

Children's Parliament meets the **Scottish Cabinet**

2022

Key messages from Children's Parliament

Annual Scottish Cabinet Meeting with Children
and Young People 2022

**WHAT HAVE MEMBERS OF
CHILDREN'S PARLIAMENT
BEEN UP TO?**

To get ready for this year's Cabinet Meeting, seven Members of Children's Parliament (MCPs) from across Scotland have been exploring key issues with their peers. From this investigation, the children have chosen three issues which they feel are important now, and that represent the voices of children across Scotland.

The key issues are:

- **Gender Equality in Education**
- **Children's Mental Health and Well-being**
- **Adults Realising Children's Rights**

**"I am bursting
with joy
[about going
to Cabinet]!"**

- Member of Children's Parliament, aged 10

GENDER EQUALITY IN EDUCATION

Children should not be treated differently in school because of their gender. The MCPs are calling for the Scottish Government to ensure the Scottish school system is truly gender equal.

"Boys and girls are not getting equal rights, and that needs to change now"

- Member of Children's Parliament
Aged 11

WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE

We can define 'stereotyping' as a guess, or assumption, about how someone might behave based on a social group they belong to – in this case if they are a girl, or if they are a boy.

The MCPs want the Scottish Government to end gender stereotyping in schools. This includes:

- **Supporting the development of friendships between girls and boys.**
- **Supporting girls and boys to engage in sport and play they aren't immediately drawn to.** Gender should not decide how children play.
- **Removing gendered school uniforms.** By doing this, children can play and express themselves how they want.
- **Removing gender expectations in schools.** Stereotyping language should be removed from schools, for example 'strong boys' and 'neat girls.'
- **Reviewing learning (the curriculum) to ensure it includes:**
 - Education about gender inequality, and how it can be tackled.
 - Positive female and male role models represented equally across all subjects.
 - Strong female characters in learning and library books.

This review should include teacher training.

- **Asking children what makes them feel safe in different spaces.** Children should be asked about what will improve their experiences in the playground and in school, and have a say in these decisions in their own schools.

"Girls can do what boys can do, and boys can do what girls can do."

- Member of Children's Parliament, aged 11

ADULTS REALISING CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

All adults should know about children's rights and how to support children, especially those adults who work with children. These issues are frequently raised during Children's Parliament projects.

"They [professional adults] need to gain the children's trust."

- Member of Children's Parliament
Aged 11

WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE

MCPs want all adults to:

- **Treat children with respect.** This means treating children fairly and talking to them politely. Adults should think about the way they act, what they say and how they say it: no shouting!
- **Build trusting relationships.** Try to understand what children are feeling and what they are going through. Building strong relationships with children is important - children should feel confident to talk to adults when they need to.
- **Listen.** Children deserve adults' attention: adults need to show that they are listening. Children's views and ideas are important and should be valued and included, especially when decisions are being made about them.

The MCPs want the Scottish Government to help **make children's rights real**, nationwide. This includes:

- **Opening a Children's Rights Museum.** A museum would provide a place for lots of people to come and find out about children's rights.
- **Launching a nationwide children's rights campaign.** The government needs to attract more attention to children's rights and make it clear that they are the responsibility of all adults, especially as they will soon be incorporated into Scots Law.
- **Running children's rights training courses for all adults who work directly with children**, including doctors, teachers, police officers and local councillors. For people who work with children, it is especially important that they have a deep understanding of how to support children's rights in the way they work.

"Be kind to [children], protect them and provide for them."

- Member of Children's Parliament, aged 11

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

The ongoing effects of COVID-19, among other things, have affected children's mental health and wellbeing in a huge way. Members of Children's Parliament have clear ideas on how we can work together to improve this.

WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE

The MCPs want the Scottish Government to **make more space for children's mental health and wellbeing**. This includes:

- **Creating more activities, clubs and places** where children can go to relax, play, learn new skills and make new friends. There are not sufficient clubs and activities available to children, especially in island and rural communities. Funding needs to be distributed in a fairer way, because it doesn't always reach the children who need it most.
- **Increasing, repairing and improving outdoor spaces.** Children love playing and learning outdoors. They recognise the positive impact nature and being active outdoors has on their mental health and wellbeing.
- **Making schools bright, beautiful and welcoming places** with exciting places to play indoors and outdoors.
- **Making sure every school has a safe, private space** where children can talk to an adult if they are worried, upset or having a difficult time.
- **Having specialist art and PE teachers for every school and nursery.** These active, creative opportunities can support mental health and wellbeing.
- **Making sure adults understand and respect children's human rights.** This means treating children fairly, not judging them and involving children in decisions that affect them. Children want to work together with adults to improve their lives at home, in school and in the community.

"Mental health can affect your physical health, and vice versa."

- Member of Children's Parliament
Aged 11

"Change your attitudes."

- Member of Children's Parliament, aged 10

**We want
the Scottish
Government to *END*
gender stereotyping
at school, make
SPACE for children's
mental health
and wellbeing,
and *CAMPAIGN* for
adults to make
children's rights real
nationwide.**