



Consultation Response – Resource Spending Review Framework

March 2022

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.

Responding to this consultation

Children in Scotland is pleased to be able to respond to the Resource Spending Review Framework consultation and would like to acknowledge input from Carnegie Trust UK in writing this response. As a membership charity representing many third and public sector organisations working directly with children, young people and families, and as a member of the End Child Poverty coalition, we understand the day-to-day challenges many families are currently facing, and the vital importance of good quality public services, an effective social security system and a strong and well-resourced third sector to support them.

We believe that publishing resource spending plans to the end of this Parliament in 2026 will help provide greater clarity for everyone working across the children's sector. We hope this will offer stability for many organisations and enable them to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their work by allowing them to develop long-term plans and move away from short-term decision making.

However, providing clarity will not be sufficient if adequate resource is not made available and if spending plans are not outcomes focused. Tackling child poverty is rightly at the heart of the review and recent action to increase the Scottish Child Payment is welcome, but even with the doubling of the Scottish Child Payment, Scotland is still not on track to meet our child poverty targets¹. The Resource Spending Review process must take into account the urgency of the current situation for many families in Scotland. It must also consider how it engages with children, young people and families and the services and organisations that support them.

Q1. In Chapter 1 we have identified three priorities to guide the Resource Spending Review process:

- **To support progress towards meeting our child poverty targets**
- **To address climate change**
- **To secure a stronger, fairer, greener economy**

Setting these as priorities helps us consider where spend should be targeted and redirected. Do you agree that our resource spending should focus on these? We welcome your views on these three priorities for this Resource Spending Review.

Children in Scotland broadly welcomes the three priorities identified in the Resource Spending Review Framework. Children in Scotland's Manifesto for 2021-2026² highlights the key steps we believe are necessary to improve the lives of children, young people and families across Scotland. Our Manifesto calls for action to address child poverty, to tackle the climate emergency and to reduce inequalities across society, all of which align closely with priorities identified. However, we believe a key element is missing from the priorities – a focus on national wellbeing.

In March 2019, Children in Scotland, Carnegie UK Trust and Cattanach commissioned the 'Being Bold: Building Budgets for Children's Wellbeing' report³, written by Katherine Trebeck. The report outlines a route map to change Scotland's economic approach and calls for the Scottish Government to prioritise children's wellbeing by aligning budget processes

¹ [Poverty and Inequality Commission, 'Advice on the Scottish Government's Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022-2026'](#)

² [Children in Scotland, 'Manifesto for 2021-26'](#)

³ ['Being Bold: Building Budgets for Children's Wellbeing' report](#)

more closely with both the National Performance Framework⁴ and child poverty targets.

Since 2007, Scotland has had a wellbeing outcomes framework in the form of the National Performance Framework (NPF). The Scottish Government, all Scottish political parties, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) and all public bodies have fully accepted the goals of the NPF. The NPF comprises 11 strategic 'National Outcomes' that are underpinned by a range of 'National Indicators' and focuses on continuous improvement rather than time-limited targets.

The NPF aims to achieve the following objectives:

- create a more successful country
- give opportunities to all people living in Scotland
- increase the wellbeing of people living in Scotland
- create sustainable and inclusive growth
- reduce inequalities and give equal importance to economic, environmental and social progress

The National Outcomes were established in legislation through the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2014. The outcomes were developed following public engagement and Scottish Ministers, public bodies and any person carrying out functions of a public nature must have regard to them.

Although referenced several times in the consultation document, we believe the statutory requirement to have regard to the NPF means that alignment with the NPF should be included in the priorities to guide the Resource Spending Review process.

We are also aware that the Scottish Government is currently finalising a series of children and young people's wellbeing outcomes and indicators, that will sit under the NPF. Inclusion of the National Performance Framework and children and young people's wellbeing outcomes framework will help to ensure public spending is outcomes focused and evidence informed and is as efficient and effective as possible.

It is particularly important that we maintain the emphasis on wellbeing, and the evidence of critical issues, at the current time. We know that people's physical and mental health, as well as their standards of living, have been significantly impacted by COVID-19. In particular, children and young people have experienced considerable negative impacts on their lives⁵. The Coronavirus pandemic has affected children and young people's education, their access to sports and hobbies and their social connections.

⁴ [Scottish Government, National Performance Framework](#)

⁵ [Scottish Government, Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): children, young people and families - evidence summary](#)

As Scotland recovers from the pandemic, we believe it is crucial that public spending focuses on wellbeing. The Scottish Government has confirmed that building a Wellbeing Economy is a top priority, so we believe there must be a stronger emphasis on wellbeing as part of the priorities outlined in the Resource Spending Review process.

Q2. In Chapter 2 we have identified the primary drivers of public spending over the Resource Spending Review period including:

- **Changing demographics**
- **Demand on the health service**
- **Public sector workforce**
- **Inflation**

We welcome your views on these and any other public spending drivers you think we should consider.

Children in Scotland believes the listed primary drivers of public spending are all important and relevant.

Given the vital role played by the third sector in supporting the delivery of public services, we would urge a broader consideration in the Resource Spending Review of workforce priorities, which incorporates the third sector workforce. It is essential that the third sector is not perceived as a 'cheap option' for delivering public service goals, and its valued, esteemed and appropriately recompensed for the vital role it plays (please also see our answer to Q3 below).

The resource spending challenges that are outlined in the consultation document clearly emphasise the ongoing need for a shift in investment towards preventative spend. This need was identified as a priority over 10 years ago by the Christie Commission⁶, and the recommendations of that report remain as relevant as ever. While we recognise the challenges associated with moving towards preventative spend, while at the same time continuing to invest in essential secondary and crisis services, we urge this review to explore how this vital change can be achieved. We are convinced that a focus on outcomes budgeting will best support this shift.

Q3. In Chapter 2 we have identified the growth of the public sector workforce as a key driver of public spending. How can we use policy interventions to maximise the value achieved from the public sector workforce in the effective delivery of public services, while ensuring the sector is an attractive, rewarding place to work?

We welcome your views on this.

⁶ [Scottish Government, 'Christie Commission on the future delivery of public services'](#)

In Children in Scotland's Manifesto for 2021-26, we have called for "Sustainable funding for children's services across the statutory, third and private sectors, across all five years of the next Scottish Parliament"⁷. We frequently hear from our members across the public and third sector about the challenges they experience – this includes uncertainty around funding, uncertainty around staff contracts, staff "burnout" and pay increases that do not match cost of living increases. Skilled and hardworking public and third sector staff are key to delivering the improvements children, young people and families need and in ensuring that Scotland is the best place in the world for children and young people to grow up. This is recognised in the 'Common Core of Skills, Knowledge & Understanding and Values for the "Children's Workforce" in Scotland'⁸. Staff must be valued for their roles, given stability, resources, support, flexible working opportunities and fair pay in order to make the public sector an attractive and rewarding place to work.

Q4. In Chapter 3 we have identified a number of ways in which we will be exploring how to get best value out of Scotland's public spending, including:

- Improving cross-government collaboration
- Public service reform
- Prevention and invest to save initiatives
- The public sector workforce
- Better targeting
- Targeted revenue raising

We welcome your views on these, and other ways to maximise the positive impact of public spending.

We broadly welcome all the areas identified for ensuring the best value for money in Scotland's public spending.

We believe improved cross-government collaboration across Scottish Government directorates would reduce duplication and lead to increased efficiencies. Children in Scotland works with Scottish Government staff across a range of portfolios and has previously highlighted areas of duplication with civil servants. An example of this is the Scottish Government's consultation activity with children and young people. While it is positive that more engagement activity with children and young people is taking place, in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), we have concerns about the lack of strategic overview of the different strands of activity taking place. Better cross-government collaboration and communication could lead to more efficient use of public funds.

⁷ [Theme 10 – Planning, Resources and Approaches, 'Children in Scotland Manifesto 2021-2026'](#)

⁸ ['Common Core of Skills, Knowledge & Understanding and Values for the "Children's Workforce" in Scotland'](#)

Children in Scotland and many of our member organisations support prevention and early intervention approaches. Investing in preventative approaches not only improves outcomes for children, young people and families, it also helps to reduce demand for public services and can lead to significant cost efficiencies. Our commitment to prevention and early intervention approaches is outlined in the Children in Scotland's Manifesto for 2021-2026. We are pleased to see references to the Christie Commission report and a focus on prevention and early intervention approaches highlighted in the consultation document. However, over ten years on from the Christie Commission, we have still not seen enough progress in this area.

In addition to the six areas identified, Children in Scotland believes better collaboration between the public and voluntary sector is an important way of maximising the impact of public spending. The third sector plays a crucial role in supporting children, young people and families in Scotland and the unique and valuable services the third sector provides has never been more evident than over the past two years during the Coronavirus pandemic. Through Children in Scotland's work on the Supporting the Third Sector project, we understand the value of the third sector, both as a sector that delivers services and as a strategic partner bringing expertise and data to inform services planning. In order to ensure the best value for money from public spending, the Resource Spending Review must consider mechanisms for supporting more effective partnership working between the third sector and the public sector including involving the third sector in strategic planning, commissioning third sector services through local authorities or Community Planning Partnerships and exploring effective Public Social Partnership opportunities.

Q5. In Chapter 3 we have shared that we will be conducting an equality assessment of the Resource Spending Review's findings. We welcome your views on any particular equality and human rights impacts which we should consider in the context of the priorities (question 1) and primary drivers of public spending (question 2) we have set out.

We welcome the commitment to undertaking relevant human rights and equality impact assessments. In our 'Being Bold' report we highlight the importance of taking a rights-based approach to budgetary processes. The report states "the goals of a [wellbeing] budget should be to uphold and realise human rights, including those of women and children, and to do so in an accountable, transparent and participatory manner"⁹. Children in Scotland believes within the context of the Resource Spending Review both a human rights impact assessment and a child rights and wellbeing impact assessment should be undertaken.

⁹ ['Being Bold: Building Budgets for Children's Wellbeing' report \(Page 6\)](#)

We would also expect the Scottish Government to conduct an equalities impact assessment. This impact assessment must recognise the intersectional impacts of 'protected characteristics' rather than simply exploring each characteristic in isolation. A Fairer Scotland Duty impact assessment (which considers the inequalities caused by socio-economic disadvantage), should also be undertaken. Finally, an environmental impact assessment should also be conducted in relation to the Resource Spending Review's findings.

Q6. In Chapter 3 we shared that this Resource Spending Review is taking a consultative approach to ensure that we engage with people and organisations across Scotland as we develop multi-year financial plans. Our intention is to use the Resource Spending Review to continue the Scottish conversation on public spending going forwards. We welcome your views on how best to continue our engagement with people and organisations after the Resource Spending Review.

Chapter 3 highlights the consultative approach of the Resource Spending Review to ensure that citizens', stakeholders' and delivery partners' voices influence our spending plans however, Children in Scotland would question the accessibility of this public consultation.

We welcome the aim of improved fiscal transparency and improved public engagement and participation in how Scotland's public finances are managed as identified in Chapter 4. With regards to public engagement, Children in Scotland recommends that the Resource Spending Review Framework moves away from language that talks about a "consultative approach" towards language that commits to a "participatory approach".

A participatory approach involves a deeper, more active engagement with wider society, and could also include the co-design of approaches and resources. As highlighted in our 'Being Bold' report, we believe that children and their families need to be involved across the entire budget process to ensure public spending meets their needs. A participatory approach also aligns with the Scottish Government's goal of incorporating the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child into Scots Law. Creative and inclusive opportunities need to be made available that support children, young people and families to share their ideas and experiences. The 'Being Bold' report also underlines the importance of elevating voices who are often marginalised. There are a range of organisations across the children's sector, including Children in Scotland, who can support the Scottish Government to effectively engage with children, young people and families about this topic, and we hope these avenues will be explored.

For more information, please contact:

Amy Woodhouse

Head of Policy, Projects and Participation
Children in Scotland
awoodhouse@childreninscotland.org.uk