



**Covid recovery: A consultation on public services, justice system and other reforms**

**5 November 2021**

**About Children in Scotland**

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.

**Children in Scotland's response**

Children in Scotland is pleased to contribute to the call for submissions on the COVID-19 consultation on public services, justice system and other reforms. We have chosen not to respond to specific questions relating to the Scottish Government's powers and proposed timelines – other organisations and individuals will be better placed to comment on these areas. Our response focuses on children and young people's right to have their experiences and suggestions heard and considered by decision-makers, in line with Article 12 of the UNCRC.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a huge impact on children, young people

and their families<sup>1</sup>. This has been seen across many different areas of their lives, and for all ages of children and young people, from babies through to young adults. Over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic we have continued to work directly with children and young people on a range of projects which have highlighted their experiences. Our projects have included the Education Recovery Youth Panel, delivered in partnership with Young Scot (report due to be published soon), and the COVID-19 Children's Strategic Recovery Framework<sup>2</sup> project. These two recovery-focused projects have provided key insights into children and young people's views and experiences during the pandemic and their priorities as we recover from it.

We know from our engagement across the sector that the pandemic has significantly impacted on children's rights, and their access to services and support mechanisms. There have been challenges in children accessing their right to education, especially those with additional support needs<sup>3</sup>. We know there have also been issues with children and young people accessing support services such as social work or mental health support<sup>4,5</sup>. There have also been significant delays and challenges within the Children's Hearings System<sup>6</sup>.

Specific groups and communities across Scotland have been more adversely impacted by COVID-19 than others – these include children and young people experiencing poverty, children with disabilities and additional support needs, care-experienced children and young people and children and families from black, Asian and ethnic minority backgrounds<sup>7</sup>. Children in Scotland believes it is vital that any future work to plan for resilient communities must understand and explore the significant inequalities that exist for different communities, and adopt a person-centred, human rights-based approach to developing new proposals. This includes engaging with children and families with lived experience and involving them in service co-design.

We welcome the Scottish Government's commitment to undertake various impact assessments, including Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessments and Equality, Socio-Economic, Data, Islands, Environment and

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-children-young-people-families-evidence-summary-june-2021/pages/2/>

<sup>2</sup><https://childrenscotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/CIS130821.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/08856257.2021.1872844>

<sup>4</sup><https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5cee5bd0687a1500015b5a9f/t/5ebc2206ee7a6919fe41a562/1589387823919/LockdownLowdown+Results+by+Demographic+Breakdown.pdf>

<sup>5</sup><https://www.youngminds.org.uk/media/01epl0t1/coronavirus-report-spring-2020.pdf>

<sup>6</sup>[https://strathprints.strath.ac.uk/76147/7/Porter\\_etal\\_IJCR\\_2021\\_Children\\_s\\_rights\\_in\\_children\\_s\\_hearings\\_impact\\_covid\\_19.pdf](https://strathprints.strath.ac.uk/76147/7/Porter_etal_IJCR_2021_Children_s_rights_in_children_s_hearings_impact_covid_19.pdf)

<sup>7</sup><https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-children-young-people-families-evidence-summary-june-2021/pages/2/>

## Human Rights Impact Assessments.

We are very pleased the Scottish Government is sharing reports highlighting children and families' experiences of the pandemic on its website<sup>8</sup>. We would also like to draw your attention to additional evidence sharing children, young people's and families' views<sup>9</sup>, and we hope this evidence will be considered and taken in account as future public health, services, and justice system reforms are considered. Children and young people's voices and opinions must be listened to and considered as part of the consultation process and in the development of proposals for future service or system reforms.

### **For more information, please contact:**

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/report-covid-19-children-young-people-families-october-2020-evidence-summary/pages/8/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.togetherscotland.org.uk/about-childrens-rights/coronavirus/childrens-views-and-experiences/>