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February - March 2021 Issue 200

Children in Scotland magazine

200

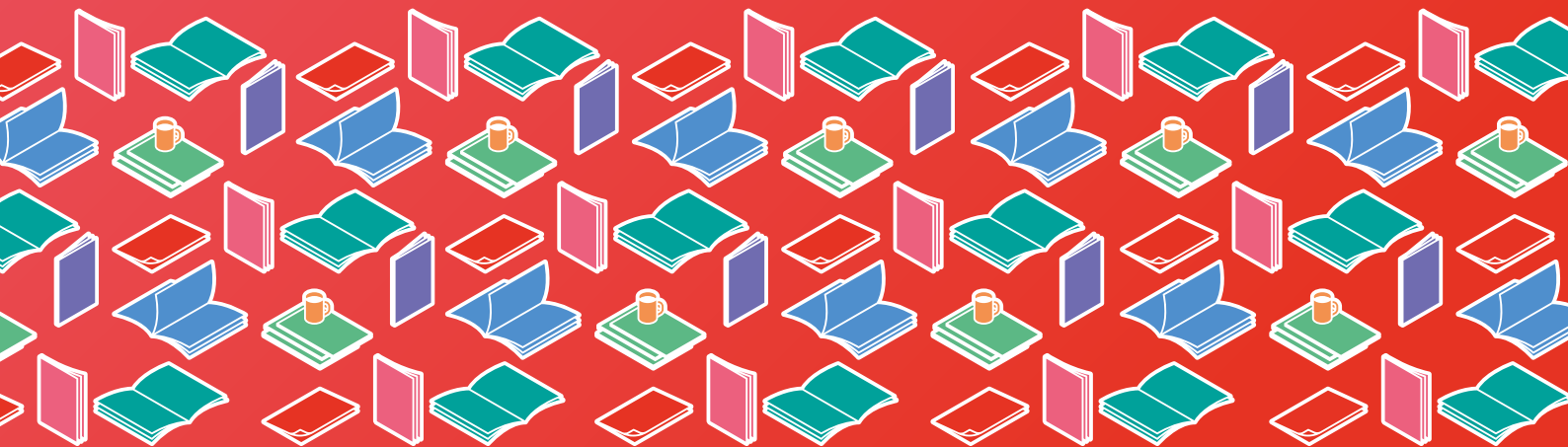
Coming of age

Celebrating 20 years and 200 issues



Also in this anniversary edition:

Meet Gina Wilson, the CYPCS's new Head of Strategy
The future of the Out of School Care sector in Scotland
Professor Lindsay Paterson on tackling learning loss
The Fife project using food waste to help families





★ Go Safe with Ziggy! ★

Road Safety Scotland's 'Go Safe with Ziggy!' campaign helps equip children up to six years old with the skills, knowledge and attitudes that will help keep them stay safe now and in later life.



The Scotland-wide learning resource teaches vital road safety skills through fun, easy and engaging videos, games and activities. Many will be familiar with the much-loved series of colourful Ziggy books, which explores important road safety themes such as holding hands, safe places to cross, and safety in the car.

With learning resources available to Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) centres and Primary 1 classes, the 'Go Safe with Ziggy!' campaign aims to encourage and inspire young children – and the adults around them – to go on their own road safety journey while playing, talking and reading together.

★ Learning resources

★ Big book sets

Teaching packs containing Ziggy stories in big book format are available for ELC centres and Primary 1 classes or any community setting where parents/carers attend with their young children.

★ Little books

Early Learning and Childcare centres and Primary 1 classes are invited to order the little books for children to take home on an annual basis.

The series of Ziggy books includes the following titles:

Ziggy and the Lollipop // Ziggy's Halloween Wish
Ziggy Visits Granny // Ziggy Goes Zab-a-ding-a-Whеее
Ziggy's Sunny Holiday // Ziggy and Maggie Start School
Ziggy's Sports Day

To order, visit roadsafety.scot/books

★ 'My Journey with Ziggy' pack

This resource pack is designed to support the important link between home and school. The pack comprises a cuddly Ziggy soft toy and a simple journey diary in a bright reflective drawstring bag. Every ELC and Primary 1 class teacher can receive a pack by taking the class out for a walk and following up with an interactive Ziggy's Big Day Out online activity.

Find out more on roadsafety.scot/ziggys-big-day-out

★ Online resources

Finally, a diverse range of engaging activities, videos, stories and interactive games can be found on roadsafety.scot/learning/early/go-safe-with-ziggy

Road Safety Scotland is a sponsor of the Children in Scotland Learning Week 2021. Look out for our showreel to find out how Ziggy helps children learn road safety skills that last a lifetime.



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Issue 200
February - March 2021

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

Our vision is that all children in
Scotland have an equal chance
to flourish.

The views expressed are
those of the authors and not
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editor or Children in Scotland.

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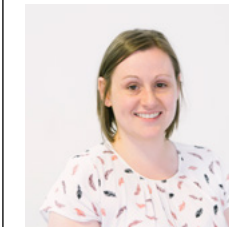
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Registered charity in Scotland
SCO03527

Registered company number
83383

ISSN 1474-9424

Welcome...



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> Hot off the press

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magazine-themed
edition of the
Children in Scotland
podcast
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So far, 2021 has not quite brought the fresh start we were all hoping for. We entered the new year once again under a cloud of restrictions and school gates remained shut for the majority of pupils.

The impacts of this and the last year have been well-documented, with concerns around the toll two national lockdowns and the cancellation of big life events and milestones is taking on our collective emotional, social, physical and mental health. In addition, child poverty rates continue to rise, and record numbers of families are experiencing financial hardship.

However, there is hope. At the time of publication, the R number in Scotland has fallen below 1 for the first time this year and continues to decrease. Pupils are scheduled to return, in part at least, before the end of the month, and the rollout of a national vaccination programme continues.

In this edition we speak to a range of experts who reflect on the past year and the priorities for moving forward.

We consider where we need to focus resources as we try to 'build back better' from the pandemic, but also reflect on where services and systems have been put in place that will bring benefits for children and families beyond the coronavirus crisis.

This issue also marks our 200th edition and 20 years of Children in Scotland magazine (see pages 17-19 for a brief history of the publication). Over this time we've proactively responded to changing society and sector needs, championed legislative change, celebrated landmark moments for the sector and, most recently, really embraced our commitment to give young people a voice and a platform. It's been a pleasure to be at the helm for the last eight years and a joy to reflect on the magazine's crucial role in the sector for a recent podcast – even if it was a bit odd being the interviewee, rather than the interviewer!

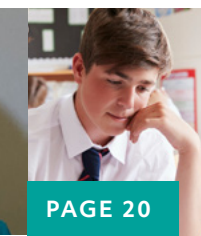
Happy reading!

Drummond

Contents



PAGE 07



PAGE 20



PAGE 23



FEATURES | PAGES 07-15

We interview **Gina Wilson, Head of Strategy at the Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland**, about the challenges ahead for our young people and what we can do to lead change (page 7), and discuss the **impact of Covid-19 on the out of school care sector** (page 12).

AGENDA | PAGES 18-21

David Mackay reflects on where we go next now the UK has left the EU, and what this means for our youngest citizens (page 18), **Professor Lindsay Paterson** explains why we must find a way to tackle lockdown learning loss (page 20), and **Clare Telfer** calls for action on rising child poverty (page 21).

VOICES | PAGES 22-25

Learn more about SHIELD, the organisation helping families in Fife (page 20), read how one mental health charity in Perth has embraced digital (page 22), and hear about our new project exploring the role of live music in the mental health and wellbeing of young people (page 23).

MORE | PAGES 4, 15, 26

Catch up on key news from the sector (page 4), read more about the history of the magazine and our development through the years (pages 15-17) and meet Rohan Gunatillake, one of the newest members of the Children in Scotland board (Introducing, page 26).

Lead news story

Tackling poverty must be an economic priority, says report

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation has warned the UK Government that they must take action to tackle increasing levels of poverty, or be defined by a record of worsening hardships.

UK Poverty 2020-21, published in January, details how the first lockdown negatively impacted on families living in poverty across the whole of the UK as they faced increasing living costs with children at home, combined with lost work and extra debt.

It also highlights how families who were in poverty, or on the verge of poverty, were particularly affected by ongoing restrictions imposed to tackle the spread of Covid-19, with the same families enduring the second lockdown in the heart of winter.

The report outlines how, before the global pandemic, incomes were already falling for people with the lowest income as the value of benefit payments decreased, leaving millions financially vulnerable when coronavirus hit. It suggests those experiencing in-work poverty were worst affected by the economic storm caused by the coronavirus, as they were more likely to be working in the hardest-hit sectors of retail and hospitality.

According to the research, workers on the lowest incomes experienced, on average, the largest cut in hours, and four in 10 workers on the minimum wage faced a high risk of losing their job.



Helen Barnard, Director of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, said:

"It's a damning indictment of our society that those with the least have suffered the most before the pandemic and are now being hit hardest.

"It's unacceptable that certain groups are bearing the brunt of the economic impact of Covid-19, and are now reeling from the latest blow of this lockdown.

"There are serious injustices we cannot put off tackling any longer. We must not rest until everyone, regardless of their background, is able to achieve a decent life."

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation has called for tackling poverty to be recognised as an economic priority and list a series of recommendations for the UK Government.

Included in the report is an appeal to maintain the current temporary increase to Universal Credit, a motion which was tabled in Westminster as the report was published.

The Prime Minister Boris Johnson has been urged to maintain the £20 per week increase until at least March with a vote led by the Labour Party. The motion passed 278 votes to none.

Although non-binding, and therefore unlikely to lead to a direct change in policy, it will put pressure on the UK Government to continue with the increase, equivalent to approximately £1000 per year.

Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer said increasing the safety net was vital for those who were facing employment uncertainty or didn't qualify for the government's furlough scheme.

He said: "We urge Boris Johnson to change course and give families certainty that their incomes will be protected."

> Read the Joseph Rowntree Foundation report, UK Poverty 2021-21, in full at jrf.org.uk

> Read the ten recommendations [here](#)

Systemically negative attitudes to children with additional support needs has to change, MSPs told

Pupils with additional needs should stop being viewed as a problem to be overcome, MSPs have been told.

Eileen Prior, Executive Director of national parent's organisations Connect, said too often children with ASN are viewed through the idea of a 'deficit'.

"It is an attitude within the system, within schools, within local authorities, which has to change", she told the Scottish Parliament's Education Committee as they took evidence on the Additional Support for Learning (ASL) review.

Ms Prior said: "If we constantly look [at ASN] as a deficit, as a problem, then our mindset is that we have to 'deal with' these children, that we have this hurdle to overcome.

Referencing the independent review, published in 2020 and chaired by Angela Morgan, she said the message of the report was a need to "reset our approach" to be more welcoming and more inclusive in order to help "move things forward".

Ms Prior also said the ASL review highlighted that many parents of ASN pupils felt ignored, with many who contributed to the review's information gathering saying they felt their contribution to their child's education had been "rebuffed" or was "unwelcome". She reminded MSPs gathered that whilst debates around ASN education often focus on resources, the contribution of parents and their knowledge of their own child should not be ignored.

> Enquire is the Scottish advice service for additional support for learning, helping parents, teachers and anyone else concerned about the educational experience of a child with additional support needs. Find out more at enquire.org.uk



HM Inspectors to review remote learning practices

Education Scotland has advised that school inspectors will review the remote learning practices taking place across the country.

In January, during the first week of term for Scottish schools, Education Secretary John Swinney confirmed there would be a series of overviews published for the duration of remote learning.

HM Inspectors will consider the quality and effectiveness of remote learning across the country, evaluating what works well and where further improvements should be made.

However, both the Scottish Conservatives and Scottish Labour have criticised the Government's approach to monitoring the remote learning practices, highlighting the inconsistencies in delivery as well as a failure around education IT infrastructure.

Remote learning for all learners is to continue in Scotland until 22 February.

> 'We need a plan to tackle the inevitable lockdown loss of learning' Opinion, page 18

Coalition calls for doubling of Scottish Child Payment

Political parties are being urged to double the new Scottish child payment to stem the rise of child poverty.

The End Child Poverty coalition in Scotland, whose members represent anti-poverty groups, children's charities and women's organisations, have warned the £10 child payment will not go far enough in tackling child poverty. They have called for it to be doubled to £20 per week, suggesting this could lift more than 20,000 children out of poverty, as part of their manifesto ahead of the 2021 Holyrood election.

But in the Scottish Budget 2021, the Scottish Government made no mention of agreeing to such a call.

Presenting to Holyrood on 28 January, Public Finance Minister Kate Forbes announced a £50m investment in the child poverty fund, and a further £68m for the Scottish Child Payment. However, there was no additional cash funding for families, and no commitment to meet the calls to double the payment.

Claire Telfer, Spokesperson for the End Child Poverty coalition and Save the Children's Head of Scotland, said:

"The budget rightly acknowledges that rising child poverty is a key risk. We urge the Cabinet Secretary to build on this budget and reduce immense pressure by putting more money in families' pockets, by increasing the value of existing payments and providing immediate support for families with children over six, as well as additional support for families struggling with home schooling and isolation throughout the winter months."

> Read the ECP coalition manifesto at cpag.org.uk/end-child-poverty-scotland

> 'Halving poverty should be the floor, not the ceiling, of our ambition' (Children comment piece) Opinion, Page 21

Young Scots mental health has worsened during pandemic

Youth charity the Princes Trust has warned that the pandemic has taken a “devastating toll” on young people’s mental health.

The Princes Trust Tesco Youth Index 2021, published in January, suggests more than half of young people (56 per cent) “always” or “often” feel anxious. One in four (26 per cent) admitted to feeling “unable to cope with life” since the start of the pandemic. Both these figures increase amongst those not in work, education or training.

The research, conducted by YouGov, gauges people’s happiness and confidence levels across a range of areas. It surveyed more than 2,000 16 to 25 year-olds between November and December 2020.

This year’s results suggest anxiety levels are at an all-time high, recording the highest rates since the Index began 12 years ago.

> [Read the report in full at princes-trust.org.uk](https://princes-trust.org.uk)

> [Peace of mind](#) Mental health charity, Mindspace, tell us how they have continued to support children and young people during the national lockdowns. [Voices](#), page 22

Scottish and Welsh governments vow to maintain Erasmus+

Two of the UK’s devolved governments have publicly stated their disagreement with the decision to withdraw from the Erasmus+ programme and committed to exploring how they can maintain links with the European educational exchange programme.

In a statement published in January, the Scottish and Welsh Governments both expressed concern over the UK’s decision to no longer associate with the Erasmus+ programme, saying it has helped transform the lives of “thousands of students, schoolchildren, teachers, adult learners and young people from across the UK.”

They said the UK Government’s proposed alternative, the Turing Scheme, will not offer the funding required to facilitate international mobility, will fail to support any of the current strategic partnerships, and will offer no support for adult education or youth work. Support for colleges, schools, vocational education and training sectors will also be significantly reduced.



Scottish Higher Education Minister, Richard Lochhead, called the ending of the programme a “huge blow” for Scottish students, community groups and adult learners.

In January he held talks with the European Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth, Mariya Gabriel, to explore Scotland continuing with the Erasmus scheme.

Mr Lochhead said: “I have had a virtual meeting with Commissioner Gabriel. We agreed that withdrawing from Erasmus is highly regrettable and we will continue to explore with the EU how to maximise Scotland’s continued engagement with the programme.”

According to the Scottish Government, more than 2,000 students and staff from Scotland use the Erasmus+ exchange programme each year.

> [Read the Scottish and Welsh governments’ joint statement at gov.scot/news/erasmus-exchange-programme/](https://gov.scot/news/erasmus-exchange-programme/)

> [New year, new beginnings?](#) David Mackay discusses the impacts of Brexit on young people, including the decision to leave the Erasmus+ programme [Leader Comment](#), page 16

Interviews, research & campaigns

“There is no shortage of ideas, but we need action”

Gina Wilson took up post as Head of Strategy with the Children and Young People’s Commissioner in July 2020 – four months in to the global pandemic. We talk to her about her priorities, and the challenges ahead

By Jennifer Drummond

Over the course of the last year and two lockdowns, restrictions imposed have undoubtedly taken a toll on young people. Across the children’s sector there has been significant engagement with children and young people in order to understand how the pandemic will impact and shape their lives, and what we can do at every level to try and mitigate any negative effects.

Concerns have been raised specifically about the impact on mental health and wellbeing, as well as the long-term implications of the school closures and exam cancellations. For those working in service delivery or policymaking, issues have become evident around inconsistent support or service provision as well as alarming shortcomings in ensuring children and young people’s rights are being met.

Gina Wilson, Head of Strategy for the Children and Young People’s Commissioner Scotland, talks to us about the challenges ahead, why we need to listen more to young people and their experiences and how to facilitate systemic change to address short and long-term effects on our youngest citizens. >



Mental Health

Jennifer Drummond: Historically poor provision, long waiting times and now the global pandemic are causing real concern about the state of young people's mental health. What do we need to do, both in terms of policy and practical provision?

Gina Wilson: "The last year has been life-changing, with limits on all aspects of children's human rights, but the pandemic has highlighted how much more we need to do to address mental health concerns before there is a crisis.

I'm concerned about the impact of coronavirus on all children and young people. From a loss of opportunities to socialise and play; services or clubs stopped; increased levels of stress at home; dramatically changed relationships; or limited support at crucial points of transition, the picture beyond immediate crisis is complex.

Politicians and other decision-makers need to listen to children and young people. One of our young advisers told us at the end of last year: "It turns out, in a pandemic, children's human rights can easily be forgotten."

I want to see a much greater prioritisation of children's rights than we have seen so far.

The impact on them is dramatic, yet they have had the least say in what's happening. We need politicians to act strongly on their behalf. In practical terms, we need investment in statutory and voluntary services that work with and for children to be a priority. Whether that's health, education, social work, youth work, outdoor education – the government must continue to invest in those spaces. As we start to emerge from this, it has to be a priority."

Education

School closures and exam cancellations has shone a light once again on the inequity in Scottish society, with those from disadvantaged areas or lower income families missing out or faring worse than their peers.

Many have said that the reliance on remote learning during the pandemic should lead to a re-examination of how Scottish education is delivered, ensuring young people are better supported to cope with changes in circumstance and equal opportunities being offered to all.

JD: What are the big lessons from the last year in terms of education provision, and what do you think needs to be done to ensure equity for all?

GW: "This pandemic has highlighted that the safety nets we might expect to exist in a national

system simply haven't been there. Instead, we have had a patchwork of smaller nets – some effective, others not. We've ended up with very different experiences for students right across the country.

Flexibility can't lead to inequality of opportunity. When we shifted so rapidly to online learning, gaps that were already there in terms of digital poverty became chasms. We still haven't bridged those. Even now, there are families who can't access online learning, for lots of different reasons, and we are nearly a year into this pandemic.

Very rarely are children and young people being asked how they want to be educated during this time of disruption. They are being given an offer of education but limited choice. We still don't fully understand the disparity and that is a massive concern. Some will have a good experience and thrive, but for others it will be much tougher. The attainment gap will be widening and that is incredibly worrying.

There also needs to be more investment in school staff. Teachers are doing their best to support their students and are working under increasing pressure. Some teachers will be struggling to access and deliver online education and not getting the support they require. Let's not forget too, that many teachers are facing a similar juggling act as other parents.

I'd love to highlight one of the ideas in Children in Scotland's 2021-26 Manifesto at this point. The 'hobby premium', ensuring that children and young people have access to an activity of their choice within or around the school day, sounds an excellent idea worth exploring as a means to support wellbeing and mental health, framed in the context of article 29 of the UNCRC which says that education should help develop the mind, body and talents to be the best they can be."

"The safety nets we expect to exist in a national system haven't been there"

Inquiry into implications of Covid-19

In July 2020, the Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland published a report which stated children and young people's rights were being largely overlooked during the coronavirus emergency. It suggested Scotland had not made as much progress on rights as we would like to think and criticised the government's lack of impact assessment of their emergency policy and legislation.

On the back of this, the Scottish Parliament's Equality and Human Rights Committee launched an inquiry into the impact of Covid-19 on equality and human rights, heeding the previous calls from the Commissioner's office along with the Equality and Human Rights Commission Scotland and the Scottish Human Rights Commission. The call for submissions closed in January.

JD: What do you hope will be the outcome or recommendations of the inquiry? What actions or measures would you like to see in place to better protect equality and human rights, particularly as we rebuild from Covid-19?

GW: "Ultimately, when it comes to protecting equality and human rights, we need incorporation of rights into our domestic laws in Scotland. We need the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the interlinked treaties included in the human rights framework being developed by the National Taskforce for Human Rights. Until they are in law, we won't have the protection that we need.

"Life-changing decisions being made during coronavirus have felt like playing a game. Every time it should be our turn, someone skips over us and we end up left behind and forgotten"

Young Advisor to the Commissioner

It's hugely positive that this year Scotland is on track to take that first step in incorporating the UNCRC into Scots law. That needs to happen as soon as possible. Human rights don't go away in a crisis and all human rights being enshrined in law is a must for those protections to be there for all people in Scotland.

On the inquiry, there is no shortage of ideas, but we need action.

The Scottish and UK Parliaments need to continue to challenge government to evidence the ongoing need for emergency powers in terms of their necessity and proportionality. It should demand detailed evidence to support that scrutiny, including more frequent and relevant Child Rights Impact Assessments. There are concerning gaps in data but we can only rebuild inclusively if we have accurate and relevant data to underpin decision-making.

Moving out of lockdown, we need to acknowledge the escalation in disadvantage faced by many children and be prepared to refocus our resources on prevention and early intervention. It won't be sufficient to go back to normal. We need to target resources on the reduction of inequalities.

Fundamentally, we need to redesign decision-making processes to include children's rights to participate at a structural level. Children and young people must be active agents in decision-making, not just passive recipients of services.

Child Poverty

At the end of last year, the Commissioner's office, along with the Children's Commissioners from Wales, Northern Ireland and England submitted a 'report card' to the UN on UK's progress on children's rights. The report was damning on child poverty, stating that in Scotland almost one in four children are still recognised as living in poverty. Following coronavirus, this rate is likely to have increased.

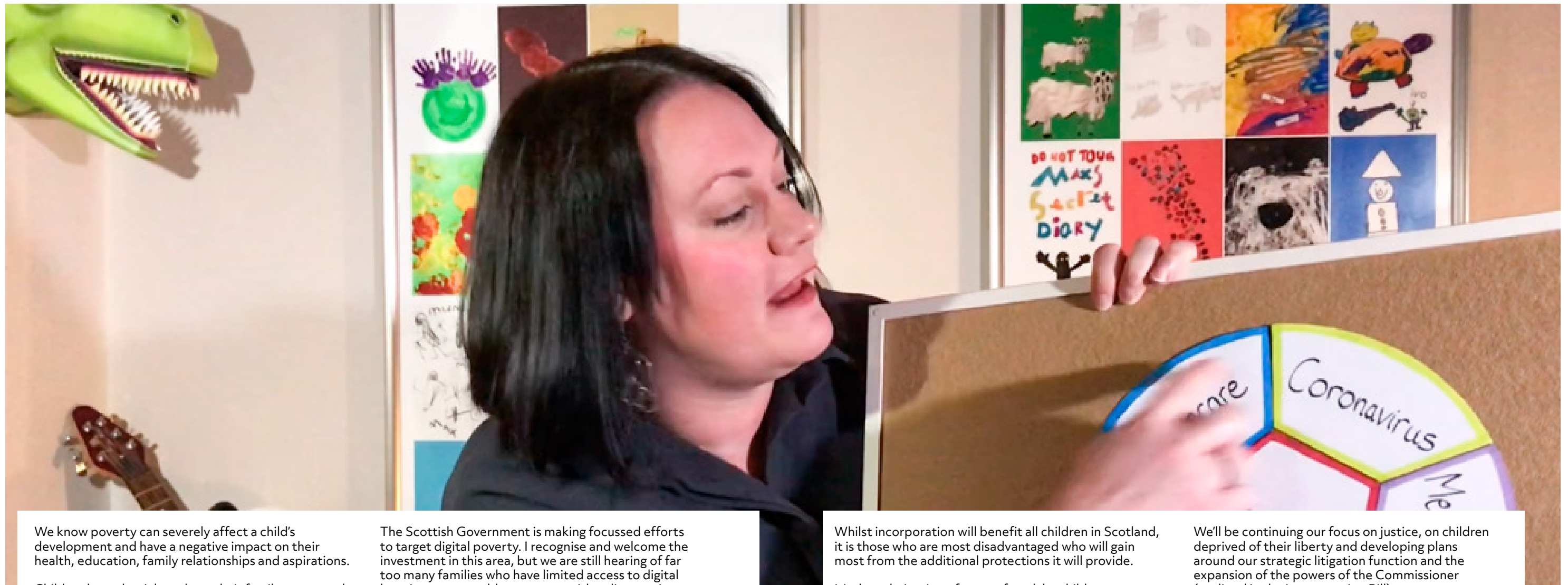
In 2019, the UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, Philip Alston, said, whilst in Scotland, that "poverty is a result of political decisions".

JD: What can the Scottish Government do to lift more children out of poverty across Scotland?

GW: "Before the pandemic hit, child poverty was the biggest human rights crisis in Scotland. The pandemic has exacerbated this and the economic impact on families has been dire.



> Image: Young people from St Andrew's Fox Covert RC Primary School, Edinburgh visit the Scottish Parliament for a meeting with the FM and others, to discuss how their rights should be defended



We know poverty can severely affect a child's development and have a negative impact on their health, education, family relationships and aspirations.

Children have the right to have their family supported, and to benefit from social security. They have a right to an adequate standard of living, including nutritious food and a safe warm home. They have rights to the highest attainable standard of health, and to extra support if they are a young carer, or disabled, or care experienced – groups we know who are impacted more than others by poverty. The State has an obligation to use all its available resources to the maximum extent possible to fulfil children's rights – and it is failing.

It isn't about suddenly finding extra money, it is about using what we have more effectively, and recognising the economic arguments for a rights-based approach to budgeting. This will lead to better education, health, and justice outcomes which, in turn, will have huge economic benefit.

So what can be done? Direct payments to families is a good place to start and will go some way to tackling food poverty. We know that most local authorities are now providing direct payments which goes some way to ensuring people's dignity too. But it is not enough. We need a human rights-based approach to tackling food poverty – it's not a matter of charity or something that should only happen to address issues in an emergency.

The Scottish Government is making focussed efforts to target digital poverty. I recognise and welcome the investment in this area, but we are still hearing of far too many families who have limited access to digital learning or are unable to engage with online services.

In the longer term, there must be continued focus on monitoring and assessing the effectiveness of policies and programmes designed to alleviate poverty.

UNCRC Incorporation

That the Scottish Government has committed to full incorporation of the UNCRC into Scots law in 2021 is momentous. It reflects a commitment to fully embracing, and offering legal protection, the rights of children and young people across the country. It is a significant development and reflective of years of campaigning from the Commissioner's office, along with partners across the children's sector, including Children in Scotland.

JD: What are your expectations of incorporation, and what benefits will it bring to children and young people across Scotland?

GW: I'm hugely excited about the prospect of Scotland incorporating the UNCRC into Scots law. In other countries, there has been a shift in culture as a result of incorporating the UNCRC. Incorporation, and the resulting duties for public authorities and Ministers, will ensure that awareness of the UNCRC spreads far wider. Children's rights will become a part of everyday life. Proactive steps will have to be taken and reported. Accountability mechanisms will enable meaningful challenge where rights are breached.

Whilst incorporation will benefit all children in Scotland, it is those who are most disadvantaged who will gain most from the additional protections it will provide.

It's the culmination of years of work by children, young people, and many others working on their behalf. Of course, the work doesn't stop when incorporation happens, but it will be the catalyst for meaningful change.

One of our Young Advisers who spoke about the benefits of incorporation said: "I think it'll take a few years, maybe more, but it's a good starting point to changing the culture around children's rights. We also need to wait until it's actually in practice." I think this assessment is pretty much spot on!

Priorities and policy focus for 2021 and beyond

GW: In common with just about every other organisation in the country, with the pandemic we have had to quickly rethink our priorities and policy focus in the short to medium term. The past year has been dominated by the human rights crisis created by the pandemic and we will continue our focus on Covid-19 and the recovery, in its broadest sense. Before the pandemic, children and young people told us they wanted us to prioritise work on poverty, climate justice, and mental health and these remain key priorities.

In November, Glasgow will host the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) which is a fantastic opportunity to drive forward changes the world needs to see to stop climate change. World leaders will be discussing their future and they have to listen to what Young Human Rights Defenders have to say.

We'll be continuing our focus on justice, on children deprived of their liberty and developing plans around our strategic litigation function and the expansion of the powers of the Commissioner (outlined in the Incorporation Bill).

The Commissioner is Chair of the European Network of Ombudspersons for Children (ENOC) during 2021. We'll be working closely with our counterparts to share learning and collaborate on Covid-19 responses and recovery. Most importantly, our focus is on getting out as soon as we can to speak to children and young people face-to-face, hearing from them directly about recovery and the future.

Gina Wilson is Head of Strategy for the Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland

> Find out more about the policies, priorities and publications of the Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland at cypcs.org.uk

> Image, above: Gina completes an interview task, set by children

Young Advisors 2021

The Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland and his team are looking to welcome a new group of Young Advisors.

Applications are welcome from young people aged 14-17 across the country, and can be made via the website. Closing date: 5pm, Monday 1 March.

Out of School Care

School's out

Following publication of the innovative CHANGE project's final report, **Robert Doyle** shares his reflections, considering how the pandemic has impacted the Out of School Care sector and how to secure the future of these vital services



The Childcare and Nurture Glasgow East (CHANGE) project has been operating since October 2016, working with the local community and partners to listen, learn and support improvement in childcare.

During our community engagement we looked at the different forms of childcare and family support, paying attention to what currently works well, what could be improved and what was felt to be missing. One area of focus was supporting and developing Out of School Care, understanding the challenges faced by providers and the value of these services to parents and carers.

Challenges facing the local Out of School Care sector

Many childcare providers will understand and appreciate the benefits of having your own, designated space. It allows staff to tailor the environment to the needs of the children and do the things that give them a sense of ownership and comfort, for example influencing how the space is decorated and having artwork displayed. There are also benefits to staff and parents, such as greater flexibility over opening hours, and the option to engage with parents and conduct staff training in the space.

However, many Out of School Care providers working in the CHANGE area said there were limited opportunities for services to have their own premises, with many community venues unsuitable for registered childcare.

Staffing was also highlighted as a longstanding issue. Many offered only part-time employment, meaning staff retention rates were low, contributing to frequent staff shortages. We heard how it was common practice for managers to have to cover staff shortages by acting as practitioners, reducing the amount of time spent on administrative tasks and forward planning.

The impact of Covid-19 on the local Out of School Care sector

For most Out of School Care services, the Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated the challenges they already faced.

Members of the Glasgow North East Out of School Care Forum, where meetings were regularly attended by the CHANGE team, described a substantial drop in attendance and logistical difficulties around staffing and access to community spaces.

Changes to work patterns have resulted in more people working from home or working and earning less because of furlough or redundancy. As a result, many families' childcare requirements have changed. They may have withdrawn from Out of School Care to save money, or due to fears around social mixing. This ongoing uncertainty, and the loss of income, has had a huge impact on the sectors' ability to forward plan and operate securely.

The pandemic and social distancing measures have presented logistical problems for services too. New procedures had to be put in place, and much more time had to be spent cleaning and getting the children used to new routines.

"Probably the biggest impact has been the reduction in numbers and therefore income, and we are having to be much more vigilant to keep everyone safe."
Linda Liddell, Head of Services, Connect2 Out of School Care in the East End of Glasgow

The services we spoke to placed children into bubbles based on which school they attended. Which, although necessary, presented difficulties.

"Keeping children in their bubbles has been hard. Out in the playground they're all out playing, but in three different bubbles, it can be difficult to share resources and minimise them coming together, explaining they need to stay apart."
Audrey Ashford, Manager at TICTACS After-School Service, Shettleston

The national picture and impact of Covid-19

Many of the issues shared locally are reflected in the findings of the Scottish Out of School Care Network (SOSCN) Reopening Survey, published in October 2020.

Surveying 103 providers across Scotland, SOSCN found that 87% of respondents' services had reopened. However, the vast majority (91%) had done so with reduced numbers. Of these, 41% said their attendances were down by more than 40%. When asked what effect it would have if the reduced attendance levels continued, many said they thought it would affect their long-term financial viability. Andrew Shoolbread, Policy and Research Manager at SOSCN, summarised the impact that Covid-19 has had on the OSC sector nationally:

"Overall, I would say it has financially weakened the sector. All the negatives about sustainability that existed before have been exacerbated. We've seen a few services close since, they just didn't reopen. Even services which were financially sustainable in the past are now looking vulnerable to closure."

It is clear from the evidence gathered by CHANGE how important the Out of School Care services are in supporting children, families and the wider community in the East End of Glasgow. It is vital that all existing services survive the coming months so that they are in a position to thrive and support the communities they serve when society begins to open back up again.

Positive outcomes from Covid-19

Although the pandemic has brought a huge amount of stress and uncertainty to the sector, some positives have emerged.

SOSCN's Reopening Survey findings highlighted stronger relationships built with bubbles and smaller groups.

"I miss the after-school club"

Jamie, 8, attends TICTACS After-School Service. He enjoys building things with KAPLA and playing on the PlayStation.

He said: "We had to stay away from each other. We had to stay in our own group. We had this wee bubble and the staff member who picked you up from school was the only one you could ask if you could do something like play a game or go to the toilet. It was difficult."

However, since the latest lockdown measures have been put in place children haven't been able to attend Out of School Care activities at all.

Jamie said: "I miss the after-school club ... I don't go anymore because of Covid. It's closed. I'm looking forward to it being opened back up."

Jamie's mum, Janette, added: "He's just fed up. He can't go anywhere, it's a shame. He really loves the after-school club, especially when the school holidays are on. I just hope everything goes back to normal quite soon."

Outdoor play has become a strong feature across the childcare sector, recognised for reduced transmissions, with less resistance from parents and providers who have embraced this approach. We also heard about the strong relationships and support networks that have been developed, nurtured and maintained throughout the pandemic.

The Glasgow North East Out of School Care Forum was highlighted in particular as having offered invaluable personal, as well as practical, support. The Forum has also been beneficial for the community, ensuring that local families that attend different Out of School Care services were treated fairly. All services came together a week before the first lockdown to share concerns and make collective decisions, including regarding fees. This ensured equity across providers and for the families they serve.

Audrey from TICTACS explained:

"We were all singing from the same hymn sheet. At the very beginning we all said that we would charge half fees, but then when it went on longer, some went to 20%, then it got to a stage that you couldn't charge fees for something that the families weren't getting. We spoke to our management committee and went back and gave the families refunds. Some services made it that families had 'paid-forward', so were in credit, and wouldn't need to pay for a number of weeks on their return."

Andrew from SOSCN indicated that strong local networks have been vital across the country:

"In areas where Out of School Care networks and forums still exist, and are meeting, services are finding that sharing ideas, concerns and issues is hugely supportive and beneficial."

Recommendations to support the sector moving forward

In February 2021 CHANGE launched the project's final report. Based on our experiences, our research and the relationships we've observed, we have made recommendations relating to the future of the Out of School Care sector.

We state that for Out of School Care services to be sustainable they should be treated as a core service. This should include considering school and community buildings as everyone's spaces.

Irene Audain, Chief Executive of SOSCN, has commented on the need for more financial support for the sector in recognition of the role it plays within the core infrastructure of childcare and family support services. She specifically calls for ongoing financial investment to ensure the services are still available in the future when they will be needed to support children's health and wellbeing, and to support families building back from the pandemic.

It is also important that Out of School Care workers are recognised as frontline staff alongside teachers and other childcare practitioners. In the context of Covid-19, Linda Liddell of Connect2 is calling for Out of School Care staff to be offered vaccinations at the same time as teachers. She suggests that ensuring all staff across the education and childcare spectrum are simultaneously offered vaccinations would ultimately help make schools safer.

Like many services, the response of the Out of School Care sector during the pandemic has been inspirational. In some local authorities Out of School Care services and nurseries were central to delivering critical childcare hubs.

Throughout the pandemic there has been worry and confusion, but staff and services have shown resilience and strength.

"Many [Out of School Care providers] responded in very creative and positive ways. Most services, whether they could open or not, wanted to support the children and families in whatever ways possible."
Andrew Shoolbread, SOSCN

"It's hard on the staff too"

Olivia, 5, also attends the TICTACS After-School Service. She likes to colour in and her favourite thing to do at after-school care is play games. She is in P1, and hasn't known after-school care without the cloud of Covid.

Olivia's mum Samantha explained: "The main impact that it's had is that she hasn't been allowed to play with one of her best friends at after school care because they go to different schools. That affected Olivia really badly because she was confused as to why she could play with this wee girl outside of after-school care but not during it. Myself and the staff had to sit down with Olivia and explain why she couldn't play with her friend."

Samantha also recognised how difficult it must be for the staff: "It's obviously hard for the staff too. It must be difficult seeing the kids quite sad and it made the staff sad too."

The last 12 months have been a difficult and challenging time for everyone, and there will be more challenges ahead.

However, there should also be opportunities. As part of the wider support for children and families, Out of School Care has essential benefits to offer. It is important that we are able to reflect, learn, adjust and build on the strong support networks that already exist.

Robert Doyle is Senior Project Officer at CHANGE: Childcare and Nurture Glasgow East

> To find out more about CHANGE and read the final report, visit childreninscotland.org.uk/change/

> Find out more about the Reopening Survey October 2020 Results, published by SOSCN at sosc.org.uk

> Photographes ©Anna Cervinkova

Browsing history

Celebrating our 200th edition, *Chris Small* charts the successes, surprises and oddities of *Children in Scotland Magazine*. Overleaf are 18 covers capturing the progress of the title, and the children's sector, from 2001 to 2021



Chris Small
 Communications and
 Marketing Manager
 Children in Scotland

Most magazines crash and burn. They struggle to make it to 20 editions, never mind 200. So we hope you'll forgive some brief introspection as we mark 20 years, 200 issues and 3,788 articles (I've read every one) since *Children in Scotland Magazine* was born.

The magazine's longevity is down to a few essentials. It's been a longstanding part of our membership offer, boosted by the willingness of the children's sector workforce to share their views, expertise and learning. It's been led by talented staff who believe in its qualities of representation, insight and balance. And it's been backed within Children in Scotland and by its audience as a valuable forum, resource and conversation-starter. Over two decades it's charted advances in practice, policy and legislation and, in the process, becoming a biographer of the children's sector.

Early editions demonstrate why the big picture effort of campaigns is so often about playing the long game. Liberal Democrat Jim Wallace's entreaty in the June 2002 edition to remove the legal defence of 'reasonable chastisement' of babies and children would finally bear fruit 18 years later. Freshly-appointed Children's Commissioner Kathleen Marshall talked about establishing "a thinktank of young people" in March 2004, pointing towards the kind of participation work that now feels preconditional.

The first few years of the magazine also track in detail the formulation of highly consequential Additional Support for Learning legislation, and the drive for truly inclusive education.

But, browsing the back issues, it's clear some things don't change. The July 2006 issue responds to one of umpteen Scottish Government early years reviews. It includes a parent describing the frantic timetabling of her life in the face of piecemeal provision: "As a mother of two young children working part-time I find my options getting more limited and more complicated ... maybe I should give up work?"

The magazine has been steered along the way by committed editors and writers,

beginning with launch editor Elizabeth Sykes whose debut included analysis of the challenges facing young refugees dispersed to Scotland. Nicola Pay's policy-crunching and Lynn Gilmour's arts coverage lifted content long-term, while Tracy Francis's stint as editor foregrounded research and practitioner views. Current editor Jen Drummond skillfully blends interviews, comment and analysis with learning from projects, mixing in occasional themed issues for extra depth and topicality.

Evolution in editorial has been matched by progress in presentation. Industrial-strength typography and block-blue layouts gave way in 2006 to a rejuvenated modern design steered by the late Nicola Copeland – a hugely talented colleague, whose unexpected loss affected the whole organisation. In autumn 2017 the magazine morphed again, relaunching as part of our new brand identity. Over the past few years Alan Tait's upbeat covers (see the UNCRC themed edition overleaf) and our own Angus Doyle's playful, infographic-driven creations for the current digital run have lent the title real visual clout.

There may have been the odd mis-step along the way. A December 2003 cover featured a 'Glaswegian' family who, with their polished teeth and Gap clothing (and a turkey), looked suspiciously like some Californians in a stock-photoshoot sitting down to enjoy Thanksgiving. And in 2014, with our current editor absent on maternity leave, the magazine's cover image, for no apparent reason, featured some rusting miniature gnomes on a rainy bridge somewhere in Perthshire.

But in content and ambition over 20 years the magazine has stayed true to the aim expressed in issue #1, 'to bring you in-depth articles on the issues affecting all those who work with or for children, young people and families throughout Scotland' and delivered on that promise with quality and flair. Thank you for sticking with us.

> Visit the Children in Scotland magazine hub at childreninscotland.org.uk/our-work/magazine/

> 'Hot off the Press' Listen to the latest podcast discussing the history and future of our flagship publication. [Listen here](#)

200



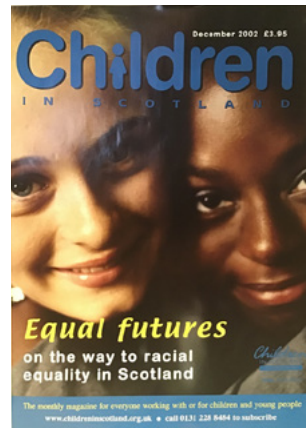
Cover stories

From refugee rights to Brexit and climate strikes, a snapshot of how our magazine has evolved visually and editorially over 200 issues



Issue 1
June 2001

Landing just weeks before the 2001 UK election, issue one leads with the extended Race Relations Act, a review of voluntary sector funding, and an upcoming Children in Scotland fundraiser with the incomparable Baroness Linklater of Butterstone.



Issue 19
December 2002

Race equality issues dominate following our Equal Futures conference, while the Carnegie Young People Initiative's David Cutler reports on involving young people in decision-making across the UK. A dad's diary documents the 'volcanic' impact of new babies.



Issue 34
March 2004

The appointment of Scotland's first Children's Commissioner, Kathleen Marshall. In our Q&A, she talks about why parents 'mustn't feel guilt' for choosing jobs or childcare and describes cross-agency work as 'adding lightning...not stealing thunder'.



Issue 43
December 2004

In her Welcome, editor Sarah Burton describes contributor paediatric surgeon Prof George Youngson's proposal to create a National Child Health Service in Scotland, to allow for strategic national planning, as 'radical, speculative – and timely'.



Issue 52
September 2005

The need for open, anti-sedentary creative spaces for children is recognised in our international architecture and design for young children award, while on other pages the Policy team's Eddie Follan previews the Additional Support for Learning Act.



Issue 62
July 2006

We cover the launch of our 2007-11 Manifesto prioritising entitlement to free, nutritious school meals for all primary children, and Caroline Dunmur reports on the Access all Areas project which captures young people's views on school accessibility.



Issue 65
November 2006

Designer Nicola Copeland delivers a new look for the magazine, complete with colour-burst floral front cover contributed by a pupil from St Bartholomews Primary, Coatbridge. Elsewhere Scots Conservative leader Annabel Goldie talks jobs, justice and parent power.



Issue 82
April 2008

Author Tim Gill contextualises the debate on safety vs resilience, and we cover the Children's Commissioner's significant report on Moving and Handling of Young People with Disabilities. Designer Tracy MacMillan's inventive layout lifts proceedings.



Issue 95
May 2009

We consider how the post-financial crash recession could impact children; former Magpie host Susan Stranks laments the loss of children's radio; and 11 years prior to the Promise, Edinburgh Uni lecturer Mark Smith urges a wholesale rethink of the care system.



Issue 133
June 2012

Featuring a parting interview with CEO Bronwen Cohen, she surveys the fiefdom and marks our cards with a commitment to universalism: 'It's essential not to lose sight of childhood as a whole, otherwise we'll forever have to pick up the pieces.'



Issue 141
February 2013

New editor Jen Drummond explores sustainability and global citizenship following the One Planet Schools report. We also note the launch of the first International School Meals Day and welcome the recognition of looked after children as a government priority.



Issue 144
May 2013

Shelter Scotland expose the effects of the Bedroom Tax in a new opinion slot; Jeni Bainbridge talks transition issues; and we cover the Stage 1 draft of the Children and Young People Bill, finding 'significant gaps in support... for vulnerable children'.



Issue 173
April 2016

We urge members to join influencing efforts in an election issue where party leaders are tested on child policy. Jen Drummond and Nicola Pay quiz FM Nicola Sturgeon, eliciting a scoop about the then hot-topic Named Person (was it all just an absinthe-fueled dream?)



Issue 177
December 2017

With Article 50 soon to be triggered, Helen Stalford predicts the post-Brexit settlement for children; campaigner Jonny Benjamin explains the need to achieve physical and mental health parity of esteem; and we report on the launch of website Reach.



Issue 185
April 2018

In an issue sporting a bright new look after our rebrand, Fair Funding campaigners bemoan 'an unusable childcare system'. CEO Jackie Brock points to the opportunities in expansion and the fundamental need for a well-trained workforce.



Issue 188
October 2018

Our quarter century-celebrating 25 Calls campaign compiles brave, brilliant ideas on strengthening rights and equality. Top calls focused on poverty and mental health in the first of five editions from maternity cover editor, Caitlin Logan.



Issue 194
October 2019

An explosive seasonal cover marking 30 years of the UNCRC. Contributors explain how, from child protection to participation, enhanced rights enhance lives – and look forward to Scottish Government-promised 'maximum incorporation'.



Issue 199
December 2020

In-house designer Angus Doyle offers multi-coloured routes to renewal in this edition marking our 2021-26 Manifesto. Inside, partners back a range of calls including drastic air pollution reduction and under-16s on citizen assemblies.

Summaries: Chris Small

New year, new beginnings?



David Mackay
Policy and Projects
Manager
Children in Scotland

@David_J_Mackay

Throughout Brexit discussions, young people have spoken of their concerns about how it will impact their lives. What happens next will be crucial for the opportunities of the next generation, writes *David Mackay*

There was a palpable sense of relief as 2020 ended. In the final few days of December, many took to social media to share memes celebrating the end of a challenging year in which our sense of normality had been turned upside down. The prospect of a brighter year was looming.

However, just a few days later, First Minister Nicola Sturgeon had announced new national lockdown measures and it became clear that 2021 (or at least the first few months of it) wouldn't feel as different as we'd hoped.

On top of this, the UK entered the new year with a very different relationship with the European Union. Since officially leaving the EU on 31 January 2020, not much had changed. The UK remained in both the EU customs union and single market until 31 December 2020, during the transition period. Now, however, the formal separation was complete.

Just one week earlier on Christmas Eve a UK-EU trade deal had been triumphantly announced by Boris Johnson. Despite the Prime Minister's suggestion, I doubt many of us spent our Christmas afternoon digesting the newly published trade agreement. Since then, the contents of the deal have trickled out into the public's consciousness.

So far, the challenges faced by the meat and fish industries seem to have received the most news headlines, with reports of produce rotting at EU ports and calls for financial support from the UK Government. But, with Covid-19 providing such a skewed sense of normality, how many people are really aware of the detail of the deal and what impact Brexit will have on their lives? And importantly, what impact will Brexit have for future generations?

Since 2018, the Children and Young People's Panel on Europe, supported by Children in Scotland and Together (Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights) has been looking at key issues affecting children and young people as the UK leaves the EU. Their work – which continued throughout last year despite the pandemic – provides a great insight into young people's hopes and fears after Brexit and can be a useful barometer for measuring the deal.

A key issue for the Panel was the loss of opportunities to freely work, study and travel in the EU. As of 1st January, freedom to live and work in the EU has come to an end for UK nationals, who will now need a visa for stays of longer than 90 days in the EU. As part of the Brexit deal, the UK Government also announced that they would no longer participate in the Erasmus+ scheme, a programme that helps students to study in other EU countries. Instead, a new UK programme named after the mathematician and Bletchley Park code-breaker Alan Turing is to be launched in September 2021.

As well as supporting university exchanges, Erasmus+ has provided opportunities to work, teach or train abroad to other groups, including vocational students, education staff and youth workers. It remains to be seen whether the Turing programme will offer the same broad range of opportunities to support young people's learning and development, rather than simply focusing

on academic achievement. The programme's impact on improving employment prospects and increasing opportunities for those from disadvantages backgrounds and those with additional needs has been well documented. To be considered a success, any replacement programme must seek to overcome inequalities and create opportunities for all our young people.

The governments of devolved nations have vocalised their concerns about leaving Erasmus+, citing worries about reduced opportunities for UK students, and in particular those from more deprived communities. In January, the Scottish

"A key issue for the Panel was the loss of opportunities to freely work, study and travel in the EU"

Government, along with partners in the Welsh Assembly, announced their intention to work to continue to secure the benefits of the programme. So there is hope for our Scottish students at least.

Another important topic for the Children and Young People's Panel on Europe was EU funding. Now that the UK has left the EU, we will no longer receive European Union structural funding, calculated to be worth around £2.1 billion per year.

The UK Government has pledged to set up a Shared Prosperity Fund aimed at reducing inequalities between communities across the four nations and deliver "sustainable, inclusive growth". So far, there has been a lack of clarity about how this fund will operate and how it will be fairly distributed among regions. Children and young people are concerned about the impact changes to funding will have on youth services and community projects which have already been hard-hit by the impact of years of austerity and cuts.

Now that a Brexit deal has been agreed, many feel it's time for the Prime Minister to deliver on his "Levelling Up" promise and reduce the geographic inequalities across the UK. Let's hope this levelling up becomes a reality rather than just another post-election soundbite and that some of Scotland's most disadvantaged communities receive the investment and development they need to create more opportunities for our children and young people. It is now more important than ever in the context of coronavirus recovery.

There is however some good news coming out of Holyrood in the midst of all this uncertainty and talk of restrictions, both Brexit and Covid-related. In mid-January the UNCRC Incorporation Bill unanimously passed stage one in the Scottish Parliament. The adoption of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child is the result of many years of campaigning across the children's sector. It is a little beacon of hope and a move towards a future where children and young people will have more of a say in the decisions that affect their lives.

> The Young People's Panel on Europe was formed in 2018 to ensure young people's voices were heard, and their views accounted for, during Brexit negotiations.

> Find out more and read their reports at childreninscotland.org.uk/children-and-young-peoples-panel-on-europe/

"Democracy isn't just the idea of a nation's elders"

Panel on Europe member Kurby urges governments and decision-makers to remember children and young people as we move forward as a non-EU nation.



"Brexit has caused headache after headache, and even more so for Scotland's young people. With limited input from Scotland's youth due to either not being of age to vote in the original referendum or having our views shunned, it has left so many of us confused and scared for our future.

"The Scottish Government took these concerns into consideration and formed the CYP Panel on Europe to help us have a voice. We were able to share our thoughts and feelings about how Brexit could impact us and share these directly with decision makers. However, their powers to take our concerns further were limited.

"So here we are. Brexit has officially happened and we have left the EU, much to our despair. We can only hope from this point forward that the government doesn't forget about us and our voices, and how important it is to listen to us. Surely a democracy isn't just the ideas of a nation's elders?"

Kurby, age 19

"We can tell when they are just in it for a photo"

Oscar, another member of the Panel on Europe, urges politicians to place children and young front and centre in decision-making – and to be genuine and meaningful in their engagement.



"After four years Brexit is finally over. Or is it? We still need to settle in to the new routine and get into the swing of our new trade deals and laws.

"Exiting the EU is like shutting the door in one room but opening it to the outside world. In 2016, a majority in Scotland voted to stay in the EU but as we are part of the UK, we still left. So what happens next?

"There are so many questions left to answer, and more to come.

"Politicians should be placing children at the forefront of their decisions, as we will experience this future for a lot longer than they will. We have strong opinions and deserve to be heard.

"Politicians should also know that we may be young, but we are not idiots. We can tell when they're in it for the photo or to make a real difference."

Oscar, age 11

We need a plan to tackle the inevitable lockdown loss of learning



Lindsay Paterson
Professor of
Education Policy
University of Edinburgh

Inconsistencies around remote learning only serve to exacerbate inequalities. Our focus now must be on addressing loss of learning through a properly-planned catch-up programme, writes *Professor Lindsay Paterson*

Children and their carers have never been so extensively involved in school learning as during the present health emergency. Many have found this difficult. The competing demands of paid work, of children at multiple stages of education, and of the sheer complexities of running a household during a national lockdown have been extraordinarily difficult. Despite the impressive efforts of teachers and schools, it's likely that all the worst effects of last year's closures will be exacerbated during the closures in place since January.

Schools last March were faced with an unprecedented situation for which no-one could have been prepared. But the problem for many children was that there was little improvement over the ensuing months. Surveys showed that online and offline teaching barely reached half of a normal school day for even a half of children. The most serious missing element was regular feedback from teachers.

Of course the other half of children were getting reasonable support, and the teachers and schools which provided that were remarkable in their imagination and dedication.

But recognising the achievements ought not to divert us from the plight of children who didn't get these benefits.

Research into what can make online teaching effective shows that it has to be active. There have to be versions of full classrooms for some of the time. There has to be regular feedback on children's work. There have to be regular one-to-one conversations online between each child and a teacher. Only the best schools managed that last year.

What's more, the sudden shift to electronic communication cast adrift those children whose families could not afford laptops or broadband. About a quarter of children in households with after-tax income less than £25,000 per year do not have access to a laptop or a tablet, according to data from the 2018 Scottish Household Survey. A third of children are below that income threshold.

Children with additional support needs faced particular challenges. Although special schools could stay open, data suggests a lower proportion of children with additional needs in Scotland attended school than children with special needs in England. Part of the problem was mainstreaming. In Scotland, the move to a presumption of mainstreaming for those with additional support needs may come with a number of evidenced benefits, but in these unusual times it has created unusual difficulties. There are a number of issues which still remain unresolved in terms of how these families are coping with the lack of support system, balancing caring needs and the requirement for specialist, or at the very least supported, education delivery.

The most visible controversy last year was for students who should have been sitting exams in the final years of secondary school. Results were based on estimates by teachers of what students were likely to have achieved. In the short term, that was probably the least unjust way to do it, but changing the assessments could not compensate for the loss of learning.

With the new closures, there are few reasonable grounds for optimism. There is almost no worthwhile national guidance from either the agency responsible for the curriculum (Education Scotland) or the Scottish Qualifications Authority. It seems likely therefore that the schools and teachers who are doing well will be the same as did well last year. Therefore inequality of provision is likely worse than last year, because these same schools will also have learnt from their own experience, and will have improved even further.

It's too late to solve these problems. Last autumn, Scottish national agencies in education refused even to recognise that there had been massive loss of learning, losses that were greatest for children facing the most difficult economic circumstances. That evasion of the problem ought not to be allowed to happen again.

If the injustices that Covid has inflicted on children are to be overcome, the urgent focus now should be on a properly planned programme of catch-up.

> 'HM Inspectors to review remote learning practices' News, page 5

"Halving child poverty by 2024 should be the floor, not ceiling, for our ambition"



Claire Telfer
Head of Scotland
Save the Children UK

Twitter: @CTelfc

With increasing numbers of families experiencing financial hardship, we need to be ambitious – by putting money directly in parents' pockets, writes *Claire Telfer*

A year ago, nearly one in four children in Scotland experienced poverty and destitution amongst children was rising sharply. Twelve months later we're facing a deepening crisis as the economic fall-out of the pandemic tightens the grip of poverty on families. The impacts have been cruel, plunging some families into crisis for the first time and deepening the hardships of others.

Without enough money it's hard to focus on anything else. Many families have been forced to rely on charity. One mother I spoke to recently told me "I was stranded, I had to feed my baby." This is alongside lockdown, round-the-clock childcare and home schooling. We know poverty puts children at risk of poorer life experiences, opportunities and outcomes. As we emerge from the grip of the pandemic we need to navigate our way to a fairer society and fairer childhoods for all.

Prioritising child poverty is key. Ambitions to reduce child poverty will be blown wildly off course without further, quicker, bolder action. Halving child poverty by 2024 should be the floor not the ceiling for our ambitions for the next Scottish Parliament. The best way to do this and advance children's rights is to ensure families on low incomes have more money. Money enables families to meet basic needs, reduces stress and worries and gives choice and control so children can flourish.

Save the Children along with our End Child Poverty partners believes a cash-first approach is the most impactful and immediate way to tackle poverty and offers the most dignity and freedom. We want to see a relentless focus on increasing family incomes over the course of the next parliament, starting by asking all parties to commit to at least doubling the value of the Scottish Child Payment to £20 per week. The prioritisation of this game-changing benefit is welcome – the first payments will be made in February – and will lift tens of thousands of children out of poverty. But more is needed.

Important and welcome action has been taken on child poverty. Yet it's also crystal clear that poverty will soar without further decisive steps. Child poverty rises or falls because of the policies that a government implements.

We don't need to wait for the next parliament to act. In this time of crisis more can be done now.

The Scottish Government's 2021-22 Budget was a key opportunity to take further action to increase family incomes. The government acknowledged rising child poverty as a key risk to the country but didn't commit to any new action to help get cash to struggling families now. The Fraser of Allander Institute pointed out that the £90m allocated for the council tax freeze could have funded an additional £13 a week per family via the Scottish Child Payment, protecting the income of those who need it most.

"Money enables families to meet basic needs, reduces stress and gives choice and control"

The End Child Poverty manifesto sets out other areas where action can be taken. We want to see moves to help families with older children, prevent destitution amongst families with no recourse to public funds, a child poverty-focussed labour market policy that prioritises tackling low pay amongst women, and holistic support for families.

Sustained action and continued political consensus across party lines is needed not just on prioritising tackling child poverty but on the approach we take. We want to see civil society and political parties unite in supporting our call for a cash-first approach to tackling poverty, focusing on the cause of poverty – lack of money. The priority must be to get cash support direct to hard up families, using the statutory rights-based mechanisms available to national and local government, rather than leaving it to charities to provide basic income security.

The best way to counter low income is with money through the most direct routes to families. This would help us achieve fairer childhoods for this generation and the ones to follow.

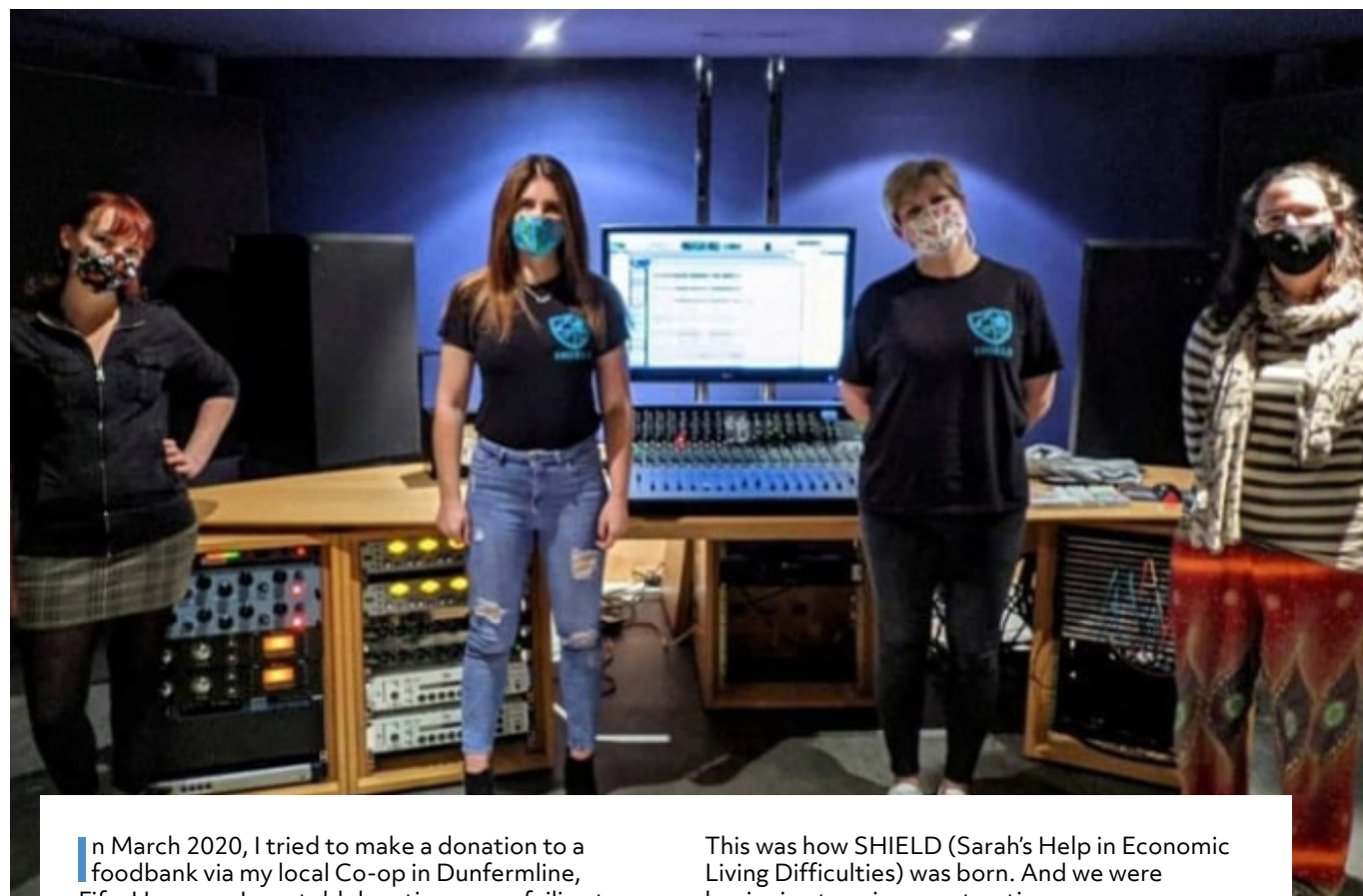
> Coalition calls for doubling of Scottish Child Payment News, page 5

> As members of the End Child Poverty coalition, Children in Scotland supports all the calls made within their manifesto. We have also made recommendations to tackle child poverty in our own Manifesto for 2021-26 Read our Manifesto

People, projects, perspectives

Agents of SHIELD

A local community group in Fife is providing invaluable support to families and individuals in need during the pandemic. *Sarah Keeble* talks about the history and future of her service



In March 2020, I tried to make a donation to a foodbank via my local Co-op in Dunfermline, Fife. However, I was told donations were failing to be collected and the collection point was being stopped. I later found out the foodbank was only operational for two hours each day, three days a week.

On that day, I took the food home and assessed what I was going to do with it. It wasn't food that I or my children would ordinarily eat, and I wanted to use it for the purpose it was intended. I separated the food and batch cooked it, with the intention of delivering food parcels to locals who needed it.

At first, I issued small appeals for help and assistance, running the group from my home. Eventually there were 88 people requesting our food parcels – all of which were cooked, packed and delivered individually by myself and a small group of volunteers.

This was how SHIELD (Sarah's Help in Economic Living Difficulties) was born. And we were beginning to gain some traction.

We received support from a local church group who offered us their hall to turn into a food hall, meaning we had a premises to cook and package the food parcels. It also allowed us more space to explore offering other provisions, such as clothing or goods.

At the same time, we secured a contract with FareShare, one of the UK's largest charities fighting hunger and tackling food waste, after I observed the food parcels shielding OAPs were receiving were not fit for purpose. Many older people had lost the support of a key worker, or may have lost a partner who would ordinarily have been in charge of cooking meals. The boxes were a good idea, but they were not providing effective food security. The individuals needed something that was easy and straightforward to prepare. Or, even better, was already cooked and ready to eat.

"To date we have cooked more than 70,000 meals from food waste"

The partnership with FareShare was a huge turning point for the group and provided us with the network to reach even more people. We moved to a larger premises and, most recently, secured a contract with our local Asda, Co-op, Tesco and Aldi stores to collect their food that would have otherwise gone to waste, seven nights a week. To date we have cooked more than 70,000 meals from food waste. We have also now started 'Surplus Pop-Ups' in three locations across Fife where people can collect bags of perfectly good food, at no cost, that supermarkets would normally be sending to landfill.

The individuals and families we support are varied and come from a range of backgrounds. We have some who are on long-term benefits, but many who are facing unexpected hardship. A huge proportion of those we help are experiencing in-work poverty, have recently lost their jobs or are between jobs and are awaiting their Universal Credit. They have no support from the state.

SHIELD aims to help alleviate some of this pressure by providing food support or helping with clothing, giving a bit of respite to assess and make sense of which direction to go in next.

We have developed relationships with a number of businesses and are happy to facilitate connection where there could be employment opportunities. We also operate a skills exchange, asking individuals we help to use their skills to help grow the group. This approach empowers the individuals we are working with and positions us as less of a charity and more of a support network.

The help we offer often goes beyond the material goods, providing struggling individuals, families and parents with a helping hand at some of the most difficult times of their lives and easing the financial, emotional and mental burden.

One of our individuals had breast cancer and was struggling financially. When her washing machine broke, we replaced it. We also helped put food on the table and provide gifts for her children at Christmas.

Another individual was fleeing domestic abuse. She and her five children arrived in Fife and were referred to us by the local Advice Hub. We were able to provide some support until her benefit claim was approved.

We have also helped at least three families who have lost everything in house fires. The response to our appeals allowed us to fill their cupboards, provide clothing, toys, toiletries and furniture.

Plans for the future

The intention for SHIELD was always to offer something different. It was never designed to be formatted like an existing service. I don't feel that the problems of food poverty and food waste have ever been tackled effectively. There are many trying, with far more money than SHIELD has, but the problems remain. The issues still exist, so we need to think differently.

The next step for SHIELD is to become a Community Interest Company (CIC). Becoming a CIC would mean SHIELD becomes asset-locked. Everything we have, all

"The problems of food poverty and food waste have never been tackled effectively"

our financial assets and otherwise, would be tied into SHIELD and funds can only be spent on community interests. It safeguards us as a group and ensures that we have the right people, with the right intentions involved in management and delivery. There is no personal financial gain.

We do have plans to apply for charitable status for our food waste work. As an extension to the services we provide, I have plans to develop some food education programmes, visiting schools to talk about food and food waste. I want to educate people about food waste, tackle stereotypes and misconceptions, and teach families how to cook with it. We would still continue to cook our meals for SHIELD, to run our pop-ups, but also to offer this educational service too.

SHIELD was created to meet a need and fill a gap within my local community. It developed at an entirely unexpected time in my life and had I known just how big it was going to become I'm not sure I would have had the confidence to explore it.

But I'm glad I did.

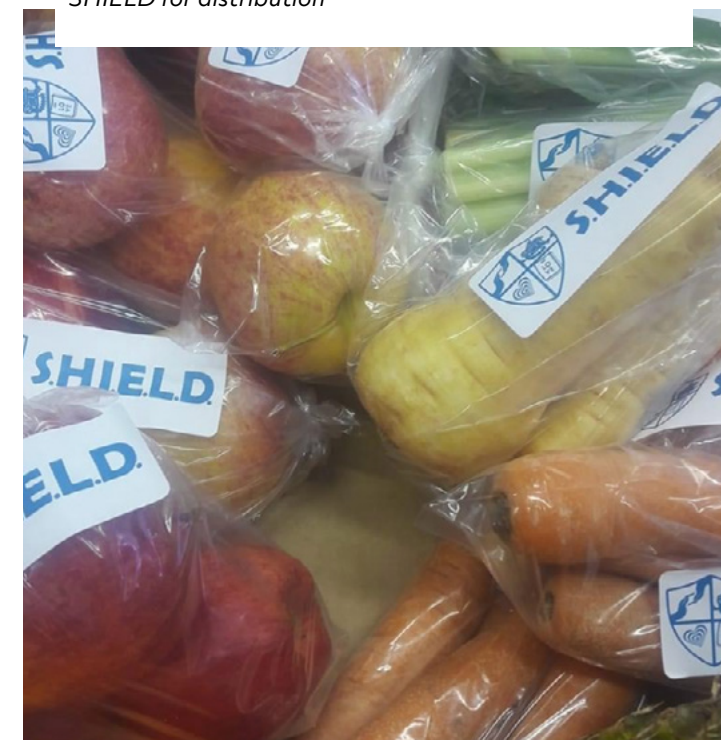
The support SHIELD has received from the community has been overwhelming. From those offering premises, to the partnerships we have built and continue to build, to the people who are donating food, goods and clothing and the team of volunteers. I am extremely proud of what we are building, and our achievements so far.

Sarah Keeble is Founder of SHIELD - Sarah's Help in Economic Living Difficulties

> To learn more about SHIELD visit their Facebook page facebook.com/shielduk.org

> Words by Sarah Keeble and Jennifer Drummond

> Images: (page 20) Sarah, second from left, with some of her volunteers; (below) food waste packaged by SHIELD for distribution



Peace of mind

Mindspace, a mental health support service in Perth, has continued to support young people during the pandemic by moving online. *Jillian Milne* explains how they've adapted, and why she fears for the future

Last year brought about seismic changes in our society and how we operate. As adults, the series of lockdowns and restrictions can, for the most part, be approached with some pragmatism and perspective. For young people these developments have been significantly more challenging. Key life events and milestones have been cancelled or postponed. Some have been overly-simplified, their importance and significance reduced, leaving many young people with a sense of feeling deprived or cheated.

When the country locked down, Mindspace had to make immediate changes to service delivery. In 'normal' times all our young people's support services — Counselling and our Young Person's Recovery College (a learning approach to understanding and managing mental health) — would be delivered face-to-face. This would be on a one-to-one or group basis, taking place at our own premises, schools, GP surgeries or with other third sector organisations around Perth and Kinross.

In March 2020 we moved all our services to telephone and digital, including via Zoom and across social media. For many, this was welcome, but it has also revealed a spectrum of challenges for young people. Some faced difficulties in having access to technology; some in finding a safe, confidential space within their home, free from disruption from other family members. For others, the whole experience of adapting to using cameras on their mobile devices for activities other than watching TikTok content or Instagramming was initially awkward. There

"For many young people, digital has provided a lifeline"

was a feeling of being more exposed online, leading to a gradual approach to make a voice and then later visual connection. There are also those who have decided to wait for face-to-face support to resume.

Overall, whilst face-to-face is undoubtedly our favoured way to support clients, digital has presented some new opportunities and allowed us to continue to support young people during this turbulent time.

Social media has become invaluable since we increased our use of digital platforms. Our YP Recovery College uses a confidential messenger service through our Facebook page and an Instagram account allows us to maintain vital communication channels with the young people. On these we share useful mental wellbeing hints, tips and advice and information about forthcoming events.

For many young people, digital has provided a lifeline. Our ability to remain connected has been valuable to their mental health and wellbeing. Some young people have told us they have found it easier to engage in group work digitally as it offers them more flexibility and confidentially, for example the option of camera off/mic off.

Young people are amazing and resilient. But many are also scared, anxious, lonely, angry, worried, frustrated or sad. These emotions will not go away overnight. They will need to receive continued understanding, support, reassurance, encouragement, patience and kindness. We as adults must provide unwavering and unconditional support, but we also have to teach young people to be kind to themselves.

Emotional wellbeing has been a struggle for a huge number of young people and many experts are predicting mental ill health to be the next pandemic. There is no novelty factor in this latest lockdown. For many it feels significantly worse than the first. The 2021 lockdown has a whole range of emotional, social and economic factors at play which are arguably more intense this time around. I am hopeful we will return to some version of normality, but I fear that services like ours may be in more demand than ever.

Jillian Milne is Chief Executive of Mindspace

> To find out more about the work of Mindspace visit mindspacepk.com

> Young people's mental health worsens during pandemic **News**, page 6

New project

Sweet soul music

A new project looks to examine the impact of live music experiences on the health and wellbeing of young people, identifying barriers to engagement and how these can be overcome. *Amy Woodhouse* explains more

Even in the toughest of times, music can bring solace. If we are in a bad mood, it can be cathartic. If we are sad, it can lift our spirits. If we are bored, it can transport us to other places.

Many of us have desperately missed live music experiences over the last year, curtailed due to the restrictions introduced in response to the pandemic. Live music is probably something we would wish all children and young people to experience, as part of their cultural development and as a boost for their wellbeing. Its current absence is keenly felt.

Children in Scotland is therefore delighted to be partnering with Scottish Ensemble to lead a new research group, looking at the impact of live music experiences on the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people.

The partnership is borne out of a shared agreement that children's mental health is the responsibility of us all. Thinking to the future, we want to establish how, when the restrictions finally ease, we can make live music accessible and part of the broader mental health improvement activity.

Our group is one of 18 new Special Interest Research Groups being supported by Emerging Minds, a UK-wide research network that aims to reduce the prevalence of mental health problems experienced by children and young people.

Alongside Scottish Ensemble, we are delighted to be working with a number of partners. The University of Stirling will bring research expertise, and the Scottish Government Mental Health Division will make the connections with government policy. Crucially, Changing our World, Children in Scotland's children and young people's advisory group, will also be involved – shaping the focus for the group and working together with other members to discuss the findings and agree recommendations.

We recognise that children and young people engage with music in many different ways. With this group we want to understand what, if any, particular effects experiencing live music can have for children and young people. We will seek to identify what different factors, such as location, performance type, communication and interactions, have on impact, and how experiences vary based on age and protected characteristics, such as disability, sexuality or race. We want to identify how barriers such as poverty and other forms of disadvantage can be overcome.

We know that many performing arts organisations, including orchestras, are currently trying to understand



what their contribution to Covid recovery and renewal could be. Given the reliance on the arts to get people through the last 11 months, be it listening to music, watching broadcasts of old theatre performances or exploring new ways to deliver and connect with arts output, there is certainly a timely need for the work we plan to do.

Much work has already been conducted on the impacts of learning and playing an instrument on young people's attainment and wider learning outcomes but we want to make sure that our focus is on the wider holistic benefits of using music as much for wellbeing purposes as for learning/curriculum purposes.

We are keen to extend the reach and membership of the group. We will be running a series of workshops during the summer months to explore this topic in depth. If you are interested in finding out more, please do get in touch. Further information will also be circulated through Children in Scotland's usual channels.

In a post-lockdown world, we'll need live music more than we ever have – to give children and young people creative ways to articulate and understand their emotions, and to provide them with happy and hopeful experiences to see them into the future.

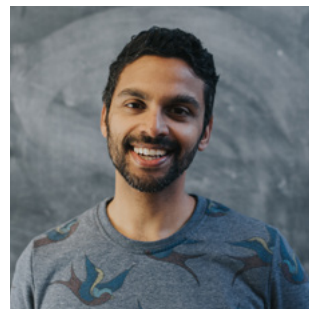
Amy Woodhouse is Head of Policy, Projects & Participation at Children in Scotland

> For more information on the Emerging Minds project, or to find out how to be involved, contact Amy on awoodhouse@childreninscotland.org.uk

Introducing...

"Profit margins have been prioritised over people's wellbeing"

Rohan Gunatillake, a recent appointee to the Children in Scotland Board, aims to bring a fresh perspective and new ideas building on his experiences in technology and innovation.



Rohan Gunatillake
Children in Scotland Board
Member

> Rohan joined Children in Scotland as a Director of the Board in August 2020.

> To find out more about our Board and how they support our work visit childreninscotland.org.uk/about-us/our-board/

> Rohan hosts a podcast, Meditative Story. To listen or find out more visit meditativestory.com

I joined the Children in Scotland board in order to provide a sounding-board to the team and bring some different, yet valuable, ideas and connections. I had recently finished six years on the board of a large international charity and wanted to support work closer to home. I'm impressed by Children in Scotland's work, ambition and organisation and felt it was a good opportunity to bring my experiences to an already high-functioning team working in such an important sector.

I bring a diverse background in technology and innovation. My day job is within NHS Scotland building infrastructure and user-facing products. It's all about helping health and care professionals have the right information they need to do their job at the right time. My team comprises project managers and designers across a range of projects. We've also been involved in several Covid-19 projects and since January I've personally been partially deployed to support the Scottish Government on the people-facing digital elements of the vaccination programme.

Technology can be a force for good, but has to be designed to be such. Many of the issues we see today in terms of the negative impacts of big technology exist because commercial interests and profit margins have been prioritised over people's wellbeing. It is perhaps naive to think a corporate system will change, but I am optimistic we are beginning to see a more mature conversation about the problem. I would urge everyone to watch the Netflix documentary, *The Social Dilemma*, if you haven't already.

In a world with no shortage of stress, we all need reliable ways to bring more balance and connection to our lives. Prior to my current role I ran the company Mindfulness Everywhere, which became best known for its mindfulness app *buddhify*. I'm very proud of how our values-led, self-funded approach has been able to find a place in a now very competitive market. Along the way I have also published a book, *Modern Mindfulness*, which looks at how to practice and understand mindfulness in our busy, modern lives.

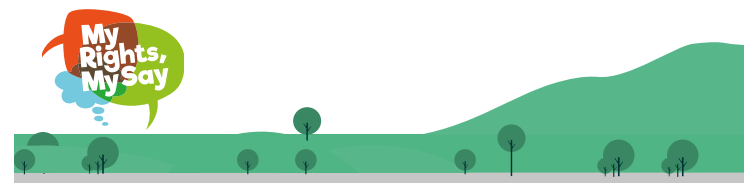
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