

# A Scotland where all children can flourish

Children in Scotland Strategic Plan  
2023-28





“Welcome to our plan which sets out what we aspire to do over the next five years. During that time, we will seek to do as much as we can to realise our vision of a Scotland where all children have an equal chance to flourish. In the plan, we outline our priority areas of work, the high-level actions we will take and how we will measure our success.

The plan has been created at a time when the cost-of-living crisis means that we will have to work with increasing efficiency and focus to make a real difference. We know that the crisis is having a greater impact on many of those who are already struggling to realise their rights. Many organisations working with the most vulnerable populations across Scotland are struggling themselves, seeing their own income decrease while bills continue to rise.

Against this backdrop, we have to remain ambitious and optimistic that real and positive change is possible. The commitment made by Scottish Government to, for example, Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC), incorporation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and combating child poverty, should give us a level of hope despite implementation challenges.

There is a lot to do. If we want to ensure we are having an impact, effective prioritisation and collaboration will be critical in the development of good policy and practice that really makes a difference for children and young people.”



***Judith Turbyne, Chief Executive***



## Developing our strategy

This strategy reflects a lot of conversations and sessions within the Board, with Changing our World (our children and young people's advisory group), our staff team, our members, and the wider network. Just as important as conversations designed to specifically reflect on the strategic plan, however, is the active listening that has gone on over the past year. Some of the richest learning for an organisation comes through conversations and work that are not directly about the strategy itself, but about the world the strategy needs to live in and have an impact on. Our learning in the thirty years since our organisation was established is also an essential foundation on which we have built this strategy.

I want to thank everyone who has spent time with us. I feel all the work done has led to a strategy that will help us build on our strengths and will refocus some of our activity to ensure that we are responding to the current context and to our understanding of how we can best contribute towards change.

You will see that the plan looks more like an evolution of the previous plan rather than a revolutionary change in direction. That feels positive to me. I have been consistently hearing that a lot of what Children in Scotland currently does is the right kind of work and that this can be sharpened by some refocusing.

**Members sit at the heart of our values and the work of the organisation.** This has always been the case. However, we now know that in the current climate there needs to be a sharper focus on our membership. This is reflected in the plan.

There has been a lot of discussion about how to maximise impact. For an organisation like Children in Scotland, there is always the potential to be spread too thinly. Our membership is broad and the policy context rich, but we do not have the resource to work on everything. This has led us to link our proactive policy work more tightly to the manifesto that we developed in close consultation with our members.

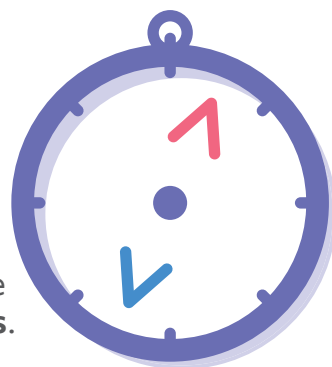
Previous strategies have concentrated on the financial stability of the organisation, but our environmental sustainability has to be equally robust. Again, this is reflected in the plan.

Finally, I believe this has to be a 'living' plan. There are two dimensions to that. The first is making it 'live' for those who are reading it. Over the next few months, we will be reflecting on what each area of the plan means in more dynamic ways, trying to lift the words off the page so that they can resonate more fully with our network.

Just as important is seeing the plan as a living document over the next five years. As the context shifts and changes, we need to make sure we are continuing to have the right strategic conversations. This plan is written at a moment in time, and we need to make sure it continues to be relevant as things change and move in the coming years.

# Towards a Scotland where all children have an equal chance to flourish

Over the next five years, will use our values to guide all our work. Strengthening equality, diversity and inclusion will run through everything we do. In implementing the plan, we will always strive to be brave, open and fair, collaborative and kind. Here are **our six priorities**.



## 1 Children and young people's views will be listened to, taken seriously and acted upon



### What actions will help us achieve this?

- 1.1 Making sure all our work supports the rights of children as outlined in the UNCRC.
- 1.2 Fully embedding the work of Changing our World within the work of Children in Scotland.
- 1.3 Facilitating a strong voice from the Inclusion Ambassadors that can be fed into policy work.
- 1.4 Building on our participation and engagement work, seeking to ensure as wide and inclusive a children and young people's voice as possible that helps shape policy and practice.
- 1.5 Making sure that the children and young people we work with receive feedback on the impact of the participation and engagement activity they are taking part in.
- 1.6 Supporting children and young people to develop the skills to confidently engage with participatory work.
- 1.7 Building strong collaborations with other organisations across the sector and beyond to strengthen participation and engagement work nationally and internationally.
- 1.8 Developing new partnerships to support the participation and engagement of children and young people in key themes focused on building a better and more sustainable Scotland.

### How will we know we are achieving this?



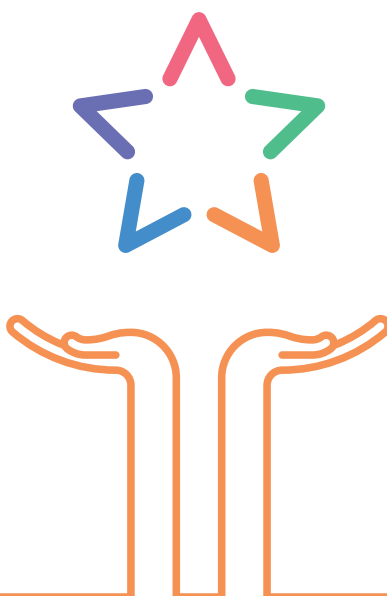
- We have concrete examples of how we have supported children and young people to be active partners in policymaking and implementation.
- We can show that with our support, good practice in the participation and engagement of children and young people is increasingly being embedded across and beyond the children's sector.
- There is evidence that together with others, we are supporting the active participation and engagement of children and young people to help build a better and more sustainable Scotland.
- We can show a continued strengthening of our practice in this area.

## 2 We will deliver quality services that support children, young people, parents, carers and professionals



### What actions will help us achieve this?

- 2.1 Delivering high quality relevant information and support across Scotland through our national services Enquire, Resolve and My Rights, My Say.
- 2.2 Campaigning to improve policy and practice based on evidence, with a strong focus on greater investment in person-centred, early intervention and prevention approaches.
- 2.3 Championing the wellbeing of children and young people and their parents and carers in our direct services, project work and policy activity.
- 2.4 Supporting the development of professionals particularly around additional support for learning.
- 2.5 Collaborating with partners across Scotland and the UK to influence the improvement of policy and practice for children and young people with additional support needs.



### How will we know we are achieving this?

- The children, young people and families we are supporting through our managed services are telling us that our support has made a difference.
- Our managed services are providing the support that children, young people, parents, carers and professionals need in order to access appropriate support.
- The learning from the delivery of services is actively influencing policy and practice across Scotland.
- Early support and prevention are becoming more consistently applied in policy making and services.
- Progress is being made in the implementation of the Additional Support for Learning Action Plan.

### 3 We will maintain and build on a strong and effective network with a vibrant membership at its core



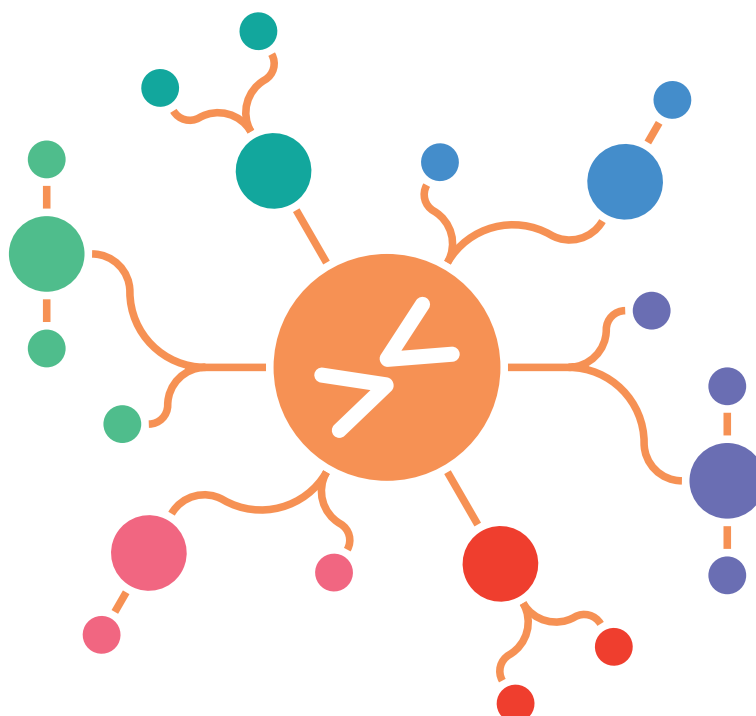
#### What actions will help us achieve this?

- 3.1 Investing in strengthening the diversity of our membership.
- 3.2 Evolving our membership offer as the external context continues to change and shift.
- 3.3 Collaborating with external partners who can provide benefits for our membership.
- 3.4 Building links between the membership and a broader network to increase the impact of the work.
- 3.5 Investing in collaboration across and beyond the sector to contribute to best practice, learning and policy development.

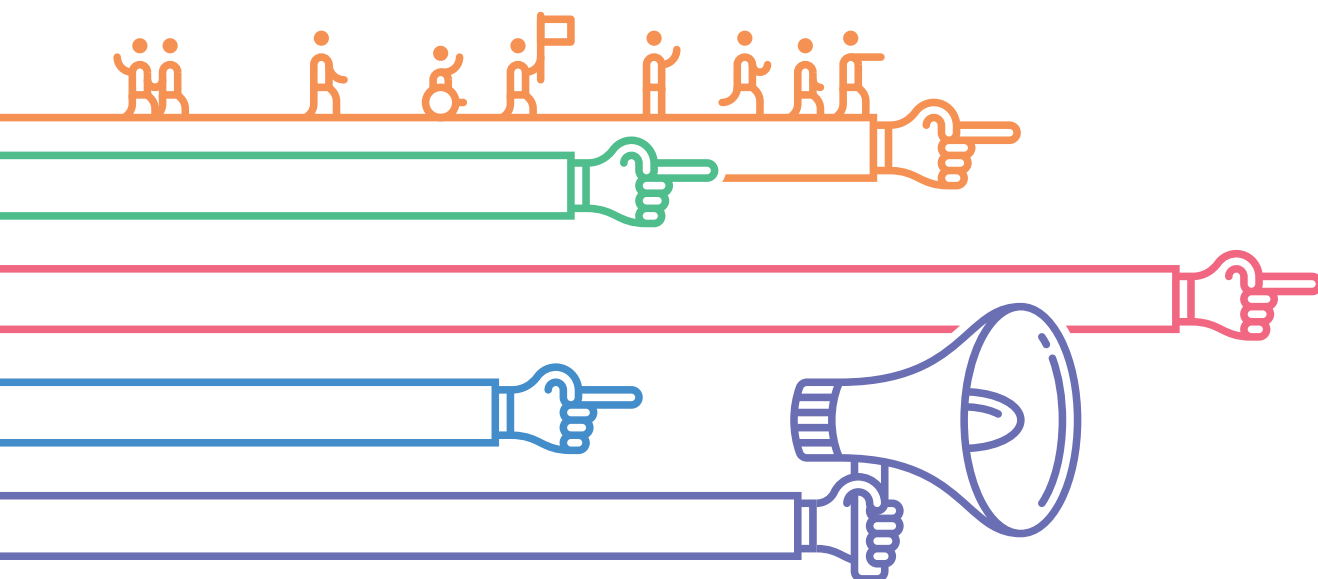


#### How will we know we are achieving this?

- We have evidence of a strong, diverse and vibrant membership.
- There is evidence that our members benefit from being part of Children in Scotland.
- We can show effective collaboration with organisations within and outwith the children's sector.
- We can evidence the impact this collaboration is having for children and young people across Scotland.



## 4 We will lead and develop the children's sector workforce



### What actions will help us achieve this?



- 4.1 Listening to the sector and using our research to plan and deliver a programme of capacity-building that meets the needs of the children's sector workforce.
- 4.2 Providing information and resources through our digital and print communications that are accessible and benefit the children's sector.
- 4.3 Including a range of voices from our network and those with lived experience in our communications and activities.
- 4.4 Delivering high-quality consultancy that reflects the needs of the sector, focusing on our identified priority areas, emerging research, and best practice.
- 4.5 Facilitating the development of innovative solutions to challenges within the sector via projects, research and approaches to service planning and delivery.
- 4.6 Ensuring that all our work is evidence-based or evidence generating.
- 4.7 Actively sharing our learning with our network and the wider children's sector.

### How will we know we are achieving this?



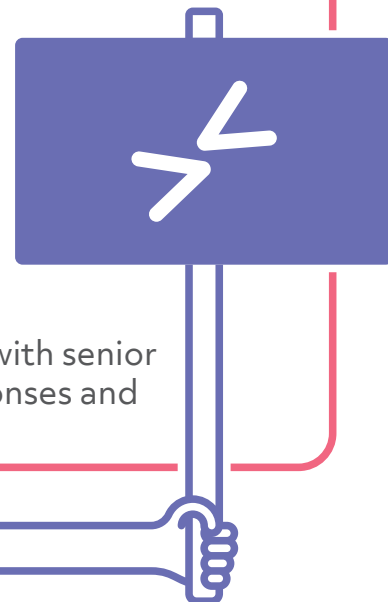
- We have contributed to the strengthening of the workforce through our learning opportunities.
- Our communications are reaching a wide audience and supporting the development of the wider sector.
- There is evidence that we are using our platform to amplify the voice of the children's sector.

## 5 We will influence policymakers to deliver on our Manifesto priorities



### What actions will help us achieve this?

- 5.1 Facilitating the bringing together of the knowledge, experience and voices of our members and wider network.
- 5.2 Working on innovative projects and programmes that add to the evidence base with respect to the best approaches to policy and practice.
- 5.3 Working with members and the wider network to gather new evidence where we identify knowledge gaps relating to the lives of children and families, identifying the barriers they experience and identifying effective ways of ensuring timely early support to children and families.
- 5.4 Sharing evidence and resources with the whole sector to support learning, development and understanding of policies and best practice.
- 5.5 Directly influencing the development and implementation of national policy through engaging with key decision-makers, including MSPs, and using effective lobbying and campaigning approaches.
- 5.6 Directly influencing the development and implementation of national policy through participation in Scottish Government steering groups, forums and networks etc.
- 5.7 Deepening the influence and impact of the Children's Sector Strategic and Policy Forum.
- 5.8 Building on and strengthening the impact of the Cross-Party Group on Children and Young People with YouthLink Scotland.
- 5.9 Exploring the potential to increase the inclusion of the voice of children and young people in other relevant Cross-Party Groups.
- 5.10 Supporting members' understanding of key national policy developments and supporting them to share issues/priorities with senior decision-makers through our Voices Forum, consultation responses and evidence briefings.



### How will we know we are achieving this?



- We have evidence of progress on our Manifesto calls.
- Progress is being made to ensure that children and young people's rights are upheld.
- There is increasing policy coherence in areas impacting on children, young people and families.



## 6 We will be an environmentally and financially sustainable organisation



### What actions will help us achieve this?

- 6.1 Ensuring that the organisation has a shared understanding of values and that we are investing in empathetic leadership.
- 6.2 Ensuring that staff are fairly paid and have good terms and conditions by benchmarking against other organisations within the sector and beyond.
- 6.3 Investing in the overall wellbeing of staff, including implementing our wellbeing plan.
- 6.4 Investing in training and learning for staff with a particular focus on ensuring that they are equipped to provide a wide range of person-centred engagement.
- 6.5 Developing and implementing a net zero plan and working across the organisation to embed that plan.
- 6.6 Ensuring good financial management.
- 6.7 Actively managing risks for the organisation and reflecting that in an updated risk register.
- 6.8 Modelling good governance, ensuring that our governance is in line with the Scottish Governance Code for the Third Sector.
- 6.9 Investing in a new income generation strategy with our values at its heart which contributes to our long-term sustainability.
- 6.10 Embedding continuous self-evaluation and improvement across the organisation.
- 6.11 Investing in our digital capability and management including cyber security.

### How will we know we are achieving this?

- We have a skilled and motivated staff team.
- We are well governed.
- We have a satisfactory level of unrestricted funds.
- We are a net zero organisation.

