

## Critical action

*Dr Khadija Mohammed  
on embedding anti-racism  
in education*

## A lasting legacy

*Has Nicola Sturgeon left  
our children and young  
people better off?*

## Space to create

*Breaking down barriers  
to participation  
in the arts*





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## Supporting the Third Sector Project

The aim of the Supporting The Third Sector Project (STTS) is to support third sector partners to become more involved in local and national planning and decision-making.

We do that through working with Scotland's Third Sector Interfaces (TSIs) and facilitating the TSI Children's Services Network to ensure that local third sector organisations are involved strategically in national and local policy and practice.

The project is funded by the Scottish Government Strategy team and hosted through Children in Scotland.

For more information about the project, please contact:

[girfec@childreninscotland.org.uk](mailto:girfec@childreninscotland.org.uk)

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# Welcome...

to the fourth edition of our still relatively new magazine for our members. Within it, the intention is to provide a space where colleagues from across the children's sector can find something to inspire, inform, and hopefully challenge the status quo.

We're delighted to extend the Changemakers section in this edition to include a report from our youth advisory group's meeting with Bruce Adamson as he heads towards the end of his term as Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland. Alongside our interviews with anti-racist educator Dr Khadija Mohammed and theatre-maker Rachel-Jane Morrison, this section really sets out our stall for celebrating positive change led by children and young people.

My thanks to our Contributing Editor Caitlin Logan who has brought so much to this edition, and to our designer Angus Doyle.



**Catherine Bromley**  
Editor

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Catherine Bromley".

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Cover: **Huayue Pu**

# Insight

Published by Children in Scotland

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Edinburgh, EH2 2PR

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Issue 4, Summer 2023

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We also acknowledge the support of the Scottish Government through a CYPFEIF and ALEC Fund Grant.

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*Insight* is published twice-yearly and is free for all Children in Scotland members. For information on membership, email:

[membership@childreninscotland.org.uk](mailto:membership@childreninscotland.org.uk)

Views expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily the opinions of the editor or Children in Scotland.

Printed by Ink on Paper, Dundee  
[inkop.co.uk](http://inkop.co.uk)



Registered charity in Scotland SCO03527  
Registered company number 83383  
ISSN 2753-2399

## Members' Community

### Welcoming new members

A warm welcome to new members joining Children in Scotland since the last edition of *Insight* was published in November 2022. Joining us are: Active Life Club; Ardfern School; Dyslexia Science; Dunbar ASN Community & Family Support; James Gillespie's High School; Man On!; Pilrig Park School; Rascals Out of School Care; Scottish Centre for Children with Motor Impairments; Sightlines Initiative; The Teapot Trust and Urban Youth Project.

### Feedback from members' training opportunities

Thanks to all who joined us at the 'Children's Rights and the UNCRC: bridging policy and practice' training session in January and the 'Meaningful participation in theory and practice' training in March.

*"As always, attending these training sessions not only provides a lot of information but also some great tools to access. Really useful, thank you"*

Delegate on UNCRC training

*"Lots of ideas to add to my toolbox!"*

Delegate on Participation training

### Helping to shape our Strategic Plan

Many thanks to our members who joined us at our Voices Forum on 24 January 2023 for a productive discussion about our Strategic Plan. This helped us to finalise priorities for the strategy, but also informed our plans on how it can be implemented, how we engage with and influence government and how we can support our member organisations, particularly smaller organisations. Our strategy is now published and **available on our website**.

Our next Voices Forum will be on Tuesday 23 May, 10am-12pm and all members are invited to attend. For more information or to book your place, contact Parisa Shirazi via [pshirazi@childreninscotland.org.uk](mailto:pshirazi@childreninscotland.org.uk)



### Our partnership with Yopa

We are delighted to be continuing our corporate partnership with award-winning estate agent Yopa.

The next six months of the partnership will include Yopa's invaluable support of our Mental Health Conference in May, and their ongoing sponsorship of our children and young people's advisory group, Changing our World, as the group continues to lobby government on the issues on which they want to see change and progress made.



# Bulletin

In each edition of *Insight*, we hear from members about their news, events and innovative projects

## Kiltwalk!

Organisations and individuals from across our membership have already signed up to raise funds in Scotland's big-hearted, mass participation walking event. Places for the Glasgow Kiltwalk have sold out, but there are still spaces to sign up for Aberdeen (4 June), Dundee (20 August) and Edinburgh (17 September).

For more information:  
[kiltwalk.co.uk](http://kiltwalk.co.uk)



## Outdoor learning boost

Congratulations to the Good Shepherd centre in Bishopton, Renfrewshire on its recent funding success. Their award from the National Lottery Community Fund will enable the centre which supports vulnerable young people to significantly develop its outdoor learning projects. Young people will have an outdoor classroom and families will also have their own outdoor activities space.



## New CEO for Partners in Advocacy

Robert McKay (above) has joined independent advocacy organisation, Partners in Advocacy as its new Chief Executive Officer.

Robert brings with him a wealth of experience in the third sector including senior leadership roles with the National Autistic Society and Terrence Higgins Trust (THT). His working and personal life has been focused significantly on supporting vulnerable people, including children, young people, and adults.

On his new role, he says: "I'm honoured to be part of the team at Partners in Advocacy (PiA), which has a great reputation for providing high-quality support on a national level. The involvement of PiA in delivering the My Rights, My Say service lifts my spirits, it fits in with my passion and beliefs, and provides such a necessary support to children, young people, and their parents/carers."

## Flower power

Teapot Trust is delighted to have won a show garden at the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) Chelsea Flower Show, being the only Scottish based charity to have done so. Made possible by a generous grant from Project Giving Back and designed by Semple Begg, the garden will be on display during the 2023 RHS Chelsea Flower show in May before being relocated to its permanent home at Glasgow's Royal Hospital for Children, where Teapot Trust has been working in partnership to support families in need over the last decade.

Image credit:  
*The Elsewhere Garden*,  
Illustrated by  
Sandra Dieckman



## Paying the price

Families Outside, supported by abrdn Financial Fairness Trust, has launched new research highlighting the devastating financial cost to families of supporting someone in prison and after release.

The research found that the burden of care and costs associated with supporting someone in prison in Scotland falls disproportionately on women, with many spending half their income or more in costs relating to their family member's imprisonment. The families of people held in prison overwhelmingly live on very low incomes. The research found the impact of additional costs and loss of income means that families are often pushed into extreme food and fuel poverty.

For more information head to:  
[familiesoutside.org.uk/paying-the-price](http://familiesoutside.org.uk/paying-the-price)

# Creative collaboration

We're delighted to continue our partnership with the Illustration department at Edinburgh College of Art. In this edition we return to working with the postgraduate Illustration students and once again we were knocked out by the standard of the work submitted. Sixteen students submitted responses to four pieces of editorial and were supported in meetings and discussion with Editor Catherine Bromley and Designer Angus Doyle.

Below the students whose work was chosen for publication explain the approaches that they took and the methods they used.



**Huayue Pu** (Cover):

"My idea was to show that the members of Children in Scotland are diverse, active and dynamic organisations. Using mainly iPad drawings, I designed several different occupational groups to convey that members come from all walks of life and professional areas to make a difference in children's lives, such as health and care professionals, youth activists and social workers, as well as local authority workers. The whole image is a high and low but free and open space, expressing that members are all working to improve the lives of children in their areas of expertise."



**Pando Wong** (Personal reflection, page 7):

"With this illustration, I wanted to convey hope and optimism. I can feel that Mr. Sweeney is a kind and enthusiastic person who genuinely cares about young people and understands their needs, and I wanted to reflect this in his portrait. I spent a lot of time perfecting the lines of his eyes and expression to ensure that the readers feel a sense of friendliness. As for the background, I chose roads leading in different directions to reflect the theme of the article. I used a bright colour palette in the hope that young people will be inspired to find the right path for their future."



**Xiaoyan Xu** ('A complicated legacy', page 20):

"Sunshine and Struggle' is a visual representation of the ongoing struggle faced by vulnerable children in Scotland. Despite the passing of legislation to protect and promote their rights, the reality for many remains bleak. The painting shows a stark divide between the idyllic world of basking in the warmth of the sun, and the harsh realities of poverty that haunt the children below. In a world where Brexit and the pandemic have exacerbated existing inequalities, it is crucial that we invest in projects that can make a real difference to the lives of those in need. This painting is a poignant reminder of that fact, and a call to action for all of us."



**Sahana Narasimhan** ('Creating hope together', page 34):

"While I stay in Scotland, I can't help but feel the sensational love and affection children and youngsters have for each other. A feeling of warmth and cosiness that creates a home rather than a house. People give each other warmth in this cold city irrespective of their race or walk of life. What you see through my art is how I feel when a beautiful diverse community gives back to its people and that's exactly what I aspire for people to experience."

Congratulations to all the students who took part and to the four whose work is published in this edition. And our thanks to ECA's MA Illustration Programme Director Fionnuala Doran.

## Diploma in Therapeutic Life Story Work

September 2023 - June 2024



TLSWi



Children in Scotland is delighted to be working in partnership with Professor Richard Rose for the fourth year running to deliver the Professional Diploma in Therapeutic Life Story Work (TLSW).

Visit [childreninscotland.org.uk/events](https://childreninscotland.org.uk/events) to find out more and apply.

Registrations are now open for course study beginning in September 2023.

Block 1: **4-6 September 2023**; Block 2: **8-10 November 2023**;  
Block 3: **5-7 February 2024**; Block 4: **3-5 June 2024**



# Steven Sweeney

## Board Convenor, Children in Scotland

**I**t's incredible what children and young people can achieve when we get out of their way. If we can put our trust and our confidence in them, children and young people will surprise us, they will learn and improve from the experience. With autonomy to take risks, along with the required support, tools and encouragement, this is where the magic really happens.

In a previous life I was a secondary school teacher. Don't get me wrong, I loved the profession, and it was a privilege to be in a learning environment with pupils every day. My wife is a teacher (others in the family too) and it's actually how we met, so I have much to be grateful for on that side. I decided that teaching wasn't for me though, that I was part of an education system that just wasn't meeting the needs of so many young people. That I was in their way.

They say it takes 10,000 hours of practice to make you an 'expert'. From my youth to my early 30s, I spent a fair share of my work and leisure time coaching sports, particularly football. I am certainly no expert, but it was during these years that I refined my skills in terms of building relationships and bridges of trust with young people.

Sport is a great vehicle for learning how to lead, to step out of your comfort zone, develop a healthy risk appetite, shape good morals and strong values. Rich opportunities present themselves when the children's sector meets Scotland's physical activity and sporting system. The same can be said for the likes of arts, drama, music and dance.

My main motivation and inspiration for stepping into the Convenor role when the magnificent Maureen McGinn stood down earlier this year was thinking about the amazing organisations in membership with Children in Scotland.

I'd like to shout out to just a few who inspire me with the opportunities they provide our young people.

The Children's University Scotland provides recognition for young people's participation in extra-curricular activities and their wider community. Spartans Community Football Academy (CFA) in North Edinburgh delivers stunning youth work provision and much more. Women's Aid South Lanarkshire and Renfrewshire (WASLER) provides critical domestic abuse protection for women and children.



Community Volunteers Enabling Youth (COVEY)'s mentoring and befriending services and Machan Trust's activities are part of a vibrant and impressive Larkhall Community Network. Finally, Kibble – for the work it does in Paisley, where I grew up and my dad ran a social enterprise which supported young people to learn a trade.

So, in recognition of these charities and all those working across Scotland to help give our young people the best start, I lift my hat. A vibrant membership is at the heart of Children in Scotland's work, and I look forward to meeting many more of you in the coming months and years ahead.

I am writing this fresh off the back of a Community Wealth Building Bill Consultation event with third sector organisations in South Lanarkshire where it was brilliant to see it recognised that it's not just a moral imperative, but an economic necessity, to give young people a fair chance to make their mark.

Rewiring economic development whilst delivering outcomes for people, places and the planet requires the energy, entrepreneurial spirit and innovation of our youth. So, let's provide the support, tools and encouragement, then get out of their way. •

**“  
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Illustration:  
Pando Wong

**“So many young people are now raising their voices against racism – we have no choice but to respond”**





**Dr Khadija Mohammed**, Associate Dean for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion at the University of the West of Scotland, former primary school teacher, and Chair of the Scottish Government's Anti-Racism in Education Programme talks about the importance of embedding a meaningful understanding of racism across the curriculum and beyond

Interview by **Caitlin Logan**

**T**he question of how to eliminate racism in Scottish education, and indeed across all of society, generated renewed attention and commitment in the Spring of 2020 when Black Lives Matter protests across the United States became an international news story in the wake of the murder of George Floyd by a police officer.

The Scottish Government website states that its Anti-Racism in Education Programme was established in response to the significant amount of correspondence received by the Deputy First Minister as part of the Black Lives Matter movement during this time, and to one of the recommendations of the COVID-19 Ethnicity Expert Group.

A stakeholder group was set up during the pandemic, and in October 2022 a formalised board was established, chaired by Dr Khadija Mohammed.

For Mohammed, like many anti-racist educators and activists, this work was not new, nor was it a passing moment. In 2013, she co-founded the Scottish Association of Minority Ethnic Educators to provide a strong voice for social and professional communities and to engage in critical dialogue. In her role at the

**“It’s been wonderful to witness the leadership of children and young people of colour in setting up anti-racist clubs within schools and holding their schools to account”**

*Opposite:*  
**Dr Khadija Mohammed, photographed at home, March 2023, by Phil Wilkinson**  
[philspix.com](http://philspix.com)

University of the West of Scotland, she has been steadily working to ensure that the next generation of teachers and early years practitioners are supported to become anti-racist educators.

And now, she is determined to ensure the momentum is sustained so that the national focus on anti-racism can spark a transformation which enables children and young people across Scotland to have an education that represents the diverse past and present of our world, and challenges all of us to create a more socially just future.

#### **Catalysing change**

**Caitlin Logan:** What does anti-racist education mean to you in practice?

**Dr Khadija Mohammed:** Anti-racist education is a term that often I hear colleagues, or sometimes teachers, shy away from, but it’s quite a powerful word to show that we’re taking critical action. Anti-racism, first and foremost, acknowledges that racism exists, and secondly, we need to take action in dismantling and disrupting racial discrimination, whether it is in our curriculum, school sites or beyond.

**CL:** How and why did you get involved in work around anti-racist education?

**KM:** I got involved because of my personal and professional journey as a teacher of colour. I began to question how my racial identity could play a role in supporting open, honest and critical conversations with young people about difference. I also felt that we could do better at facilitating conversations around race and racism at the university with our student teachers or early years practitioners, and I felt it was remiss of us not to do that.

This work has been in direct response to our children and young people and their families raising concerns around their lived experience in school settings: racism in Scottish education continues to exist and can manifest itself in a number of ways. There were significant statistics around children and young people of colour saying they didn’t see themselves represented in their curriculum, and many of them experienced racism but didn’t feel comfortable approaching their teachers to tell them. Some of them didn’t even have the confidence that their teachers knew what to do.

There have been a number of issues and some key world events, where so many young people are now raising their voices against racism – we have no choice but to respond to that.

### **Inclusive education**

**CL: Can you tell me a bit about where things are with the work of the Anti-Racism in Education Programme?**

**KM:** The programme has four work streams. One is looking at curriculum reform and we are due to publish our anti-racist curriculum principles soon. The focus here is on how important it is for children and young people to experience a curriculum that meaningfully recognises and fairly represents the rich and diverse communities within Scotland and beyond. It really is encouraging them to start inquiring and asking questions about Scotland's role in historical world events, and to understand the difference between individual racism and systemic racism.

Part of the work is about how we ensure teachers are confident in teaching an anti-racist curriculum and in supporting both children and young people of colour, but also white learners to be anti-racist. That links to another of the work streams: professional learning and leadership. We have co-designed a Building Racial Literacy Programme for educators, and it's about encouraging them to develop their own nuanced understanding of race and racism, and then begin to think about developing an anti-racist action plan within their educational setting.

The third stream is around diversifying the education workforce. Teachers of colour are, now, around 1.8% of the teaching profession. So, the Scottish Government appears committed to exploring ways of attracting young people of colour into teaching.

The final workstream is around racism and racist incidents in school. Research shows that headteachers or teachers are reluctant to identify and/or document something as racism. It's often recorded as bullying, or under "other". Reporting isn't really about trying to adopt punitive measures, it's about leaders within schools thinking: "If a racist incident has been reported in my school, what will I do as a leader? What are the next steps for me to ensure that doesn't happen

**“  
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again? What does it mean for me as a leader to safeguard all the children and young people and colleagues in my care? How can we be an anti-racist school?”

What's unique about it is that we have many young people of colour and key stakeholders informing and shaping the work that we're doing. It's been wonderful to witness their leadership in setting up anti-racist clubs within schools and holding their schools to account.

So, it's a much-needed programme and we're at the start of our journey, but I'm hopeful that we are beginning to disrupt and transform our educational spaces so that anti-racist practice is embedded throughout.

**CL: In 2019, statutory guidance was introduced on LGBTQI inclusive education. Would you like to see anti-racist education being made statutory in a similar way?**

**KM:** That was indeed a landmark moment, and we would absolutely aspire to have a similar commitment on anti-racism. We are hoping to achieve this through hosting a Race Summit in the future. If we take pride in Scotland that we are the first devolved nation to embed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) within Scottish legislation, if we're thinking about upholding children's rights, then anti-racist practice needs to be a core part of our curriculum, not a bolt-on. Oftentimes we have [people saying], "it's Black History Month, what are we going to do?". We must move away from a tokenistic approach to curriculum to one that is inclusive and responsive to all diverse learners. We need an anti-racist curriculum.

If we can make LGBTQI history a mandatory part of the curriculum, I see no reason why we can't have anti-racism in that space. If you apply an intersectional lens, you have far better outcomes in speaking to the diversity around us within school settings and beyond.

### **Beyond the school gates**

**CL: Do you think elements of this work can be applied to settings outside of formal education, such as youth work?**

**KM:** Absolutely. The work we're doing is not exclusively for school teachers. In our design team for the

Building Racial Literacy Programme, we have community educators, early years colleagues, and third sector organisations who are working with marginalised communities. So, it's much more beyond the formal schooling environment.

**CL: Do you feel that there's a good enough understanding of, and commitment to, anti-racism within the children and families sector in Scotland? How can that be improved?**

**KM:** No, I think there is much work needed within this sector. For our services to be fit for purpose to support children and families of colour, staff need to be racially literate and have the language with which to name, frame and address some of the issues that our families and young people raise – namely, the inequity they experience within the different services. If they do not understand the everyday lived experiences of our families of colour, then how do they ask critical questions of their practice, or examine whether their policies and services are fit for purpose? Do they speak to the diversity of our families across Scotland, and how culturally responsive are they to those differing needs?

Many young people and families of colour experience gaslighting where somebody might question their reality and ask, are you sure that's what you've experienced? Or maybe that's your interpretation of it – perhaps you are being overly sensitive? Or maybe the individuals who said the racist comment didn't mean anything by it. In any service that supports families and children, there's absolutely no room for complacency, and applying an anti-racist lens to the work they do to better support and understand them is vital.

### **The politics of education**

**CL: There's been some pushback to the idea of teaching about Critical Race Theory and Black Lives Matter from the UK Government and even within Scotland. Do you think that's something we need to be concerned about, and how can that sort of backlash be guarded against?**

**KM:** Oftentimes in Scotland, the rhetoric is that "there's no problem here", but we know there is no room for complacency – racism is very much alive and well in Scotland.

We saw Tory MPs talking about "wokery nonsense". We will experience pushback from some of our white senior political leaders, but also from some of our BME [Black and Minority Ethnic] political leaders. So, we need to ask questions of why that is happening.

I'm an academic; my PhD research drew on Critical Race Theory (CRT). It is such a powerful critical framework to help us understand race and racism and how it manifests. It states clearly that racism is in the everyday experience for people of colour and CRT provides tools to really unpack this and think about how we can take action.

Quite often headteachers will claim that "schools are apolitical", but of course, schools are political sites. Our children and young people should be comfortable in challenging, questioning and arriving at conclusions through critical debate, so that they're not being influenced by the negative stereotypes portrayed in the media.

Moreover, whilst we often reference George Floyd as an example, Scotland's has its own George Floyd: Sheku Bayoh. We need to be comfortable in saying that and thinking about the sorts of systemic institutional racism that our children and young people are exposed to in the broader world. How do they stand up in the face of injustice? We want our young people to be challenging injustice wherever they see it – that's really important.

**CL: If there's one thing that you'd want people to take away from this interview, what would it be?**

**KM:** I think the work that we're engaged in is a call to action for our next generation of young people and our next generation of teachers. We want our young people to have their rights upheld, but also to grow up in a world where they have a strong sense of self. So, it's a duty upon us to ensure they have safer, bolder and braver spaces where their diverse multiple identities are acknowledged, nurtured and celebrated. •

**“  
Schools are  
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Our children  
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To find out more about the Anti-Racism in Education Programme visit:  
[gov.scot/groups](http://gov.scot/groups)



# Unlocking the power of creative thinking

A new partnership is building a radical new platform for creative thinking in Scottish schools. One of its Directors, *Helena Good*, says this is just the beginning

**W**orking alongside amazing teachers in schools across Scotland, we are empowering students to take ownership of their learning, providing them with the opportunity to engage with the curriculum in an innovative way that supports their needs, and encouraging them to develop the skills and competencies that will be essential for success in the 21st century.

Daydream Believers is a small team of passionate, award-winning educators and employers who came together to put creativity at the heart of education because we believe innovation and curiosity are key to unlocking the potential of the future workforce. We believe that regardless of background, our young people need to envision themselves as successful in life.

We want to develop the genius in every young person and give them the tools to be critical thinkers, problem solvers, ideators and leaders. We have created free, collaborative online learning experiences grounded in equity, where learners can actively participate in their education, instead of memorising for tests, and where the curriculum is delivered in a way that supports the needs of our students. This is a space where professionals in business and education are invited to participate and help shape learning.



Our teaching resources are built on interdisciplinary learning – one of the most equitable ways to teach. This approach enables teachers to understand how each pupil learns, use innovative ways to assess their knowledge, and then make adjustments based on the results.

Learners get a chance to set their own goals. They have time to discuss the work. They take academic risks and along the way, they get to discover who they are and what matters to them.

In October 2022, Daydream Believers was selected by HunderED, a global organisation specialised in education innovation, as one of the top 100 innovations that are changing the face of education in a post-Covid world. In particular, they recognised our impact and potential for scalability.

“*Learners are encouraged to think differently, break the rules, fail, collaborate and generate creative, innovative solutions*”

Above:  
**Still from Daydream Believers promotional film**

Opposite:  
**Students taking the Creative Thinking qualification at St John's Academy, Perth**

All images © Daydream Believers

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## The Creative Thinking qualification

In January 2021 we launched a new qualification in Creative Thinking. This is a SCQF level 5 and 6 qualification – equivalent to a Nat 5 and a Higher – and is delivered across an academic year. It's based on a simple creative process with five broad learning outcomes which are clearly mapped to our resources and assessment app, Stellar. To date there are 20 high schools working with us on the qualification, with more schools lined up to join us in the new academic year.

To support the learning and teaching experience, we created Playlists of resources in collaboration with LEGO, Ellen MacArthur Foundation, Studio LR, Acrylicize and Edinburgh Napier University, amongst others. Working through the different challenges in the Playlists, learners are encouraged to think differently, break the rules, fail, collaborate and generate creative, innovative solutions. They are learning through exploration. Our Playlists are all free to download from our website.

As we head towards the end of an academic year, we are reflecting on our experience. It's fair to say it has gone way beyond even our wildest dreams! We are inspired and excited about the experiences and results that our amazing teachers are sharing with us. This has opened up space in the curriculum for conversations and thinking around topics that really matter to our young people. They are sharing their insights and creating a new vision for our world.

We want to offer this experience to every school in Scotland. We have seen that dreaming big and believing in what's possible is the key to creating a more equitable future for all our young people. ●

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**Helena Good** is one of the Directors of Daydream Believers

Find out more about their work: [daydreambelievers.co.uk/qualification](http://daydreambelievers.co.uk/qualification)

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## “Next year’s course is already oversubscribed”

**Mrs Johann Packer**  
**St John’s Academy, Perth**



I was excited when I heard about the Creative Thinking qualification, as I realised it was a new kind of course that would be ideal to introduce in our school. The real-world challenges sounded exciting but more importantly, the focus on analytical thinking and problem-solving would develop key skills needed by our young people. The class was small to start with, but numbers quickly increased as word spread about what the course involved. They could see that the project-based course structure encouraged freedom and the potential for an interesting range of work to be produced.

We have worked on a range of stimulating projects, from designing a circular fashion brand to creating a campaign spreading kindness to others. Each project brief pushes our pupils to really question everything and challenge their own thinking, which sparks a growing confidence as they approach each task. This style has encouraged a fearless approach to asking questions and has developed skills in creatively communicating ideas to others.

Teaching the course has been personally rewarding as I have laughed with my class but also cried at some of the hard-hitting topics we have tackled. It has allowed me to get to know pupils better than any course I have taught before and has challenged me to reflect on my lessons whilst helping to grow and develop my own skills. Having come from a design background, I recognise the relevance of this course and how it will prepare for careers within creative industries and more.

Creative Thinking is generating a buzz amongst the school community as they are intrigued when they see and hear what we are up to. Next year’s course is already oversubscribed with current pupils even asking to retake as they don’t want to leave.

This fresh and exciting course gives pupils a realistic insight into working within the creative industries. The outstanding levels of portfolio produced has already helped with the next steps into higher education. I would recommend the Creative Thinking course to any school as I have loved teaching it and look forward to seeing it go from strength to strength.



# *“I think we’ve started to create an amazing culture of children as human rights defenders”*

Bruce Adamson’s six-year term as Children and Young People’s Commissioner Scotland comes to an end on 17 May. **Changing our World**, the children and young people’s advisory group of Children in Scotland, quizzed him on the highs and lows of the role





## What are you most proud of from your time as Commissioner?

When I came into the role, I had three big things I wanted to do. One was on physical punishment of children – we got that changed. One was the age at which the criminal law applied to children – we got that changed, but not as much as I would like. And we got the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) Bill through Parliament. It needs some amendments, but incorporation will come. I'm proud we've managed to make good progress on those. But the thing I'm most proud of is the work we've done to build the ability of children and young people to understand rights, use rights and have your voices heard. I think we've started to create an amazing culture of children as human rights defenders.

## What was the hardest thing about the role?

One is that there's one million children and young people across Scotland and there's one Commissioner and 15 staff. The hardest part is deciding which issues you work on and which children and young people you talk to, because you haven't got unlimited time and money.

This job is about challenging people in power, which means you get a lot of pushback. I get abuse on social media and a lot of politicians get angry with me, so it's hard sometimes to process that but that's part of the job. But I find it really difficult when children and young people work alongside me and that's directed at them. That's one of the things I want to improve – protections for human rights defenders.

## What were your long-term goals?

When you become Children's Commissioner, you only get six years, so you've got to move quickly, but there are some issues that take longer. When I started, I spoke to lots of children and young people, and poverty was one of the big [issues] – and that got worse during Covid and the cost-of-living crisis. So, I think a big change is needed in how budgets are used around poverty, getting support, and breaking down stigma. And I'm concerned we're not doing enough to support children and young people's mental health. Those are things I want to make sure the Commissioner's office continues on, and they'll be things I'll be keen to still be part of.



**“The thing I’m most proud of is the work we’ve done to build the ability of children and young people to understand rights, use rights and have their voices heard”**

*Opposite and above:*  
**Bruce Adamson with Changing our World, photographed at the Scottish Poetry Library, March 2023 by Phil Wilkinson**

## What can we do as young people to protect our rights?

Putting the UNCRC into domestic law is the most important thing we can do. We've seen in countries that have done this that it changes the way decision-makers do their job – they take rights seriously because they know if they don't, they can end up in court. Once it's in, what you can do is use it. So, when you're talking about mental health, education, disability, climate change, using these tools to challenge those in power. The Children's Commissioner's Office is going to be right there beside you, helping with that.

## What are your thoughts on pineapple on pizza?

It's a good thing Article 12 in the Convention talks about children being able to make their own decisions. So, I think it's a personal choice. Following on from some of the SNP leadership candidates who spoke about their own views, I think pineapple on pizza is an awful, awful thing, but I would never impose that on anyone else. ●

Find out more about Changing our World at:

**[childreninscotland.org.uk/  
changing-our-world](https://childreninscotland.org.uk/changing-our-world)**

Find out more about the role of the Commissioner:  
**[cyps.org.uk](https://cyps.org.uk)**

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## Arts

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# A class act: levelling the playing field in the performing arts

From career paths to community connections, the benefits of theatre-making to young people are obvious to those who have experienced it – yet keeping those opportunities alive in Scotland’s low income and rural communities is an ongoing battle. For Young Quines’ Rachel-Jane Morrison, it’s a battle she’s determined to win

By *Caitlin Logan*

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**Y**oung Quines, a project of feminist theatre company Stellar Quines, runs free weekly theatre and drama groups for young women and young people who are non-binary, trans or exploring their gender identity in Kirkcaldy and Levenmouth, led by professional theatre-makers.

These groups are for 14 to 18-year-olds, while the recently introduced Younger Quines group caters to those aged nine to 13. Both were the brainchild of 29-year-old theatre-maker, director, and community arts practitioner Rachel-Jane Morrison.

“The arts are one of the things that we all lean on in times of panic or crisis or joy or fun. I think having that become accessible on a really ground roots level for young people allows them a window into that industry. It’s a place with very little pressure to be anything other than yourself, and if that feels too much, there’s an option to be somebody else,” Morrison explains.

Morrison grew up in Methil, a former mining village on the East coast of Fife, before heading to Glasgow to study Contemporary Performance Practice at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. This education, she says, was a “privilege” which “took a whole village, a whole community” to achieve. “Working class people from my area don’t often get the chance to study in such elite institutions,” she adds.

This is why Morrison is committed to breaking down the barriers which young people in this part of Fife face to participating in the arts; barriers which, in her view, are only becoming harder to surmount. “When I came back to that community to see that the opportunities that were once available to me had disappeared, it really saddened me”.

“I was doing a lot of workshops across Fife, and I quickly found out that, in schools, the arts were being cut or they were being less prioritised. Schoolteachers were at total capacity and really trying their best, but really having to go against the grain to create this arts education,” Morrison explains. “That really frustrated me and angered me, because it instantly makes the arts feel like they’re inaccessible and like they’re a bit of a pipe dream or a bit of a hobby; that they’re not a career path, especially in working class areas.”



The idea of providing a space specifically for young women and those of marginalised genders to create theatre was inspired by the “distinct lack of confidence” she had observed amongst this group through her work in the area.

“They were so anxious, they were so low in their self-esteem, that it just wasn’t working for them being in a drama context, yet they’d all chosen to be there,” Morrison recalls. Her sense was that these young people were being “let down” by the lack of resources to provide them with much-needed opportunities to build on their confidence and their aspirations.

Despite all of this, securing funding to bring this dream to life was an uphill slog – in large part because of its location. “I went chapping on the doors of theatre companies that I’d worked with for quite a long time, and none of them were willing to support it in Fife, which was really problematic. I would say, ‘it’s a project that’s specific for Fife because I’ve seen the need for it,’” she says.

**“It’s a place with very little pressure to be anything other than yourself, and if that feels too much, there’s an option to be somebody else”**

*Opposite:*  
Young people at the Take Up Space summer project in Kirkcaldy, 2022

*Above:*  
Rachel-Jane Morrison



As a creative practitioner, Morrison knows all too well that “there’s a huge pull towards the city centre for work”. “It’s not that there’s nobody trying to do anything in Fife, it’s just that we’re not as well-known, we don’t have the same gravitas as a company in Glasgow, Edinburgh or Dundee might have, and Fife is quite hard to get to via public transport. A lot of arts funding doesn’t support travel bursaries,” she says.

However, perhaps the succession of closed doors was meant to be, because Morrison’s idea turned out to be the perfect match for a partnership with Edinburgh-based Stellar Quines, which has been producing feminist theatre for 30 years. The company agreed to support the project in Fife back in 2019, and after the slight hurdle of a global pandemic and the closure of arts and community venues across the country, the groups got up and running in August 2021. “I was over the moon”, Morrison says.

Currently, the Kirkcaldy group is at the early stages of learning about storytelling and devising techniques, whilst the younger age group in Buckhaven is working on devising a piece of physical theatre from a poetry piece called ‘These Girls are Like Lions’ and the older group is devising a performance around a text about a group of teenagers at school. The latter is being developed with the young people so that it “becomes about their unique stories, wrapped up in characters so it is being told in a way that feels really supported”.

Morrison explains: “It’s being led through a feminist lens, creating a female-led space every week – a safe space where they’re celebrated.” For Morrison, that also means being LGBTQI-inclusive. The groups have attracted “a diverse range of young people”, she says, which includes non-binary young people and those who are “on journeys within themselves or looking at transitioning”.

“It’s important that they can come into that space and vocalise their needs, or if they’ve got any vulnerabilities that they’re feeling particularly unsure about. I think it’s great that we can host that, and we can go on and make drama and theatre and performance.”

Beyond creating a safe and supportive space, though, Morrison’s ambition is

*Opposite, above:*  
**Young people and practitioners playing with paint to music during Jupiter Artland trip, Summer 2022**

*Opposite, below:*  
**Sharing with families at the end of the Take Up Space summer project in Kirkcaldy, 2022**

that this work should offer the young people a meaningful “pathway into the industry”.

The step from youth theatre to professional theatre is one which leaves many young women behind, Morrison has observed. “When I was at drama school, the courses were quite male-dominated, and the spaces felt quite male-dominated – which is ironic, because in mixed gender youth theatre sessions it tends to weigh heavily on young women,” she says.

“When we move further up the line and it becomes a career path, we often see young women dropping out, or women in their early careers dropping out, and they don’t get as far ahead as their male counterparts,” Morrison adds.

Although she notes that things are starting to change for the better, Morrison feels that groups like Young Quines, which seek to level the playing field, remain vital. “For me, it feels important that we’re addressing the imbalance across the industry in a very small, micro way.” •

“*When we move further up the line and it becomes a career path, we often see young women dropping out, or women in their early careers dropping out, and they don’t get as far ahead as their male counterparts*”

*Photography:*  
**Jassy Earl**

*Young Quines and Younger Quines* is funded by the Culture Collective. Find out more about the project at: [stellarquines.co.uk/engagement/young-quines/](https://stellarquines.co.uk/engagement/young-quines/)





# A complicated legacy

As the new First Minister Humza Yousaf settles in, *Amy Woodhouse* reflects on nearly nine years of Nicola Sturgeon's leadership and what it achieved for Scotland's children and young people



In advance of writing this, I talked to friends and colleagues about what they thought of Nicola Sturgeon's tenure as First Minister. I asked their views about her legacy for children and young people and whether they felt she was leaving them in a better position than she found them. And quite how to summarise nine years in 900 words? In some respects, it would be easier to use only two: "it's complicated".

I started as Head of Policy at Children in Scotland in 2015, so I have been in this role for almost all of Nicola Sturgeon's premiership. In those early days I spent a lot of time on the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, which brought in a raft of changes, including an ultimately unsuccessful attempt to place the Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) approach on a statutory footing. It was a difficult experience for the children's sector in many ways.

As the CYP Act and subsequent United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) and Gender Recognition Reform Bills have shown, legislation may pass in Holyrood, but that has not always been the end of the story. Even where there haven't been legal challenges, the job of turning legislation or national policy into change on the ground hasn't always gone according to plan.

I'm sure implementation issues predate this current government, but 'Scotland's implementation gap' feels like a ubiquitous term at the moment – plug in your policy area and watch it appear. A sector colleague describes it as an "implementation deficit disorder" – which implies something chronic, complex, and disabling. And it's not something that is likely to clear up on its own, unfortunately.

You can see evidence of the implementation gap in many places. It exists in the variance between the entitlements outlined in Additional Support



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*Despite the difficult choices that would need to be made, Scotland does have the power to do something about it*”

for Learning legislation and the paucity of support that many children and young people with additional support needs receive. It's also present in the national approach to addressing the poverty-related attainment gap, which has received significant investment over many years without any clear indication of impact. Or in the roll-out of the 1140 free childcare hours policy, as childcare providers and families face severe challenges in making it work for their circumstances.

This is all deeply frustrating because real efforts have been made and money invested. I'm convinced that both Nicola Sturgeon and her deputy John Swinney were committed to improving the lives of children and young people. They recognised inequalities and endeavoured to address them through policy, legislation, and fiscal measures. That is a very good thing and not to be taken for granted, particularly when you compare this to the rhetoric and decisions made at Westminster in recent years.

The importance of listening to children's views has also been increasingly recognised at all levels, including by the First Minister. In 2018, the Year of Young People, Children in Scotland and YouthLink Scotland delivered two First Minister's Question Times. We brought together 100 children from across Scotland to ask questions of the First Minister on issues

that mattered to them. Nicola Sturgeon got quite a grilling, but I remember the respectful way she listened and how she made time to meet with any child who wanted to speak to her afterwards. It was a small thing to do in the grand scheme of things, but she didn't need to do it.

Nicola Sturgeon's personal commitment to listening to children's views has also been evident in her commitment to "Keep the Promise". The Promise and the prior Independent Care Review fundamentally changed Scotland's perspective on what care means, brought hope to care experienced children and young people, and challenged the organisations and systems that surround them.

And, with the Bill to incorporate the UNCRC, Scotland was given a chance to position itself alongside other pioneering countries in the field of children's rights. It was and remains a thrilling prospect. But for all this 'promise', we haven't yet managed to get the UNCRC Bill over the line, two years after it was passed.

The Scottish Government has also invested significant public funds into addressing child poverty, particularly through the Scottish Child Payment, giving much needed money to low-income families. The SCP has been widely welcomed by anti-poverty and children's organisations, including Children in Scotland. However, even with this incredible investment, child poverty levels remain at around 24% – a shocking statistic for any wealthy country. The investment sadly has been nowhere near enough to address the problem.

Is it fair to hold our recently departed First Minister entirely responsible for such failings? These have been (to use another overused phrase) unprecedented times. Brexit, a pandemic, a cost-of-living crisis: they have all significantly undermined the wellbeing of the country and made life more difficult for all, particularly those who were already struggling.

I am reminded of a statement made by campaigners that poverty is and remains a policy decision. Despite the difficult choices that would need to be made, Scotland does have the power to do something about it. We have more control over implementation than is sometimes implied, and money is only part of the solution. We undoubtedly have to get better at investing in the right things – those that are likely to have the biggest impact.

Looking back over Nicola Sturgeon's time in office, there is so much that is positive to hook on to. However, there is considerable disappointment in the lack of substantial, meaningful, lasting change for children and young people. Given where we are as a country and as a world, it's hard to be confident that things have improved since 2014. But as I said at the start, it's complicated. ●



**Amy Woodhouse** is Head of Policy for Children in Scotland

Read our manifesto for this term of the Scottish Parliament: [childreninscotland.org.uk/2021-26-manifesto](https://childreninscotland.org.uk/2021-26-manifesto)

Illustration: **Xiaoyan Xu**

# Empowering recovery and change through choice

Approaches to supporting mothers whose children have been removed into care vary significantly. Real change for families will only be achieved through a consistent, Scotland-wide model which is non-judgmental and unconditional, writes *Dr Alison Scott*



In our society, punitive measures such as points on driving licences and community pay-back orders have a finite life and then they are done. Women who have children removed, however, carry that grief and trauma forever. It never ends.

Whilst there is no question that protection of children is of paramount importance, who cares for the birth parents left behind? Who supports them through their grief to carry on with their lives in a positive way? Who manages the trauma from this and probably many other previous episodes in that mother's life?

Rightly, the focus on the child needs to ensure that they live in a safe, loving environment. The Promise Scotland sets out targets to ensure that care experienced children grow up feeling that they are respected, cared for and loved. For too long, many of these young people have found themselves in the same situation as their parents and aims to change this by 2030 are commendable. However, support for the parents, and in particular the mothers of these children, is vital to improve quality of life and self-esteem, and to empower people to acknowledge and process their grief, then move forward with positive steps.

Work by Mason *et al*, based in Lancaster, who interviewed women whose babies had been removed at birth, demonstrated recurrent themes: feeling isolated with unacknowledged support needs; shame; stigma and failure of others to acknowledge their maternal identity; acute trauma and disenfranchised grief; and lack of strategies to mitigate pain/grief. Subsequent to these findings, a box of information and support was given to all mothers in this situation.

The best time to offer help and support has not been assessed scientifically and may well be different for different women.

Providing both physical and psychological care whilst allowing women the space and time to talk through what has happened to them is essential. Support from professional social work staff and healthcare staff, as well as the opportunity for peer support and group work, needs to be available to all women.

Currently, across Scotland there is no consistent model of care for women who have had children removed. Mapping services is a quick job as there are so few. Services need to be multidisciplinary and joined-up in order to provide the best holistic care possible for women who have complex situations and are hugely vulnerable. Linking between statutory services, health services and the third sector is the most effective and efficient way to empower women to start caring for themselves.

All of these services have to be trauma-informed and have staff who are trauma-trained delivering care, working towards empowering women to make positive decisions in their lives by providing safe, caring environments where the messaging is consistent and clear – that women are valued and can make positive choices. Care needs to be non-judgemental and unconditional.

There are currently a number of projects in Scotland trying to provide this kind of high-quality care at the same time as evaluating themselves to prove the need and worth of their work. Martha's Mammies was established midway through 2022 in Glasgow and provides women with a safe space to grieve their lost children. It offers women the opportunity to look at their futures and see peers who have successfully moved on following their trauma. Scottish Adoption's Bluebird group in Edinburgh, Aberlour's Recovery House in Dundee and the Sparrow project in Edinburgh are all trying to set up multidisciplinary services that women can influence by having a voice to say what their needs and wants are.

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*Whilst there is no question that protection of children is of paramount importance, who cares for the birth parents left behind?*”

However, none of these projects has secure funding. In some cases, they end up competing against each other for central funding. It is illogical and cruel to set up a project that then has to end because of a lack of ongoing funding. Instead, the same model could be used across the country with variations due to geographical issues, such as remote and rural areas, but based upon the same principles and practices.

At the centre of all of these projects sits the needs of the woman who has suffered the trauma of the permanent removal of a child. Supporting her with her emotions and giving her the choice as to where she goes next is absolutely imperative for success.

Organisations – of which there is at least one operating in Scotland – who state that their purpose is to support women but will only do so if she complies and uses contraception, are enforcing behaviours and removing choices from women, thus perpetuating the lifelong abuse which she has been subjected to. Support conditional upon certain behaviours, with that support then being removed should the woman not comply or indeed have a further pregnancy, is not only cruel, illogical and inhuman, it is immeasurably damaging to the woman and her family, her community and society.

Going forward, shared learning to create successful, trauma-informed, multidisciplinary teams with secure funding would allow staff to focus their time on their clients rather than having to invest time on recurrent funding bids. It also encourages staff permanence through job security.

I am a fan of Dr Edith Eger, a wise psychotherapist who survived imprisonment in concentration camps and forgave the horrors committed against her. Here are two of her quotes from 'The Gift':

*“Change is about interrupting the habits and patterns that no longer serve us.”*

*“We do not change until we're ready. But readiness doesn't come from outside and it can't be rushed or forced. You're ready when you're ready, when something inside shifts and you decide, 'Until now I did that. Now I'm going to do something else'.”* •



**Dr Alison Scott, FRCOG, FFSRH**, runs WISHES (Woman Inclusive Sexual Health Extended Service) in Edinburgh and acted as Medical Advisor to the Scottish Government's Women's Health Plan. She is also Head of Student Wellbeing for Edinburgh University Medical School.



# An assault on human rights

The Illegal Migration Bill could effectively ban seeking asylum in the UK. *Raza Sadiq* explores the grave consequences for children and families and argues that solidarity will be the key to resistance

If you think the Tory UK Government has only now started to castigate refugees – stripping them of their rights and protections – you’ve not been paying attention.

This has been the game plan, long in the making. It’s intrinsically linked to who they are as a party and as a government. It’s the driving force behind their unrelenting Brexit pursuit. ‘Taking back control’ was only ever just another name for re-establishing British exceptionalism.

The Tory Government’s Illegal Migration Bill (the caricatured “Small Boats Bill”), in addition to the already passed Nationality and Borders Act, is the end game. Now some of our poorest, most vulnerable and desperate will pay the price.

Just to recap: these are people who, through desperation, are clinging to the sides of boats – sometimes to the sides of planes – just to try and find the opportunity of a better life. Fleeing famine, war, and persecution, only to be othered by an uncaring and increasingly right-wing Tory Government.

## **We have to pay attention.**

The Illegal Migration Bill places a ‘virtual ban’ on asylum claims, no matter how valid. That’s not just my view, it’s the view of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). It said: “The legislation, if passed, would amount to an asylum ban – extinguishing the right to seek refugee protection in the United Kingdom for those who arrive irregularly, no matter how genuine and compelling their claim may be, and with no consideration of their individual circumstances.”

In the pyre of its Brexit bonfire, the UK Government is quite content to ignore international and domestic rights laws. On the face of the Bill itself, the Home Secretary admits that the Illegal Migration Bill may not be compatible with the Human Rights Act (1998) and the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR).

There is a profound impact on the rights of children and families too. The Bill has a plethora of unchecked consequences that, if implemented, are not only likely to breach the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child but will undermine the rights of children within the Refugee Convention.

We now face an unprecedented power grab by the Home Secretary, allowing for separated children to be detained with no access to bail before 28 days. We are now so far down the path of the Tory-led demonisation of asylum seekers that the detention of separated children in hotel and reception centres is a possibility.

Not stopping there, the Bill also removes protections for modern slavery victims. The UK Government will now be returning children who have been trafficked to the UK back into the arms of the criminal and often violent gangs who sent them here. If the Nationality and Borders Act didn’t already make it hard to seek asylum in the UK, the Illegal Migration Bill has made it impossible.

The families and children being demonised by this UK Government don’t seek asylum lightly. They’re often fleeing the most unimaginable horrors. This Migration Bill criminalises them for doing so. These are children.

“*The families and children being demonised by this UK Government don’t seek asylum lightly. They’re often fleeing the most unimaginable horrors. This Migration Bill criminalises them for doing so*”

Their existence, or legality, is not up for debate. Regardless of where they were born, or where they had come from, they are now members of our community. Under this new Bill, when they turn 18, they face being deported to a country they don't know, where they can't be cared for, and where they could be placed in immediate danger.

The most egregious part of this? The UK Government simply doesn't care. Whether it's migrants, refugees, those seeking asylum, workers, or those on welfare, the Tory Government has systematically and deliberately dismantled the rights and protections of all those they ideologically oppose.

The crackdown on civil liberties, the removal of protections, and the restriction of hard-won freedoms are just as applicable to the Illegal Migration Bill as they are to the Nationality and Borders Bill and to the Minimum Level (Strikes) Bill. If you're on the wrong side of this government, you're being made to pay with your rights.

### **We made them pay attention.**

The Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC), in partnership with TUC colleagues, led the charge in opposing the UK Government's Strikes Bill.

Workers, including young workers in some of the most exploitative workplaces across the country, face more barriers when seeking to take strike action against rogue employers. It's abundantly clear that, as workers grow stronger, Tories grow more scared. We've had the Trade Union Act (2015). We've now got the Strikes Bill. True to form, when something challenges the hegemony of the UK Government – unions standing up for ordinary workers – they try to strike us down. The linkages to the Tory demonisation of migrants are unspeakably clear. Those who take action and try to seek a better life for themselves are met with resistance and hostility.

Led by Stand Up to Racism and supported by the STUC and a whole host of civic Scotland organisations, we will not stay silent in the face of injustice. We cannot sit idly by whilst those at their most vulnerable – those seeking asylum – are routinely denigrated by the UK Government. Last month, as we marched through the streets of Glasgow in defiance of the Illegal Migration Bill in solidarity with refugees the length and breadth of Scotland, we saw our movement at our best. Plural. Collective. United. Strong.

We won't allow those seeking sanctuary in Scotland to walk alone. They have the weight of our movement behind them, which is exactly why we have grabbed the attention of the UK Government. ●



**Raza Sadiq** is Co-Chair of STUC Black Workers and Chair and founder of the Active Life Club in Glasgow, which promotes inclusion and diversity in sports for young people.

Find out more about the work of the STUC at: [stuc.org.uk](https://stuc.org.uk)

# The Child Maintenance Service should be re-designed to meet the needs of children and families – not the needs of the state

There is an endless stream of data to support the need for targeted specialist support and advocacy for lone parent families, and there is no doubt they are a particularly vulnerable and diverse group, recognised as a priority group in the Scottish Government's Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan.

The UK's Child Maintenance Service (CMS) was designed to promote family-based arrangements and reduce the 'burden' on the state to intervene. However, there is a wealth of research and evidence highlighting the failures of an existing system that, in too many cases, fails to meet the needs of families.

Child maintenance is overlooked as a lever in the national mission to tackle child poverty. All too often we see broad, far-reaching societal measures to tackle poverty, with the hope that this will 'trickle down' to support key family groups. However, if we are to meet child poverty targets, we must invest in significant targeted interventions such as addressing the failing CMS.

At Fife Gingerbread, we have been working with the Poverty Alliance to revisit the challenges surrounding child maintenance and better understand how/ if these have changed in the context of pandemic recovery and a cost-of-living crisis.

So far, we have learned that the system fails to consistently enable lone parents to access child maintenance – often causing harm, both financially and to families' health and wellbeing. In cases where domestic abuse is a factor, the process is particularly challenging. Child maintenance, like poverty, is a deeply gendered

issue as around 90% of lone parents are women. Additionally, the research highlights a lack of awareness amongst practitioners supporting families and that child maintenance does not reliably feature in existing financial inclusion activity.

At a local level I am hopeful that the research will reinvigorate awareness and create a call to action, building capacity to take forward recommendations on improving the support available to help lone parents navigate the system. However, the key here is that the system itself is broken and requires radical change. Lone parent families shouldn't have to navigate broken systems to secure financial support for the care of their child(ren).

The system does not work for families, and often fails both resident and non-resident parents. We must stop tinkering around the edges: we must advocate for transformational change. So, what could a supportive and successful child maintenance system look like? My belief is that the key principles that would underpin a successful system would include:

- A system that is free, transparent and simple to navigate, with caseworkers allocated to ensure families are supported and not retelling their 'story' repeatedly.
- A system with children at the heart of design and decision-making, that promotes children's rights and best interests, parental responsibility, and an adequate standard of living (as set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child).

- A system grounded in the understanding that trauma (such as parental separation and domestic abuse) has wide reaching impacts on the health and wellbeing of families.
- Culture change so that the system views child maintenance as an entitlement, rather than families being 'lucky' if they have a reliable financial arrangement.

If we can agree the fundamental principles of the system itself and design it to meet these needs – rather than those of the state – then surely the result would be radically improved? •

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*Lone parent families shouldn't have to navigate broken systems to secure financial support for the care of their children*”



Laura Millar is Strategic Manager of Fife Gingerbread, which specialises in engaging lone parents and families in need.

Find out more about their work at: [fifegingerbread.org.uk](https://fifegingerbread.org.uk)



# Targeted top-ups have the power to help families penalised by unjust cuts to UK social security



In Scotland too many children are still living in poverty. Tens of thousands of households are facing difficult choices about whether to prioritise spending on rent, heating, or sufficient food. The Scottish Government must continue to invest in tackling poverty, and social security is key to ensuring families have the resources they need.

The introduction of the Scottish Child Payment has been a game changer in terms of tackling child poverty. Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) analysis suggests that the £25 per week payment for low-income families will shift the trajectory of child poverty and put Scotland on course to get close to, if not meet, the interim child poverty target of less than 18% of children living in poverty by 2024.

But this alone is not sufficient to lift many families out of poverty. There needs to be additional investment in the Scottish Child Payment. Analysis by independent think tank IPPR Scotland for Save the Children and the Trussell Trust concludes that the payment will need to rise to at least £40 by the end of the parliament. As well as increases in the basic value, the Scottish Child Payment could be a mechanism to provide additional support to some of the families that are most at risk of poverty.

Many of the families in Scotland at greatest risk of poverty have been directly impacted by cuts to the UK social security system. The two-child limit restricts means-tested benefits to just the first two children in a family. It was introduced in 2017 as part of a range of cuts to social security during the 2010s which aimed to reduce UK Government spending. The policy has been

“*The only real effect of the policy is to take money out of the pockets of low-income families and drive up child poverty*”

shown to have a negligible impact on the number of children parents decide to have, meaning the only real effect of the policy is to take money out of the pockets of low-income families and drive up child poverty. Scottish Government analysis has shown that reversing the two-child limit would be the most cost-effective way to reduce child poverty.

Another cut that was introduced with Universal Credit was the young parent penalty: parents under 25 receive less support than older parents in exactly the same financial situation. This penalty, understandably, contributes to higher levels of poverty amongst young parents – over half of children with mums under 25 are living in poverty.

Ultimate responsibility for these policies lies with the UK Government and we, along with many organisations, are calling on the UK Government to scrap the young parent penalty and the two-child limit. However, the Scottish Government must find ways to support these families.

Working with One Parent Families Scotland and other organisations that support children and families, we have identified that the quickest and most effective way of providing immediate support to these families would be through additional amounts of Scottish Child Payment. Targeted payments to families impacted by the two-child limit and the young parent penalty would provide them with much-needed support to mitigate the impact of these policies and help many of the families most at risk of poverty. ●

Ed Pybus is Policy and Parliamentary Officer for CPAG in Scotland, which works for the one in four children in Scotland growing up in poverty.

Find out more at: [cpag.org.uk/scotland](https://cpag.org.uk/scotland)

# The power of vulnerability

Reflecting on a new book exploring difficult questions about how we support male survivors of sexual violence, *Finlay McFarlane* says recognising these experiences is both fundamentally feminist and essential to the wellbeing of boys and men

**S**ons and Others: Loving Male Survivors shines the brightest light into the darkest and most taboo of spaces, introducing readers to the experiences of male survivors of sexual violence through the lens of those around them: sons, friends, fathers and lovers.

Each page is loaded with breathtaking vulnerability as Tanaka Mhishi recounts his own journey of masculinity and trauma, interwoven with referenced and deep research (an effort which Mhishi himself notes was a difficult task, as clinical and statistical research about male survivors is sparse at best). It encourages us to ask better questions of male survivors, to acknowledge and even revere their resilience, and grapples with the urgent and growing need to educate young men to be anti-sexist whilst also acknowledging our own failure to expand our feminism

to include an understanding of what's shared between women, non-binary people and male survivors.

Survivors of any intimate or sexual crime often struggle to find the words to describe what has happened to them. Indeed, as I read through the significant events in Mhishi's journey, I found myself reflecting upon my own story, how what had happened to me and how I had felt along my own story from victim to survivor was in striking parallel to Mhishi. How, at these crucial intersections of our lives, as we both struggled to find a way to express our experiences and worked through complex relationships with others, our bodies and our identities, we lived these lives unaware of each other's existence. And what a difference it would have made at the time, feeling that we were so utterly alone, to have known someone who understood.

“*Becoming a male survivor can feel like the loneliest and most isolating experience on earth*”



Loneliness and isolation are factors aggravated by social and cultural intersections. Our culture, race, sexual identity, and ultimately masculinity all weave a complex web that causes men and boys to retreat, alone, in their experiences. Our culture, as Mhishi notes, cannot comprehend the very idea of men as victims/survivors. It's simply too bizarre, too outlandish and often brushed off with humour. Indeed, as many as 84% of men who have had experiences that would meet the legal definition of sexual abuse do not describe themselves as victims or survivors. Such is the tragedy so eloquently and thoughtfully investigated by Mhishi.

In the UK, around one in six men will experience some form of sexual violence. These numbers double when including men experiencing sexual harassment in the workplace, and for gay and bisexual men, data suggests the number hovers at around 47%. These are not insignificant numbers. Indeed, you are statistically more likely to be a male victim of sexual abuse than a perpetrator, yet somehow becoming a male survivor can feel like the loneliest and most isolating experience on earth.

Rightly, generations of women have fought with some remarkable success for Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) policies, and for recognition that women still make up the majority of victims and that not enough is being done to prevent this violence. These policies drive our public health campaigns, encouraging survivors to access services. They inform how we hold conversations in our classrooms about consent, and on a fundamental level perhaps contribute to the feeling of male invulnerability to such crimes. It's a little-known fact, even among civil servants who work in the VAWG sphere, that men and boys are supposed to be included in these strategies. An easy mistake to make perhaps when the very title indicates only the existence of female survivors.

*Sons and Others* doesn't shy away from asking difficult questions of the reader. How can you find space to advocate for male survivors without detracting from the important and necessary work to educate young men to be actively anti-sexist and no longer bystanders to the scourge of violence against women and girls? What are we saying to those boys in those classrooms who, statistically,



are sadly likely to find themselves grappling with becoming the 'exception' themselves? Mhishi, who reflects on his own experiences as an educator in schools, addresses these questions and more in such a thoughtful and open manner that readers are likely to find themselves, as I did, having to fold the corner of the page to take stock, to absorb fully the threads in all their complexity before being able to move forwards. These are not questions that we, as a society, regularly ask ourselves and they certainly leave plenty of room for thought.

Mhishi notes that the very existence of male survivors is political, powerful and fundamentally feminist. Male survivors and male vulnerability challenge the *status quo*, flip our understanding of a patriarchal world on its head, and can also encourage men to see the harm of a patriarchal society – not just as something alien that happens only to women, but that can affect the lives of their brothers, fathers, and friends too.

*Sons and Others*, I believe, is a mandatory read in a world where a growing consciousness is emerging. Where male survivors are finding their voices and where the Scottish National Party (SNP), presently the governing party of Scotland, has committed to laying the groundwork to establish a complementary strategy to VAWG for men and boys. As we undertake this mission and as part of a national discussion, I hope that we, as a country, can collectively harness Mhishi's thoughtfulness and eloquence. ●

**Finlay McFarlane** is an SNP Councillor for Edinburgh City Centre ward and campaigner for male survivors of intimate violence. Finlay won the Men and Boys Coalition Campaigner of the Year Award in 2022.

*Sons and Others: Loving Male Survivors* by Tanaka Mhishi is published by 404 Ink as part of its Inklings series. Available now.



# Out of the box

If we start early, we can change the received narrative on gender.

**Rhiann McLean** finds power in Susie Heywood and Barbara Adzajlic's practical manual

**C**hallenging Gender Stereotypes in the Early Years takes an evidence-informed, intersectional deep dive into gender stereotypes, inequality, and how we can challenge the narrative.

This book has a clear audience: practitioners in early years settings. But just as the authors draw on their own experiences of parenthood, I found myself reading the book as both a practitioner and as a mother. These authors draw on a wide range of evidence and well-articulated practice wisdom drawn from their Gender-Friendly Nursery Programme. Heywood and Adzajlic do more than call for system-wide change in the ways we reinforce gender stereotypes, they outline clear and practical steps to get there.

The first part of this book takes a critical look at what we know about 'hard-wired' gender differences, calling into question the science that separates and categorises male and female brains. This section of the book was a standout for me, and a stark reminder for all readers that science is still a predominantly male field, steeped in its own bias. Differences in brain development as a direct result of sex are minor, and the authors arrive at the assertion that gender is socially constructed, and we as a society are hard-wired to find evidence that confirms our bias rather than challenges it.

The second part of the book takes a critical perspective on how gender stereotypes are produced and reproduced across society: the toys we play with, the music we listen to, the TV we watch, but also in games, porn, and social media. These influences force us into 'gender boxes', neat categories of boy/girl/man/woman that enforce gender norms and limit our experiences, aspirations and connections.

The authors do not shy away from the topic of violence against women and girls, and Adzajlic builds clear and

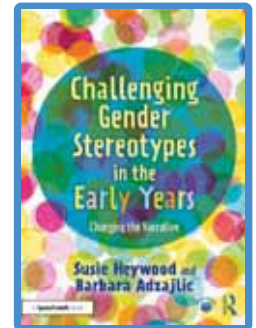
powerful narratives about how early gender pressures contribute to patterns in which violence is seen as part of the male identity, and women are blamed for inciting this 'natural' reaction.

The book touches sensitively on the impact of gender stereotypes on mental health, both in terms of boys' struggles to articulate and express their feelings and get the support they need, and women's experiences of, on average, more mental health issues than their male peers, while often internalising these challenges. The message is clear: when it comes to gender stereotypes and mental health, there are no winners.

The book also explains how LGBTQI issues intersect with gender and offers nuanced explanations of how gender stereotypes contribute to homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia.

Looking at gender stereotypes from a 360-degree perspective, the book explores approaches to engaging with families, linking with fathers, and even developing a gender-balanced workforce.

As a reader, you need to know that *Challenging Gender Stereotypes* is practical at its core and intersperses sometimes harrowing narratives with accessible exercises to cement learning. As I look up from reading it, I make a mental note that challenging gender stereotypes requires action and commitment from us all, and I already feel better equipped. •



“  
*As a society we are hard-wired to find evidence that confirms our bias rather than challenges it*”

**Rhiann McLean (she/her)** is part of Three Sisters Consultancy, a small family consultancy dedicated to improving outcomes for young people with additional support needs in Scotland through research and training.

*Challenging Gender Stereotypes in the Early Years: Changing the Narrative* by Susie Heywood and Barbara Adzajlic is published by Routledge. Available now.

Strengthening Scotland's children's sector workforce is one of our key priorities. Here's a summary of some of the learning opportunities we have coming up this summer.

Visit [childreninscotland.org.uk/events](https://childreninscotland.org.uk/events) for our full programme.



## Upcoming webinars

### May 9 **Distressed not 'difficult' – supporting distressed behaviour in children**

Nicola McAllister | Tuesday 9 May, 10am-12pm

Learn more about how we can respond to a child's behaviour, how we can minimise the reoccurrence of distressed behaviour and bring about long-term change for our children and young people by understanding what is going on in their bodies and brains.

### May 25 **Child Protection Awareness**

Barnardo's | Thursday 25 May 2023, 10am-1.30pm

Overview of child protection responsibilities in Scotland. For those who work directly with children and young people.

### July 18 **Confidence in Practice: assessing children's relationships**

Sandra Strathie | Tuesday 18 July, 10am-1.30pm

This in-depth online training focuses on the theory, methods and tools that can be used to assess children and young people's relationships with their parents/carers.



## In-person learning events

### May 30 **Children in Scotland's Mental Health Conference 2023 – Digging Deeper: Intersectional approaches to inclusive mental health**

Children in Scotland | Tuesday 30 May, 9am-4pm

Queen Margaret University, Musselburgh, Edinburgh

This conference will provide a platform for learning about intersectional approaches to improving children and young people's mental health. We will explore inequalities and how these can compound to affect children and young people. There will be opportunities to explore latest research, hear from diverse voices and share experiences to support your work with children and young people.

### June 6 **Understanding the Teenage Brain: development, learning and behaviour**

Jan Montgomery | Tuesday 6 June, 10am-1.30pm

Riddle's Court, Edinburgh

This half-day, in-person training focuses on adolescent brain development and how we can ensure our teenagers grow into well-functioning adults. Aimed at anyone living or working with teenagers.

### Jul 13 **Trauma recovery, regulation and self-care: three-day residential course**

Jan Montgomery | Thursday 13 July, 4.30pm - Saturday 15 July, 12.30pm

Agnes Blackadder Hall, St Andrews

This unique three-day residential course in St Andrews gives you the opportunity to uncover how trauma is an embodied experience that effects the body as well as the mind. You will explore these embodied aspects of trauma in a safe space, and draw on the experiences of other practitioners, in order to develop best practice.



# “Getting support for your wellbeing should be easy”

From one family’s search for support in their community, Man On! was established to make the path to connection an easier one for young people and adults in Inverclyde

**Words:** Chris Paul

In 2019, my dad’s struggles with mental health became too much for him and he attempted suicide. During his time in hospital, he spent time with other patients and enjoyed talking to them and supporting them with their own battles. His own lived experience was useful to others, and he got lots from them too. His recovery went well, and he found himself back at home with the same struggles.

To replace some of the positives of his time in hospital, we searched for support locally, but nothing seemed to connect for him. My background of working in the third sector supporting young people came in handy, and I had the idea of running a peer-support group for men in the community to help my dad, trying to create a safe space for those with thoughts of suicide to connect with others.

I was always aware of the gaps locally in support for young people and adults with their mental health. I always felt that getting support for your wellbeing should be easy. We spoke about a name for the service, and we felt ‘Man On!’ was a good one, as it’s copying the phrase heard on football pitches to alert you that somebody was close by. We wanted the name to carry

that sense of connection in the community.

We tried our first peer-support group in a local community centre in March 2020 and a handful of men turned up. A few days later, we were put into lockdown as the Covid pandemic became a real-life event across the globe.

Man On! appeared to be shelved until the lockdown lifted – and then we found Zoom. Our groups went digital and we had weekly Zoom calls, with word spreading fast about the support on social media. We had 30+ men on a weekly basis attending, talking about their struggles and supporting each other.

Through local support from CVS (Communities and the Voluntary Sector) Inverclyde, we became a Community Interest Company in May 2020. We canvassed the Inverclyde public on the gaps they felt were there and we co-produced a Wellbeing Plan, taking forward ideas like “Football Therapy”, “Walk and Talks” and “Coffee Drop-ins” when restrictions allowed. We received funding and created a Community Hub, equipped with a pool table, a dart board and a kettle, and we opened the doors to the community. In the first year, we supported over 150 men, some of whom were suicidal.

“*The vast majority of senior phase pupils we heard from were struggling with stress, anxiety, and life in general*”

*Opposite, top:*

**(Left to right) Reece Mcewan – Man On! Ambassador; Logan; Wilson; Peter Canevale – Youth Wellbeing Worker; Kirsty McGregor Burns – Youth Wellbeing Worker; Megan Coyle – Volunteer**

*Opposite, bottom:*

**Peter Canevale, Youth Wellbeing Worker and Chris Paul, CEO of Man On!**



My passion has always been supporting young people, and some of our members were 16, 17 and 18, struggling with how life was playing out in the pandemic. Some never got the chance to finish school properly and others had been impacted by the isolation and loneliness they felt during that time, some even saying they lost the skills and ability to connect. Hearing these views gave rise to Man On! beginning our journey to co-create a YP (young people's) Wellbeing Service, leading us to go on a school roadshow, canvassing young people on their views about support in the community.

The vast majority of senior phase pupils we heard from were struggling with stress, anxiety, and life in general. Many didn't have an adult they could confide in, and most were also supporting friends who were struggling. We got to work and co-produced a service with the young people's views at the heart: they felt getting help for their mental health should be easy; they didn't like being on waiting lists and not being kept updated on the progress; they wanted to speak with people who understood what it felt like to struggle; and, crucially, they wanted to access somebody who would listen to them quickly. We were fortunate



to receive funding from The National Lottery and the local schools to develop this service and it has been a lifeline for a number of young people in our community.

Our recruitment model is to have trained, empathetic volunteers and staff. A number of our team have had direct lived experience of suicide, loss, or mental health struggles. This has been crucial, alongside providing professional development and training to staff. The team has developed an early-intervention hub at the heart of Inverclyde with an open-door policy to anyone above the age of 15 who needs support. Our staff co-produce

Safe Plans for those experiencing suicidal thoughts and work alongside families and partners in education and health to ensure that young people are as safe as possible.

We became a SCIO (Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation) in January 2021, so our journey as an organisation is only two years in. We are immensely proud of what we've achieved so far for every member who has been able to find connection with our help. Our trauma-informed principles and lived experience philosophy have helped break the stigma for our community to access support. Those in our community were never hard to reach, it was the systems and processes to accessing support that needed to change.

Only a community can prevent suicide and we look forward to growing and supporting as many people as we possibly can. The team that we have developed in Man On! is very special. They have helped over 400 people in our community and have all done this after experiencing their own personal pain and hardship through life. They have turned that adversity into a superpower; connection! ●



**Chris Paul** is the Chief Executive Officer of Man On! Inverclyde, a suicide prevention and wellbeing charity for the adults and young people of Inverclyde and beyond

For more information about the service, visit: [manoninverclyde.co.uk](http://manoninverclyde.co.uk)

# Creating hope together

With suicide the leading cause of death for five-to 24-year-olds, it's essential that children and young people's experiences are reflected in policy and practice on suicide prevention. Children in Scotland is working with a new Youth Advisory Group to make sure that happens



**Words:** Chris Ross

**T**he picture for children and young people's mental health in Scotland is challenging, with reports highlighting extended waiting times in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and the often poor experiences of young people when they do access services or support.

We also know there is a complex picture in relation to suicide across the whole population. While rates appear to be reducing, they are still too high, with 753 lives lost by suicide in 2021. According to Public Health Scotland, across the 5-24 age group, suicide is the leading cause of death (although the rates per 100,000 people are lower than for over 25s).

As part of a whole-society approach to reducing rates of suicide in Scotland, Children in Scotland and the University of Stirling began delivery of a new Youth Advisory Group last year. The group supports the delivery of Scotland's new Suicide Prevention Action Plan and Strategy, 'Creating Hope Together', and places the views of young people at the centre of policymaking. The joint plan, delivered by the Scottish Government and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA), aims to reduce rates of suicide, whilst tackling the inequalities which contribute to it.

Over the last three years, an adult Lived Experience Panel delivered by the Scottish Association for Mental Health (SAMH) has ensured that the voices of those with lived experience of suicide are heard and taken seriously by decision-makers. The Youth Advisory Group builds on this to create space for young people with experience of suicidality, mental health issues, or a bereavement by suicide to inform policy and deliver on the new action plan.





In Year One of the group, we have worked with seven young people from across Scotland. By its nature, the group involves talking about emotive issues, and setting the groundwork for this has been essential. A huge focus of our work has been on building trusting relationships and a safe space for people to share views. This includes ensuring all members have access, should they need it, to support before, during and after sessions.

It has been great to watch the group take form and develop its identity. The empathy and peer support that is borne out of shared experience and a shared desire for change is heartening.

The group has engaged directly with the Scottish Government and COSLA to inform policymaking and influence change. We have worked with the Scottish Government to ensure the views of children and young people feed into the development of the 'Time, Space, Compassion' approach to preventing suicide. The group explored what these concepts mean for young people. They reiterated the need for person-centred support and the importance of developing relationships. They want people to take time to get to know them as individuals and access support that feels right for them when they need it.

Out of a recognition that the group will not be the right space for everyone, we have also begun work supporting a participation network. This group is aimed at hearing from practitioners in the children's sector about their experiences and those of the young people they work with. Practitioners have unique knowledge and a key role to play in suicide prevention through supporting young people. After three meetings, the network continues to grow and provides a vital source of evidence.

The first year of the Youth Advisory Group has not been without its challenges. We have found it more difficult to get young people involved compared to other areas of our participation work. Organisations have understandably been protective of the young people they work with and there can be concerns



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*The empathy and peer support that is borne out of shared experience and a shared desire for change is heartening”*

about the support available. We have seen this picture change as we take forward the work and are increasingly trusted by the young people taking part and the organisations working in this area. We have also been pleased to be able to provide payments for organisations supporting the young people involved, in recognition of the key role they play in enabling their participation.

The project has proven to be a valuable learning experience for us at Children in Scotland. While we have a wealth of experience of supporting children and young people's participation, this was our first time working on a project specifically relating to suicide and with those with lived experience of this. Working with the University of Stirling has been vital here; Dr Lynne Gilmour's experience and knowledge around suicide and child and adolescent mental health has helped shape our approaches to supporting young people to share safely.

For this project, the values remain the same as with all our participation work but the approach is slightly different. We quickly found that members of the group are keen to share, and as long as the scaffolding of support is right, they are comfortable to talk about their personal experiences. Their suggestions of how to do this safely have been invaluable. They are also acutely aware of the effect this has on the staff leading the work – they want us to take care of ourselves, so we can support them.

Going forward, we are excited to work with the group and ensure lived experience continues to inform national policy and practice. In Year Two, they will be focusing on the role that education and training play in enabling practitioners to support young people and to prevent suicide. •

**Chris Ross** is Senior Policy, Projects and Participation Officer at Children in Scotland.

Find out more about the project at:  
[childreninscotland.org.uk/young\\_advisory\\_group](https://childreninscotland.org.uk/young_advisory_group)

Illustration: **Sahana Narasimhan**





**Celebrating  
Anti-Bullying  
Achievements**

**“It brought together everything so that when we came to pull the evidence for it, it all connected. It’s been about embracing all the staff training we’ve been doing, all the work we’ve been doing with the children, our focus on wellbeing, it’s been a celebration of all of it. It’s been wonderful. (School lead)”**



**Self-Assessment  
Toolkit -  
5-stage process**



**Review and enhance  
your Anti-Bullying  
Policy and Practice**

## **respectme, Scotland’s Anti-Bullying Service, launches new reward programme**

Have you ever wondered if any of the work you do to prevent and respond to bullying is making any difference to the lives of children and young people?

This perplexing question has been a driving force for the team at respectme, Scotland’s Anti-Bullying Service, who are delighted to announce the national launch of the ‘respectme reward’, for schools, youth settings and children’s services.

Developed from a pilot scheme with schools from Dumfries and Galloway during the global pandemic, this unique approach to anti-bullying self-assessment offers access to a novel, interactive online toolkit, guiding users through a 5-Stage process towards success. Getting started is easy by visiting [www.reward.respectme.org.uk](http://www.reward.respectme.org.uk)

The ‘respectme reward’ is a first for Scotland – never before has there been a systematic way to consistently gather and assess policy and practice data to evidence the impact of local anti-bullying work.

Leading the design and development of this new national programme, fully funded by the Scottish Government, Lorraine Glass, Interim Director, commented:

“We already know that some amazing anti-bullying work takes place across Scotland in schools and youth settings, although we didn’t have a systematic method of recognising this positive and often life-changing anti-bullying work at a national level. The ‘respectme reward’ celebrates the inclusive spaces where bullying is prevented from happening in the first place, and then handled well when it does take place. The reward recognises the consistent action required to create safe, happy and inclusive spaces for children and young people where bullying behaviour is never acceptable and is constantly challenged”.

“Our role at respectme is neither one of inspection nor enforcement, instead we seek to build solid, trusting relationships and act as enablers to help guide, uphold, celebrate, validate and share good practice wherever we can, and to encourage improvement and change through support and respectful challenge. This approach helps nurture a culture of growth rather than one of compliance.”

respectme is thrilled to bring this new reward programme to schools, youthwork and children’s services across Scotland and showcase the energy that a whole-school approach to anti-bullying can generate, and the real difference it can make.

Designed for schools  
and children and  
young people’s  
services



**GET STARTED**

# A promising partnership

Children in Scotland is committed to delivering the calls of the Independent Care Review and being part of the work of The Promise. As part of our **Learning Focus** series, we share insight into a new programme co-designed with care experienced young people and pupil support staff

**Words:** **Simon Massey**

**F**unding from The Promise Partnership will provide Children in Scotland the opportunity to deliver an exciting new project over the next two years. This will build on the experience, expertise and passion of Children in Scotland and Enquire staff, children and young people with lived experience, and pupil support staff across the country.

In December 2022, we found out that we'd been successful in an application to The Promise Partnership to deliver an innovative project to help #KeepThePromise. Our idea brought together several strands of work we've been involved in over recent years – meaningful participation, engagement and co-production, our contribution to the Independent Care Review, and providing pupil support staff with learning and development opportunities.

The basic idea is quite simple – to develop and deliver a support and learning programme for pupil support staff using a co-production model. But, as is often the case, a lot of work will go into making that simple idea a reality!

Central to the plan, and essential to its success, is the fact the project will consist of two working groups: one involving care experienced children and young people and the other with pupil support staff. The groups will work separately and together, and

their input will run throughout the whole programme – designing its activity, delivering aspects of the training (if they choose to do so), and updating or adapting it in light of feedback or changes.

We are building on a history of work that Enquire and Children in Scotland have led with pupil support staff, including conferences in 2019 and 2020. And we are combining this with our extensive direct participation and engagement work with children and young people, from our 'Making Space' international architecture competition in 2016, to 'First Minister's Question Time: Next Generation' in 2018 and 2019, and our recent collaboration with Staf on the Home and Belonging initiative.

There are several key principles supporting the project:

- Our approach will be underpinned by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and by Children in Scotland's values, and it will be directly informed by The Promise reports.
- We will take a truly collaborative and co-designed approach.
- We will take an active learning approach throughout the development and delivery of the programme.
- We will share our learning with a view to informing wider discussion and creating systemic change.

The project will go through three phases:

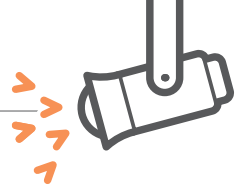
- Creation of project identity and systems (March-June 2023)
- Exploration: Discover, Define and Develop (July-December 2023)
- Delivery: including evaluation and review (January 2024-March 2025).

We are currently recruiting to the two working groups, so if you know anyone who would be interested, please share this article with them and ask them to get in touch.

Children in Scotland's vision is that all children have an equal chance to flourish, and this project provides us with a fantastic opportunity to actively deliver on the commitment we have made to #KeepThePromise. •



For more information about the Promise Partnership Project, visit our website: [childreninscotland.org.uk](https://childreninscotland.org.uk)



# Members' spotlight

Each issue we profile one of our member organisations, highlighting their work and how they are contributing to improving children's lives



HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT SCOTLAND

ÀRAINNEACHD EACHDRAIDHEIL ALBA

**Profile:** Historic Environment Scotland is the lead public body established to investigate, care for and promote Scotland's historic environment.

**What are the current priorities for Historic Environment Scotland?**

*Dr Adam Jackson, Head of Strategy and Policy, External Relations and Partnerships, Historic Environment Scotland*

Scotland's historic environment is defined as the physical evidence for human activity that connects people with place, linked with the associations we can see, feel and understand. It's our castles, churches, standing stones, gardens, landscapes, and found in collections, objects, drawings and photos. It's often the places where we live, work, shop, enjoy visiting, or maybe where we walk our dogs. It's also in our stories, traditions, and songs.

At Historic Environment Scotland (HES), we want to ensure that the historic environment makes a real difference to people's lives. A difference to our health, to our economy, to our culture, to our environment.

Across our work, we are currently prioritising activity that helps to address inequalities, supports the wellbeing of local communities, looks after the properties, collections and archives in our care, supports sector recovery and resilience, and contributes to the creation of a stronger, fairer and greener nation.

**Can you tell us a bit about how HES is working to make the historic environment sector a more inclusive space?**

Our corporate plan, *Heritage for all*, speaks to our commitment to ensuring that everyone should be able to connect with, enjoy and benefit from the historic environment. But we know that we can't achieve this on our own and we are committed to doing this in partnership with organisations and communities.

Our 2021-25 Equality Outcomes report sets out our plans to ensure that our workforce better reflects wider society, that our places, collections and archives are accessible to all, and that the stories we tell reflect the diverse history of our country.

**What are the opportunities you offer for children, young people and families to get involved?**

In partnership with Young Scot, we recently published an Action Plan developed by HistoricScot, a forum of young volunteers aged 12-25 years

from diverse backgrounds and places across Scotland. We're committed to delivering it over the next few years.

But right now, we offer a range of opportunities for our visitors to experience some of our iconic sites and enjoy a range of fantastic, historically themed live performances and interactive experiences, while exploring and learning about Scotland's rich heritage. We also offer free learning visits to our properties to thousands of school children, and £1 entry to sites for young people.

**Why is membership of Children in Scotland important to you?**

Partnership and collaboration are key to our success as an organisation, to a thriving historic environment, and to delivering positive and lasting benefits for communities and places – now and in the future. Your remit and wide membership provides rich potential to collaborate and engage children and young people in heritage. ●



A family taking a selfie at Tantallon Castle, near Dunbar. Image ©HES.

Find out more about Historic Environment Scotland at:

[historicenvironment.scot](https://www.historicenvironment.scot)

Interview by **Catherine Bromley**



# ONLINE TRAINING COURSES

APRIL – SEPTEMBER 2023

CHILD  
POVERTY  
ACTION  
GROUP  
IN SCOTLAND

## Calendar of online training courses

- Full programme of online training courses designed to help advisers stay informed and up-to-date
- Courses range in topic and training level to suit all learning requirements
- All courses delivered online via Zoom

### APRIL

18-20 & 25-27	Introduction to welfare rights <b>EXTRA DATE</b>
24-25	Universal credit for ill health and disability
26-27 <b>NEW</b>	Transferring to Scottish disability benefits

### MAY

4	Child disability payment – an introduction
10-11	Benefits for EEA nationals
15	Adult disability payment – an introduction
16	Students and benefits – the basics
17	Payments for children in Scotland
22-23	Benefit basics in Scotland
24-25	Benefits for EEA nationals – advanced
30	Students and benefits – an update
31 May – 1 June	QBC – making the most of your calculator

### JUNE

9	<b>SCOTLAND WELFARE RIGHTS CONFERENCE (IN GLASGOW)</b>
14-15	Universal credit update and tactics
19-20	Mental health and benefits

### AUGUST

17	Scottish social security – an introduction
18	Universal credit – managed migration
22-23	Challenging decisions – mandatory reconsiderations and other tactics
24	Limited capability for work in universal credit
29	Attendance allowance – an introduction
30 <b>NEW</b>	Benefits and the armed forces community

### SEPTEMBER

5-6	Transferring to Scottish disability benefits
7-8	Appeals to the Upper Tribunal
12-14 & 19-21	Introduction to welfare rights
27	Benefits overview
28-29	QBC – making the most of your calculator

■ INTRODUCTORY ■ STANDARD ■ EXPERIENCED

### SCOTLAND'S WELFARE RIGHTS CONFERENCE 2023

IT'S ON **FRIDAY 9 JUNE 2023** IN GLASGOW

BOOK NOW [cpag.org.uk/scotland/conference](https://cpag.org.uk/scotland/conference)

Browse all our courses at [cpag.org.uk/scotland/training](https://cpag.org.uk/scotland/training)

#### CONTACT:

0141 552 3303 | [pchalmer@cpagscotland.org.uk](mailto:pchalmer@cpagscotland.org.uk)

[cpag.org.uk/scotland](https://cpag.org.uk/scotland)  [@CPAGScotland](https://twitter.com/CPAGScotland)

### 'In-house' online training

Do your staff need an overview of benefits? Do staff need specialist training on benefits for their client group? We can deliver all our courses plus many more, for up to 15 staff in your organisation – courses currently being delivered via Zoom. View at:

[cpag.org.uk/scotland/training/house-training](https://cpag.org.uk/scotland/training/house-training)

### Publications

You can view our Scottish handbooks, factsheets and ebulletins for free online at:

[cpag.org.uk/scotland](https://cpag.org.uk/scotland)





# the National Parent Forum of Scotland

## We champion parental engagement with decision-makers and ensure the voices of parents and carers are heard

The NPFS is a volunteer-led organisation, helping parents and carers ensure that every child can maximise their potential throughout their school life, improving outcomes for Scotland's young people.

### Free resources for parents

Available to download from [www.npfs.org.uk](http://www.npfs.org.uk)

Our *In a Nutshell* series, cutting jargon to help parents and carers understand the curriculum, assessment, qualifications, careers information and much more in Scotland's changing education landscape.

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### We need you

The NPFS is made up of parent representatives from every local authority in Scotland. This helps us use local experiences to inform national policy, because every child is important to us.

To find your local area representative visit [www.npfs.org.uk/rep](http://www.npfs.org.uk/rep)

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### We're listening

We always want to hear from parents and carers, and those who work with them, about their thoughts on Scottish education issues.

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### Contact us

[enquiries@npfs.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@npfs.org.uk) • [www.npfs.org.uk](http://www.npfs.org.uk)



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