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We've done our work, what will YOU do?

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Children's views on tackling poverty in Scotland

2026

About the Project

Save the Children commissioned Children's Parliament to undertake a collaborative project in the run up to the May 2026 election to develop a current understanding of children's attitudes towards poverty and what their priorities would be for tackling poverty in Scotland.

From October 2025 to February 2026, Children's Parliament and Save the Children worked together with 32 children aged 8 – 10 in a Primary 5 class at Oakwood Primary School in Easterhouse, Glasgow. Using a children's rights approach, the two organisations supported children to explore the causes and impacts of child poverty in communities and share their views on Scotland's attempts to tackle it.



Through a series of 11 creative workshops, the children deepened their understanding of children's human rights, explored their local community and thought about what all children in Scotland need to grow up happy, healthy and safe. Children reflected on how not having enough money can affect children, their families, and their communities. In a session co-facilitated with the Poverty and Inequality Commission, children also learned more about child poverty in Scotland and Scotland's 2030 child poverty reduction targets and considered the actions which governments can take to ensure all children's needs are met.

The children led a successful influencing event at the end of the project to share their views on child poverty and the changes they felt needed to be made, using as reference colourful mixed-media artworks they had created during the project. Children invited influencers and decision-makers and concluded their event by inviting the adults to each make a pledge to change something based on what they had learned from the children.



We've done our work!

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**We want people
to take our
words and
put them into
action** 99

Member of Children's Parliament

What will YOU do?



What matters to children

Children at Oakwood Primary identified five themes from their discussions on child poverty in Scotland and the issues that can arise if children experience poverty. These themes are important for children to be happy, healthy and safe.


- Basic needs (cost of things)
- Experiences (interesting and fun activities outside school)
- People and Relationships
- Places to live and play
- Health

What follows is a summary of children's views about each theme, including direct quotes from the children themselves.



Basic Needs (the cost of things)

Children highlighted the high financial cost of a wide range of goods and utilities as being a problem for families. This included food, clothes, toys, technology as well as rent and bills. A lot of what children spoke about related to basic needs (food, shelter, warmth), but they also felt it was important that families should be able to afford the things that make children happy (treats, toys, technology, and the clothes they like).



“No money means people can’t afford food.”

“It makes me feel sad because some people can’t afford basic things like milk.”


“You can’t always get what you want because it costs a lot of money.”

“No internet [means] no playing with friends.”



Experiences

Children felt it was important that all children should be able to have fun and interesting experiences outside of school. They spoke about enjoying going out for food or ice cream, birthday parties, swimming or other sports, cinema, and clubs. They spoke about fairness in relation to experiences.



“Poverty affects children because they can’t go to different places.”

“You should be able to go to clubs because sports or crafts and stuff like that can make you happy.”

“Children enjoy holidays – to have energy, have fun and a good time and break from school!”

People and Relationships

Children highlighted how poverty has an effect on people, how they feel, and their relationships with others. They felt that poverty could lead to children being bullied or feeling left out, and that it could also affect how well adults felt able to care for children.

“They could be bullied for not having enough money.”

“You may not be able to pay to do things your friends are doing and that may make you lonely.”

“The kids want to see their mum, but they barely get to see her because she’s working from morning to night.”

“My friends make me feel really happy.”

“It might affect adults’ mental health. That might make them unable to take care of their children.”

Friendship is critical to a happy childhood. Poverty affects friendships between children as a result of not having access to technology, clothes or money for activities.

Places to live and play

Children felt a safe home was important and often spoke about homelessness as a possible consequence of poverty for families. When talking about what communities need, they spoke about it being important for them to have green spaces, places to play, shops and facilities.

“Children should be safe and warm.”

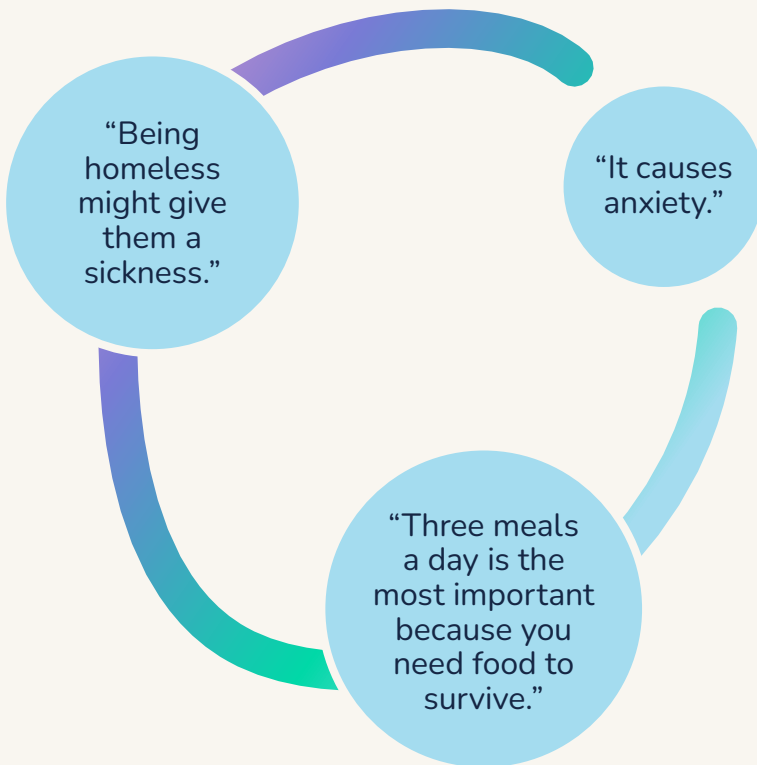
“Having no play area, can affect children’s happiness, fresh air and fun.”

“No shops can prevent children from getting food and nice clothes.”

“If the rent is too high, they could be homeless.”

Health

Children spoke about how poor health could be caused by poverty (as a result of lack of access to basic needs or the impact on mental health) and that poverty could limit access to healthcare. They discussed the obstacles to attending medical appointments that poverty can cause; and that not having enough good or regular food, warm clothing, or a safe home can all contribute to children becoming physically or mentally unwell.



What Children Said Should Change



The government should help them be safe, especially those who have a disability.

Member of
Children's Parliament



The children shared actions that they felt needed to be taken to address poverty. Many of the issues they talked about overlapped several of their themes and the children were keen to see changes made which would benefit children in all these areas. They wanted more financial support for families, measures to reduce costs and increase incomes, and better support services. They saw child poverty as an issue which required more action from the Scottish Government.

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**Give the family
the money!**

Member of
Children's Parliament

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Reduce
The cost
of things



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**I think people need
to get more money
for their jobs.**

Member of
Children's Parliament

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The Children's Event: **We've done our work, what will you do?**

The end-of-project influencing event took place at Oakwood Primary in February 2026. The children invited elected members from the Scottish and UK governments, local councillors, decision-makers, representatives of local community groups, and their families to share their views and the artwork they had produced to express their views during the project. The event was entirely designed and run by the children. Everything from welcoming guests (and asking them to put their phones in a special box to make sure they weren't distracted) to the presentations and a guided tour of the artwork was prepared and delivered by the Primary 5 class.

From the stage, children explained the issues they'd been exploring and their views on the causes and impacts of child poverty, as well as what they felt needed to change, as summarised above. In groups, the children then took their invited guests on a tour of their art exhibition.



Through workshops with artist Greer Pester, the children had developed artwork using a range of materials and techniques that filled the space with colour, shape, and symbolism. The children had developed repeating symbols to represent things children need, like warm homes, food, clean clothes, safe places to play, treats

and fun experiences. Their art reflected on how not having enough money can make it harder to have these things, and the effects that can have on relationships and physical and mental health. It also expressed the joy of being a child and what a happy, healthy, safe and cared for childhood should feel like.

At the end of the event, the children asked guests to think about what fairness and dignity means to them in the context of child poverty and what they could do to help to ensure every child has enough.

Adult guests wrote pledges – ideas for changes they could make based on what the event and exhibition had inspired them to think about:

“Work to get energy costs reduced”

Local Councillor

“Ensure children’s voices are heard”

Local Councillor

“I will make sure we think about how to support more free activities for children”

Scottish Government
Civil Servant

Impact:

Children are Making a Difference

Importantly, the children were very happy with the event and how they did. They felt listened to and were proud of their achievements. They felt encouraged by the feedback they received from the adults, especially their loved ones.



After the event I felt so proud of myself.

My parents were so proud of me.

I felt happy because we could tell the adults to change child poverty.

We were brave to do this.

After the event my face was hurting from smiling, it was so exciting.



Members of
Children's Parliament

Having pledged at the event to raise the children's work in the House of Commons, Maureen Burke MP did so on 12th February 2026:

"I recently attended an event at Oakwood Primary School in my constituency, where pupils took part in workshops facilitated by the Children's Parliament and Save the Children, exploring the impact of poverty. I was so moved that day by the children who recognised that too many of their peers are growing up in hardship and concerned about basic needs such as food and housing. Would the Leader of the House join me in commending the pupils of Oakwood School for their thoughtful contributions, and reaffirm this Government's commitment to tackling poverty?"

The Leader of the House, Sir Alan Campbell, responded:

"I absolutely join my hon. friend in commending the pupils, and indeed the staff, of Oakwood Primary School for their thoughtful contributions. ... The empathy of these students is truly commendable, and I thank them for everything they are doing."

The response to the children's work was extremely positive, with many attendees noting the unique perspective that the children brought to the topic and how compassionate they were. Alice Hall, Deputy Director for Tackling Child Poverty, Scottish Government shared:

"It was brilliant – the children were so articulate, passionate and engaged, and the sense of optimism and determination in the room was palpable."

The event also sparked conversations with local organisations around opportunities to collaborate on work to tackle child poverty related issues in Easterhouse and Scotland.

What next?

The power of this work in hearing directly from children has already grown and developed into a longer-term collaboration between Children's Parliament and Save the Children, funded by The Robertson Trust. Over the next two years, the two organisations will be supporting children in Glasgow and across Scotland to engage in activism to fight the causes and effects of child poverty in their communities, ensuring that children's views are at the core of Scotland's approach to tackling this devastating children's human rights issue.

The focus of this work will be to empower children to lead local and national campaigns on child poverty. We aim to grow a Scotland-wide movement of child activists campaigning to address the causes and impact of child poverty, to meet the 2030 child poverty reduction targets, in a way that improves children's lives and focusses on the action and policy change they care about.

The issues identified by the children at Oakwood Primary School will provide the starting point for this continued work in Glasgow, and we look forward to working further with communities and elected representatives to ensure meaningful action is taken in these areas.

With incorporation of the UNCRC into Scots law, all public bodies in Scotland have legal responsibilities to uphold children's human rights and seek children's views on issues that affect them. Child poverty is the single biggest breach of children's human rights in Scotland. It is not inevitable; it is a political choice. The Scottish Government have committed to eradicate it. Poverty, as children have clearly demonstrated, is not solely about income. It is about experiencing dignity and respect in everyday life. Poverty can too easily take this away.

Jobs don't
pay enough money

Children must:

- Have an opportunity to share their views on poverty and influence decisions on how to tackle it.
- Have information about children's human rights and be able to advocate for their rights and the rights of other children.
- Be recognised as rights holders where solutions to child poverty recognise this.

Listening to children about the impact of poverty and involving them in decisions to address it is fundamental.

The next step is to recognise that tackling poverty needs to be done with and alongside children, not simply 'for' them.



More about Children's Parliament



Our dream is that children grow up in a world of love, happiness and understanding. Our mission is to inspire greater awareness and understanding of the power of children's human rights and to support implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) across Scotland.

For more about our story and the work we do:
www.childrensparliament.org.uk

More about Save the Children

Save the Children aims to ensure families have the money, services and power to end child poverty. They help to build communities of people who care about children, listen to what's important to them, and work together to make things better by:

- Amplifying the voices of children and families enabling them to engage with decision makers and influence policy locally and nationally.
- Influencing change by generating evidence and supporting policy-makers to implement solutions to increase family incomes and tackle the root causes of poverty.
- Supporting communities by working with families and local partners to challenge poverty in the places they live.

For more information, or to discuss ways in which you or your organisation could be involved with supporting child activism, please contact Gregory Metcalfe, Project Lead for Children's Parliament:

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