



Our work in 2023-24

Children in Scotland's Achievement Report



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Welcome from the Chief Executive, Dr Judith Turbyne



Click the frame above to play the video!

“Last year was our 30th anniversary and we celebrated it in style. It was great to be able to look back over the last 30 years and see how we’ve evolved as an organisation over that time”

Dr Judith Turbyne





Welcome from the Board

Following 12 months in which our 30th anniversary was celebrated, welcome to Children in Scotland's Achievement Report for 2023-24. Thank you to Changing our World, our Children & Young People's Advisory Group, for their fantastic contribution to this report, where we provide examples of our work across our six priority areas. We aspire to give all children an equal chance to flourish in Scotland, and this action-packed report shows that we are bringing the best version of ourselves forward everyday to realise our ambitions.

Last year I said in my opening remarks that I was bursting with pride at what our children and young people, staff, and wider stakeholders have all achieved together. This year is no different, it is genuinely an honour and a privilege to play a small part in making all this magic happen across the country. The attitudes and behaviours that embody our organisational values jump off the page when reading this report, too many to mention but I'll draw you to a couple of highlights if I may.

I love the learning around the co-design of the Live Music and Mental Health Project. Enquire's "Navigate" Keep The Promise Project focuses on key issues we know can disproportionately affect care experienced children and young people. A shout-out to our CEO for her remarkable #30Hills Challenge, and all members' involvement in our anniversary celebrations. The launch of our OU in Scotland Partnership which contributes to our sector workforce development offer. And of course our work with Together, campaigning for the UNCRC to be incorporated into Scots law. Thanks to the Children in Scotland staff team for making the magic happen, delivering many further highlights across the past 12 months.

On behalf of the Board of Directors at Children in Scotland, thank you for reading, and for your continued support. Together let's give all children an equal chance to flourish.

Steven Sweeney
Convener

Making sure that children and young people's views will be listened to, taken seriously, and acted upon



Across the past 12 months, Children in Scotland has worked with more than 440 children and young people across Scotland. We have supported them to have power and agency in their own lives, and to influence wider policy, legislative and practice change in their communities and nationwide.

Children and young people have shared their views with us on a wide range of topics including education, mental and physical health, the environment, equality issues and rights and democracy. Our engagement activity has involved working with children and young people from a wide range of backgrounds, including those who are furthest from their rights.

Children and young people have also continued to shape our work and development as an organisation in many practical ways, including interviewing new staff members and helping to co-design our member events.

Our participation work is guided by Article 12 of the UNCRC and guidance from the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child on meaningful participation, and over the past year we have continued to support staff to build their participation skills and share our learning both internally and externally to support improvements in practice across the children's sector.

1 Inclusion Ambassadors

In 2023-24, the Inclusion Ambassadors project continued to develop and thrive. We have worked with the group on key topics such as support planning, and explored their views on behaviour and relationships in schools.

A key focus for this period was delivery of a second year of the **Success Looks Different Awards**. The Awards are a chance for schools to celebrate how they are supporting pupils with additional support needs to feel included, supported and celebrated.

This year, members of the Inclusion Ambassadors decided to add a new early years category to the Awards. They were also more involved in judging winners of each category and took a lead role in visiting winning schools and presenting the awards.

“There seems to be an ever-increasing awareness of the group and how they can contribute to policy and practice changes. They now have a bigger platform to share their views”

Inclusion Ambassadors Project Team Member



Above: Staff and pupils at Our Lady and St Patrick's High School, Dumbarton (top), and Fairview School, Perth, receiving a Success Looks Different Award

2 Live Music and Mental Health Project

In 2023, Children in Scotland worked with the University of Stirling and Scottish Ensemble to deliver Innovation Labs in three areas of Scotland – Inverness, Stirling and Glasgow.

These two-day workshops provided interactive live music experiences, exploring music, emotions and physical space. They included a range of co-design activities supporting children and young people to work alongside professionals from music, mental health and youth work backgrounds to create project ideas for live music interventions in their local communities.

The project supported children and young people to feel empowered and helped adult practitioners to improve their skills and confidence in working with children and young people and adopting co-design approaches.

**“
I feel excited. I don't know, it's
given me a new feeling, I feel like
a businesswoman...”**

Young person, Live Music and Mental Health Project

3 Children's views (My Rights, My Say & Additional Support Needs Tribunal Under 12 service)

Our team of associates has grown to six to accommodate the increase in direct referrals. We are incredibly grateful for the hard work, compassion and determination they put into each and every child and young person we work with.

In terms of capacity, the service has also grown. This year some of our collaboration partners and beneficiaries of our “Next Level” offering have been:

- The Additional Support Needs Tribunal
- The Association for Child and Adolescent Mental Health
- Edinburgh Young Carers
- East Renfrewshire Council
- Shetland Council
- Forces Children Scotland
- Dundee University
- East Dumbartonshire Council.

We have also started the vital process of setting up our young people's advisory group for the My Rights, My Say service. This work has already been inspiring and we are excited to see how the group continues to develop.



Above: The Live Music and Mental Health project engaged with young people in Inverness, Stirling and Glasgow

Below: My Rights, My Say formed its young people's advisory group in 2023





2023-2024 has been a busy year for **Children in Scotland's services** with our exceptional staff team relentlessly pursuing and maintaining high quality, innovative and accessible support for parents, carers, professionals and children.

Our **Enquire** and **Reach** services have continued to offer vital advice and information, while our **My Rights, My Say** service has seen 93 referrals this year – a 45% increase from 2022-23. Our **ASN Tribunal** views-gathering support service for under-12s has received 39 referrals over the year, up 34% from the previous period.

Resolve Mediation has worked tirelessly to build trust and understanding to promote and support effective relationships and good communication, while keeping the child or young person at the core of all discussions. They received a record number of referrals in 2023-24, supporting over 100 families and education staff.

We have fed into multiple government consultation responses to ensure that these capture the views and experiences of the children, families and professionals that we support. We also gave evidence to the **Education, Children and Young People Committee** in Scottish Parliament in relation to the ongoing ASL Inquiry.

“From start to finish you helped reduce so much of my stress and anxiety. This has now thankfully been a positive outcome in which my daughter will be able to return to education suited to her needs. We will be forever thankful!”

Parent's feedback to Resolve Mediation

1 Enquire outreach

This year Enquire held two online events in partnership with the **Scottish ADHD Coalition** to help parents and carers of children with ADHD understand their education rights. Both events were attended by over 100 people and due to the level of interest, we published follow-up content, including a **Q+A** with the Scottish ADHD Coalition, to help answer some key queries. The success of these events has helped inform our model for running events going forward and has led to further collaborations, including an event with **Scottish Autism** which was attended by more than 140 parents and carers.

+45%

Referrals to the My Rights, My Say service saw a 45% increase compared to 2022-23

+34%

2023-24 saw a 34% year-on-year increase in referrals to our ASN Tribunal views-gathering support service

2 Reach

Reach has continued to go from strength to strength this year, with a lot of new content focused on helping children and young people understand more about their rights and different kinds of additional support needs. The team continued to work closely with the Inclusion Ambassadors, our youth advisory group representing a range of additional support needs, to develop their **own space** on Reach to showcase what topics they've been talking about, and to promote work like their **Success Looks Different Awards**. This year more of the team got involved in visiting schools and nurseries across Scotland and handing out these awards, which was a personal highlight for many.

“

Getting to talk about my experiences and getting to know that it will help other people through their experiences”

Young person who contributed to Reach describing what they most enjoyed about the experience

3 Enquire's "Navigate" Keep the Promise Project

Enquire sought funding outwith their core Scottish Government grant for the first time this year and were delighted to be successful in their Keep the Promise Fund bid. Their project, Navigate, will run until March 2025, and involves creating an online resource that helps care experienced children and young people, and the adults who support them, understand and uphold their education rights.

It focuses on three key issues we know can disproportionately affect care experienced children and young people:

1. Absence from school
2. Formal and unlawful exclusion
3. The underuse of co-ordinated support plans (CSPs).

ENQUIRE REACH



RESOLVE MEDIATION

talk and listen together

Maintaining and building on a strong and effective network with a vibrant membership at its core



Anyone can be part of our network – whether they attend our training or events, access any of our services, use our website or engage with our social media channels. Central to our network is our Membership – those individuals and organisations who join us because they share our **values and vision**.

Our Membership brings a diverse range of knowledge and experience to the table. An active Membership is essential to helping us achieve our vision and by the end of March 2024 we had 450 Members, which is exactly where we'd hoped to be. We engaged with them through our forum meetings, at events, via our comms channels (including Insight, blogs and social media) and in day-to-day interactions with our staff.

Despite the challenges the sector is facing, it is great to see so many people continuing to get involved. Here's looking forward to the next year!

“I joined to be part of a network of professionals supporting children, young people, and families; to improve my practice and learn”

Respondent to our Membership Survey 2023

1 Membership offers

Knowing just how challenging things are across the sector, we work hard at keeping our activities as affordable and accessible as possible. We started 2023-24 by holding our Membership prices for another year, while also introducing **a free Member offer** for the smallest charities and organisations working primarily with minority ethnic children and families in Scotland, as part of our wider equality, diversity and inclusion work. We were pleased when 13 organisations took us up on the offer, and then later in the year, as part of our 30th anniversary celebration, we introduced a **permanent free Membership category**.

“We are a very small charity with limited income streams, so having the opportunity to engage with Children in Scotland through our free membership has been invaluable. It keeps us updated with legislation, policy, and what's going on around Scotland to support children”

Respondent to our Membership Survey 2023



Above: We continue to provide our large and diverse Membership of organisations and individuals with important networking opportunities

2 30th anniversary

2023 saw Children in Scotland mark its 30th anniversary and, of course, we wanted to celebrate this with our Members and wider network. Over the course of the year, we put on a range of activities, including some free learning opportunities, shared blogs and the creation of some new artwork. Our **30th anniversary** publication includes some highlights from the year, among them:

- Our CEO's **#30Hills Challenge**, which raised over £2,000
- Launching our **new free Membership category** in October
- Our 30th anniversary event in November.

More information on our history and who we've worked with over the years can be found [here](#).

3 Member forums

Members have the opportunity to network, learn and feed into discussions at the meetings of our two forums:

1. **Voices Forum** – open to all members, focusing on key issues affecting the workforce, children and families.
2. **Strategic Sector Forum** – open to those who hold senior positions within the children's sector, looking at issues at a national level.

Both groups met regularly throughout 2023-24 with elections held for the Strategic Sector Forum and **new membership announced in March 2024**.

“The Forum offers opportunities to engage with Ministers and other speakers, to debate key issues with colleagues, to shape joint responses, and, at times, to influence Scottish Government thinking on future policy, legislation, or funding”

Former Strategic Sector Forum member

Right: To celebrate our 30th anniversary, we published a commemorative publication, reflecting on three decades of success and change.

Illustration: Issey Medd



Leading and developing the children's sector workforce



Whether it's our influencing and policy work, our extensive Learning Programme, or people accessing information on our website and receiving our digital communications, we work hard to make sure that we keep people up to date and supported to improve the lives of children in Scotland.

The relationship we have with the sector is two-way – we listen to them and try to develop **learning opportunities** to meet needs, add voices and opinions to our **consultation responses** and offer opportunities to come to together in **forum meetings**. But we also ensure we share our knowledge – learning from our **Services** or our **Projects** in reports and briefings, or the skills and expertise that our staff have in blogs, articles and training sessions.

Our values – brave, open and fair, collaborative and kind – provide the foundation for how we work with the sector.

1 The Children in Scotland Learning Programme

The events landscape has been particularly challenging since the pandemic, but our Learning Programme has continued to meet the needs of our network.

This year saw 40 open events and 44 commissioned training events take place, engaging over 1,500 delegates, while we had over 750 new registrations to our **eLearning Hub** – a 40% increase in one year. Feedback and evaluation remains excellent, which is down to a combination of the hard work of the Children in Scotland team and the amazing trainers that we work with, in addition to the enthusiasm of delegates and their dedication to make a difference.

“I came to this residential feeling totally overwhelmed and tired. I am leaving feeling in control, passionate and back to being ‘me’. Thank you so much”

Open Learning Programme – Trauma recovery, regulation and self-care: 3-day residential

‘Very good’ or ‘excellent’

High-scoring feedback for the Children in Scotland Open Learning Programme



Trainer knowledge

Content

95%



Trainer delivery

Administration 94.3%

2 Pupil support staff learning programme

Children in Scotland secured two-year funding from the Promise Partnership in March 2023 to develop a **co-produced learning programme for pupil support staff**.

This year we worked closely with pupil support staff, regularly meeting to design the programme, while visits to secondary schools allowed us to engage with care experienced children and young people. These meetings ensure their experiences and views shape the programme, which is due to launch in September 2024.

One of the highlights has been our involvement in Duncanrig Secondary School's celebration of Care Day 2024. After facilitating a session to hear the views of care experienced young people, one of the participants shared a presentation on children's rights and their own lived experience of the care system – an inspiring input which helped inform and develop our thinking.

3 OU in Scotland partnership

We were working with the Open University (OU) in Scotland throughout 2023 to identify the best way to join forces to support the children's sector in Scotland and formally **announced our partnership in November**. We then went on to develop a joint **learning portal**, which launched in March 2024 and aims to provide the workforce with easy-to-access information and development opportunities. These dovetail with other learning and events on offer from both Children in Scotland and the OU in Scotland.

“Children are our society's future, and I am absolutely delighted for us to be partnering with Children in Scotland”

Susan Stewart, Director of the Open University in Scotland



Above: Children in Scotland visit Duncanrig Secondary School to celebrate their Care Day



Influencing policymakers to deliver on our Manifesto priorities



A key success of Children in Scotland's work over the last 12 months has been our policy and influencing activity, covering key themes from our **2021-26 Manifesto**.

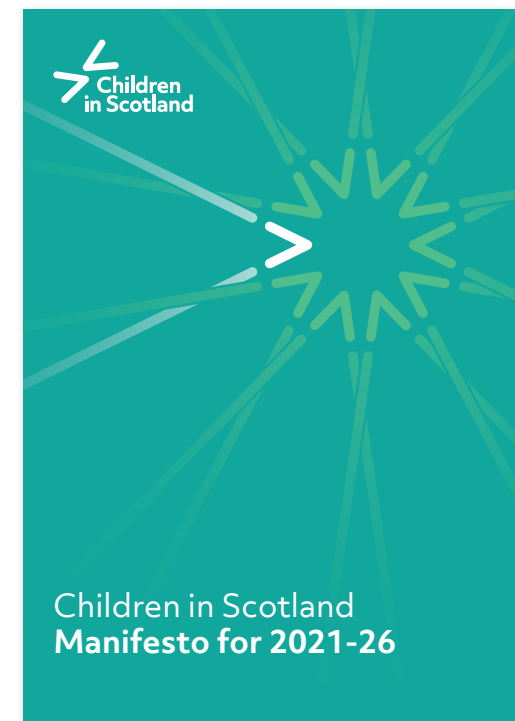
Our work has involved joint campaigning and influencing with partners across the children's sector on issues including sustainable funding, child poverty and children's rights.

We have also led calls for policy and practice change, building upon evidence from our Projects and Services. Key examples of this include our work around education reform and the delivery of additional support for learning informed by our ASL services and the Inclusion Ambassadors, and policy activity focusing on children and young people's mental health guided by our work around family support and the **National Suicide Prevention Youth Advisory Group**.

1 Incorporation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

On 7 December 2023, the Scottish Parliament unanimously voted to incorporate the UNCRC into Scots law. Children in Scotland has been at the forefront of campaigning for incorporation, having proudly worked closely with Together (the Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights) and organisations across the children's sector to make this a reality. However, it is important to recognise that this momentous occasion could not have been achieved without the passion and dedication of so many children and young people who have tirelessly campaigned for incorporation for many years. This includes those who have worked alongside us on our projects and our children and young people's advisory group, Changing our World.

Incorporation will play an important role in protecting children and young people and strengthening their rights. Since the vote, Children in Scotland has been working hard to support the children's sector workforce to prepare for the commencement of the Act in July 2024.



Above: We continued to pursue key themes from our 2021-26 Manifesto in our policy and influencing activity

2 Additional Support for Learning Inquiry

In December 2023, Children in Scotland and our services submitted responses to the Additional Support for Learning Inquiry led by the Education, Children and Young People Committee at the Scottish Parliament.

The Inquiry is exploring the presumption of mainstreaming, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the access to remedies laid out in the Additional Support for Learning (Scotland) Act. In our written responses, Children in Scotland was able to share evidence from our Services, and key learning from the Inclusion Ambassadors.

In February 2024, we supported members of the Parliamentary Committee to attend an online session with the Inclusion Ambassadors to hear directly from them about their experiences in school.

Some of our key messages to the Inquiry included the importance of creating a meaningful culture of inclusion in schools, supporting children to have their views heard, investing in staff training, supervision and support, the key role pupil support staff play in the classroom, and the importance of high quality, free and accessible advocacy services for children, young people and parents and carers.

3 Scottish Covid-19 Inquiry

Also in March 2024 our Chief Executive, Dr Judith Turbyne, gave evidence to the Scottish Covid-19 Inquiry. As a membership organisation, we were able to share the challenges of the pandemic for many children's sector organisations and reflect on the impact of UK and Scottish Government decision-making.

We were also able to underline the significant impact of the pandemic on children and young people's learning and mental health, and highlight the inequality within Scottish society which made the Covid-19 lockdowns particularly challenging for specific communities of children and young people.



SCOTTISH
COVID-19
INQUIRY

Being an environmentally and financially sustainable organisation



While all our priority areas are very important, this one underpins all our activity and ensures that we are in a position to continue operating.

We are working hard to ensure we achieve it and focus on the following areas:

1. Having a skilled and motivated staff team
2. Being a well-governed and a well-run organisation
3. Having a satisfactory level of unrestricted funds
4. Being a net zero organisation.

This year the Board set up a Finance and Audit Committee to support our work to be financially sustainable and we focused on our development by making the best use of the unrestricted funds we had available to us. We have also established a baseline to assist us in our net zero journey and we have agreed to set up an internal working group to guide the organisation on this journey.

“I really enjoy working at Children in Scotland. The supportive, fun and committed environment makes it a great place to work”

Staff feedback for the 2023 Having Your Say survey

1 Human resources

Our staff team are key to everything we achieve as an organisation and ensuring staff are paid fairly and treated well is essential to our ongoing success and ensuring staff feel valued and motivated.

In the summer of 2023, we introduced a new pay scale and refreshed our offer with respect to terms and conditions. Feedback from staff has been very positive with significantly improved responses to salary and benefits questions in our annual 'Having Your Say' survey. 94% of staff responded positively to the following questions: 'I feel that I am paid fairly for the work that I do' and 'I feel that my salary and benefits are competitive within the charity sector' – increasing from 75% and 60% respectively in 2022.



Above: All-staff meetings in Edinburgh, June 2023 and March 2024

2 IT

IT security alongside efficient and effective digital working is of significant importance to Children in Scotland's sustainability and as such we were proud to achieve our Cyber Essentials accreditation in September 2023. Certification gives us peace of mind that our systems and processes will protect the organisation against cyber-attacks and ensure our ongoing sustainability.



3 Corporate partnerships

We have continued to receive support from corporate partners with ongoing relationships with both the award-winning estate agent Yopa and The RS Macdonald Charitable Trust. We developed a new partnership with the OU in Scotland – officially launching this in November 2023.

These partnerships provide a range of support including financial contributions that support Changing our World or allow us to offer affordable learning opportunities to the sector. They also provide access to expertise and opportunities to develop joint projects such as the OU x Children in Scotland Learning Portal, launched in March 2024.

“We’re delighted to lend our support to an event that highlights intersectional approaches to better mental health for all young people”

Anthony Conroy, Head of Yopa Scotland (pictured above right) on the support of Children in Scotland's Mental Health Conference 2023

