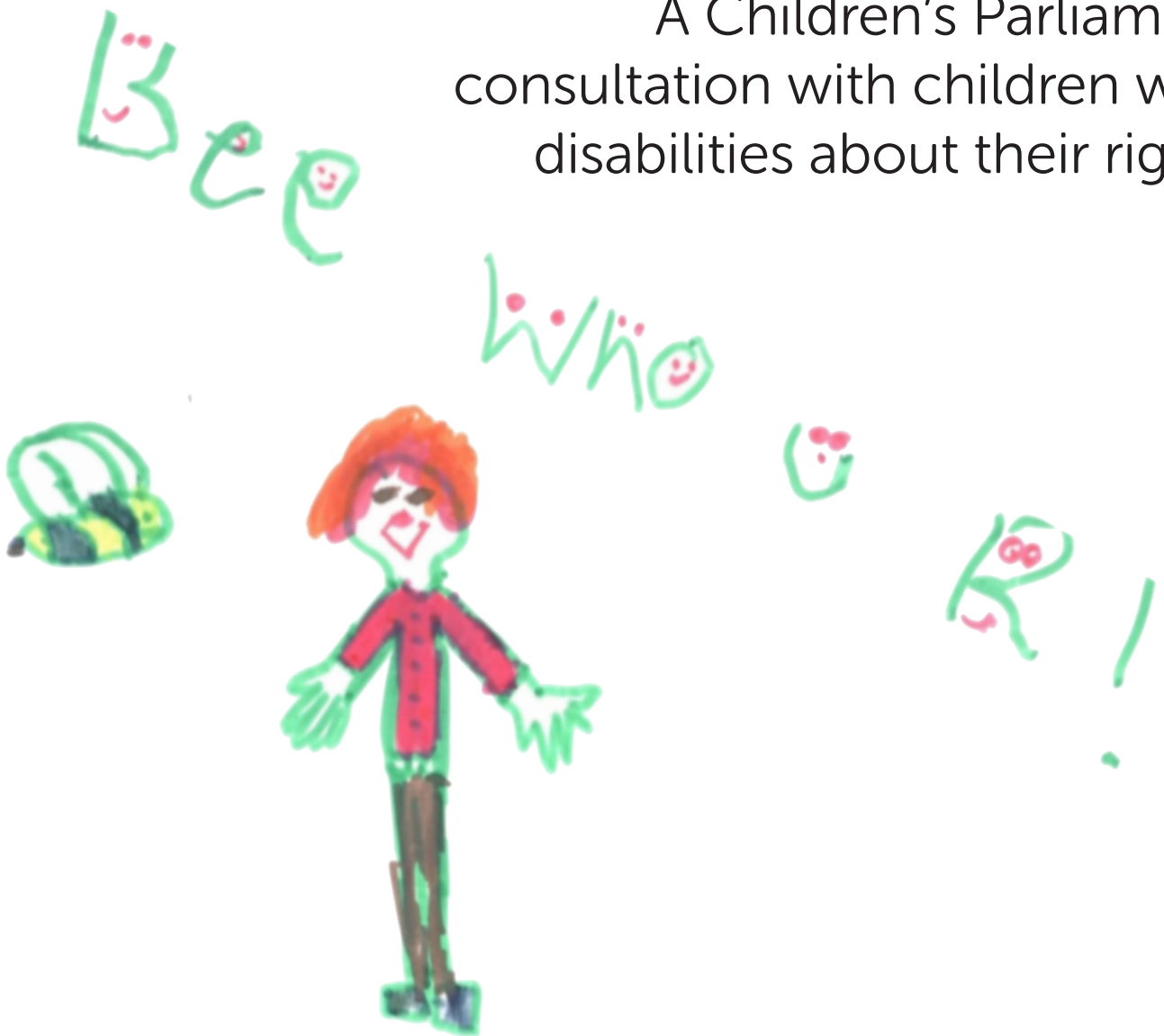


All children should be **healthy, happy and safe**

A Children's Parliament
consultation with children with
disabilities about their rights



Thanks

Children's Parliament would like to thank the children and staff at the following schools and organisations for their participation in this consultation:

- Beattie School, West Lothian
- Kaimes School, Edinburgh
- Hamilton School for the Deaf, South Lanarkshire
- Lothian Autistic Society, West Lothian



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About Children's Parliament

Children's Parliament (CP) is Scotland's Centre for Excellence for children's participation and engagement.

Children's Parliament works for a future where all children in Scotland are actively engaged in shaping our world so that everyone is healthy, happy and safe. We believe all children should live and grow with dignity and be valued for what they can offer the world.

We work creatively through projects, consultations and training programmes to improve communication between children and adults and to build relationships based on mutual respect and understanding. This enables us to explore our world together. We provide children with opportunities to share their experiences, thoughts and feelings so that they can influence life at home, in school and in the community through change at a local and national level.

About Children and Young People's Commissioner for Scotland

The Children and Young People's Commissioner for Scotland (CYPCS) promotes and safeguards the rights of children and young people in Scotland under the age of 18 (and those under 21 if they have ever been in the care of, or looked after by, a local authority).

The current Commissioner is Tam Baillie (appointed by the Queen on the nomination of the Scottish Parliament in May 2009). He is independent of Parliament and Government but is accountable for the work done. The responsibilities and powers of the Commissioner are laid out in the Commissioner for Children and Young People (Scotland) Act (2003).

The Commissioner has a responsibility to:

- Promote and safeguard the rights of children and young people;
- Have regard to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and act in a manner that encourages equal opportunities; and
- Encourage the involvement of children and young people in the work of the Commissioner, and consult relevant organisations and in particular under the Act those children and young people who otherwise might not have their views known/ or included.

The Commissioner has the power to:

- Carry out an investigation into whether a service provider has regard to the rights, interests and views of children and young people generally, or to particular groups of children and young people.

As part of the Commissioner's general function, the Commissioner also promotes, commissions, undertakes and publishes research on issues relating to the rights of children and young people.

About the consultation

The Children and Young People's Commissioner for Scotland is currently undertaking the development of the Commissioner's Strategic Plan 2016 – 2020. In order to ensure that children's views and experiences inform the development of this plan, CYPCS commissioned Children's Parliament to identify key messages from children across CP's projects and consultations facilitated between 2012 and 2015.

CYPCS also commissioned CP to engage directly with children with disabilities of primary school age. This consultation explored what children with disabilities say they need to be healthy, happy, safe and to have their say in their lives. Children identified what can get in the way of realising their rights and what actions can be taken to support the realisation of rights for children with disabilities.

The work was undertaken with the support of colleagues in a number of settings with whom the children have day-to-day relationships. In each setting and with each child, the engagement was framed around how they communicate and how they best understand, engage and share views. Our engagement with the children was informal, using props, creative activities, observation and communication devices to help make the sessions enjoyable, accessible and focused.

Children's Parliament staff worked across four settings - three special schools and an after-school club. While the participating children were aged between 6 and 13 years old, their needs and abilities determined that they were best supported within a primary school setting.

In total, 24 children (15 boys and 9 girls) took part in the consultation. These children experience a range of disabilities and additional support needs, including Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), deafness and severe hearing impairment, moderate visual impairment, profound and multiple learning disabilities, and chronic health conditions.

The quotes in this report come directly from the children, as do the illustrations. When a quote is used it states the gender and age of the child.



Healthy, Happy and Safe

What do children with disabilities need to be healthy, happy and safe?

- To have friends
- A warm welcome when they get to school
- To play, have toys
- To have fun and laugh
- To be active and have adventures
- To go to the park with parents and siblings
- Technology – to play, communicate with others and have fun
- A good night's sleep
- Healthy food to eat
- Medical care and doctors who are nice and friendly
- Familiarity and routines
- To have pets to care for
- To have their say about learning or care plans that are about them
- Activities outside school, after school, at the weekends and in the holidays
- To be with adults who love them
- To be safe from adults who might harm them
- To get to know and trust the adults (outside the family) who provide care for them
- Recognition of personal accomplishments

'I'm the second best in my school in the high jump and I play handball for West Lothian. I love sports!'

– Girl, 9

'Getting a taxi home from school makes me feel safe.'

– Boy, 8

'I'm happy when I go to the shops with my dad and help him outside.'

– Boy, 6

'When I have a bad dream, my mummy looks after me.'

– Girl, 6

'Family can be overprotective – it's annoying but it keeps you safe.'

– Girl, 10

Having a say

What do children with disabilities need to have their say?

- Choices about all aspects of day-to-day life; things like deciding what to wear, what or when to eat and what activities to do.
- Adults who take the time and care to listen and explain things.
- The opportunity to work out the ways they like to communicate their wishes.
- The opportunity to create and share rules at school (rules should be positive and not start with 'don't').
- Supports/devices to assist in communication i.e. hearing aids/cochlear implants, glasses, communication boards, etc.
- Opportunities to express their opinions.

'[Adults]
should know if
you feel worried and
if you tell them, they
can help. If you don't,
they won't know.'

– Girl, 12

'If you
don't share
your opinion, they
wouldn't know what
you think and feel.'

– Girl, 9



Barriers

What can get in the way for children with disabilities?

- When people see the child's capacity in a limited or fixed way.
- When adults worry about you.
- When other children behave badly or bully, especially when this is based on your disability.
- Spending a lot of time travelling between home and school or home and activities that are accessible.
- Prolonged illnesses and hospital stays disrupting day-to-day life.
- Adults being busy.
- Adults not understanding how a child communicates.
- Adults not having the skills to communicate in ways the child uses.
- Accidents at home.
- When medical and support needs take a lot of time and leave the child (and adults) tired or mask what potential and capacity the child has.
- When an adult does not provide intimate/personal care with respect and dignity for the child.
- When not enough support is available outside school-term times.
- Situations and experiences being too loud, bright or over-stimulating.
- Lack of recognition of child's autonomy and independence.

'It's sad and painful [to be bullied], but friends can keep you from getting bullied and they help you.'

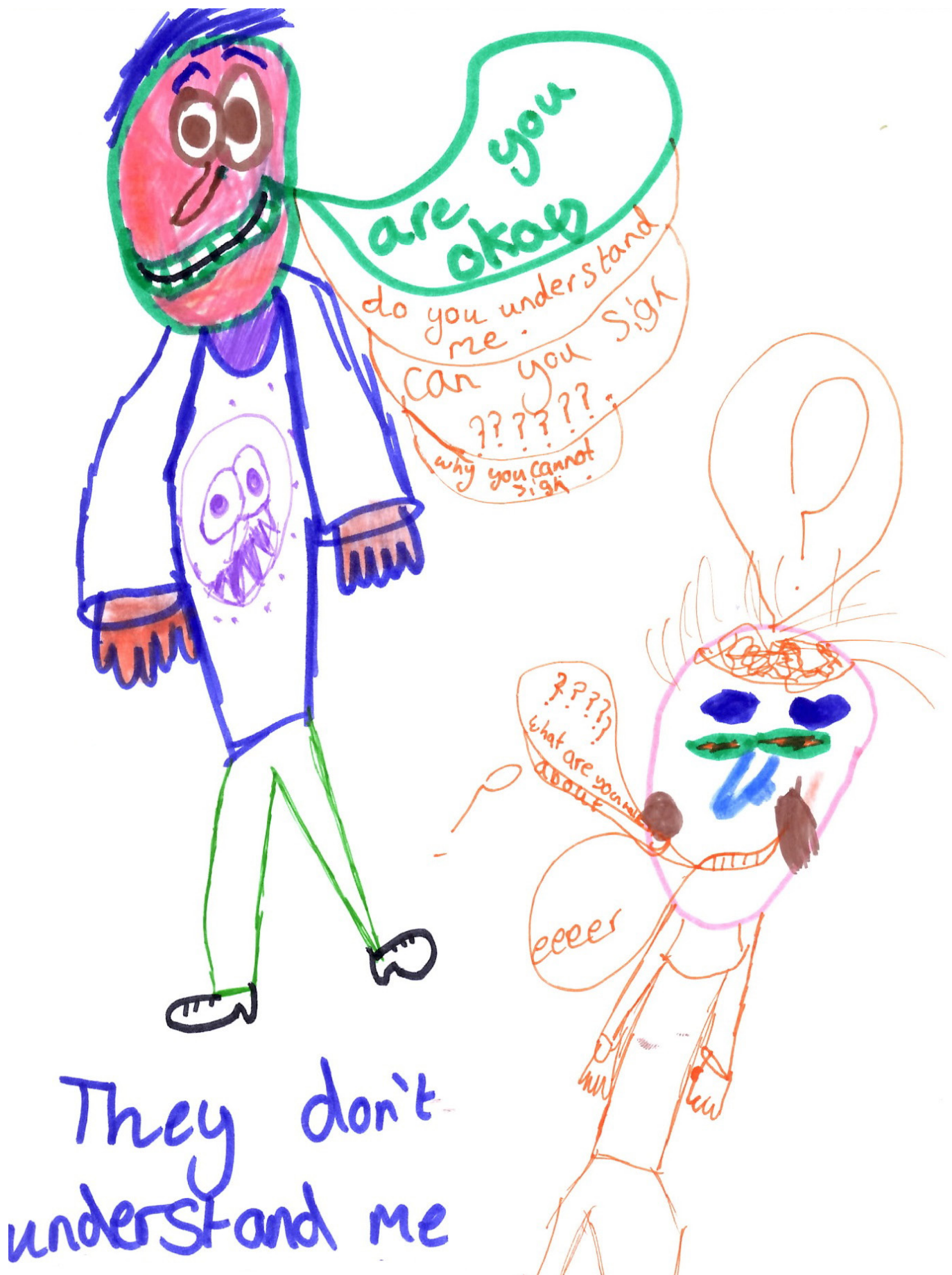
– Boy, 9

'People who are hearing, why don't we teach them to sign so they can talk to me?'

– Boy, 10

'We listen to adults because they're our bosses apparently, but this is my life and I should be the boss of myself.'

– Girl, 9



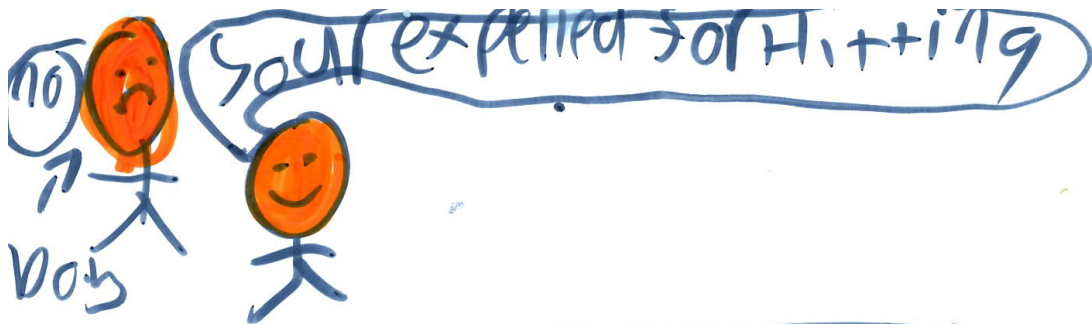
They don't understand me – illustration representing the frustration felt by a child with hearing impairment.

Actions

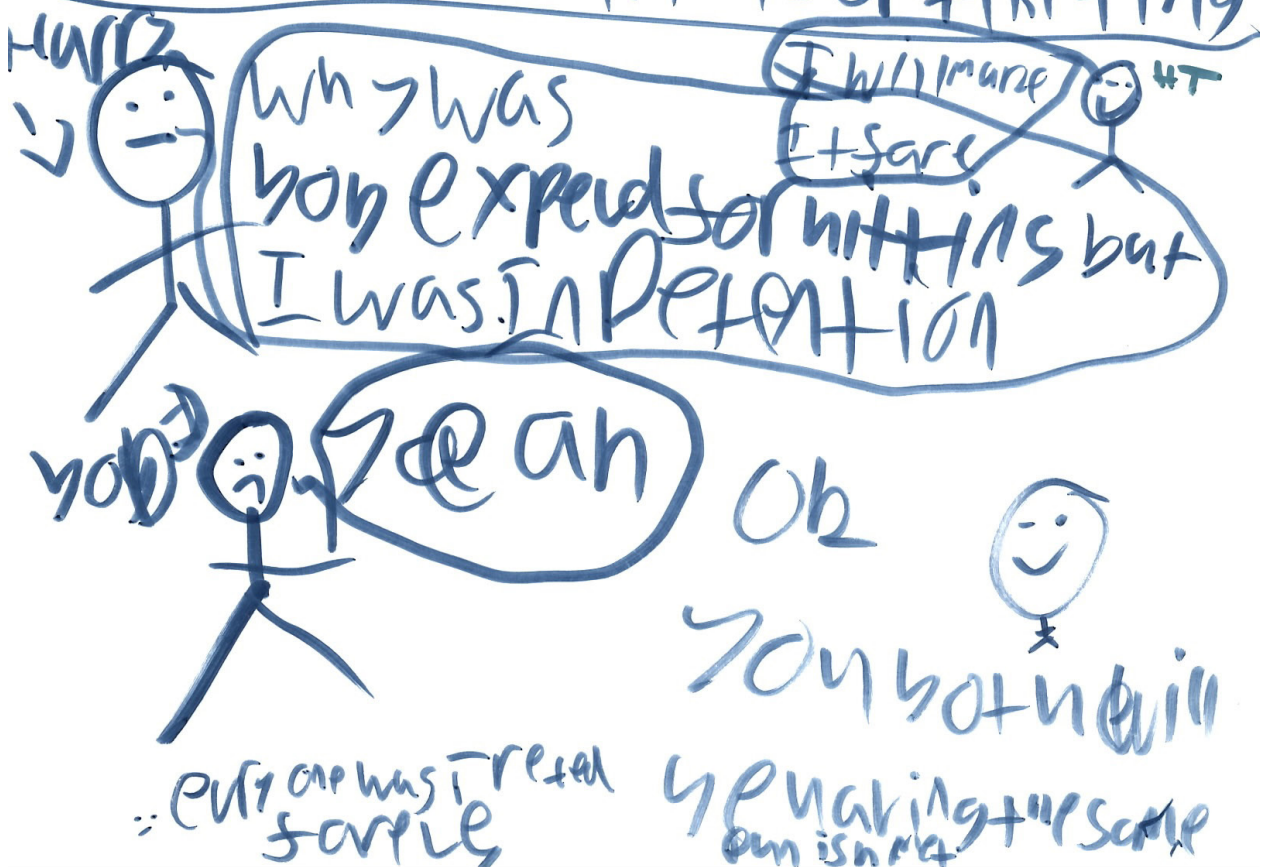
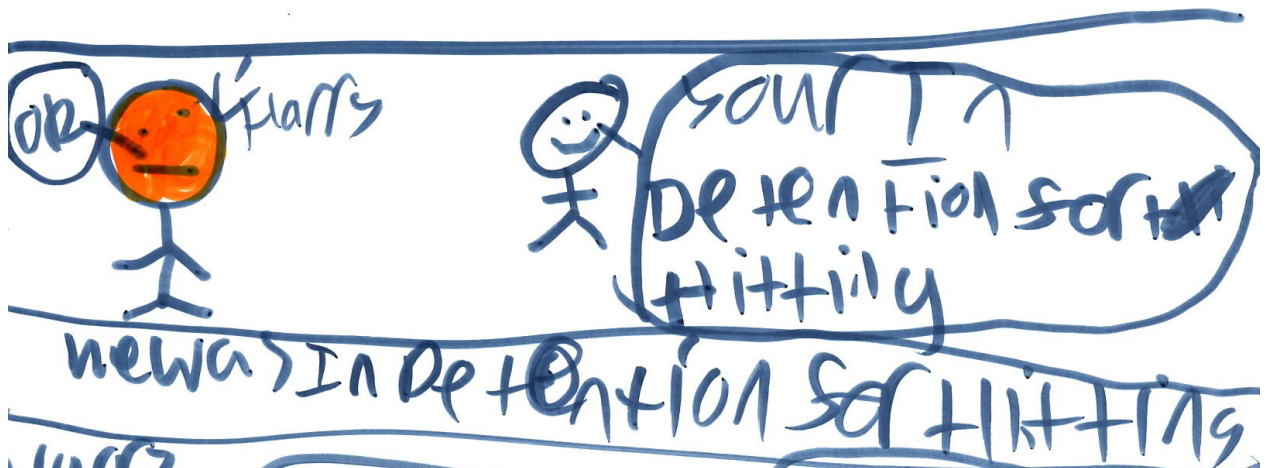
What would mitigate barriers and support the realisation of rights?

- When everyone focuses on what can be done, what can be learned, what progress can be made.
- More opportunities for activities and social time with other children.
- When children help make the rules.
- When adults talk to and include the child in conversations about them, rather than over them or not even recognising they are present.
- Good, regular and positive communication between parents/carers and school staff.
- When teachers and other school staff explain what is going on.
- Respite care.





negot expelled for hitting



Everyone is treated fairly – illustration representing children's feelings of unfair treatment when different punishments are handed out for similar behaviour.

Appendix 1

This poster was the result of a previous consultation with 10 and 11 year olds in a mainstream schools setting. Some of the children had additional support for learning needs. The poster is shared here to remind us of the many similar needs and experiences of children whatever their disability/ASL needs.

Happy, Healthy and Safe

Adolescent wellbeing, the views of 10 and 11 year olds

To make Scotland the best place to grow up and flourish children need:

- A family
 - To be cared for
 - Drinking water
 - Warm, clean clothes
 - A warm bed
 - A smoke-free home
 - Parents that help
 - Not to be alone
 - A nice house that isn't crumbling around you
 - Enough sleep
 - A chance to co-operate with others
 - Exercise and keeping fit
 - A good education that teaches you lessons for life
 - Time to do your favourite subjects at school
 - Art
 - To play with friends
 - To have boundaries so you know where you can go
 - To join things and not be left out
 - A mobile phone
 - Trips with family and friends
 - To be part of the Christmas show
 - Not to talk to strangers
 - To be with safe people in a safe home
 - To be streetwise
- To know your way around so you don't get lost.

But what can get in the way of wellbeing in the community?

- A stranger asking you odd or rude questions
- Sugary food
- Bad examples like people swearing
- Having no friends
- A bad government
- Greedy rich people taking the land
- Not feeling safe
- Being nervous when you first join something.

So, what can we do? What actions would improve wellbeing in the community?

- Someone to walk to school with and more lollipop people on the roads
- Constructive things to do
- Good food for reasonable prices
- Good doctors and enough of them
- Help if your parents are fighting
- Free education
- Get the right change from shopkeepers
- More recycling
- Community orchards
- Someone to call if you are being abused and care homes for abused or neglected children
- More care for nature – don't let big companies destroy forests
- Don't start a fight, try to resolve conflict
- Avoid strangers and don't share personal information.

But what can get in the way of wellbeing at home?

- Having to move
- Being neglected or abused
- Not having clothes for school
- Having to wash your own clothes
- Worring about how parents get on
- Parents arguing
- Parents splitting up
- Living in 2 houses
- Feeling scared
 - No-one to play with
 - Parents never at home
 - Bad parents
 - Second-hand smoking
 - Being forced to eat food you don't like.

So, what can we do? What actions would improve wellbeing at home?

- Every child needs a place to stay and sleep
- Children have toys, computers and proper clothes
- Parents buy food for their children
- Every family has life essentials like kitchen equipment and a washing machine (they might need help then they can pay it back)
- Support for parents like parenting classes
- Proper lunches for all children
- Higher childcare benefits and lower childcare costs
- No bedroom tax
- Exercise for everyone
- Social workers to help children not in the right conditions
- Children who listen to their parents and keep in touch
- No-one steals
- Stop parents smoking
- Pets so children can be responsible.

But what can get in the way of wellbeing at school?

- Moving school
- If work is too hard
- Bullying
- Not getting the attention you need
- Irresponsible children that others copy
- Falling out with friends and feeling lost
- Being afraid to tell the teacher something
- When disabilities can stop you doing certain things.

So, what can we do? What actions would improve wellbeing at school?

- Make sure everyone is remembered
- Anti-bullying means protection by teachers and friends
- Be able to go to the toilet when you need to
- Everyone is treated equally
- Buddy systems
- Make sure everyone has friends
- Give a healthy school dinner to everyone so no-one is hungry
- Teachers that listen to you and let you explain
- Being able to apologise instead of being punished
- Playing outside and clubs at lunchtime.

Children's Parliament
giving ideas a voice

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