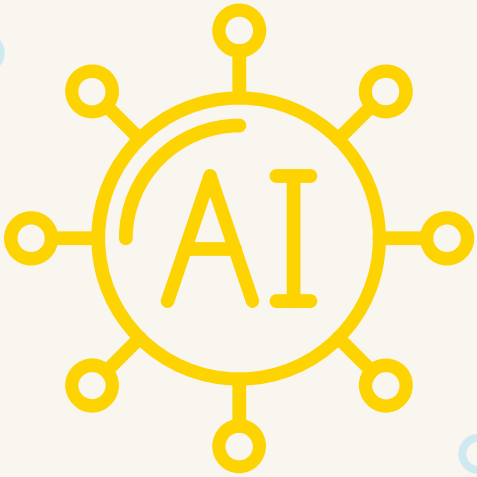
Children's Parliament

Exploring Children's Rights and A.I.

Stage 3 (Final Summary Report)

Children's Parliament | Scottish AI Alliance | The Alan Turing Institute

Contents



A Note on Language and Accessibility
Throughout this report we use "A.I." rather than the more conventional "AI" as an abbreviation for "Artificial Intelligence". This is a deliberate choice. It has come to our attention that the abbreviation "AI" is problematic for screen readers, which may be an issue for people using assistive technologies, and we are keen to make this report as accessible and inclusive as possible.

Cover image: Photograph credit Roberto Ricciuti.

Introduction

Between 2022 and 2025, Children's Parliament worked in partnership with the Scottish A.I. Alliance, The Alan Turing Institute and 140 children in Scotland to explore the relationship between Artificial Intelligence (A.I.) and children's human rights. This final report provides an overview of the aims and process of the project, along with reporting on the impact on key audiences and key learnings. The process and activities of the project have been recorded in the stage 1 and 2 summary reports and project films, which provide a detailed account of how a children's rights approach was utilised and how the children involved developed their key messages into calls to action[1], along with rich evidence of the children's views.

Few, if any, projects around the world have examined the impacts of A.I. on children's human rights in this depth, with children playing such a central role throughout. As such, though the project focused on the experience of children in Scotland, the learning and outputs have been internationally impactful and provide invaluable insights for A.I. developers and policymakers on children's views on how A.I. systems are made and used.

Over the course of three years, the project aimed:

- to explore the relationship between children's human rights and A.I.
- to explore and develop children's knowledge and understanding of A.I.
- to explore A.I. and its significance in children's lives today and implications for the future.
- to give children the opportunity to engage directly with real world A.I. applications.
- to identify and develop opportunities for children to share their views on A.I. and to shape the development and deployment of A.I.

[1] In Children's Parliament projects, children will often develop 'calls to action' – these are the changes which they want adult decision-makers to make in order to improve children's experiences and access to their children's human rights in relation to the project's focus.

A.I. presents specific challenges and opportunities for children. Children interact with A.I. in many ways, but these systems are rarely designed with their specific needs in mind. Children live in a world where A.I. can improve their lives and, at the same time, has the potential to become a negative influence. As ever greater attention and resources are devoted to the development of A.I. tools and their potential to drive productivity, it is vital that those using, developing and legislating A.I. pay equal attention to the risks posed by these technologies and such rapid change, especially for children.

This report demonstrates that children are best placed to articulate their own hopes and concerns on the impacts of A.I. on their lives and human rights. Calls to action developed by Members of Children's Parliament[2] articulate the changes that they feel are most important for adults to implement to uphold children's human rights. Through working with children, Children's Parliament and partners have developed a range of resources and materials to support adults to navigate the intersection of A.I. and children's human rights – whether as professionals working with A.I., or as educators working with children. The children quoted here were aged between 8 and 12 when they participated.

Image: Member of Children's Parliament artwork.

[2] All children who participate in a Children's Parliament project become 'Members of Children's Parliament'.

Foreword

Steph Wright, Head of the Scottish A.I. Alliance

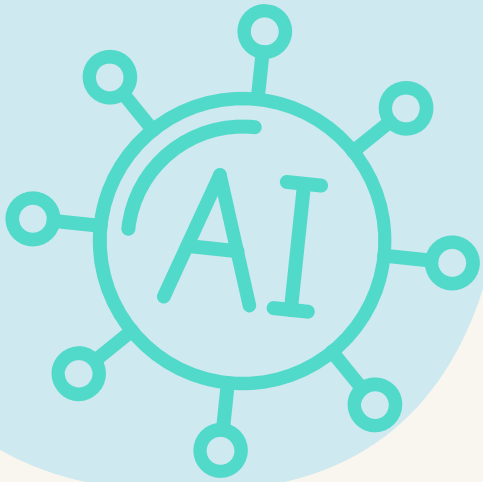
When Scotland's A.I. Strategy launched in March 2021, we were proud to make clear commitments to children by adopting UNICEF's policy guidance on A.I. for children. With the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) on its way into Scottish law, it felt only right to empower children to take part in shaping Scotland's A.I. future. The first conversations began that autumn, with the Public Policy team at The Alan Turing Institute, Dr Mhairi Aitken and Dr Morgan Briggs, who were then working on UNICEF's policy guidance 2.0, and soon after with Cathy McCulloch and Rona Blackwood at the Children's Parliament, Scotland's leading champions of children's rights. And the rest, as they say, is history.

Three years on, the project has gone further than we imagined. It has drawn attention from Finland, Australia and Costa Rica, and was highlighted by the Beneficial A.I. for Children Coalition at the 2025 Paris A.I. Action Summit. As I write, our teaching packs are being shared with schools across Scotland. None of this would have been possible without the passion of the Children's Parliament team (Gregory Metcalfe, Sandra Rabbow, Ranim Asfahani, Rona Blackwood, Frances Lingard and Sophia Georgescu), our colleagues at The Alan Turing Institute (Mhairi, Morgan, Dr Janice Wong and Dr Sabeehah Mohamed), and Calum McDonald from the Scottish A.I. Alliance.

Since 2022, the world of A.I. has transformed at an unprecedented pace, with large-scale generative models reshaping how we create, communicate, learn, and play. A.I. systems are now increasingly embedded in education platforms, social media, games, and even toys, exposing children to algorithmic influences from ever younger ages. While these technologies may offer positive opportunities, their negative impacts on children are now well evidenced, including risks to privacy, exposure to harmful or biased content, addictive design patterns, and the reinforcement of inequality and discrimination. As A.I. becomes more integrated into our everyday lives, it is more important than ever to pause and ensure that children's rights are not sidelined and that their voices are meaningfully heard. Protecting children and including their perspectives is central to building trustworthy, ethical, and inclusive A.I., the core vision of Scotland's 2021 strategy. This project has demonstrated that Scotland can lead the way in embedding children's rights and experiences into A.I. design, governance, and policy.

Children's Parliament dreams of a world where children grow up with love, happiness and understanding. I hope this project has brought us a step closer by ensuring that children's voices are not just heard but shape the A.I. future we are building together.

The Project



A journey through a children's rights approach

The Exploring Children's Rights and A.I. project spanned three main stages. During each stage, Children's Parliament worked with children and project partners through a mix of in-person workshops, online sessions, additional learning activities for teachers to support the classes' knowledge and understanding of A.I. and influencing events. The aims and activities of each stage are summarised below. The main investigation of the topic with children took place with 116 children from four classes in schools across Scotland. For a full account of the process and findings, please refer to the Exploring Children's Rights and A.I. Stage 1 and Stage 2 summary reports, along with videos showing the work and outputs, which can be found at childrensparliament.org.uk/exploring-childrens-rights-and-ai/. We worked with the same four classes of children aged between 8 and 12 (school years Primary 4 to Primary 7) across the two years in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Stirling and Shetland.

This project demonstrated a children's rights approach through:

Building the capacity and agency of children as rights-holders to claim their rights - we ensured children had a thorough knowledge of A.I. and children's rights, and experienced being respected, listened to, and taken seriously. Project planning and delivery was inclusive and child-friendly with fun, creative and easy to follow activities so children could explore the topic and share their thoughts confidently.

Supporting children to defend their rights and those of others - we supported children to gather the views of other children through class missions and surveys and to articulate their collated calls for change with decision makers[3].

[3] Decision makers' are adults with the power to affect change. This includes policy-makers, elected officials, and civil servants, but can apply more broadly.

Building the capacity of duty-bearers[4] to fulfil their obligations to children - we facilitated the direct engagement of children with decision makers at the A.I. Summits and sharing events; the dissemination of calls to action and resources ensured duty bearers had a clear understanding of children's views on A.I. in relation to their rights.

Recognising relationships based in human rights values are necessary for realising children's rights - we demonstrated the values of kindness, trust and respect for human dignity and encouraged participating children and adults to do the same.

Establishing an environment that supports children to participate and advocate effectively for themselves - we demonstrated in practice how children can meaningfully participate, disrupting adult-child hierarchies, and created an environment where children felt able to share their thoughts and ideas openly. We collaborated with artists throughout the process which provided children with new and hands-on experiences and empowered them to express their thoughts and ideas.

Enabling adults to benefit from the rich learning intrinsic to a children's rights approach - adults around the project - including parents and carers, teachers, project and A.I. partners, practitioners, policy leads, academics and decision makers - had the opportunity not only to see the calls to action and resulting resources but to experience the power of rights-based practice.

Image: Members of Children's Parliament at the Scottish A.I. Summit. (Credit: Roberto Ricciuti.)

[4] Duty-bearers' are individuals employed by public bodies with legal responsibilities to uphold the UNCRC.

Stage 1: Learning about A.I. and children's rights

After initial workshops to build Members of Children's Parliament's understanding of their children's human rights, Children's Parliament and The Alan Turing Institute facilitated a series of sessions to understand children's knowledge and feelings about A.I. The sessions explored the effect of A.I. on children's lives and gathered views on how children's human rights should be upheld in relation to decision-making about A.I. The complexity of A.I. as a subject – both from a technical perspective and as a social and political issue – became apparent as the project developed. Children's Parliament and The Alan Turing Institute teams decided then to focus more time on topic exploration, so the children gained a solid foundation of understanding. Considerable time and frequently revisiting concepts and definitions ensured the children gained the necessary knowledge and confidence to investigate the concepts of A.I.
This stage culminated with the first group of 'Investigators' presenting their work via a 'news report' in a plenary session at the Scottish A.I. Summit 2023 in Glasgow. In this session, the children explained the broad themes that had emerged from their exploration of A.I. and how it impacts children's lives and rights: fairness and bias, safety and security, A.I. and education, and the future of A.I.

Image: Stage 1 report available from childrensparliament.org.uk/our-work/exploring-childrens-rights-and-ai/

Image: Members of Children's Parliament at the Scottish A.I. Summit. (Credit: Roberto Ricciuti.)

[5] The 'Investigator' team consisted of three children from each of the four schools we worked with who worked with each other and the partner organisations to share learning and ideas across the country and explore issues in greater depth.

Stage 2: Exploring A.I. in the real world and identifying what needs to change

For stage 2 of the project, the children examined the themes that had emerged over the first nine months of the project in greater depth. Through discussion with the children, it was decided that the themes would be adapted slightly. 'The future of A.I.' was felt to be a 'catch-all' topic, which would be addressed across all themes. The volume of evidence gathered around the theme of A.I. and education, meanwhile, dictated that this area be further divided into two distinct themes: 'A.I. in education' (the use of A.I. within education), and 'learning about A.I.' (the need for, and content of, education about A.I.).

The project followed a similar structure in stage 2 as it had in stage 1 – delivery alternating between in-person workshops in schools, online sessions bringing the 'Investigator' children together to share findings and make decisions, and 'mission packs' of resources and activities for the children to complete in school with their teachers to support their understanding and gather further evidence of their views. Where all four locations followed the same programme in stage 1, in stage 2 each class explored an individual theme in depth. For this, Children's Parliament facilitated a series of two-day workshops in each school. The first day was spent with a local organisation working on a project involving A.I., ranging from the NHS developing A.I.-assisted diagnostic tools to a digital consultancy company in Shetland. The focus of the workshops, facilitated through creative activities, was for the children to develop their understanding of A.I. and its use in the real world and, as important, for the organisations to gain an understanding of the children's perspective on their uses of A.I. technologies. The second day of workshops was dedicated to working with a local artist to create artworks which reflected the children's thoughts and feelings.

Each school collaborated with a different artist and in a different medium. In Stirling, the artist Eye Suriyanon supported the children to create graphic scores and compose a soundscape using homemade instruments to reflect on their ideas on fairness and bias. In Glasgow, children worked with Zeo Fawcett to create rotoscoped animations on their work on safety and security. The children in Edinburgh choreographed a performance with the organisation Science Ceilidh to share their thoughts and feelings on A.I. in education. In Shetland, Jono Sandilands ran a printmaking workshop with the class, and the children created their own wooden placards to share their priorities for learning about A.I. The art was then exhibited at the Scottish A.I. Summit 2024, where the second group of Investigators presented their key issues to an audience of professionals, developers, and policy makers from across Scotland's public and private sectors.

"The creative activities provided a unique platform for [the children] to explore complex topics in a tangible and imaginative way. Through art, they were able to express their understanding and concerns about A.I. in ways that may have been more challenging through traditional discussions alone."

Jono Sandilands, artist, Shetland

Image: Member of Children's Parliament with Steph Wright, Head of Scottish A.I. Alliance.

“If you’re talking in front of people and you’re nervous, just think about something you like doing and that makes you calm. And remember that you’ll probably never see the people again!”

Member of Children’s Parliament, Edinburgh

Through their exhibition at the 2024 Scottish A.I. Summit, the children’s artwork supported conversations between adults and children in the space. This allowed the children to build on the work they had done in presenting their key messages and facilitated in depth conversations about the process and the children’s feelings about A.I.

Stage 2 closed with a series of sessions with the Investigators in which they developed the key issues that Members of Children’s Parliament had identified in relation to A.I. and children’s human rights into 12 calls to action organised by project themes (safety & security, fairness & bias, A.I. in education, and learning about A.I.). These calls to action reflect the changes that Members of Children’s Parliament consider necessary for A.I. to play a role in supporting children’s human rights in Scotland, with additional protections to prevent harms resulting from the development and use of these technologies.

A group of Investigators from both stages of the project shared the calls to action (overleaf) with key decision makers from the Scottish Government, academics and third sector partners at an event in June 2024.

“Never assume what kids want or need from tech and A.I. - ASK THEM!”

Written pledge, Scottish A.I. Summit 2024 attendee

Image: Stage 2 report available from childrensparliament.org.uk/our-work/exploring-childrens-rights-and-ai/

Stage 2: Calls to Action

Fairness and Bias

1. Children have the right to be included, to have a say, and to be listened to. Adults need to ask children for their views when they are making decisions about designing or using A.I. If it is only adults making A.I. systems, the A.I. systems won't understand children.

2. Lots of different people, including children, should be involved in A.I. development. To avoid bias, they need to take everybody's lives into account.

3. Adults must ensure that the use of A.I. does not have a negative impact on any children's rights, for example the right to appropriate and accurate information, or the right to protection from discrimination.

Safety and Security

1. There should be rules about how much and what data companies are allowed to gather about children. Companies should not collect or share data from children unless it is absolutely necessary.

2. Companies should not use children's data to train A.I. systems without children being asked.

3. Children feel A.I. can't always be trusted and isn't always safe –more child-friendly information about A.I. is needed, to help children make informed choices.

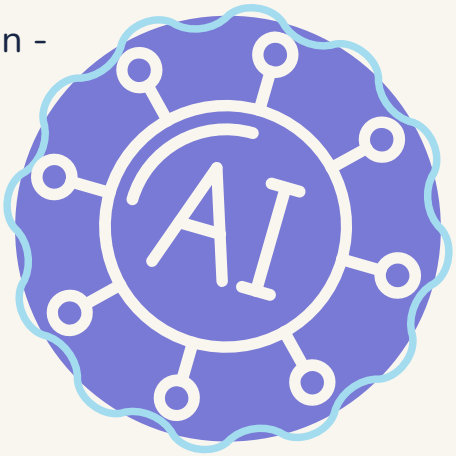
Images: Members of Children's Parliament artwork.

A.I. in Education

1. A.I. might not understand neurodivergent children and how they learn in different ways. Decision-makers must take this into account when deciding what A.I. systems can be used in schools. A.I. systems need to include and support all children and their human rights.

2. Teachers can use A.I. systems to help make learning fun - children learn better when it's fun. Teachers should be supported to use A.I. appropriately in class.

3. A.I. should support, not replace, teachers. Teachers understand children's feelings and children think this is really important.



Learning about A.I.

1. A.I. should be in the curriculum. A.I. will be a part of all children's lives, so they need to learn and understand what it means before they grow up.

2. More children should know about A.I. so they can understand what's happening when they use it. This will help to make sure children's rights are respected. The more children learn about A.I., the more they will know how to keep themselves safe.

3. Teachers should learn about A.I. and children's rights to support children's learning and help to keep them safe.

Image: Members of Children's Parliament at the Scottish A.I. Summit (Credit: Roberto Ricciuti.)

Stage 3: Helping make the change happen

With the first two stages of the project concluded and a clear picture of children's priorities on A.I. and children's human rights established, the final stage of the project focused on driving change. In summer 2024, further funding was secured from the Scottish A.I. Alliance to embed the calls to action and develop resources to support the professionals involved in this process. The Children's Parliament team developed two key outputs: an online learning resource for adults who work with A.I. called 'Why Children's Rights Matter in A.I.', and the 'Exploring Children's Rights and A.I. Teaching Pack' for educators to use with primary school children. Alongside this work, the team continued to share project findings and calls to action across Scotland and internationally to ensure that national decision makers were equipped with the knowledge they needed to take children's views into account.

The development of both resources was based directly on the views and experiences of Members of Children's Parliament.

Why children's rights matter in A.I.

Responding to the Members of Children's Parliament's calls to action for adults to consider children's views and experiences when they are developing A.I. systems and making decisions about their use, as well as for adults to learn about A.I. and children's rights, Children's Parliament created a learning resource for adults who work with A.I. The resource consists of five eLearning modules, hosted as a free resource on the Scottish A.I. Playbook – Scotland's hub for resources and guidance on A.I.

The resource serves two purposes. Firstly, it introduces children's human rights, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), and the responsibilities that adults in Scotland have to uphold children's rights following the incorporation of the UNCRC into Scots law.

Secondly, it uses the children's calls to action to teach adults about how A.I. can impact children's lives and rights, and their feelings in relation to this impact. The resource also contains a series of self-reflective exercises to support adults to consider changes they can make in their work to ensure that children's views are considered in decision-making on A.I. and that their rights are upheld.

Image: Member of Children's Parliament.

Children's rights and A.I. teaching pack

Members of Children's Parliament clearly stated in their calls to action that children should be taught about A.I., that it should be in the curriculum, and that education on A.I. would support children's rights to be upheld. Our two national surveys of children and school staff also found that children were not learning about A.I. in school, and that teachers were without the resources to facilitate this education. In the survey of school staff, the two resource types which respondents felt were most needed were 'activity packs/lesson plans for use in the classroom' and 'video explainers for children'.
In response, Children's Parliament developed a teaching pack consisting of six full lesson plans with resources and explanatory notes for educators to use with children aged 8 to 12, with upper primary school teachers the key audience.

The lesson plans and activities were developed from the sessions Children's Parliament ran in schools with children and teachers as part of the core delivery of the project. Throughout the project, meticulous workshop notes were kept allowing the Children's Parliament team to capture feedback from children and observations on the success of each activity. As a result, the team gathered a wealth of evidence to draw on to edit and improve the activities for the final resource. A group of teachers were also enlisted to provide feedback through an online survey on the finished draft resources; this feedback was then incorporated to ensure that the teaching pack was as useful for teachers as possible.

The survey results regarding high demand for video explainers for children on A.I. were backed anecdotally by the difficulty that Children's Parliament had in finding video content online which supported children's learning. In response, Children's Parliament worked with two classes in stage 3 of the project to create a series of animated videos to explain core A.I. and children's rights principles for other children. These videos have formed part of the teaching pack but are also a standalone resource freely available on the Children's Parliament YouTube channel. Through workshops, children developed their own scripts to explain the issues and worked with animator Katy Beveridge to create animations which illustrate their explanations.

They cover four topics:

What is A.I.? An explanation of what A.I. is and what it can do.

How does A.I. use data? A broad overview of how A.I. works and the risks of it producing unfair or inaccurate outputs, introducing fairness and bias as an issue.

A.I. in our lives. Examines where children might encounter A.I. in their daily lives and some pros and cons of its use.

Healthy, happy and safe with A.I. Introduces the UNCRC and explains why children's rights matter when thinking about A.I.

Learn more about our national survey and resulting resource pack at childrensparliament.org.uk/exploring-childrens-rights-and-ai/

The timeline

Key milestones

Summer 2022

The project begins.

September 2022 to March 2023 – Stage 1 delivery

Exploring and developing children's existing knowledge & supporting them to share their views through workshops, Investigator calls, and class missions.

March 2023 – Scottish A.I. Summit Residential 2023

Our Investigators' first opportunity to come together from across Scotland, build relationships, and share their views with key A.I. decision makers and influencers.

Summer 2023

Stage 1 report and film published.

Image: Members of Children's Parliament at the Scottish A.I. Summit Residential 2023.

August 2023 to March 2024 – Stage 2 delivery

In depth exploration of the themes that children had identified as most significant, centred around themed workshops with partner organisations.

March 2024 – Scottish A.I. Summit Residential 2024

Investigators share their key messages from the children's engagement with professionals and organisations working with A.I. across sectors.

Image: Members of Children's Parliament at the Scottish A.I. Summit Residential 2024.

April to June 2024 – Developing Calls to Action

Investigators work to turn their key messages into calls to action through focus on deliverable change to support children's rights. These calls to action are delivered directly to decision-makers in the Scottish Government and beyond by the children at a sharing event in June at the University of Edinburgh .

Summer 2024

Stage 2 report and film published; Stage 3 extension funding secured to act on children's calls to action around education for children and adults.

August 2024 to June 2025 – Resource Development

Children's Parliament creates 'Why Children's Rights Matter in A.I.' and 'Children's Rights and A.I. Teaching Pack'. Children in Edinburgh and Dundee work with Children's Parliament and animator Katy Beveridge to create a series of videos explaining core A.I. and children's rights concepts for children.

Image: Member of Children's Parliament thinks like an A.I. during a workshop.

May 2025 – Why Children's Rights Matter in A.I. resource launch

A series of eLearning modules for adults who work with A.I. introducing children's rights and why they are relevant when we think about A.I. use, development and legislation.

June 2025 – Children's Rights and A.I. Teaching Pack resource launch

A series of 6 lessons with complete lesson plans, resources, animated videos, and explanatory notes for teachers.

Image: Members of Children's Parliament. (Credit: Roberto Ricciuti.)

July to December 2025

Resource sharing – through communications, events, webinars and presentations – and final reporting.

Making an impact

The project in numbers

Children

140 children aged 8-12 participated in a programme of workshops; 140 families informed about the work through newsletters and information sessions.

25 children acted as Investigators – they analysed their peers' contributions, developed calls to action, and spoke publicly about children's views.

157 children learnt about project outputs through one-off in-person events and workshops.

1,269 children shared their views on A.I. and education through our first national survey.

9,442 views* of project films created by children for children on children's rights.

Project partners

9 organisations - Children's Parliament, Scottish A.I. Alliance, The Alan Turing Institute, the University of Edinburgh's Centre for Research in Digital Education, Digital Skills Education, West of Scotland Innovation Hub (NHS GGC & the University of Glasgow), Mesomorphic, JHP Visuals, Science Ceilidh.

5 schools - in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Shetland, Stirling and Dundee.

4 freelancers - Zeo Fawcett, Eye Suriyanon, Jono Sandilands, Katy Beveridge.

76 professionals and academics from other organisations took park in the project, learning about the children's views and using a children's rights approach - Including researchers, filmmakers, teachers, school leaders, project managers, artists, doctors, computer scientists, children's rights practitioners, ethicists, and campaigners.

*Viewing figures as of 17th February 2026

Professionals and decision makers

~2,500 adults learnt about the children's views and were charged with their calls to action through presentations, discussions and workshops by Members of Children's Parliament or Children's Parliament staff at 28 different events

- Audiences included representatives of the education, health, and social care sectors, government ministers, the energy sector, third sector organisations, private tech companies, civil servants, and community groups.

507 members of school staff from across Scotland shared their views on A.I. and education through our second national survey.

54 professionals and academics met with Children's Parliament team members to learn about the project and how it could inform their own work

- Including A.I. developers, creative practitioners, researchers, youth workers, policymakers, neuroscientists, postgraduate students, and communications professionals.

4,722 downloads of the Exploring Children's Rights and A.I. Teaching Pack resources in the first six months since publication

812 the number of times the Why Children's Rights Matter in A.I. resource has been accessed in its first six months from June to December 2025.

4,519 views* of project films showcasing the process, key messages and calls to action.

*Viewing figures as of 17th February 2026

Impact on children

"I think that children should have a say about it because everyone has opinions that need to be heard no matter the age group."

Member of Children's Parliament, Shetland

"I feel like the sun because being an Investigator for the year was so good."

Member of Children's Parliament, Glasgow

"[A special memory was] meeting everyone when they first came and not knowing anyone but then becoming friends."

Member of Children's Parliament, Stirling

A key aim was that Members of Children's Parliament gain skills, confidence, and experience accessing their participatory rights and, just as important, have fun!

"He had the most fantastic time on the residential and came back full of ideas and increased self-confidence as a result of the experience."

"It has been fantastic as a parent to watch her confidence and communication skills grow throughout the year."

"He loved being at the residential and enjoyed meeting and spending time with all the other children and yourselves. The A.I. summit sounds like it's been quite an experience for them all - they will all have gained so much confidence from being part of it, and from feeling valued and heard."

Feedback from parents & carers of the children

Throughout the project, Members of Children's Parliament reported and demonstrated finding the experience hugely enjoyable, and their growth in confidence and understanding of both their human rights and A.I. was notable. The experience was punctuated by many firsts for the children: from a first train journey, visiting (or leaving) a major city, or trying passionfruit, to first time speaking on a public stage or having their views heard by politicians. The project itself was also a first internationally; never before had children been given a national platform to share their views on the impact of A.I. on children's human rights.

"It was such an adventure for the children - to fly to Glasgow, meet the children from 4 other schools, ... stay overnight in a lovely hostel and to finally make presentations to a large audience at the A.I. Summit."

School newsletter, Shetland

"This project has given my class a real sense of being heard and views being taken seriously."

Participating class teacher, Edinburgh

A.I. is a complex subject both technically and ethically. As described in the project's Stage 1 Summary Report, through exploring the subject in a fun, creative and age-appropriate way, Children's Parliament was successful in equipping the children with the knowledge and understanding they needed to express their views on A.I. and how it affects their lives. The success of this process can be seen in Members of Children's Parliament's capacity to describe not only the issues which A.I. poses for children, but also possible solutions.

"Children's rights matter in A.I. because they should be respected and valued and children should have a say in what happens with A.I."

"Children should have complete guidance and child friendly information on an A.I. system."

"It should be programmed by a diverse group of people who have an understanding of children's rights and how to respect them."

"The A.I. creators should make A.I. systems that are safe and age appropriate."

Members of Children's Parliament, Edinburgh

Image: Members of Children's Parliament collaborate.

Impact of our teaching pack

Having created innovative activities and resources through the project partnerships to support children's understanding of A.I. and their human rights, Children's Parliament was able to adapt these resources for wider use in the Children's Rights and A.I. Teaching Pack.

Evidence suggests that the Children's Rights and A.I. Teaching Pack has been well received by teachers, who view the resources as a considered and well-designed entry into the topic.

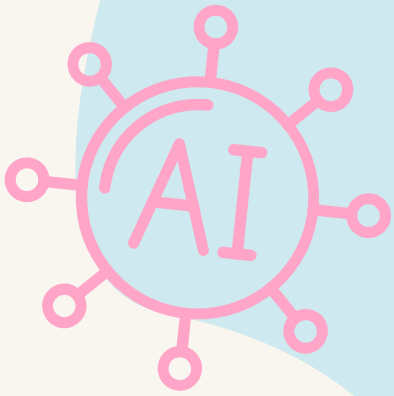
"The lesson was enjoyable and the children had lots to say. The children have heard the word A.I. lots and can talk about ChatGPT etc., but they actually have very little knowledge of its purpose and how it works. Going through the definitions was particularly useful and allowed for lots of in-depth chat. Charlie's story was effective in engaging them because a lot of them could see themselves in the story, and day-to-day would use a lot of the A.I. Charlie was using without even realising it was A.I."

Teacher, Edinburgh

The teaching pack was launched and disseminated across Scotland in time for the 2025-26 school year. While at the time of writing (January 2026) it is not yet possible to report on the lasting influence in terms of educational outcomes for children across Scotland, there is plenty to suggest they are having an immediate impact. The numerous requests for CPD inputs for teachers on the resource pack, sheer number of times the resources themselves have been accessed, and feedback gathered from teachers themselves all suggest that the teaching pack is a much-needed resource and that it is helping to build confidence for teachers and knowledge and understanding for children.

Image: Members of Children's Parliament engage in a workshop activity.

Impact on policy and practice



"The Scottish Government fully supports the calls to action from the A.I. Alliance/Children's Parliament and looks forward to working with them and the wider sector as the role of A.I. in education develops."

Corine van der Schans, A.I. Policy & Delivery, Scottish Government

Through ongoing work to ensure the children's calls to action are headed by decision-makers, significant progress has been seen in some policy areas nationally. The project has had a direct influence on a range of improvements in the Scottish education system in particular.

"As technology advances at an unprecedented pace, it is essential that we prioritise the rights of children in decisions that are taken about the use of A.I. in education. Not only does the Children's Parliament research offer a unique understanding of the views and expectations of children and young people, the resources that have been developed for Scotland's teachers will also help to foster meaningful dialogue on this important area between children, young people and their teachers.

In terms of progress against the children and young people's Calls to Action, work continues to ensure that learning about A.I. is included within Scotland's curriculum. The ongoing Curriculum Improvement Cycle, led by Education Scotland, is considering the skills, knowledge and understanding that children and young people will be required to develop, including in relation to A.I. and how this should be managed within an updated curriculum."

Clare Hicks, Director for Education Reform, Scottish Government

In August 2024, the Children's Parliament team was invited to join a working group with colleagues from the University of Edinburgh, SQA, Education Scotland and the Scottish Government to develop a curriculum framework for A.I. in Scottish schools. Children's Parliament shared the children's calls to action and contextualised with learning from across the project to ensure policymakers understood children's views of the impacts of A.I. on their rights and education. As a direct result, the finished framework – which sits at the core of trails.scot Teach A.I. Literacy Handbook – has children's rights as a foundational principle.

"We were very much influenced by [Children's Parliament's] work when we did the curriculum draft. Particularly Sandra [Project Officer, Sandra Rabbow], who campaigned for the children's rights aspect to be prominent, which is why it is now at the very centre of it."

Professor Judy Robertson, Centre for Research in Digital Education, University of Edinburgh

Similarly, the Scottish Government's Curriculum and Qualifications Division are in the final stages of publishing a Guidelines and Guardrails document for teachers on the use of A.I. in education. The guidance is explicitly informed by the views of the children in the project. Key themes in the guidance resonate with the issues Members of Children's Parliament felt were critical, such as safety, security, fairness, and bias. We were pleased to see the importance of children's views being considered in the teaching of A.I. and that some of the language was directly influenced by the children's work, for example, "A.I. should support not replace human-centred teaching". The guidance will help encourage quality, ethical and rights-based A.I. education.

The views of children have been platformed across the public, third and academic sectors. For example, the criticality of including children's views in decision-making about A.I. was highlighted through the Edinburgh Futures Institute's Report on New Perspectives on A.I. Futures (2023); and the resources and children's calls to action were presented to the Scottish Parliament's Cross-Party Group on Children and Young People to ensure visibility across the political spectrum.

We have seen significant interest and enthusiasm for the resources produced for the primary education sector. Feedback from a showcase of the resources in September 2025 demonstrated the need for resources which support children to navigate A.I. technologies and the effects of their use.

"Timely, relevant and useful."

"Children have never lived in a word where A.I. doesn't exist, so we have to make sure that they have the critical literacy to engage with A.I. responsibly."

"So helpful. I'm excited to use them in the classroom."

"I will definitely be sharing these resources with fellow PGDE students."

"Amazing wealth of high-quality resources and the activities were very insightful."

Various teachers & education professionals, Edinburgh & online (Scotland-wide)

The project's two educational resources form the central offering on the Scottish A.I. Alliance's website for anyone in Scotland who wishes to learn more about the impact of A.I. on children. As Scotland's main source for tailored guidance, training and resources, the positioning here ensures that the children's views will continue to be heard by anyone looking to make informed decisions about A.I. use and development in Scotland. The Scottish A.I. Alliance have also ensured that both have been disseminated widely (and to audiences normally beyond the reach of third sector organisations) by promoting them at national and international A.I. events, conferences, and presentations. Capacity building formed a core part of the partnership work throughout the project. Through our children's human rights approach, Children's Parliament was able to support the practice development of delivery partners to ensure a lasting impact. This has resulted in direct improvements within schools and in the participatory practice of other partner organisations.

"I was impressed by the Children's Parliament's approach to running workshops. This has certainly made me think more creatively about how we approach workshops with learners in the university and how to set up a creative and relaxed environment."

Kate Farrell, Data Education in Schools

"We are now a Gold Rights Respecting School. The project fed into our evidence for this and the children spoke about it when the assessors came to visit."

Headteacher, Edinburgh

"It is simple to write down "rights-based approach" and "A.I. should be inclusive" in bold black ink on policy papers. It is much harder to do the work that makes that happen. The Children's Parliament team and the Members of Children's Parliament make it look easy."

Calum McDonald, Engagement & Participation Manager, Scottish A.I. Alliance

Testimonials: The ongoing impact of our partnership with the West of Scotland Innovation Hub

During stage 2, Children's Parliament facilitated workshops with children in a village near Stirling with doctors and researchers from the West of Scotland Innovation Hub – a collaboration between NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde and the University of Glasgow. This partnership has proved highly influential in steering further work carried out by the Hub. Both their approach to participatory work with children and the scope of ongoing research has changed as a result of Children's Parliament's effective demonstration of a children's rights approach and the views shared by the children themselves, respectively.

Image: Members of Children's Parliament work together to problem solve.

"Since gathering the feedback from our workshop, we have been refining our research directions, especially in Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) activities. In 2025, our team has successfully secured two research fundings from The R S Macdonald Charitable Trust and Epilepsy Research Institute UK to support our research on video-based infant movement analysis for tracking Neurodevelopment and detecting Infantile Epileptic Spasms.

Participants' views on 'Trust in A.I.' in clinical applications motivated us to broaden our PPI activities to organise more workshops to engage with patients and families, especially with those less advantaged, who will likely benefit from the more accessible healthcare support through technology.

Their concerns about the limitations of A.I. and the wider data-driven technology further reinforced our initial ideas on introducing Human-in-the-loop (HITL) machine learning in our research to improve the robustness of our solutions. We are also exploring the routes for clinical validation to support the downstream development of our research in the longer term."

Dr Edmond Ho, Associate Professor,
School of Computing Science,
University of Glasgow

“Following the sessions with the Children's Parliament, we have been motivated to include the views and incorporate the input of children and young people in our research more substantially. Initially we were planning to focus solely on including developing a PPIE [Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement] group of children in our Paediatric Neurosciences Research, which we have progressed; however, we were keen to share our experiences and replicate this across different research groups in the Children's Hospital in Glasgow. We are now working together with research colleagues in the Clinical Research Facility at the Royal Hospital for Children in Glasgow, clinicians in Royal Hospital for Children and HI Scotland to develop a joint Patient & Public Involvement Group specifically focusing on recruiting children and young people, and their parent/carers, across Glasgow and the West of Scotland. Our experience with the Children's Parliament group has allowed us to take the views from the children and ensure we are being inclusive in our recruitment of our PPIE Group (still to be formally named) whilst working with local schools and community groups to do so.

The work with Children's Parliament has also inspired our plans for our PPIE workshops involving children and young people, using themes from throughout the Children's Parliament project including role play and more appropriate language explaining our work and the definition of research.

A large project we are working from includes A.I. / Machine Learning development, and the Children's Parliament project has been invaluable to us when designing the relevant PPIE groups to support our work, specifically involving children and young people, as well as advising us on the progression of our project and relevant research proposals for future projects.

Separately, we have another epilepsy-related project commenced earlier this year and hosted a series of workshops alongside a company to develop a research animation to inform children and families of our study. Working with yourselves really helped me personally with how I engaged with the children and young people as part of developing this animation.”

Isla Birnie, Research & Learning Manager, School of Health & Wellbeing, University of Glasgow

Impact internationally

> “Excellent resource by the folks at Children’s Parliament, Scottish A.I. Alliance and The Alan Turing Institute … If only every country had the same focus as Scotland on child-centred A.I.”

Steven Vosloo, Digital Foresight and Policy Specialist, UNICEF

This project is without precedent around the world: no other work to date has looked at A.I. through the lens of children’s rights in this depth with children playing such a central role. As such, there has been considerable international interest in the project. The project team has been in contact with researchers from across the UK and Europe and as far away as Costa Rica and Australia who have expressed interest in learning about both the children’s views and how a children’s human rights approach was applied. Several have inquired about adapting the resources produced to other national contexts. The children’s calls to action were also taken to the A.I. Action Summit in Paris in February 2025, where global leaders met to discuss A.I. governance, and UNICEF have referenced the project as a rare example of good practice globally for children’s participatory rights in relation to A.I.[6]

Case study: Digital Child

In May 2024, Distinguished Professor Susan Danby and Lisa Walker, the Director and Head of Operations of Australia’s Digital Child research centre respectively, visited Children’s Parliament to hear about the project. Digital Child (formerly known as The Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for the Digital Child) is a collaboration between six Australian universities which supports research dedicated to creating positive digital childhoods for all Australian children. This initial meeting was a catalyst for an ongoing collaboration between Children’s Parliament and Digital Child and has meant that Children’s Parliament’s approach and the views of Members of Children’s Parliament have significantly influenced the approach and

[6] Skills for an A.I. world: Where we stand today | Office of Strategy and Evidence Innocenti UNICEF, 2026

scope of research in Australia.
In 2026, Digital Child is carrying out research with children for the project Children's engagement with Artificial Intelligence: A Digital Child Parliament. This project aims to replicate the work done in Scotland through Exploring Children's Rights and A.I., uses resources produced by Children's Parliament, and was planned with Children's Parliament's Project Lead Gregory Metcalfe as a consultant for the work. Gregory attended the Digital Child Annual Meeting at the University of Wollongong, NSW, in August 2025 to deliver a keynote speech and take part in a panel session on the project findings and Children's Parliament's children's rights approach, as well as mentoring PhD and early career research students on how they can use learning from the project to inform their own work.

Image:
Credit: Roberto Ricciuti.

Testimonial: The influence of Children's Parliament's work on research at Australia's Digital Child

"Over the course of two days at the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) node, Gregory Metcalfe collaborated closely with researchers involved in the Innovative and Strategic Fund project at the ARC Centre of Excellence for the Digital Child. His contribution was instrumental in shaping the direction and pace of the project, particularly in relation to engaging young children in developing A.I.-related knowledge and understandings.

Gregory provided valuable insights into designing effective workshops tailored for young children, emphasising approaches that foster curiosity and comprehension of A.I. concepts. His guidance extended to methodological considerations, helping the team refine their strategies for both fieldwork and analysis.

A key outcome of his involvement was a collective decision to accelerate the project timeline. With Gregory's input, the team gained clarity on the roles of individual members, the structure of field data collection, and the analytic processes required. This has positioned the project to move forward with greater confidence and cohesion."

Distinguished Professor Susan Danby, Centre Director, Digital Child, Queensland University of Technology

What still needs to change

Members of Children's Parliament highlighted that while children as a whole are missing from conversations about how A.I. could and should be used to benefit all, it is important also to avoid treating children as if they are all the same. In their calls to action, they identified neurodiversity as one such difference that would require close attention to ensure that the uptake of A.I. technologies was fair, and throughout the project they raised many other concerns and queries relating to whether A.I. systems can account for individual differences. A limitation of the project itself is that all workshops were carried out in mainstream education settings. Further work is needed to fully understand the rights implications for children who are not in mainstream school settings. This should include children who are educated in specialist school settings, residential schools, educated at home and children who are not regularly attending school.

In the original aims of this project was an ambition to ensure mechanisms were in place for children's ongoing engagement in A.I. policy and practice development. As the project revealed significant gaps in educational materials, a decision was made to focus the final phase of the project on the development of quality learning resources with a foundation in children's human rights.

As such, the development of ongoing engagement mechanisms remains an area for further development and should be treated as a priority. This project has succeeded in raising awareness of the need to consider children's views, as evidenced by the many and frequent requests made to Children's Parliament to share learning from the children across the latter two stages of the project. Many of these requests came from organisations and researchers who were themselves embarking on the early stages of projects focussed on the intersection of A.I. technologies, children, and children's human rights.

Image: Members of Children's Parliament engage in a workshop activity.

Final word

Image: Credit: Roberto Ricciuti.

The commitment made by the Scottish Government to uphold children's human rights through Scotland's A.I. Strategy is a world-leading approach which should be celebrated. Combined with Scotland's incorporation of the UNCRC into Scots Law, there is a clear opportunity to ensure that Scotland gets it right when it comes to ensuring that the development and use of A.I. benefits children. But there is still much to be done.

The work that Members of Children's Parliament have done over three years provides a wealth of evidence on what children think and feel about A.I. and its impacts. By using this evidence and building on the work already done through the project, Scotland can ensure that the commitment to adopting UNICEF's policy guidance on A.I. for children set out in the A.I. Strategy is successfully met.

The challenge of how to operationalise the project's learnings from its engagement with the children remain.

Ensuring that children's voices are meaningfully represented in the A.I. discourse mirrors a wider structural challenge in A.I. governance: moving beyond stated commitments to participation toward sustained, influential engagement with affected communities. Throughout the programme, it became clear that while the importance of hearing from children was widely acknowledged, sustained and embedded mechanisms eluded us.

For children in particular, power imbalances, adult-centric decision-making, and a reluctance to commit to formal pathways into policy and design processes meant that their insights and influence struggle to impact outcomes in a durable way. We need to move away from intention to action. Explicit institutional ownership is needed, as is long-term resourcing, for a permanent, rights-based mechanism that embeds children's voices within existing policy, regulatory, and oversight structure.

"I don't think [governments are] taking this seriously enough because even our little minds can understand this. And we know [what] could really happen. And we just want to prevent that."

Member of Children's Parliament, Shetland

“Children should have a say in how and what they learn about A.I. because the future will be A.I.”

Children's Parliament | Scottish AI Alliance | The Alan Turing Institute

www.childrensparliament.org.uk