

What kind of Scotland?

Reviewing the National Outcomes for Scotland through the lens of Children's Parliament's programme of work from 2018 to 2023

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 Children's
Parliament

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Introduction

The National Performance Framework is Scotland's wellbeing framework and sets the vision for the nation we want to be. It is also a framework that enables collaborative working to achieve our National Outcomes. These National Outcomes must be reviewed every five years, to ensure that they continue to articulate the vision and ambition we have. They help us to ask, when it comes to the experience of all our citizens, *what kind of Scotland* do we want now and for the foreseeable future?

We have come a long way in recent years with our commitment to understanding the lived experience of childhood and the respect we give to children's participation and voice. Across government and public services there is a keen interest in engagement with children beyond the day-to-day decisions that are made. Children's Parliament would like to acknowledge the commitment that colleagues in the Scottish Government's National Performance Framework Unit has given to children's participation in this and past national outcome reviews; in 2018¹ we published our last report in support of the review process.

When we see meaningful engagement and impact, when we can report back to children that government or public bodies are listening, we make progress toward being a nation committed to human rights for all. And of course, this work now sits in the context of United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) incorporation, with this we can expect that this good practice will become normal, customary practice for government and all public bodies.

¹ What kind of Scotland? 2018 [Publications - Children's Parliament \(childrensparliament.org.uk\)](https://childrensparliament.org.uk/publications)

About Children's Parliament

Established in 1996, Children's Parliament is dedicated to the realisation of children's human rights in Scotland. 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).

Children's Parliament works with children from their early years up to the age of 14; children of this age make up approximately 16% of Scotland's population. Through our rights-based practice we provide children with opportunities to share their views, experiences, and ideas so that they can influence positive change in their lives at home, in school and in the community.

We use creative, participatory and play-based methods to support children to meaningfully engage in decisions that affect them. We support children to influence policy, practice and legislation, and we build the capacity and win the hearts and minds of adults to realise children's rights.

The approach/source material

To ensure that all aspects of wellbeing of children up to the age of 14 are considered in the National Outcomes review process, Children's Parliament has been asked to reflect on our work since the last review of the National Outcomes was conducted.

While one of the current National Outcomes is titled *Children and Young People* it is the case that *all* National Outcomes, as much as can be expected, should have relevance in terms of the wellbeing of *all* population groups.

The review of work we have undertaken looks at 47 projects and programmes that have engaged with children between 2018 and 2023. As a result, we comment across 10 of the 11 National Outcomes as currently expressed, highlighting what we know from children's lived experience as well as their hopes and ambitions for their own childhoods and those of future generations.

All quotes in the document are from children, Members of Children's Parliament (MCPs).

Our thanks go to the wide range of funding bodies, including Scottish Government, that have supported this work.

Ongoing work

Dignity in School <https://dignityinschool.childrensparliament.org.uk/>

Exploring Children's Rights and Artificial Intelligence

<https://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/exploring-childrens-rights-and-ai/>

Rights-based Practice in the Early Years

<https://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/rights-based-early-years/>

Children as Human Rights Defenders programme

<https://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/children-as-human-rights-defenders/>

UNCRC Skills and Knowledge Framework and Training Plan for Scotland's workforce

<https://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/uncrc-skills-knowledge-framework-training/>

Children's Parliament Investigates Food and Health with University of St. Andrews

<https://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/childrens-parliament-investigates-food-and-health/>

2023

Cabinet Takeover 2023 <https://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/cabinet-takeover-2023/>

Feelings Inspectors <https://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/feelings-inspectors/>
Mental Health and Wellbeing: Information and Support
<https://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/mental-health-and-wellbeing-information-and-support/>

A consultation on the universal school milk scheme for primary schools in Scotland
<https://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/universal-school-milk-scheme/>

A consultation on national school uniform Policy and Guidance
<https://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/school-uniform/>

2022

Education Reform <https://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/education-reform/>

Gender Equality in Education and Learning

<https://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/gender-equality-education-learning/>

Learning for Sustainability <https://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/learning-for-sustainability/>

Climate Changemakers <https://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/climate-changemakers/>

How Professionals Make Rights Real

<https://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/professionals-make-rights-real/>

Falkland Imagineers <https://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/falkland-imagineers/>

Cabinet Takeover 2022

<https://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/cabinettakeover2022/>

2021

Children's Parliament investigates... Child Right's Impact Assessments

<https://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/cria-east-lothian/>

UNCRC Incorporation consultation <https://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/our-work/uncrc-incorporation-consultation/>

Children's Parliament Investigates... Mental health and Wellbeing in the Western Isles <https://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/mental-health-and-wellbeing-in-the-western-isles/>

Wee Ones Wee Circle <https://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/wee-ones-wee-circle/>

Cabinet Takeover 2021 <https://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/our-work/cabinettakeover-2021/>

Climate Change for the Climate Assembly [Climate change for the Climate Assembly - Children's Parliament \(childrensparliament.org.uk\)](https://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/climate-change-for-the-climate-assembly)

2020

Children and Coronavirus <https://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/our-work/children-and-coronavirus/>

Big Ideas Big Vote <https://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/the-big-ideas-big-vote/>

Children's Parliament Investigates... Our Health and Wellbeing Curriculum

<https://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/our-health-and-wellbeing/>

The Bramble Brae Feelings Inspectors <https://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/our-work/bramble-brae-feelings-inspectors/>

Imagining Aberdeen (2016 to 2020) <https://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/our-work/imaginingaberdeen/>

Seen and Heard Fife (2015 to 2020) <https://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/our-work/seenandheardfife/>

Alcohol Free Childhood <https://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/our-work/alcohol-free-childhood-consultation/>

Screensavers/Mind Yer Time <https://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/our-work/screensavers/>

2019

National Sitting <https://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/national-sitting-2019-makerightsreal/>

Scottish Learner Panel <https://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/our-work/past-work/learner-panel/>

What kind of Edinburgh? <https://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/our-work/what-kind-of-edinburgh/>

Democracy Matters (Local democracy, decision-making and power)

<https://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/our-work/democracy-matters-consultation/>

Children as Human Rights Defenders <https://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/our-work/children-human-rights-defenders/>

Children Create (Studying Physical Activity in Children's Environments across Scotland) <https://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/our-work/children-create/>

Manor Park Parliament <https://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/our-work/manor-park-parliament/>

Children's Rights in Scotland (Action Plan for Progressing Children's Rights in Scotland) <https://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/childrens-rights-in-scotland/>

2018

National Sitting <https://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/our-work/childrensparliament-national-sitting-2018/>

Review of Part 1 of the Children Scotland Act 1995

<https://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/our-work/past-work/children-scotland-act-1995/>

School Food <https://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/our-work/past-work/school-food/>

Best Start Grant <https://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/our-work/past-work/best-start-grant/>

Child Poverty <https://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/our-work/past-work/child-poverty/>

Age of Criminal Responsibility <https://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/our-work/past-work/crim-resp/>

Dunkeld and Birnam A9 Project <https://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/our-work/dunkeld-birnam/>

A focus on the National Outcomes

Education

This national outcome is currently expressed as follows:

Education

We are well educated, skilled and able to contribute to society

We learn throughout our lives and find knowledge in varied and sometimes surprising places. Through learning we grow as individuals and as a nation, and as such, we must recognise and support excellence in teaching, research and innovation for all learners in all educational contexts.

Vision

We have an education system we can all take part in, and which inspires us to reach our potential whatever that may be. We understand that the desire to learn continues throughout life and that being curious, creative, skilled and knowledgeable is good for us, our society and economy. We value our teachers, educators and academics and do all we can to achieve the highest standards across our learning and research. We work with partners in business, industry, science and academia to ensure we lead the world in new thinking and have the talents and abilities to flourish in future.

Our work

Children's Parliament supports children to reflect on their experience of school and learning. Our flagship education programme *Dignity in School* is funded by the Gordon Cook Foundation. We place the idea of human dignity at the heart of all our work across the education system. We have engaged in the Scottish Government's Education Reform process and published joint work with Scottish Youth Parliament and Together. We have engaged with the National Discussion that emerged as a recommendation from the report by Professor Kenneth Muir on Education Reform. Other work has reported the experience of girls in school, explored the responses to racism that are needed across the system, and addressed how our education system needs to support children in terms of learning, information and support for mental health. We also support children to reflect on life at home, also a fundamentally important setting for learning. By clearly stating a view that education is lifelong, and happening across the child's life, then we can properly give equal value in terms of this national outcome to early years settings, school learning and home and community-based learning.

What have children told us?

“It is important to have someone who we trust and who can relate to us, as this helps us do our best in school.” MCP

“I’m pretty sure the government gives the teachers what we need to learn so we don’t really get a say.” MCP

“When something happens and the teacher gets mad at you, I think there should be a different way of dealing with it. We’ve talked about this with our teacher as it’s a bit shameful. You do something, he takes you out and you can see through the window that he’s shouting at you or speaking to you about something. And when you come back in, everybody is like ‘oh, what were you talking about?’ I think it should be a different way. It’s shameful. Everybody can see that you’re in trouble.” MCP

“The teacher doesn’t always see my hand.” MCP

“Racism hurts children and adults, and it happens too much today.” MCP

“I’d like the Scottish Government to put children’s rights in the curriculum in more depth.” MCP

“Learning from others is an important part of education. We do that every day, others inspire you and give you ideas – this was what was missed most during home learning, I think.” MCP

“I think we need to learn more about rights. My family told me things I never learned in school.” MCP

“We all have our own Chrome Book. We use them in lessons. Sometimes the internet is slow, and it doesn’t work.” MCP

“In our healthy, happy and safe school friends would be the most important thing because without them you wouldn’t want to learn as school would be boring, like a prison. We want to change our school so there are no arguments or bullying. People would all want to play with one another.” MCP

“Children might be more excited to go to school if teachers have to respect them.” MCP

“If you go to a school that isn’t doing well and everyone knows that it makes you feel negative about going and learning. It makes you embarrassed.” MCP

- **The needs of the individual child: *being seen*.** Children tell us that they are not always seen as an individual, that their needs are not understood or met. They often feel they need to fit in to a system. Children tell us that the most important thing that impacts on wellbeing at school is positive relationships with teachers.
- **Gender Equality in Education and Learning:** Our work with girls in primary school and early secondary school has highlighted a litany of shared experiences of sexism, sexual harassment, gender-based harassment and exclusion from subjects or spaces in the school estate. While the experience of girls in this regard goes beyond the school gates, our work has identified where change needs to happen within the education system. Girls have identified the need for training for adults, that there must be both challenge and support for boys to understand and change behaviours and attitudes, for action to make all spaces within schools safe and accessed equally, for the curriculum to be reviewed with girls to identify bias and exclusion, to a need for mandated reporting and action on abuses.
- **Anti-racist education:** Children have the right to non-discrimination, and to education which develops respect for differences, and challenges all aspects of discrimination and prejudice. Children tell us that anti-racist education means support for children who experience racism and that strategies that prevent or respond to racism in school should be shaped by children of colour alongside professional people of colour. All children need to learn about how racism impacts on people. Across the educational experience of all children there should be more positive representation and learning about the achievements of people of colour.
- **Play, sport, learning outdoors and Learning for Sustainability:** Children want adults to play with them more. Children tell us they want more P.E. and opportunities to play in the school day. Children like additional after school, lunchtime, and weekend sports at school, as well as community-based opportunities. Children say that facilities in primary school need to be better. One of the positive outcomes of Covid mitigation has been increased opportunities for learning outdoors, with a reviewed focus on teaching and learning about climate and the environment. In the national outcome *Environment*, we focus more on the review of the national commitments to Learning for Sustainability.
- **Shouting and punishment:** If there is one issue that comes up repeatedly when children talk about school it is shouting. It exemplifies much of what is problematic about the ethos and experience of school; other examples might

be unfair or harsh punishment, use of sarcasm or embarrassing or shaming a child, or the withdrawal of opportunities to play or take part in sport used as punishment. A common adult response when we raise the issue of shouting, or indeed these other examples, is that *it doesn't happen here*. We would suggest that adults need to reflect on this, take some time to observe and listen. Or ask children. One of our Corona Times Journalists reported in 2020: *"You need to be more aware of when you are shouting. Children can do just fine without you being annoyed at them. So, one thing I would change is teachers making sure to put effort in being kind to the kids and not being rude for no reason"*.

- **Why are so many children not inspired by their educational experience?**
As part of the Education Reform engagement with children and young people they were asked the extent to which they agreed with statement: *I am having the best possible education experience*. Only 1 in 3 secondary education students agreed. When asked to agree/disagree with the statement: *My education meets my needs as a learner*, only half agreed. Across many of the adult/professional discussions and debates about our education system a commonly heard claim, including from the OECD, is that Curriculum for Excellence *offers an inspiring and widely supported philosophy of education*. Reflecting on their experience of our education system, the views of children and young people do not support such a claim.
- **The empathic teacher is the key.** A child's right to an education that is concerned with realising their fullest potential means getting alongside the child, valuing their lived experience, giving them love and care, and using our best professional knowledge and skills to make a positive difference. Teachers need to be, and need to be supported to be, reflective practitioners, developing the skills and confidence to be both supported and challenged by children. If Scotland is to be the best place to go to school, it needs to be the best place to be a teacher.
- **Education, expressed as teaching and learning, is a relational activity.** Rights-based relationships are based in kindness, empathy, trust and the core idea of human dignity. Further, learning is a joyful, natural, challenging and complex activity. Understanding this means that it is beholden upon us as adults, as educators, to fulfil our duty to engage the learner with dignity and respect. Children tell us that as they grow up their experience of positive, empathic relationships with teachers diminishes; these relationships are harder to find in a larger, busier secondary school environment. This, they tell us, needs to change.

- **Using technology to support learning:** The recent work led by Professor Kenneth Muir on Education Reform stated that it was a priority for the education system to consider how technology is used to support learning and assessment. We would suggest that the vision of the current national outcome is unachievable unless there is a significant review and investment in what technology is available in schools. Children tell us that even when technology is available, it might be shared across classes, oftentimes it does not work or there is poor Wi-Fi connection. Where there have been important efforts to provide children with laptops, tablets or Chromebooks these may have limited use at home when families cannot afford an internet connection. Children's experiences of online learning or use of technology is also either enhanced or limited by the skills and confidence of the teacher.
- **Children have helped us to understand that attainment and learner voice need to be framed as human rights issues.** Scottish Government has identified the attainment gap experienced by children from our most disadvantaged communities, so recognising that there are specific and complex barriers to learning and achievement for some children. We need to understand and overcome these barriers before we can ensure their experience of school and of learning meets the minimum standards set with UNCRC incorporation. Children place a natural focus on the *experience* of being a learner, on the relationships that nurture and enable positive learner self-perception. Ability alone is not enough: how we think about ourselves matters too. The education system is committed to extending learner participation within what is called an empowered system, yet a minority of children, as expressed to Children's Parliament in the 2020 *How are you Doing?* surveys, agree that they have a choice in what they learn.

Reviewing this National Outcome

While the National Outcome *Children and Young People* refers to schools, we feel it is important that this national outcome pays more explicit attention to the parts of the education system where we find children, from early years through primary school and into secondary school and of course in community-based learning.

This National Outcome needs to articulate that, as learners, children and young people have a right to an education within a system that builds on the purposes of education defined in the UNCRC, specifically Article 29, with the purposes of

education further described in the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child General Comment 1². Article 29 states:

States Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to:

- (a) The development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential;
- (b) The development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations;
- (c) The development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own;
- (d) The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin;
- (e) The development of respect for the natural environment.

To be clear, ensuring our system is rights-based is not in the gift of schools or agencies that are part of the system. Following UNCRC incorporation it will be law, and all public bodies will have legal responsibilities to further the rights of the child in this regard.

This national outcome would benefit from a recognition and acknowledgement that parents and carers are the child's first, most important and often lifelong primary educator. Education, or more accurately learning, is not just the domain of the professional educator or formal provider.

This national outcome could make clear links with the outcome that focuses on *Human Rights*. Children tell us that the experience of the education system is different if you are a girl and if you are Black/a person of colour. Our National Outcomes can be a place where we articulate our challenge to all forms of discrimination and hate.

With tackling poverty a clear policy priority this national outcome on *Education* could articulate more clearly that as a nation we will tackle barriers to education, including poverty and gender inequality, so giving more of a direct read over to other National Outcomes such as *Poverty* and *Human Rights*.

² General Comment No. 1: The Aims of Education (article 29) (2001)
<https://www.ohchr.org/en/resources/educators/human-rights-education-training/general-comment-no-1-aims-education-article-29-2001>

Finally, a view on the impending establishment of key new national agencies for qualifications, inspection and quality improvement, which are all part of the Education Reform process. These processes to date, and emerging descriptions of what comes next, are simply not rights based. The emerging language of ‘learner voice’ is passive and weak. It is not the transformational change promised. We would pose a question: What is the purpose of National Outcomes, sitting in a National Performance Framework, when key developments in the system fail to be grounded in the rights of the child and the aspirational vision we claim to have?

Communities

This national outcome is currently expressed as follows:

Communities

We live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe

Our communities are shaped by the quality and character of the places we live in and the people we live among. In this Outcome we recognise that to be healthy and happy as a nation we must nurture and protect our local resources, environments and all who live in them.

Vision

Our communities are pleasant places to live where everyone has a warm, appropriate, efficient and affordable home. We value excellent and innovative design and are committed to sustainable planning and transport. We believe that access to greenspace, nature and other leisure activities positively enhances our lives and health. We have high quality, affordable and accessible public services and facilities that positively enhance our lives. We focus our investment on deprived communities and disadvantaged rural areas.

We live in friendly, vibrant and cohesive communities which value diversity and support those in need. We are encouraged to volunteer, take responsibility for our community and engage with decisions about it. Our communities are resilient, safe and have low levels of crime.

Our older people are happy and fulfilled and Scotland is seen as the best place in the world to grow older. We are careful to ensure no-one is isolated, lonely or lives in poverty or poor housing. We respect the desire to live independently and provide the necessary support to do so where possible. We recognise that older people have particular needs around financial advice, mobility and transport, home improvements, heating, technology and the internet which require additional support.

Our work

Children's Parliament works with children across the domains of their lives, reflecting on home, school and community. In all areas children tell us what they and other members of their families and communities need to ensure their shared rights to be healthy, happy and safe. While children talk with us about the people and spaces that make up their community, they also talk about the services that are available. Children have helped us consider how we can use Children's Rights Impact Assessments. How we listen to and engage with children in consideration of

their communities will be an important part of how we make rights real following UNCRC incorporation.

What have children told us?

“Children need to live in environments that are safe and clean. Trees can help with that.” MCP

“The road is often too busy, there are a lot of cars - too many cars.” MCP

“A positive community environment is really important because families need healthy outdoor spaces.” MCP

“Pick up dog poo!!! Do it!” MCP

“Sometimes we are scared to play in the park because of broken bottles and syringes, or adults and young people drinking. When this happens, we can’t socialise with our friends.” MCP

“Adults should be kind, friendly and not shout at children and young people.” MCP

“We do not want a negative reputation depending on where we live.” MCP

“Parks should get cleaned regularly and have more bins. Walkways need more light to feel safe.” MCP

“We have technology we can use against climate change – the name of the technology is a tree!” MCP

“In the community not many children help to make decisions. Children don’t get to decide what the money is spent on, they also don’t get to vote or choose who gets to be in charge. For the very few that do have a say in making decisions they don’t enjoy it. Children are barely involved, we can make some decisions, but they are boring, and we don’t care about them.” MCP

- **Children’s concerns, aspirations and needs are often no different to adults in their community:** MCPs (Members of Children’s Parliament) from across Scotland have worked on a range of community-based reflections and formal consultations that have evidenced that their experiences and perspectives are often akin to those of adults, although their solutions to challenges can be more creative. From considerations of the dualling of the A9 in Dunkeld and Birnam, to the future of the Falkland Estate in Fife, to community/city planning in Aberdeen and Edinburgh, children often prioritise protection and active engagement with nature (whether in urban or rural settings). They are concerned with feelings of safety and effective ways to tackle bullying and violence and promote positive prosocial behaviours, a desire to tackle social isolation and to be able to play, good public transport and that every family should have ‘enough money to live on’ (this is discussed further in the national outcome *Poverty*). That perspectives are alike across the generations should be no surprise, but this can only be revealed to adults when they choose to listen and help create opportunities for children to be reflective and insightful.

- **The value of intergenerational communication and relationships:** Following on from the point above, much of our community-based work seeks to bring children and adults together, either as fellow community members or in terms of children meeting adult duty bearers from public services. It is in the interaction that learning takes place, it is our job at Children’s Parliament to prepare all parties and participants to meet with respect and good intention. This points to this national outcome needing to acknowledge more explicitly that communities of place are made up of many parts and that it is in the interaction of these parts that community cohesion is achieved. A final note on this for public bodies would be that work with communities needs adequate resourcing.

- **What would ‘public services and facilities that positively enhance our lives’ look like for children?** Or indeed for any citizen? It is interesting that this statement is found in the vision element of the national outcome, rather than read as a top line matter of lived experience. Children often tell us that things need to change now, be better now, they do not understand why so much of what they are asked about is framed as aspirational, as *vision*. So, the challenge we pose is that in our National Outcomes, and across the National Performance Framework, we should describe what public services need to be like, day-to-day, for the child or adult that engages with them. We would suggest we start with articulating the need for public services to be high quality, affordable and accessible as *the right of citizens*,

understanding that rights are basic entitlements, they are (as the expression goes) *the floor not the ceiling*.

- **The value of trees:** In the national outcome *Environment* we explore in more detail what children tell us about the natural environment, but we should flag in this space the importance children give to trees. Children tell us that in every community - urban, rural or island communities – we must protect existing trees and local species, plant more, and place trees at the heart of how we curate our natural spaces. Children tell us that trees make communities healthier and happier. In their work in support of the Climate Assembly, MCPs called for the creation of a national tree planting day which would see everyone plant a tree, every year.
- **Local democracy and having a say:** In an exploration of how local democracy works and in the development of best practice toward facilitating children's involvement in Children's Rights Impact Assessment, Children's Parliament has heard that there are ways to engage children: by having local Councillors come and meet children where they play, learn or hang out; by holding meetings like Community Councils in places where children and young people feel relaxed and can be invited to contribute; by involving children in participatory budgeting, giving children resources to make decisions on; by making community actions and protests safe, welcoming and inclusive of children and young people; by making participation at school work better for every child.

Reviewing this National Outcome

The top line text for this national outcome could be more accessible in its language and simply state: *We live in communities that are healthy, happy and safe*.

As it is, this national outcome could go further to give appropriate value and acknowledgement of the rights of those who live in geographical communities, and communities of interest, to inform and influence decisions that impact on their communities. As we journey towards being a human rights focused nation there is a need to commit to meaningful community engagement and community empowerment and to do this with citizens of all ages. The national outcome needs to talk about local democracy.

In this national outcome as well as others we would question the framing of so much of it as *vision*. As if what is stated is a dream, can only be imagined. We need our National Outcomes to be stated as basic entitlements, the rights of all citizens.

While the National Performance framework must address the lived experience and rights of older people it is odd that this group is identified in this national outcome, when their needs and rights (like children) sit across all National Outcomes.

Health

This national outcome is currently expressed as follows:

Health

We are healthy and active

Our NHS is pivotal to our health and happiness as a nation, and we are dedicated to supporting and equipping it to face the challenges it has now and in future. We also understand that our health is dependent on a wide variety of factors and actors, and we therefore need to take a whole system approach to promoting good health and activity.

Vision

We regard the health of all our people as being of utmost importance. Consequently, we live long, healthy and active lives regardless of where we come from. We are all able to access world class, appropriate and free/affordable health, social care and dental services. We cherish and protect the NHS as a force for good in our lives and provide the necessary investment and planning to ensure our health and social care systems are viable over the long term.

We prioritise health and wellbeing at national and local government levels and actively implement healthy public policy. We use evidence intelligently to continuously improve and challenge existing healthcare models. Our approach is integrated, preventative and person-centred. We are focused on resolving needs in order to achieve positive health, care and wellbeing outcomes.

We implement a whole system approach to health and wellbeing which targets harmful health behaviours early on and from different angles. We have revolutionised our food culture and prioritise affordable, healthy food and local food production. We have addressed the availability of unhealthy food options and are combatting food and drink industry facilitation of ill-health. We have developed a healthier, responsible attitude to smoking, alcohol and drug use. We are active and have widespread engagement with sport and exercise. Our awareness of mental health and suicide has resulted in more immediate, comprehensive and successful support for those in need.

Our work

Children's Parliament supports children to understand their right to be healthy, happy and safe, and to think about this across their lives: at home, at school and in the community. We talk a lot with children about their health and wellbeing, sometimes explicitly but inevitably whenever we play and work together aspects of health and wellbeing are a part of the conversation. Our work through the pandemic was ground-breaking in that it captured children's lived experience, both online and the real world, using both quantitative and qualitative tools. We have also explored aspects of health and wellbeing in school life, including in terms of learning via the health and wellbeing curriculum. Exploring health also means talking about Scotland's relationship with alcohol and tobacco. An important theme of our work in the reporting period has been around mental health and wellbeing.

What have children told us?

"There is a mental war going on now. Adults don't hear about children's mental health." MCP

"It feels like a weight has been lifted from you when you get to talk about something that is important to you." MCP

"If we don't feel loved, then we can become lonely. Love is what kids need most." MCP

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

"No one asks us about alcohol and suddenly when you think about it, you realise it's all around you all the time." MCP

"Sometimes it's on these big boards [in shops]. It says buy 2 for £1 or something like that – it's adverts for alcohol. Or in magazines. There's always adverts for alcohol." MCP

"Some children aren't getting out to play and not as much fresh air. It's not good for their health and happiness." MCP

"I thought that it'd be good if teachers told their class a time of day that they could come and speak to them. Every day, it could be in the middle of lunch or something and the teacher says, 'you can find me here and have five minutes if you need to talk to me'." MCP

“You might be stopped from getting help when your parents, family and friends are too busy, or when you’re too scared or embarrassed to say anything.” MCP

“Make learning about mental, emotional and physical wellbeing a regular part of timetabled classes. Listen to children’s experiences and feelings through regular check-ins, talking about feelings and learning how to manage emotions. It should be like this for all children, not just when a great teacher thinks it is a good approach.” MCP

“Sometimes adults need help so they can help us eat healthily and be active and give us compliments and encourage us.” MCP

- **The impact of Covid and the meaning of recovery:** Discussion about our nation’s health is happening in the context of post pandemic recovery. Children’s Parliament has been reporting on children’s experiences since March 2020 and we continue to report on the impacts, particularly on children’s mental health and wellbeing. However, it is worth reflecting on what we mean by recovery because this impacts on how we view the future of the nation’s health. It is possible for example to think about recovery as a *return to a normal state of health, mind, or strength*. The problem with this definition is the word *normal*. In terms of health and wellbeing, particularly for some communities and populations, pre-pandemic normal was not good enough. We need to look to a more nuanced or social understanding or definition of recovery, particularly relevant when we acknowledge the levels of anxiety and other manifestations of poor mental health across our population of children and young people. Through this lens, recovery means something like *a process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live a self-directed life, and strive to reach their full potential. ...Recovery is person-driven and supported through relationships and social networks*³. This feels like a child/person-centred and rights-based understanding of recovery as we think about health, rather than a systems-focused approach.
- **The importance of mental health/Accessing mental health information and support:** Children tell us that there are few opportunities to learn about mental health and wellbeing, this being distinct from being able to access support for mental health, which is dependent on the setting, more patchwork than pattern. In recent work Children’s Parliament has worked with children to develop a programme of learning about mental health and

³ What is recovery? <https://medicine.yale.edu/psychiatry/care/cmhc/recovery/>

wellbeing to be published soon as the *Feelings Inspectors*; an innovative tool for learning and an important part of education as prevention.

In terms of children's mental health, we learned from our work through the pandemic, and from our large scale *How are you doing?* surveys, that the mental health of children aged 8 to 14 deteriorated; this was especially so for girls aged 12 to 14. Our National Outcomes would benefit from consideration of the importance of sex as a characteristic in terms of both experiences and emerging solutions or responses.

Our work for Comhairle nan Eilean Siar/Western Isles Council explored what children seek in terms of responses to worries and to bolster good mental health. These themes were returned to when exploring, in a national project for Scottish Government/COSLA Mental Health Joint Delivery Board in 2023, what children want in terms of access to mental health information and support. If our National Outcomes are intended to foster understanding, and support action on mental health, then children need to see adults and services deliver on tackling bullying, social exclusion and loneliness, to make play spaces and opportunities available to all, to offer confidential and play based opportunities to talk about feelings, and for adults in their lives to listen and not judge.

- **Learning for and about health:** It is a noticeable omission that the national outcome does not talk about how we need to learn about health and wellbeing. Curriculum for Excellence states that all children should have access to learn about these topic areas: mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing; physical education, physical activity and sport; food and health; relationships, sexual health and parenthood; substance misuse. With some exceptions, including some dedicated teachers and other adults in school, the Health and Wellbeing curriculum is often poorly facilitated; this becomes more serious in secondary schools where children tell us that the curriculum is more likely to be driven by subjects that are linked to exams. Children tell us that their school day must make more space and time for learning about health and that this learning must be built from positive learner/teacher relationships and an experience of being in a safe and creative learning environment.
- **An alcohol-free childhood:** Children contributed to the Scottish Government's consultation on its Alcohol Framework 2018: Preventing Harm. The concept explored was whether children could live an alcohol-free childhood. Children told us that alcohol permeates every aspect of their lives: from marketing and availability in shops, marketing in sports and cultural spaces in real and virtual environments, exposure at family gatherings or at

home, and in the streets even as they walk to school and people are outside pubs smoking. As we submit this report Scottish Government is consulting on what it intends to do about marketing of alcohol, including options that are not the ban children want to see. The current national outcome refers to “combatting food and drink industry facilitation of ill-health” and wants to see a “responsible attitude to smoking, alcohol and drug use”. If we reflect for a moment on the damage alcohol brings to childhoods, and the lifelong harm that starts with alcohol marketing to groom a future audience for these products, we can see how we need to make firmer commitments in our National Outcomes/National Performance Framework.

- **Physical activity:** The national outcome references *being active* and *support and exercise*. In our work with University of Glasgow in 2019 children tell us that children in rural areas have less access to sports facilities or organised activities; that transport to sports and leisure is a barrier to children who live in families without cars; that children with disabilities often cannot access clubs or open access facilities; that costs are increasingly becoming a barrier to participation; that outdoor play and sports areas can be poorly maintained and feel unsafe; that some children cannot afford the equipment or clothing that they require to take part, especially in winter months; that some children rely on school and out of school provision because their family does not support their participation; that girls have fewer opportunities or can feel excluded. All of this points to the need to better frame *being active* and *support and exercise* as matters of equality and inclusion.

Reviewing this National Outcome

This national outcome would have greater resonance with people if it were more self-evidently about people, families, communities rather than overtly about the NHS. The top line description that sits under the title feels jargonistic and does not easily speak to the public as opposed to providers. In general, this national outcome reads as somewhat disconnected from the people and communities we want to understand it.

In terms of possibly rephrasing this national outcome, our reference to how we understand what post pandemic recovery means might prove useful in rephrasing; so while not denying the importance of services and the NHS we might think about something along these lines in the body of the text: *We are a nation that seeks to support every person, young and old, to improve their health and wellness, live a self-directed life and strive to reach their full potential. Coming out of the pandemic we understand that recovery is person-driven and supported through relationships and social networks.*

One last point on the use of the word *responsible* in this outcome, used in reference to *responsible attitudes*. When *being responsible* is linked to *attitudes* then we stray into judgement and the suggestion that there is a right and a wrong way to be. Who judges this notion of being *responsible*?

Poverty

This national outcome is currently expressed as follows:

Poverty

We tackle poverty by sharing opportunities, wealth and power more equally

Scotland is a wealthy country, and we have the resources, ability and commitment to provide a decent life for all our people. Through this outcome we will work together across political parties and sectors to identify and address the root causes of disadvantage and set in place the actions to eradicate poverty for good.

Vision

We are committed to eradicating poverty and hunger in Scotland. We are addressing the links between poverty and income, housing, ethnicity, gender, health, disability and age. Our achievements, potential and life choices are not decided at birth or by class or background. We are all able to enjoy financial security, have a decent job, home and a good life.

Our work

Children tell us about family life and about their communities. Our work during the pandemic highlighted children's awareness of their families' struggles with money and having enough to provide for them. With the so-called 'cost of living' crisis being much reported across media, children are also very aware of the challenges faced by many in the community. Children acknowledge the stigma that is associated with poverty and show great empathy to children living in poverty; they understand poverty as an infringement of rights.

What have children told us?

"If your parents are stressed about money and argue a lot, it'll impact you and you feel like you can't do anything about it." MCP

"Children have the right to a decent standard of living. Some homes aren't very clean because of cigarettes and alcohol. Some parents aren't responsible because of drugs and alcohol. The Government can help massively by providing a bit extra money so children can have a better start in life." MCP

“There is equality and there is equity – it’s hard to feel normal when you are living differently from other children.” MCP

“Nothing is truly free. You still might have to pay for the bus fare.” MCP

“My mum gives us our tea, but sometimes she doesn’t have enough money for tea.” MCP

“My mum had a job, working all the time, but now she doesn’t get as many shifts so we’re struggling at the moment.” MCP

“I think that children should be treated fairly and should always have what they need for a normal kid’s life.” MCP

“Education is free, but a lot of things are not.” MCP

“Although children have a right to food, not all children in Scotland have enough food.” MCP

“Children’s rights are the rights children have, like the right to have a good home, good food and a good community to live in.” MCP

“We went to a private school for a day recently and we got really good school lunches. It was free! You get macaroni with broccoli, and you could have fruit, ice cream and a drink too. It was delicious. I think we should all get the same opportunities to have good food at school, like private schools.” MCP

“About once a year we get one big project which we need the internet for at home. For those who don’t have it, they have to do the homework after school with the teacher.” MCP

- **Children’s awareness and understanding of poverty:** In Children’s Parliament work during the pandemic our *How are you Doing?* survey reported that 1 in 3 children said that their parents or carers worry about having enough money for their family. MCPs have chosen to take the cost of living as a key topic when they meet the Scottish Cabinet this year. Children have told us that worries about money and poverty are stresses on family life. It can be cold at home. Children cannot do the things their friends are doing. Children tell us that when their clothes are old, when they appear unkempt, they are excluded and bullied.

- **Poverty and education:** While important work has been done on the *Cost of the School Day*⁴ children still tell us about the impact of poverty on things like accessing trips and activities, school uniform, stationery and books, being left out because they can't afford to do things with friends, being hungry and worrying about families having enough.
- **Hunger and the importance of food at school:** The national outcome currently references ending hunger. Children tell us that access to healthy food and enough to eat should be the experience of every child, it should be acknowledged as their right. For many, access to food at school, from breakfast clubs to school milk, to lunch, to snack at the after-school club, ensures they are not hungry. Although mostly appreciative of food at school it is often not of the quality or quantity children want and need, nor does it offer enough choice, it can be poorly presented or settings within which food is consumed might not be comfortable and children can be rushed.
- **Cost of living:** There is much framing of some of these issues currently as being about 'cost of living'. Children tell us that as a nation we can do these things to address situations when families do not have enough to get by:
 - Ensure children and their families have access to computers and the internet.
 - Make social activities and clubs cheaper for families.
 - Provide extra support for single parents.
 - Reduce the price in gas, electricity and utility bills.
 - Put more money towards benefits.
 - Create flexible working policies for parents.
 - Build more council / social housing for families.
 - Provide money / support to families in need of food.
 - Open more foodbanks.
 - Make clubs free or cheaper so more children can attend and socialise.
 - Help people keep track of what they're spending.
 - Talk with children who are living in poverty and listen to their suggestions.

Reviewing this National Outcome

Poverty is the greatest human rights infringement. It undermines the inherent dignity of every person touched by it. We ask Scottish Government to make this bold and clear statement in this national outcome. We suggest that the terminology of *poverty and hunger* remains as a focus, rather than the more euphemistic *cost of living*.

There is an urgent need to state as a nation we believe in *the right to food*. Only when named as a human right, for children and for adults, will we give this both a sense of urgency and some power.

⁴ Child Poverty Action Group <https://cpag.org.uk/cost-of-the-school-day>

Human Rights

This national outcome is currently expressed as follows:

Human Rights

We respect, protect and fulfil human rights and live free from discrimination

We recognise and protect the intrinsic value of all people and are a society founded on fairness, dignity, equality and respect. We demonstrate our commitment to these principles through the way we behave with and treat each other, in the rights, freedoms and protections we provide, and in the democratic, institutional and legal frameworks through which we exercise power.

Vision

We recognise the fundamental equality of all humans and strive to reflect this in our day-to-day functioning as a nation. We stand together to challenge unfairness and our equalities legislation, law and practice are world leading. We uphold human rights, democracy and the rule of law, and our justice systems are proportionate, fair and effective. We provide the care people need with love, understanding and dignity. We have robust, independent means to hold government to account and take an active interest in politics and civic life.

Our work

Children's Parliament is a human rights agency. We work with children who, when they become members of Children's Parliament, also become Human Rights Defenders. The powerful notion of being a human rights defender⁵ helps children to connect with a global movement and to understand that they can work with others to protect and promote human rights, and that when they do, they are active agents, not passive recipients of rights.

Our work in the realm of human rights is undertaken in an exciting context: incorporation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child into Scots law. Whilst this has experienced challenges from the UK Government and therefore delay, we believe that incorporation of United Nations Human Rights treaties into

⁵ The United Nations describes the role of human rights defenders here:

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-human-rights-defenders/about-human-rights-defenders#:~:text=Human%20rights%20defenders%20seek%20the,economic%2C%20social%20and%20cultural%20rights>

law is the only way to ensure that Scotland becomes a nation of human rights defenders.

Our work with children provides evidence that human rights realisation is about hearts and minds; by this we mean there is a need to ensure understanding, awareness and the intellectual support and commitment for human rights. There is also the need to build on the more personal and emotional pledge that this requires.

What have children told us?

“Children’s rights are important, very important! It’s actually a bit of care and love for you!” MCP

“Listen to children, we have good ideas.” MCP

“It’s one of your rights to know your rights.” MCP

“Children’s rights are important because they are essential to make a child’s life liveable.” MCP

“I think you should make children’s rights law because it will keep a lot more children safe.” MCP

“It’s important for children’s rights to become the law because it’s for our protection.” MCP

“I think that incorporating children’s rights is important because some people don’t even know what the UNCRC is.” MCP

“If we are talking, be quiet and listen.” MCP

“I think that if the UNCRC was incorporated fully, happiness and school performance would rise.” MCP

“Don’t shout at us. Treat us with dignity.” MCP

“Everyone should be heard, and kids also have a creative side so you may get some new ideas.” MCP

- **Putting rights in law/lessons from our UNCRC incorporation journey:** For as long as Children’s Parliament has worked with children, they have asked that their rights be put into law, and that the best way to do this would be through UNCRC incorporation. Despite unanimous Scottish Parliament support in 2021 incorporation has not yet been achieved, but in the time that is taken to resolve challenges posed by the UK Government we have been able to see where it has been possible to make progress anyway, and where the tensions are apparent. Throughout this process those supporting incorporation realise that incorporation is not a cliff edge, rather those agencies supporting the realisation of rights have been speaking about *progressive realisation*. However, with this optimistic notion in mind our sense is that progress on realisation of rights is slow, and we have concerns that in government and public services many are preparing more for complaints and litigation than they are for the cultural and behaviour change that will realise respectful rights-based relationships.

There is of course broader support for incorporation of other UN human rights treaties: the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW); the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD); the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). If this is the road we are on, then this national outcome becomes even more important to who we are as a nation. *However*, what current experiences tell us is that if we are to advance with broader human rights commitments there needs to be some deep and honest reflection about what we are learning from the process of UNCRC incorporation.

- **Where we make rights real:** The lives of children are more contained than the lives of adults; by that we mean the younger the child the more important it is to acknowledge the importance of the domain of home and the key role that early learning and childcare and then school plays in the life of the child. Children tell us day in day out about how adults at home and in care and education express love and understanding, and when they do not. It is in these spaces that we make rights real and so our national outcome needs to acknowledge these are the spaces in which rights exist or are infringed.
- **Rights in the early years:** With support from the Cattanach Trust, Children’s Parliament’s Year of Childhood in 2021 gave much focus to the Early Years Sector, namely identifying and amplifying good rights-based practice in early years settings, highlighting impact for children, families and communities. While children will have a growing understanding of rights it is

often in their lived experience that our duties to protect, promote and fulfil the rights of the child will be evident. As the national outcome states: *We demonstrate our commitment to these principles through the way we behave with and treat each other.* The key challenge is how we parent or provide services which deliver on the principles, especially when the rights holders have little or no power. In this sense a national outcome has no meaning unless it relates to appropriate support, training or resources that support those with duties and power to make the principles real. Children's Parliament has developed a 5-pillar model for the early years sector which exemplifies how this meaningful approach can be supported.

- **How professionals make rights real:** Developing the ideas already stated, the individual professional person who engages with children day-to-day is a key ally in the delivery of the experience of rights for children whether at school, within service provision, or in the community. As the rights of the child enshrined in the UNCRC become law, Members of Children's Parliament have investigated how professionals make rights real, producing a bank of resources, training and support materials for professionals in their lives. With UNCRC incorporation imminent, Children's Parliament is currently a partner in the development of a Skills and Knowledge Framework and associated Training Plan for the public sector workforce. In short, the vision expressed in the National Outcomes needs to acknowledge the importance of resourcing change, so that we can develop and demonstrate rights awareness, to facilitation of rights day-to-day, to ensuring that we are a nation of rights champions and defenders.
- **Child Rights Impact Assessments:** Making rights real means understanding the potential impacts on children arising from laws, policies, budgets, programmes and services as they are being developed. CRIAs (Child Rights Impact Assessments) are recognised by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child as general measures of implementation for the UNCRC. Members of Children's Parliament have investigated how best to involve children in the process of Child Rights Impact Assessments. A CRIA mainstreams a human rights approach, ensuring those impacted are informed, engaged and listened to. This is especially important when the CRIA process can help identify unintended or negative impacts, or even when impacts are neutral but could be improved. What this points to is the need for decision makers and public bodies to be aware of their responsibilities and to build into the system ways of fully considering plans and decisions through the lens of children's human rights.

- **Making participation the habit of a lifetime, while understanding that rights are about so much more.** While we appreciate the limits of what a national outcome can capture and commit us to, there is some useful learning from UNCRC incorporation that should be considered. Children’s Parliament is concerned about what can feel like an imbalance in the commitment to participation over other aspects of human rights; it can feel like there is a rush to offer or prioritise *participation* experiences to children as rights holders. At Children’s Parliament we seek to offer meaningful, safe experiences of ‘having your say’ and do so in ways so that children are inspired to make participation the habit of a lifetime, not be put off by a one-off experience. We also balance a commitment to participation rights with what are often called the other ‘Ps’: the right to *provision* or services, for example, so that health, education and play is possible; the right to *protection* from all harm; and the right to *prevention* of infringements of their rights.

- **Human Rights education and beyond...:** Children are focused on the lived experience of rights; these are experienced through rights-based relationships which are founded on kindness, empathy, trust and the core idea of human dignity. The national outcome itself is focused on the notion that “we recognise and protect the intrinsic value of all people” and “we recognise the fundamental equality of all humans...” yet there is no articulation of how this recognition comes about. We cannot assume it is intuitive and shared, indeed we know it is not because we can identify rights infringements on a daily basis. It is worth addressing the role of human rights education for all citizens. By this we do not mean rote learning of articles of a convention, rather we mean building a good knowledge base to understand what human rights ideas and principles are, which is then followed by creative, inclusive, experiential learning that builds rights awareness into the day-to-day personal and professional relationships people have.

- **Building a nation of Unfearties:** To mark Children’s Parliament’s 21st birthday, we initiated the inspiring and brave band of *Unfearties*. Since 2017, 1265 people, including doctors, nurses, teachers, parents, carers, civil servants, local authority workers, third sector practitioners, United Nations deputy high commissioners, and the First Minister of Scotland have joined the movement. *Unfearties* are individuals who are courageous in discussing children’s issues, are making a difference in children’s lives, and who are willing to speak up for, and stand alongside, children. Our national outcome currently states the need to stand together and uphold rights, our contribution regarding *Unfeartiness* is to try to encapsulate our distinctive Scottish spin on the idea of human rights defenders. We offer the idea to others and would love to see it reflected in our National Outcomes.

Reviewing this National Outcome

During our work through 2020, in the context of the pandemic, children were asked whether they felt that their rights were respected by others; 25% of children responded 'no'. This being so, the national outcome would be strengthened by stating that our vision requires commitment to UNCRC incorporation as well as to the other human rights treaties as part of a Scottish Human Rights Bill. Only when rights are enshrined in law are they fully able to protect all citizens.

Equally, the national outcome needs to express an understanding and commitment to make rights real for all in the public and private domains of life; in terms of children, rights do not end, nor are they compromised, when the child goes home, or goes to school.

This national outcome could helpfully articulate an understanding of the ideas of *rights holders* and *duty bearers*. Rights holders are not passive recipients, nor are human rights in the gift of duty bearers. For our nation to understand the power and meaning of human rights the national outcome must clearly state that human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated.

The national outcome could explicitly prompt public bodies to reflect on and take action to ensure that their practices are world leading. The National Outcomes states that: *We have robust, independent means to hold government to account...* One important way to do this is to have meaningful human rights Impact Assessments of all laws, policies, budgets, programmes and services as they are being developed.

There is one final challenge with this national outcome: it's very offer as a distinct item. One challenge of supporting the process of implementing the rights of the child has been to help adults/services understand that human rights are not another initiative, rather they are a foundation. A choice needs to be made: do we articulate human rights as a distinct national outcome, or do we ensure that human rights commitments and language and culture permeate every other stated national outcome?

Environment

This national outcome is currently expressed as follows:

Environment

We value, enjoy, protect and enhance our environment

Scotland is a beautiful country, and we are blessed with abundant natural resources and architecture to rival the best in the world. Through this Outcome we recognise that it is our duty to protect and enhance these assets as essential to our economy, culture, way of life and the wellbeing of future generations.

Vision

We see our natural landscape and wilderness as essential to our identity and way of life. We take a bold approach to enhancing and protecting our natural assets and heritage. We ensure all communities can engage with and benefit from nature and green space. We live in clean and unpolluted environments and aspire to being the greenest country in the world.

We are committed to environmental justice and preserving planetary resources for future generations. We consume and use our resources wisely, ethically and effectively and have an advanced recycling culture. We are at the forefront of carbon reduction efforts, renewable energy, sustainable technologies and biodiversity practice. We promote high quality, sustainable planning, design and housing. Our transport infrastructure is integrated, sustainable, efficient and reliable. We promote active travel, cycling and walking, and discourage car reliance and use particularly in towns and cities.

Our work

Children's Parliament has long focused on exploring with children where they live. This might start with their home, their street and neighbourhood. Then it extends to their village or town, the island or region they live in and their country. We also think of where we live as the planet we share. This area of work has been very busy in the period we consider in this report. With Scotland at the centre of global initiatives with COP26 the interest and opportunities children had to learn about and explore the environment and the climate emergency grew massively. Children's Parliament was delighted to be at the heart of much of this work, bringing children's voices to considerations here and internationally. We hope the response to this national outcome draws attention to the need to place children's rights and wellbeing at the heart of what we want now and in the future.

What have children told us?

“We love learning about our environment.” MCP

“Outdoor learning is sometimes just one week in the school year, it should be in every subject.” MCP

“If COP26 hadn’t happened, we wouldn’t have learned about global warming.” MCP

“Adults in Scottish Government and teachers should have climate education for them planned into every school year.” MCP

“There should be more time to be active and play. They are good for your health, give you more opportunities, teach you how to respect other people and learn communication skills.” MCP

“We don’t do enough about the environment at school.” MCP

“We should have solar panels and do more recycling at school.” MCP

“As it will affect our future, we need to know what is going on now.” MCP

“We didn’t even recycle in our school, like not at all, we didn’t even have recycling bins. So we petitioned the school to get recycling bins and we were successful, but the school wasn’t responsible for emptying them, it was the local council because they had some like contract or something with a cleaning company, and anyways they ended up not collecting the recycling bins when they were supposed to and they just overflowed and eventually got locked up and then taken away. Our school tried to help but it was the council’s decision, and they couldn’t do anything about it.” MCP

“We learn about climate change in school, and it is interesting, but sometimes I start to not care because I don’t know what to do about it.” MCP

“Learning about climate change is important to me because I want to feel safe and make sure that the planet works and stays sustainable.” MCP

“Through being involved in the Climate Assembly and other events with adult decision makers on the climate emergency, I’ve noticed that other adults around me

at school and at home have been inspired by our work. They've changed their attitudes and perspectives on climate change in one year." MCP

- **Childhood and the climate emergency:** Children are citizens now, and across the globe they are impacted by the climate crisis. Children tell us that it is imperative that we take action to tackle the climate crisis at home and in alliance with others. There is a sense of urgency in what children tell us; this challenges the notion that it is *the future* rather than *the now* that concerns or impacts on them.
- **Opportunities arising from COP26:** Children tell us that COP26 inspired many educators and schools to introduce children to learning about climate and sustainability. In doing so, and in seeing Scotland at the heart of a global event, this made children feel inspired to learn and do more. It remains to be seen whether COP26 has been a springboard or a one-off event in terms of learning in our schools.
- **The value of engaging children as partners in our response to the climate emergency:** Children's Parliament was delighted to be able to support MCPs to be part of Scotland's 2021 Climate Assembly. Adult Assembly members were respectful and inclusive of children's perspectives and the calls to action they offered; this was a genuinely impressive example of children's participation on both process and outcomes. Children's Calls to Action are detailed in the full report, (link provided earlier in the sources section), but it is worth highlighting overarching themes here which were: *diet and food* and the changes that are required; *land and sea use* which considered farming, trees and protecting wildlife and native species; *our lifestyle* which considered house building and homes, reusing and recycling and support for those struggling to heat and pay bills at home; *how we travel* which thought about electric cars, getting to school, cycling and public transport; *work and learning* which reflected on more green sector jobs, better learning about things we can all do that will help tackle the climate emergency. Our MCPs also brought international connection and recognition, for example taking their work to Mikiko Otani, Chair of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. She continues to take the children's messages across a range of international fora.
- **Learning about and for sustainability:** This national outcome does not yet recognise the importance of education for *all* citizens when it comes to how we look after the natural environment or understand and then act on the climate. Theoretically, all children in Scotland's schools have access to the part of the curriculum that is called Learning for Sustainability which covers several distinct but interrelated areas: outdoor learning, global citizenship

and learning about sustainable development and the climate emergency. We say theoretically because children tell us that access to this curriculum is something of a lottery, dependent on whether adults in the education system want to give access to it. During Covid and post pandemic children tell us there was increased opportunity for outdoor learning, but this was pragmatic rather than considered as part of the Learning for Sustainability offer. As stated above, many children tell us they had improved experiences of learning about sustainable development and the climate emergency because of a connection with COP26. When it comes to global citizenship children tell us they do 'rights education', oftentimes considering rights infringement experienced by children globally, but they do not necessarily learn about or experience rights day-to-day. Children tell us they want outdoor learning to be part of the day-to-day offer of the school day, and not just in early learning or primary school but in secondary school too. Children tell us they want to do more to learn about and act on children's human rights, climate emergency and sustainability; and they want to do this with adults alongside them.

Reviewing this National Outcome

The national outcome could make clear the need for education for all citizens, and commit our nation to ensuring learning for every child about the climate crisis within the curricular area Learning for Sustainability.

In the description of the calls to action from the children involved in the Climate Assembly we see that their interests are reflected in the national outcome. It would be helpful to simplify language and ensure that each of the children's key areas are described explicitly: *diet and food, land and sea use, our lifestyle, how we travel and work and learning.*

Children are intuitively international in their perspective, and they very much believe that environmental issues are often global issues. This national outcome might benefit from an acknowledgment that what we do here in Scotland must connect with global initiatives.

Culture

This national outcome is currently expressed as follows:

Culture

We are creative and our vibrant and diverse cultures are expressed and enjoyed widely

Scotland is a vibrant, modern country with a strong tradition of investment in the arts and creativity. We have world renowned festivals, music and film industries and a rich seam of storytelling and visual art which stretches back hundreds of years. In this Outcome we honour, celebrate and support our creative talent in all its wonderful diversity.

Vision

We take pride in being a vibrant and creative country. We see our culture, humour and heritage as essential to who we are and to our appeal as a place to live and visit. We recognise that the arts and culture bring us pleasure as well as other social and economic benefits. We cherish and protect our history, traditional and rural cultures, and embrace those from elsewhere. Everyone is encouraged to enjoy culture in all its forms, and we support our creative sectors and those working in them.

Our work

Children's Parliament uses the arts and creative approaches as a medium for our engagement with children. When observing a Children's Parliament session, one might see children engaged in puppetry, sculpture, drama, photography or creating animations. We do this because creativity provides simple pleasure. Much like play, these arts activities are natural for the child, they facilitate expression and overcome other barriers to participation and traditional thoughts about what 'voice' means.

In feedback here we draw on our work as part of the Education Reform process to report on what children tell us. We also consider the importance of Article 31 of the UNCRC when we reflect on arts and creativity.

What have children told us?

“School doesn’t help your talent. It only helps with literacy and numeracy.” MCP

“Some people who like sport in PE show their personality, and who like writing also show their personality. But those who like drawing, dancing, singing, only get to show personality at break.” MCP

“I am more creative at home.” MCP

“I am half French so being able to teach French in my class helps to celebrate my differences. It really teaches you how to respect people. The school supports my special way of communicating.” MCP

“When we learn about our culture, it makes us feel proud to be Scottish.” MCP

“We learn Gaelic from P1, and we use it in lots of projects like local archaeological digs or bingo or community cafes. We have a Gaelic choir in school and take part in the national Mod. We do lots of learning about the history and culture of our Island...” MCP

“Respect is in our school values, and we do religious learning, but I feel that we focus too much on Christian festivals.” MCP

“Children from Poland and England do not feel represented. I would like to learn more about these.” MCP

“I don’t know what the values of Scotland are.” MCP

- **Creativity at school:** As part of our work on the process of Education Reform we asked children to reflect on the statement: *My education helps me to develop my personality, talents and abilities to their fullest potential.* Just over half of the 3,879 secondary school learners who responded agreed with the statement (56%). In small group discussion children identified that the school curriculum often focuses on more traditional academic subjects and there is a lack of space for arts and creativity.
- **Cultural identity and language:** The Education Reform work also saw us ask children for responses to this statement: *My education helps me to develop respect for my parents/carers, my cultural identity and language.* Secondary school learners responded to a survey, and just over half of the 3,868 who responded agreed with the statement (55%). Using small group discussion to feed back their views children in primary school reported that they do project work to learn about different cultures and faiths. Some also develop ideas about cultural identity through traditional dance and poetry. Those learning in Gaelic medium education learn about their language and culture. But experiences differ, and some children do not feel that their culture or faith is equally acknowledged or respected.

Children also reported that they want to learn more about other cultures, and to see a more diverse representation of adults who work in schools as teachers and in other roles.

- **What are the national values of Scotland?** The Education Reform work also saw us ask children for responses to this statement: *My education helps me to develop respect for the national values of Scotland.* As with the earlier statements this is asked because it is stated in Article 29 of the UNCRC as one of the purposes of education. Many of the responses from primary and secondary school age children were that they simply did not know what our national values are: indeed, some asked, *do we have any?* Secondary school learners responded to a survey, and fewer than half of the 3,858 responders agreed with the statement (44%).

Reviewing this National Outcome

While this national outcome is about arts and creativity it is overly focused on this as a 'sector' or an industry rather than how, as the UNCRC states, we are committed as a nation to *the development of the child's personality, talents and abilities to their fullest potential.*

It is unclear what the National Outcomes means by *culture* beyond the arts sector. Do we also mean *culture* in the sense of the customs and social behaviours of our society? If we do, then we would want to see this national outcome connect with the cultural, lived experience of children: Are they seen? Are they heard?

Further, is it more helpful to express access to the arts as a right? Specifically, this national outcome must surely connect with Article 31 of the UNCRC, which will soon be in Scots law:

Article 31

1. States Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.

2. States Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity.

And finally, should a national outcome on *culture* be more explicitly concerned with articulating our national values?

Economy

This national outcome is currently expressed as follows:

Economy

We have a globally competitive, entrepreneurial, inclusive and sustainable economy

We recognise that a strong, competitive economy is essential to supporting jobs, incomes and our quality of life. We also know that our economy must be environmentally sustainable, inclusive and benefit all our people and communities. Through this Outcome we will create the conditions through which to achieve these commitments alongside economic growth.

Vision

We have a strong, dynamic and productive economy which creates wealth and employment across Scotland. Our economy is competitive, and we have good international trade, investment and export networks. We are considered an attractive place to do business.

Our economy is inclusive and focused on improving the lives of all our people. We ensure the benefits of economic growth, wealth and opportunities are fairly shared. Access to labour markets and jobs is evenly shared between us. Our sustainable economic growth is not achieved at the expense of our social interests or those of the environment. As such, our economy is ecologically accountable as well as socially responsible. We regard the green economy and our rich ecological capital as a valuable development opportunity and actively progress advancements in these areas.

Our work

When Members of Children's Parliament talk about the economy they talk about people, how they live their lives, what they can do, and be. In work exploring the climate, sustainability and poverty children tell us how as a society we should be, one that is fair and green. There is a clear cross over with this national outcome and the reporting we provide on National Outcomes entitled *Poverty and Environment*.

What have children told us?

“Every family should have enough money to live on.” MCP

“I think you should move poverty up as a priority because it’s becoming more likely to happen.” MCP

“Parents should be there for their children, but they need to work too. It would be really difficult for some families to do both, but they have to be there for their children either way.” MCP

“Fairness means everyone gets the same opportunity.” MCP

“People in poverty might be scared to ask for help or go to a foodbank because they don’t want to look weak. They want to be seen as strong.” MCP

“Buy locally sourced produce, recycle and speak about how we feel about climate change.” MCP

“Governments around the world are trying to make money, but these methods may involve changing the environment and destroying the livelihoods of people of poorer nations. These poorer people may have no say in these changes.” MCP

- **What is the focus of our thinking and action when it comes to the economy?** The national outcome proposes that a key purpose of the economy is that we *create wealth and employment*. While there is acknowledgement of the importance of *inclusion and sustainability* children tell us they want an economy that is more explicitly concerned with eradicating poverty, addresses the climate emergency and is committed to global justice.
- **Children intuitively seek an economy that works for people.** Across our programmes children suggest ways to do this that might inform the National Outcomes and National Performance Framework:
 - Create more jobs that help look after nature.
 - Help people who don’t have jobs to learn skills and get green jobs (green jobs look after the environment and tackle the climate crisis).
 - Teach children about green jobs and what qualifications they need to get them.

- Shorten the hours people are at work or school so they can do things like grow their own food, plant trees and look after and repair things in their area.
- Make and sell more food locally.
- Support environmentally friendly small businesses, organic farmers and butchers.
- Allow only sustainable ways of farming, fishing and crofting.
- Use only natural fertilisers and reduce the number of animals being farmed or fished.
- Only build new homes where this doesn't damage important or protected habitats, and make sure all new houses are energy efficient.
- Create more wind farms and solar panel use so that all energy in Scotland is renewable.
- Make businesses pay for their waste and impact on the environment.
- Create better railways to help connect people.
- Make public transport better and more environmentally friendly.
- Ban diesel and petrol cars and make electric cars affordable.

Reviewing this National Outcome

Children tell us that there are many things that we can do that will support our economy to be fairer, inclusive of all and more environmentally friendly and sustainable. The national outcome could articulate the connections more clearly with efforts to do our best when it comes to the climate crisis and eradicating poverty.

International

This national outcome is currently expressed as follows:

International

We are open, connected and make a positive contribution internationally

Scotland has a long and proud history of intellectual, cultural and economic exchange. As we have carried our stories, talents and creations abroad so too we have welcomed and benefited from those of others. In this Outcome we commit to fulfilling our obligations internationally, promoting our place in the world and deepening our relationships with others.

Vision

We pursue happiness and quality of life as legitimate social goals. Our family, communities and people are important to us, and we are committed to being fair and socially just. We are respectful of all who chose to visit, live and work in Scotland and acknowledge the positive contribution they make. Our visitor economy is thriving.

We are proud of our achievements and are confident, ambitious and positive about the future. We are regarded as a vibrant, modern country and have positive international relations, influence and exchange networks. We recognise the interconnectedness of people and the obligations which flow from this and play a valuable role in providing aid and supporting developing countries. We are committed to promoting peace, democracy and human rights globally.

Our work

Children's Parliament is focused on the realisation of children's human rights here in Scotland, but the UNCRC is of course the most widely ratified of all human rights treaties. The realisation of children's human rights is an international endeavour. When Scotland completes the process of UNCRC incorporation into law this will place us in a small but growing band of nations that have taken the step beyond simple ratification. Scotland is the only country in the UK to have done so. In our work we support children to think internationally and globally. Some of our work demands this perspective, for example children's engagement with the climate crisis which is discussed in an earlier national outcome: *Environment*.

What have children told us?

“Please make people follow children’s rights better and make an effort to enforce them in Scotland. Then we will inspire other nations to do the same.” MCP

“If a country has really good results in play, it would be amazing if every country could learn and take from the one that is doing well and then every country would be amazing.” MCP

- **Children at the United Nations:** In 2018 Members of Children’s Parliament took part in the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child ‘*Children as Human Rights Defenders*’ Day of General Discussion (DGD)⁶.

Members of Children’s Parliament have also engaged with the UNCRC reporting process and attended the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child which meets in Geneva, representing the views and lived experience of Scotland’s children during the Committee’s consideration of the UK/Scotland reports on UNCRC implementation. In 2023 they took several key issues, distilled and agreed with MCPs from across the country from our programme of work. They presented on the experience of school, pressures of testing, the importance of positive relationships and ideas about how human dignity should be embedded in the experience of school and learning. They also discussed equality, focusing on racism and the experiences of girls in the education system, they talked about mental health and wellbeing, presenting on the importance of children accessing information and support, that learning about mental health should be improved, and the value of activities, play and positive relationships. They shared views on the vital role that adults play to make rights real for children, identifying that adults need to model rights-based relationships and include children in decisions.

- **Other international connections:** The realisation of children’s human rights is a global endeavour. In support, Children’s Parliament is a partner in the International and Canadian Child Rights Programme⁷. Working in an international alliance the work will explore and better understand the connection between children’s rights to participation and protection.

⁶ X <https://www.ohchr.org/en/events/days-general-discussion-dgd/2018/2018-day-general-discussion-protecting-and-empowering>

⁷ A [International and Canadian Child Rights Partnership - Toronto Metropolitan University \(torontomu.ca\)](https://www.torontomu.ca/~international/)

Reviewing this National Outcome

This national outcome could do more to acknowledge that every citizen, including children, can contribute to creating a nation that is outward facing, internationalist and committed to social justice. Being part of a global family that seeks to make rights real for children we would suggest that this national outcome needs to make more of the phrase which closes the current text, this would mean putting these words front and centre in our national outcome: *We are committed to promoting peace, democracy and human rights globally.*

Children and Young People

This national outcome is currently expressed as follows:

Children and Young People

We grow up loved, safe and respected so that we realise our full potential

In our children we see the best and worst of ourselves now and in the future. They are the measure of our worth as a nation. In this Outcome we are dedicated to providing the essential conditions of love, respect and understanding through which our children can become the happy, fulfilled and successful adults they all have a right to be.

Vision

We do all we can to ensure our children grow up in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding. We enhance their life chances through our early years provision and by supporting families when they need it. We ensure childhood is free from abuse, tobacco, alcohol, drugs, poverty and hunger. Our children are not left worried or isolated. We include and involve children in decisions about their lives and world, and protect their rights, dignity and wellbeing.

Our communities are safe places where children are valued, nurtured and treated with kindness. We provide stimulating activities and encourage children to engage positively with the built and natural environment and to play their part in its care. We provide the conditions in which all children can be healthy and active. Our schools are loving, respectful and encouraging places where everyone can learn, play and flourish. We provide children and young people with hope for the future and create opportunities for them to fulfil their dreams.

Our work

Children's Parliament provides a rights-based lens through which our nation can see and understand childhood. We are not the only agency who helps in this regard, but we are uniquely placed as everything is founded and grounded in the human rights of children. This report began with a plea to weave childhood and children's human rights throughout all National Outcomes, but we also appreciate that a distinct national outcome also focuses the mind on a special realm, when so much is learned and internalised and informs the adults we become. We ask that you do not misunderstand this point, children are not to be perceived only in terms of *becoming*, they are citizens now. If this distinct national outcome is to achieve anything it needs to be the place where children and young people are firmly located as actors in Scotland's drive for wellbeing, now as well as in the future.

Feedback on this national outcome highlights some specific issues in terms of what we have learned from children across our programmes.

What have children told us?

“We need your encouragement. If you are told comments like ‘you are never going to get where you want’, then you feel like you can’t do it. Be positive and support us to get better at things.” MCP

“Not being part of decision- making about my life makes me angry and sad.” MCP

“Bullying makes children feel horrible, abandoned and left alone. You feel like no-one ever cares for you.” MCP

“Sometimes when you say something and adults don't believe you that makes you feel sad; that they are not being kind and that's when sometimes if they don't trust me, I don't really trust them.” MCP

“I think adults should protect children from harm, they should be protective shields and keep children safe.” MCP

“It is important that children with care experience think they are loved. Even if they are cared for - they all have the right to be loved.” MCP

“Adults have to find the space in their day to stop and listen to us.” MCP

“Adults may say that it is just a joke and that the child that is being bullied is just overreacting and taking it too seriously, but they aren't.” MCP

“Something bad is that parents aren't nice to their children – they shout at them and hurt them, not just their feelings but their bodies too, then the child is really sad.” MCP

“If you go online and you see somebody, you might think they have the perfect life. They're only going to post the good stuff, but it makes you feel bad about yourself as you think ‘wow, they're so much better than me’.” MCP

“Never hide the fact that someone is bullying you. Cyber bullying hurts. It really hurts. It doesn't end well for anyone.” MCP

“When you have someone who loves you like that around you, you don't feel all alone and helpless, like some random being in the world.” MCP

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

“Please try to keep social workers with children as long as possible and don’t change them around. You can’t build trusting relationships if you know they will be leaving you again soon.” MCP

“I really want to stay with my foster carer, she’s really nice. I can’t tell my social worker because I’m frightened they’ll tell my mum. When she gives me a bit of paper and asks what I want, I just say ‘I don’t know’.” MCP

- **Bullying:** Children have been telling Children’s Parliament for nearly 30 years that bullying is a serious rights infringement that adults continue to fail to prevent or respond to adequately. This national outcome would benefit from some extended language around abuse: we would suggest in parenthesis after the word *abuse* it should read: *Abuse can be physical, sexual, neglect or bullying.*
- **Loneliness, worries and connectedness:** Currently, the national outcome expresses this vision: *Our children are not left worried or isolated.* Across 2020 children told us that they often felt lonely. We understand this was in the context of lockdowns, but coming out of these experiences later in the year we were still being told by 1 in 5 children that they often feel lonely. Again, after their experiences of Covid by late 2020 around 35% of boys and 45% of girls between 8 and 14 years old were responding negatively to the prompt ‘even if I am having a difficult time, I feel I will be okay’. Alongside this 20% of children told us if they had a question about their health, they did not know who to speak to. Most concerning was that by late 2020, 50% of 12 to 14-year-old girls, 32% of 12 to 14-year-old boys and 35% of 8 to 11-year-old girls and boys agreed with the prompt statement ‘*There are lots of things I worry about in my life*’.

As adults we often imagine childhood as carefree, a sociable time when friendships and connection with adults is to be expected. It is important that this national outcome has a positive vision that *our children are not left worried or isolated*, but making the statement alone does not make it so.

- **Care experienced children:** Members of Children’s Parliament with care experience were supported to contribute to the work undertaken as part of the Care Review that led to The Promise. Children tell us that when they are in the care system then love should be at the heart of all relationships and

experiences. Relationships are essential to build trust and help recovery from trauma. Children tell us that respite is challenging for children and should only be used in emergency situations. Children who are care experienced tell us they need to have adequate support for learning and as many opportunities to succeed as possible. They tell us they need to feel like they belong with the families they live with, whether in kinship or foster care, and want to be treated like the other children in the family. Policies and practices which make children feel excluded from 'normal' life should be stopped.

- **Living lives that are both 'real world' and virtual:** The digital world offers extraordinary opportunities for promoting and protecting children's rights and wellbeing. Children tell us that they do not necessarily distinguish between the two spaces, they can move easily from real to online environments for learning, play, relationships and information. Work has been undertaken by Children's Parliament and other agencies working with children and young people to explore how to be healthy, happy and safe online but perhaps this national outcome needs to acknowledge the different lived experience of this generation of younger citizens. This is more than online safety; this is about citizens living lives across platforms.

Reviewing this National Outcome

This national outcome requires a significant amount of change. We will address it section by section.

The outcome starts with this statement: *In our children we see the best and worst of ourselves now and in the future.* We struggle to understand what this means and suggest this is deleted in the review.

It continues: *They are the measure of our worth as a nation.* Again, this is unclear. Does it mean we measure our success as a nation in terms of how children report whether their childhood is a good childhood? We do not measure this at the moment. Again, a plea to delete this from the review of the outcome.

It continues: *In this Outcome we are dedicated to providing the essential conditions of love, respect and understanding through which our children can become the happy, fulfilled and successful adults they all have a right to be.* It would help if we reviewed and refocused the language in reference to children, lifting from the UNCRC more clearly and so consistently using the language of the Convention, for example we could use language like this:

- As a nation we recognise the inherent dignity and equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family, which of course includes children and young people.
- We acknowledge that there are children living in exceptionally difficult conditions, and that such children need special consideration.
- Our commitment to the rights of the child means we reaffirm our faith in fundamental human rights and dignity and the worth of all children and young people.
- All children and young people are entitled to all rights and freedoms without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.
- We understand that the child, by reason of their physical and mental immaturity, needs special safeguards and care, including appropriate legal protection, before as well as after birth.
- We recognise that the family is the fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth and well-being of all its members and particularly children.
- We are committed to a childhood for every child that fully prepares them to live an individual life in society, brought up in the spirit of the ideals proclaimed in the Charter of the United Nations, and in the spirit of peace, dignity, tolerance, freedom, equality and solidarity.

In the vision element of the current national outcome the language is good and appropriate, but as we have referenced elsewhere the issue is that the term 'vision' implies some point in the future. Rather, what is described needs to be the reality, lived day-to-day experience of children and young people *now*, particularly so in the context of UNCRC incorporation. If we are not yet providing children with safe, stimulating, healthy, respectful, playful, fulfilling (all the language in the outcome) spaces and relationships, we are failing them.

To summarise, this national outcome needs to align itself with the UNCRC as impending Scots law; incorporation means something very profound in terms of how we view childhood and how we work together to realise children's human rights and wellbeing.

Finally, when it comes to one group of children - those who are care experienced - there is a real imperative to acknowledge that children want to be involved in making decisions about their lives. As well as reviewing and framing this national outcome in the rights of the child, this outcome needs to make specific reference to the commitments made to care experienced children and young people as part of The Promise. We understand that National Outcomes may not be the place to list policy, but The Promise talks to the nation we are, and it should be made explicit in our National Outcomes.