

How does your garden grow?



A report for children on a consultation for
the Scottish Government
on the Children and Young People Bill

Children's Parliament
October 2012

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In this report we use the drawings and things children said.

Front cover illustration by Geordie.

At the top of the pages **messenger bees** carry all the things children want adults to do.

At the bottom of the page the **snails and their trails** tell us about things that can get in the way of children being healthy, happy and safe.

About this consultation

A consultation is when someone (like the Scottish Government) has an idea and they want to ask people what they think about it.

The Scottish Government wants to make Scotland the best place to grow up. They are planning to make a new law that will help all children in Scotland to get their rights and be healthy, happy and safe. As a way of checking what people think about their ideas, the Scottish Government had a consultation on their plan. **This plan is called the Children and Young People Bill.**

It was important that children take part in the consultation so the Scottish Government asked Children's Parliament to help. Our job was to find out what children think needs to happen in Scotland to make children's lives the best that they can be. As a way of thinking about this, we imagined Scotland as a big, beautiful garden and each and every child as a unique and special plant, growing in that garden.

We worked together to think about what children need to grow, how children need to be cared for and about the important role adults have in children's lives. We also talked about the special help and support that some children and families might need.

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We want to say a BIG thank you to all the children who took part in our workshops. Many thanks also go to the staff in the schools we visited. We met with 107 children aged between 9 and 12 years old. Most children were able to attend 2 full days of workshops so that we had the time to talk and think about children's lives and adults who help them.

The workshops took place in these places:

Angus: Muirfield Primary School, Arbroath

Edinburgh: Leith Primary School

Glasgow: Glendale Primary School and Cartvale Secondary School

Fife: Benarty Primary School, Lochore

Stirling: Braehead Primary School, Stirling

West Lothian: Harriesmuir Primary School, Livingston

What children need

The Scottish Government wants to know more about children's **wellbeing**. To help us talk about what wellbeing means to children we thought about Scotland as a garden and we used our 'Grow Well Chart'. On it we recorded what children thought babies, toddlers, primary school age children and teenagers need to be **healthy, happy** and **safe**. Everyone agreed that these were important things for the Government to think about when they make new laws about children.

To be **healthy BABIES** need

- Loving parents
- Mothers care and cuddles
- Breast milk
- Books and toys
- Feeding and changing
- Comfy place to sleep
- Protection and care
- Attention
- Playing
- Fresh air.

To be **happy BABIES** need

- Attention
- Milk and food
- Happy family
- To feel comfy
- Toys
- Laughter
- People around you
- Reading stories and singing songs
- To explore with their parents
- Brothers and sisters to play with
- To be warm.

To be **safe BABIES** need

- A clean environment – someone to tidy up
- No violence
- Family
- To be safe with things like reings, doors on stairs and medicines out of reach
- Cuddles and reassuring words
- Comfort
- Understanding
- To be warm and cosy
- People nearby and never to be left on their own
- Love.



Children are seeds; let them grow in a healthy, happy and safe environment.

To be healthy TODDLERS need

- Exercise
- Family
- Love
- Food – 5 a day
- Activities
- Songs and games
- Nursery
- Parks
- Friends
- Educational books
- To brush their teeth
- A clean environment
- Freedom to play
- No-one smoking around you.

To be happy TODDLERS need

- Even more attention
- Good nursery staff
- Patience
- Silly people and tickles
- Being healthy to be happy
- Being out and about
- Medicine
- Fun learning
- Stories
- Pets
- Music and instruments
- To be talked to
- Lullabies
- Grandparents
- Parks, Playing and Playgroup
- To learn counting.

To be safe TODDLERS need

- A hand to hold
- People to help
- Be supervised
- Regular health check-ups
- Kisses and cuddles
- To be in a safe environment
- No violence and no teasing.

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Feeling lonely, left out and isolate and like no one cares.



Give kids places to have *fun*, be active and be safe.

To be **healthy PRIMARY SCHOOL AGE** children need

- Parents
- Exercise and sports
- Healthy food, eating and drinking – 5 a day
- 3 square meals
- Experimenting with new things
- Walking and biking to school
- Water and free fruit and milk at school
- More playtimes
- After school clubs
- Hygiene
- Breakfast clubs
- Sleep.

To be **happy PRIMARY SCHOOL AGE** children need

- Love everywhere
- Fun
- Freedom
- Good home life
- Support from a caring adult
- To see their Dad
- Learn to listen
- School – get educated
- Good teachers
- Lots of social skills
- Girlfriends and boyfriends
- Being outdoors
- Being out and about
- Having choices
- Friends
- To be safe on line.

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To be **safe PRIMARY SCHOOL AGE** children need

- To be taught self-safety
- Family – parents who know how to look after you
- Road and bike safety
- Teachers looking out for you
- Listening
- Protection from parents and carers
- Friends
- Don't talk to strangers
- Mobile phone safety
- To be safe on line and on social networks.



People saying nasty stuff about me or making fun of my name, where I am from, my colour, what I like.



Everyone should stop smoking and drinking and taking drugs.

To be healthy TEENAGERS need

- Information about smoking, drugs and alcohol and no smoking, no drinking, no drugs
- Support for peer pressure
- More emotional support
- Advice about healthy eating
- High school
- Hygiene and learn how to take care of your body
- Choose friends carefully
- Sleep
- Food
- Take responsibility
- Activities
- Help with Boy/Girl issues.

To be happy TEENAGERS need

- Space
- Love from your parents
- Parents not arguing
- Friends (choose your friends carefully)
- Advice
- Education
- Phones/Technology
- Freedom and responsibility
- Independence
- Inspiration
- Plenty of fun and enjoyment.

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To be safe TEENAGERS need

- Family and keeping in touch
- Avoid peer pressure on smoking, drugs and alcohol
- Parental advice
- No bullying
- Good places to hang out – be careful where you go
- Protection
- Protect your privacy
- To be trusted by your parents
- Be safe on line
- Phone to keep in touch
- Be sensible
- Condoms
- No gangs no drugs and no alcohol.



Being swore at or being slapped by your mum or dad.

About rights

As children discussed the needs listed on The Grow Well Chart we talked about the idea of rights. All the children who took part were given a leaflet about the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child**.

In this consultation, as in other consultations done by Children's Parliament, the children felt strongly that all children need to learn more about their rights. They said that the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child should be like a law so that adults pay attention to it.

"Make it in the law that adults have to listen to children".

"Enforce children's rights instead of just letting it be optional to people".

Children want the Scottish Government to understand more about children's lives and what it means for them to have their rights. They said that the Scottish Government needs to:

- Know what children's rights are and know the UNCRC.
- Make sure that families have enough money, food and a home so that they can look after their children.
- Make sure parents fully understand children's rights and act on them.
- Stop child poverty for children to have their rights.
- Stop children being bullied. Children should be safe wherever they are.
- Keep children healthy; they need to play, to get involved in sports and protected from drugs and alcohol.
- Make sure the NHS is good for children.
- Try their hardest to reduce pollution.
- Make sure that children in Scotland are treated well and stop people stereotyping all children and young people as trouble.
- Make sure that children and young people learn about and understand politics.

Children also told us that the Government needs to talk to parents and other adults about children's rights, so that everyone can work together for children.

"The politicians should have a discussion to the parent and decide what's better and then look after you and protect you forever and discuss children's rights".

Things that get in the way of being healthy, happy and safe

At one point, as children were drawing, talking and writing in their workshop 'gardens', along came trouble ... some pesky snails! Just as there are sometimes problems for plants growing in a garden, there can be problems for growing children too. With this in mind children used snail models and their silvery ribbon trails to record all the things they could think of that would get in the way of them growing well. These are things children worry about a lot.

Children don't like shouting and violence

Children asked questions about whether or not it is okay for an adult to hit a child and some of them talked about these things happening:

"Sometimes my mum throws my dad out the house 'cos he hits me and my wee brother".

"My stepdad nearly broke my arm".

"My mum needs help with being angry and smacking me on the bum or the face. Everyone shouts at me".

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Children worry that their family does not have enough money to buy what they need

Children said it is sometimes difficult for their family to buy enough food, to get clothes for children and they worry that their family cannot pay the rent and the household bills.

"My mum gives us our tea but sometimes she doesn't have enough money for tea".

"My mum would always buy me or my brother's clothes first; she always has to get mine before hers. She's a single mum because my dad left".

"Families need money so that they can feed their families and have somewhere to live".

Children worry about their parents splitting up

If that does happen, some children lose contact with their Dad. Sometimes children know and understand why things happen, but sometimes nobody explains.

"I don't see my dad 'cos he's in jail".



Responsible adults and parents beside you.

"I want to see my dad more but my mum won't let me. I don't know why".

"When I'm at my pal's house me and my pal pretend we're going up the park but we sneak away to my dad's work so's I can see him. Nobody knows".

Children want adults to listen to them

They think that when adults don't listen to them it is because :

- Adults think children don't understand.
- Some adults can be stubborn but they do have to listen.
- They think they know what's right.
- If you go to them too much, they stop listening.
- Maybe they get bored. If children get into trouble all of the time people might stop listening to them.
- Maybe they don't want children involved in what they are talking about.
- They don't realise children have good ideas or they think the children won't understand.
- They think that if they were trying to tell the child something they didn't like then the child might make a big fuss and they think it'll be a lot easier if adults just decide.
- Some adults don't want children to know what's happening.

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After reviewing all the troubles on the snail trails everyone agreed that for all children to grow well they need to have the right to a loving and caring family, to affection and attention, to friends, to freedom and play, to learn, to a clean environment and to a home and community free from alcohol and violence.



Angry parents and parents having arguments and fights in front of children.

Parents and carers

"Tell your children a lot that they are awesome and cool".

In the workshops children created a portrait of an important person who looks after them or cares about them. Because we were thinking of Scotland as a garden, we talked about adults being the "gardeners" who look after children and help them to grow. For most children their gardener is a parent or carer.

No matter who was chosen as their gardener children agreed on what was important for those adults to understand about how to do the best job of caring for children. While some children live with their mum and/or their dad, others live with another member of their family, or are cared for by foster carers. But, no matter where a child lives, every child needs someone who:

- Cares about how you feel.
- Gives them healthy foods and some treats sometimes.
- Is loving, kind and caring, responsible, have a nice place to stay, give you nice clothes and keep you clean, take you out places, is friendly and nice.
- Treats their children like they would like to be treated themselves.
- Let's children have their say.
- Teaches them about caring for each other, helps children think about what everyone wants and listens to everyone.
- Can cope without shouting all the time.
- Children can trust and you can talk to if you feel unsafe or worried.
- Will be there when you get home.
- Plays games.
- Takes care of them, gives you food to eat and doesn't starve or leave you thirsty.
- Loves them and cares about them and can help them settle down and put them to bed.
- Misses them.
- Reassures you about your family being okay like if someone is in hospital.
- Tries to be happy.
- Will stay interested in you.



Every child should have an adult to cosy up with.

Children were aware that sometimes parents and carers may have their own worries or problems and they may need help with things too. Children suggested that the Government, and other people who help children and families, might need to help parents and carers with these things:

- Money, paying bills and rent.
- Keeping the house clean.
- Transport.
- Being happy with a new partner.
- Being a parent for the first time and know how to bring up a baby.
- If the child is unwell or they need support if they are unwell.
- Help to stop drinking.
- A helping hand to be responsible.
- How to talk to children, respect them and listen to them.
- Knowing when there is something wrong with their child but their child isn't telling them, like when a child can't stop crying.
- Someone to come and check-up on them to make sure that everyone is doing well. They need to learn how to do a good job, like getting tips on what to do right.
- Knowing what's right and wrong and if they do something bad helping them understand they can't do that.

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When I get really angry and can't keep control and feel like I have to fight back.

People who help: the idea of the Named Person

Thinking about the children growing and blooming in our garden with the help of their gardeners, we moved on to talking about all the adults who do jobs to help and support children and their families. Children made a list that included people who do jobs like: teacher, social worker, after-school club worker, nurse, nursery teacher, key worker, doctor, police officer, psychologist and sports coach.

We talked about the Scottish Government's idea that every child should have a **Named Person**, who can know a child and provide any help or information a child or their family might need. In our garden project we thought about this person as the **Head Gardener**.

We asked children what they might need a Head Gardener to do for them and they said:

- They need to be someone to go to – for children and parents.
- It would have to be someone you know and they would have to know each child.
- They would put you first.
- They act quickly if you are in danger.
- They try to fix what is happening.
- They talk to me to find out if I am okay or have a worry, help you and care about you.
- They visit where every child lives and talk to adults too.
- They would be nice and not shouty; you can talk to them and they make you feel good about yourself.
- They would protect you and make you happy and don't let you be in trouble.
- They would check on you – check with you and with people who work with children.
- They would side with you which would be good.
- They would make sure children are clean and check you've got a happy environment.
- They would keep an eye on developing skills.
- They watch over children to make sure that they are happy, healthy and safe and get all their needs.
- They could help people if they get stuck.
- They would stop bullies, stop violence and stop us being exposed to drink.
- They would help you to learn to take care of yourself.
- They would have to be nice and kind and not scary.
- They would fight for your rights.



Adults should treat children fairly.

We also asked children what they thought might be difficult about doing the job of a Head Gardener and they said:

- To listen, communicate, have the time, all at the one time.
- It would be a hard job to do if you don't learn about the child.
- There is no point in picking someone you barely see.
- You need to give guidance but try hard not to be bossy.
- They might have other responsibilities and other things to do.
- Finding out what children need and making sure they get resources.
- It would need a lot of organisation.
- There would be arguments and fights, so dealing with people who get upset or angry.
- You would find out private things about the family.
- Adults might refuse to talk to them about the children.
- Adults might refuse to get the help they need.
- You have to keep up with all the technology.
- It would be a stressful job.
- They would try to listen to the person's problems but it might be tricky to solve the problem. They would try to be patient and not shouty.
- Everyone is so individual it would be difficult to look after everyone.

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One child summed up the challenges of the job like this:

"If you have to make sure children are safe and they keep up everyone's rights they'll be very busy because there are a lot of people to look after".

Children also talked about whether the Head Gardener should change for different ages of children. Some children thought the person should stay the same and be alongside the child as they grow and be someone they could learn to trust. Some children thought the person would need to change as they grew up because you have different needs as you grow, and because people change jobs.

Some children asked whether or not the person could be changed if "you didn't like them or couldn't get along with them".

We have given the Scottish Government all these important messages about the Head Gardener/Named Person idea to help them figure out how to make this idea work well for children.



If parents are at a party they shouldn't come back drunk and shouldn't swear in front of children.

When children need help: the idea of having a Child's Plan

When children created their fantastical pictures of themselves as plants, everyone could see how very different they were from each other. We followed this idea of differences and talked about there being some plants, like orchids or tomatoes, which need extra support to grow properly and that this is also true for children.

The Scottish Government already knows that it is important for some children to get this extra help and support. They think that if a child is getting help it would be a good idea to have one **Child's Plan**. That way, everyone knows what they are supposed to be doing and can work together to help the child. After an energetic and challenging greenhouse building exercise everyone had something to say about the idea of one Child's Plan. The children with experience of getting help and support, from someone like a social worker, were able to add more personal comments. Overall, most children thought it would be a good idea to have one Child's Plan.

"Everyone was just getting in a muddle and we needed the plan to help each other".

Children said one really important part of having a Plan would be that they have their say and that all the adults pay attention to it.

"Of course I want to have a say. I want to tell what I'm like, what I like and what kind of people I want to go with".

"Yes, and make sure everyone knows how important the Plan is".

"Yes, it helps teamwork to have one Plan".

"Yes, there should be one Plan because if you did loads of plans you wouldn't know which one to pick. Make sure it's emailed to all the people that need to read it".

Children also said that if you have a Child's Plan it can't always stay the same, so it would need to change and grow with you as you got older and had your say too.

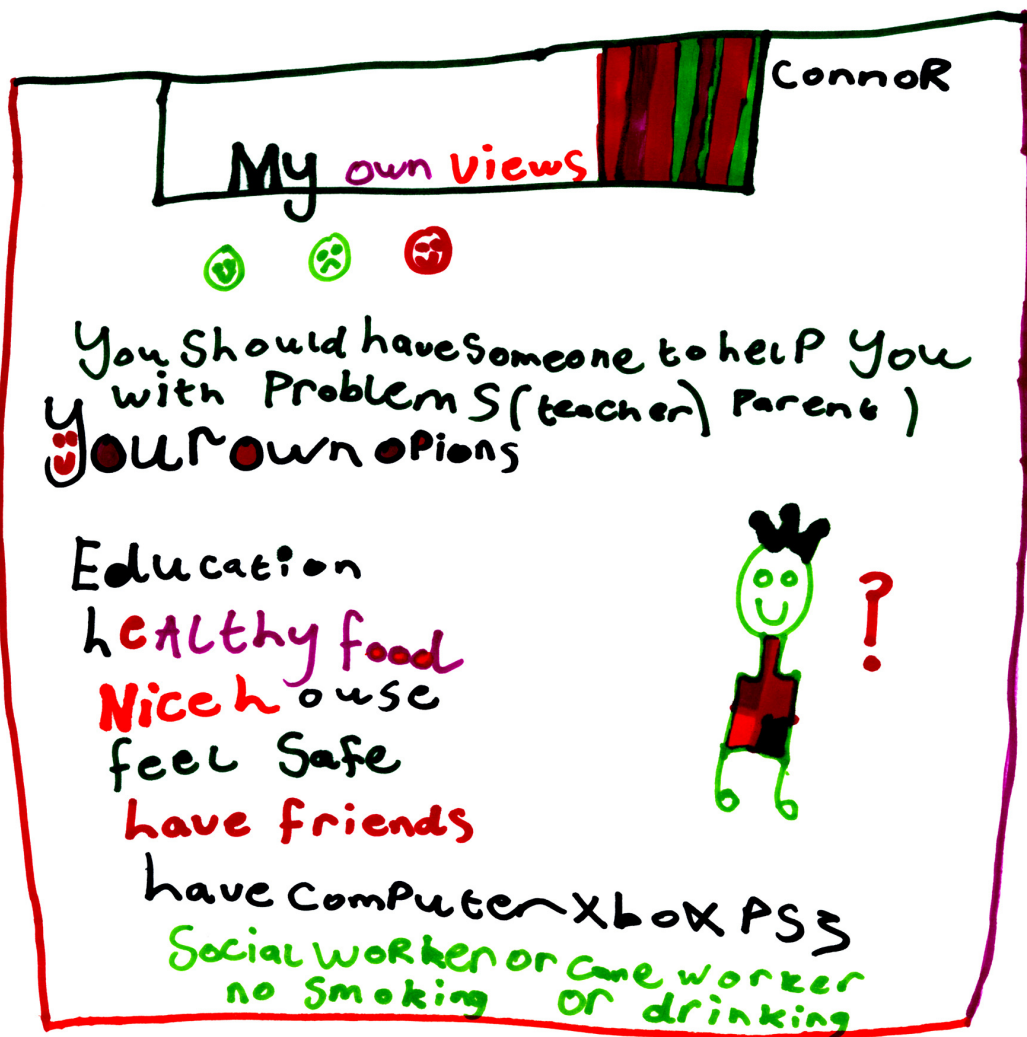
"We would need to make the Plan grow. All the different adults would need to add their own bit and the child would give their ideas too".



Give us healthy tuck and running around.

Children decided these are the top things that you need to do to make adults understand and agree to a Child's Plan:

- Stop adults shouting.
- Plan talking times so that if things happen you can talk and it doesn't boil over.
- Make sure adults are not doing others things at the same time.
- Have someone tell adults that they have to listen properly.
- Have a worker (like from Who Cares?) who comes to your house and talks about what's coming up.
- Adults should have eye contact, sit beside the child.
- Ask the parents and everybody to ask the children first. If parents or other people just ask first then you can have your say.
- Consult children about Plans, meet with them and explain what their choices are.



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Drugs make you ill and they stink.

Making foster care better

We meet with children one at a time to talk with them about living away from their mum or their dad. We know that for some of the children it was not an easy thing to talk about. Children wanted the Scottish Government to know what it's like to live with a carer and so they spoke out. They were very clear that they wanted all the children in Scotland to have good care.

They said that these things are important:

- Children need to understand why they are in a foster care placement.
- Brothers and sisters should stay together.
- Children should meet their prospective foster carers before being placed with them.
- Children should be able to keep in touch with their parents and grandparents when they are in foster care, if that is what they want to do.
- Children should be able to keep in touch with their friends when they move into foster care.
- Children need to be able to build trust with their foster carer.

And here are some of the things children said to help us understand what foster care should be like:

"What I think about foster care: Give children a better life than they have had, make them forget what has happened and give them new opportunities, make sure they have contact with their family. Make sure they have a nice clean environment. Give them healthy meals. Make them happy".

"Make sure foster carers listen to children".

"Children should get the same good treatment as they got with their mums".

"Your foster carer should make you feel like the person's who's looking after you is your mum or dad".

Sometimes children don't get the care placement they want to have, especially if they have brothers and sisters.

"The last time I saw my granny I told her what had happened at my mums and she phoned social work. Then lots of social workers came and we got put in foster care. There's not enough room for all of us so we're in different places".



Children should have some things be private, get a say in things and be listened to.

Some children said it can be hard when you would like to stay with your foster carer but you don't want to hurt your mum or dad by telling them that.

"I really want to stay with my foster carer, she's really nice. I can't tell my social worker 'cos I'm frightened they'll tell my mum. She gives me a bit paper and asks what I want so I just say 'I don't know'".

Children also said that all carers should get good training and that it's important to make sure they are good at being carers:

"Foster carers should get 'double trained' to take care of their foster children".

"Foster carers should have to take a test to make sure they are loving, caring and can be as good as the best parents".



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Not being allowed enough playing time outside or when it's raining.

To end

Across our consultation workshops children have talked about their needs, wellbeing and rights. Children have been asked to think about their own lives, and to think on behalf of other children across Scotland to tell us what they need from the Bill that the Scottish Government is considering. What children want is achievable. We hope all the adults who read this report do their best to make it happen.

The Children's Parliament team were joined by others to develop and facilitate the workshops. Thanks to (and to Ryan for the drawings):



Katrina Sher



Yonnie Fraser



Joanna Boyce

More about Children's Parliament at:

www.childrensparliament.org.uk

Thanks to the **Scottish Government** for the funding that made this consultation possible.

Appendix: The children's workshop

Because the Scottish Government wants to make Scotland the best place in the world for children to grow up Children's Parliament designed the workshop activities around the idea of a garden.

DAY ONE

The Grow Well Chart: Children record and organise ideas about what children of different ages need to be healthy, happy and safe. Children identify the important needs as rights and discuss the UNCRC.

Seed Packets: Children create their own seed packets; each child focuses on the uniqueness of their individual needs and details growing instructions for their parents and carers.

Garden Landscapes: Thinking about the variety of environments and plants in a garden.

Individual Plants: Children draw themselves as a plant that shows the uniqueness of them as an individual.

Snails: Identifying things that get in the way of healthy growth.

Gardeners: Identifying the important adults in children's lives; what do they do to ensure they are healthy, happy and safe.

Head Gardeners (the Named Person): Working together children construct a figure out of gardening equipment. Children record their responses to some key questions about the role of head gardeners/named person.

Messenger bees: Carrying the most important message to the adults.

Peer Consultation: Working with classmates and friends to identify other key messages for adults.

DAY TWO

Building the Greenhouse: Children work as a team to build the greenhouse structure; considering the role each plays and the usefulness of having a plan and considering the need for protection and care.

Potting plants: Considering the need for additional support and using prompt questions to reflect on the idea of the single Child's Plan.

Cloches: Continuing reflection on care and protection and alternative family environments.



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