Access to education
Article 29 Aims of education



View the Articles

¹ unicef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/A-breath-of-toxic-air_UnicefUKResearchPaper_June2018.pdf

² childreninscotland.org.uk/its-time-to-follow-young-peoples-lead-on-climate-change/

³ climatestrike.scot/

⁴ trelo-attachments.s3.amazonaws.com/5f560af1917118edf74cf93/5f59f8b11a9063544de4bf39/cdb10977949b38128408f5322f9f676d/United_In_Science_2020_8_Sep_FINAL_LowResBetterQuality.pdf

⁵ unicef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/A-breath-of-toxic-air_UnicefUKResearchPaper_June2018.pdf



We call on political parties to commit to:



Embedding education about climate change in the curriculum, in line with a wider review of Curriculum for Excellence. Children and young people from all backgrounds should be informed and be able to critically engage in discussions on climate change and wider environmental issues



Publishing a revised Climate Change Plan and taking the necessary steps to ensure legally binding targets on greenhouse gas emissions in Scotland are met. This includes a 75% reduction in emissions by 2030 and a clear pathway to net zero by 2045



Improving air quality in locations where children live, learn and play. A school air quality monitoring and education scheme should be introduced to measure air quality, educate children and families about this issue, and reduce children's exposure to harmful pollutants.

Calls supported by:



