

Love, Happiness and Understanding: Year of Childhood 2021



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Acknowledgments

Year of Childhood 2021 could not have been possible without the support of our funders; Scottish Government, Cattanach Trust and Corra Foundation.



Introduction to Year of Childhood



The Year of Childhood was a year-long celebration of childhood running throughout 2021 and early 2022, hosted by Children's Parliament. During the year we explored childhood through the lens of children's human rights, creating opportunities to share rights-based practice in an atmosphere of optimism and confidence.

The aim of the programme was to support the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which was voted unanimously into Scots Law on 16th March 2021. 2021 was also Children's Parliament's 25th birthday year; it was the perfect year for us to maximise

opportunities to share understanding and good practice in relation to children's human rights, and demonstrate how a rights-based approach can transform outcomes for children, families and communities.

Childhood is the most important time in our lives, a time when lifelong health and wellbeing outcomes are established and where habits of a lifetime are formed. We can do better by our children and the Year of Childhood offered an opportunity to amplify what we can do differently.

The objectives of the Year of Childhood's Programme were:

- To create space for dialogue on children's human rights
- To highlight existing good rights-based practice
- To deliver inspirational media and communication strategies to raise awareness of children's human rights

The Year of Childhood Programme planned for a dynamic, creative, fun and impactful year that would bring usual – and unusual – suspects together to learn, share, challenge, provoke and celebrate. It was an opportunity to share our own bank of evidence which highlighted the impact of a rights-based approach and invited others across Scotland and beyond to do the same.

Our plans were visionary and reflected the potential we know lies within the people of Scotland – big and small – to expose the abilities and potential of our youngest citizens and offer practical examples of what adults can do to support them.

"Children's rights are important, very important! It's actually a bit of care and love for you!"

Member of Children's Parliament, age 6

Approach



Our programme consisted of:

- a varied portfolio of events to widen our discourse on children's human rights;
- sharing stories to invite reflection on varied experiences of childhood and the lifelong impact they had;
- a recorded conversation series to explore the concepts and values which underpin rights-based practice;
- inviting Unfearties to grow the movement of children's champions in everyday life;
- sharing knowledge and practice of children's human rights in key sectors via webinars;
- a dynamic communication strategy to demystify rights and spread the word;

...to explore childhood through the lens of children's human rights with both professional and everyday audiences.

With a wide remit of engagement, our audience was able to respond to our campaign across a variety of mediums. It was really important, as we engaged with people in their personal personas as much as their professional, working ones, that we cast a wide net in our communications, and enabled them to see – and to respond to – the impact of children's rights in their everyday lives as much as through any duty-bearer roles they might have.

Through our positive, optimistic messages, we invited our audience to share with us what they thought was

working well; where they saw their strengths lying and celebrate their achievements. This approach also offered a safe space for the sharing of any fears or challenges too; it opened a door for wider provocations that we could ask of whole sectors.

Our role, on many occasions, was to cheerlead; to remind them that they were already doing this work; that it wasn't anything new or extra; that in fact, it was the most humane, natural response for their way to be with children.

“(On the UNCRC and Incorporation) it sort of raises the level; it’s been an ongoing issue about making sure that we really are inclusive of younger children. We could quite easily say, ‘oh well, we didn’t include them because...’ and I think with this inspiration, maybe we can really have really good conversations about it, and move it forward because it’s every child’s right to have their views considered.”

- Professor Kay Tisdall



Our Year in Numbers

Overview

227
37 Unfearties
online events
with **1217** attendees

25+
17 birthday messages
9 stories of childhood
7 sector webinars
5 practitioner profiles
3 summer conversations
3 funders
2 podcast mini-series
1 child-led webinars
Unfearties Welcome
Pack

Web Traffic

Year of Childhood
page views **10,998**

Unfearties
page views **12,879**

Facebook

reach **31,168**

Instagram

profile visits **207.5%**
increase

"Teamwork makes the Dream Work!"

Without these incredible partners, contributors and storytellers, Year of Childhood would not have achieved the same success.

Storytellers

Clare MacGillivray
Colin MacKenzie
David Johnson
Denisha Killoh
Donna Sinclair
Ezmie McCutcheon
Frank Cottrell-Boyce
Friends of the Amal Project
Geraldine McClune
Gillian Hunt
Julia Whitaker
Lorraine Glass
Maxine Jolly
Muriel Gray
Paul Carberry
Rona Mackay MSP
Steph Wright

Contributors

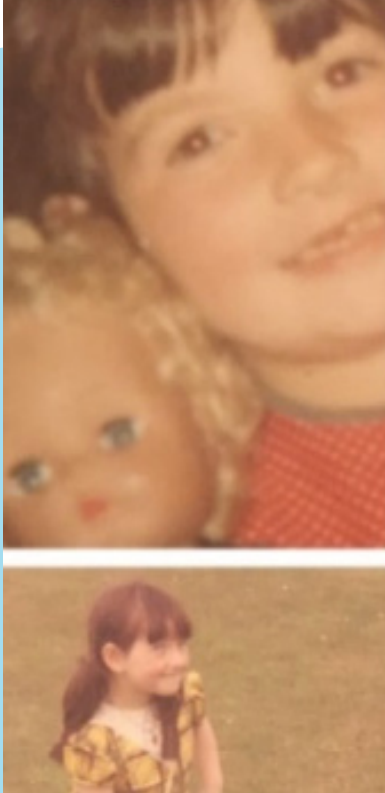
Barnado's Scotland
Carnegie UK
The Care Inspectorate
Camerados
Children and Young People's
Commissioner for Scotland
Children and Young People's
Centre for Justice
Early Years Scotland
Licketyspit
National Museums Scotland
National Day Nurseries
Association
National Rural Mental Health
Forum
NHS Lothian
NHS Grampian

Partners

Community Learning
Development Standards Council
Corra Foundation (also funder)
Edinburgh Futures Institute
Fathers Network Scotland
NSPCC Scotland
Our Story Scotland
Scotland's Climate Assembly
Scottish Government (also funder)
Cattanach Trust (also funder)
Together
Upstart

Peek Project
Public Health Scotland
Scottish Childminding
Association
Scottish Community Safety
Network
Scottish Youth Parliament
Starcatchers
The Intergenerational Network
The Village Storytelling Centre
University of Edinburgh
Youth Theatre Arts Scotland
Dr Adam Burley
Ben Thurman
Dr Neil Thin
Dr Autumn Roesch-Marsh
Suzanne Zeedyk

Spotlight: Reflecting on Childhood



"Although I know I was a very-much-wanted and loved only-daughter, my childhood was littered with stress, fear, danger, and pain, generated by dysfunctional parents, which sat unequally alongside the happier, peaceful, fun, and more pleasant times. What I now understand from looking back, is that as a child you don't know what you don't know ... ACEs weren't a thing then, my peers had variable home lives and there was no SHANARRI to measure wellbeing. So I just got on with it, unknowingly developing a set of skills in response to trauma that would protect me, save me from being defined by my poorer experiences and allow me to flourish and grow (well, only to a tiny 4'10"!)

Standing up for myself has always been more metaphorical than physical!"

- Lorraine Glass, Lorraine's One Good Adult

Our 'storytelling ask' launched Year of Childhood, inviting diverse reflections on childhood experiences through a non-professional lens. We wanted to invite adults to reflect on their own childhoods; what had made them feel happy, healthy and safe? We knew this might not always be the easiest topic for everyone to engage with but were keen that it was approached through our lens of positivity, and gentle curiosity.

We were privileged to receive 17 stories of childhood, and as you can see in Lorraine's story below, people shared a mixed bag of experiences. However,

in all of them, we could see the undeniable need for love, happiness and understanding shining through.

The Key Words bubble shows us that the ability to play, to explore outdoors, to feel safe, to be loved by family and friends, to take part in activities, to feel pride, to have supportive patient adults, to be treated fairly and to have fun are key features.

Many of the themes which came out of this work were explored further in our conversations around key values of a children's rights-based approach.

Key Words from Our Stories



OurStory Scotland Podcast Series

OurStory Scotland have been collecting oral histories of the LGBT Community in Scotland for the past 21 years, but had never looked specifically at the stories of childhood. The three podcasts they have collated for us illustrate a diversity of childhood experiences. We are left at the end of each episode with an overwhelming sense of hope and a reminder of the lifelong impact of childhood.

[Listen to the OurStory Scotland podcast series here.](#)

To enable as many people to connect with us in as many ways as possible, we developed a varied use of mediums to inspire conversation and connection. One of these was our Conversation Series.

We reflected initially on the key themes of **Love, Happiness, Kindness, Trust and Empathy** values we believe underpin the ethos of a rights-based approach.

Conversation Series

To enable people to connect with us in as many ways as possible, we developed a varied use of mediums to inspire conversation and connection. One of these was our filmed Conversation Series. Hosted by Children's Parliament, the five one-to-one 20-minute conversations in the first series explored the values which underpin children's human rights and why they are so important – **Love, Happiness, Kindness, Trust** and **Empathy**. We wanted to saturate each conversation with language that would reassure our audience that a rights-based approach wasn't something new, and it most likely wasn't something very different to what they were already doing – but understand that framing their work

in rights knowledge and language is key. Contributors included Dr Adam Burley (NHS Lothian), Ben Thurman (Carnegie UK), Dr Neil Thin (University of Edinburgh), Suzanne Zeedyk and Dr Autumn Roesch-Marsh (University of Edinburgh).

Our second series of five conversations looked at practice in action - we invited partners such as the Children and Young People's Commissioner for Scotland and the Children and Young People's Centre for Justice to share their understanding of what a rights-based approach looks like and feels like in their everyday work. The Museum of Childhood, Scotland's Climate Assembly, Edinburgh Futures Institute and Camerados also featured in this series.

Watch all the series' episodes [here](#).



Spotlight: Sector-Specific Practice

From the outset of the Year of Childhood we wanted to take a deeper look at the knowledge, understanding and practice of children's human rights in sectors where there has perhaps been less focus and where there were opportunities and interest to do so.

After all, it is rights-based practice that will drive Scotland to be a nation that ensures children grow up in a world of love, happiness and understanding, and it is often practitioners who are the front-line Unfearties leading the charge (see page 18 for more information on Unfearties).

Whilst our work touched a wide range of sectors, our webinars targeted three in particular:



Webinars:

1. Community, Learning and Development
2. Creative Arts
3. Early Years

1. Community, Learning and Development

Our first targeted sector was the Community, Learning and Development (CLD) Sector. The aim of our event was to bring together experts in children's human rights and Community, Learning and Development to consider, at this opportune moment, how we can draw connections between these two important fields of theory and practice.

We were joined by Dr Marion Allison (Director, CLD Standards Council), John M Davis (Professor of Education, University at Strathclyde), Margaret Ledwith (Emiritus Professor, Community Development and Social Justice, University of Cumbria) and Cathy McCulloch (Co-Director, Children's Parliament) for an incredibly lively discussion which attracted a plethora of questions and interest from our audience.



The esteemed panel of experts drew a large audience of 216 attendees and through Dr Allison's involvement, we were able to feed their questions back into the CLD Standards Council.

2. Creative Arts

Working in partnership with Youth Theatre Arts Scotland, our second sector webinar brought together children's rights-based experts and creative arts practitioners to understand where their approaches to working with children could support each other and the children they work with.

We were delighted to be joined by Virginia Radcliffe (Lickety Spit), Rebekah Corbett (PEEK Project) and Helen Mill (The Village Storytelling Centre) to discuss where the creative arts sector currently sits in relation to incorporation of the UNCRC. We were able to share ideas and resources with Youth Theatre Arts Scotland's members.

Key Takeaways from the Arts Sector Webinar

What knowledge, skills and training do creatives/arts workers with less children's rights experience need to take a rights-based approach?

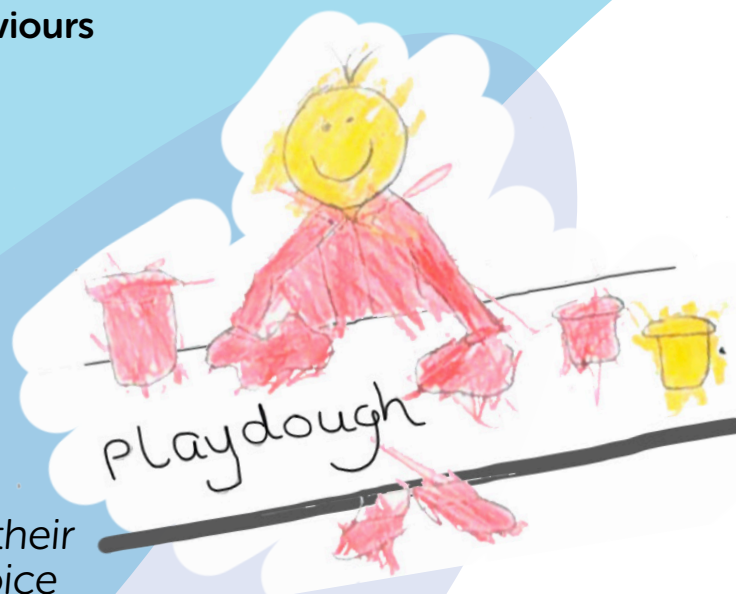
- **Be aware of power and expectations; know that you will learn as much from the children and their families as they will learn from you.**
- **Provide time and space for exchange of - and response to - reflection on practice.**
- **Children's rights are not an activity; behaviours and actions deliver children's rights.**
- **Learn from others.**

3. Early Years

Our third sector focus was on the early years which, with the support of the Cattanach Trust, we were able to explore in more depth. For more information on our Early Years Webinars, please refer to page 14.

"We support parents to be led in play by their child, teaching their children that their voice is valued and listened to - not as leaders of the future, but as leaders right now."

- Helen Mill, Village Storytelling



Through these webinars, practitioners were able to share resources and examples of good practice; identify gaps in knowledge and understanding; share concerns and challenges in a safe space and pave the way for what comes next in their journey to realising children's rights in practice.

New Audiences

Over and above our sector-specific webinars, we also had the opportunity to seek out new partnerships and new audiences. We were invited to share our Unfearties work with the National Rural Mental Health Forum, a membership-led discussion space which brings together organisations who support those in rural areas of Scotland with their mental health and wellbeing. Typically, they do not engage with organisations who work

with children, nor do they participate in any direct work with children, but they are made up of people who out with their working personas have children, grandchildren, nephews and nieces and people who within their working personas may work with families - all of whom were our key target audience for Year of Childhood, and who would benefit from learning more about children's rights.



(Feedback from NRMHF on what they think it means to be an Unfeartie and uphold children's rights in Scotland.)



Spotlight: Early Years

With support from the Cattanach Trust, the Year of Childhood specifically focused on the Early Years Sector, namely identifying and amplifying good practice in early years Settings.

Our key activities included:

- **Bringing in a seconded Project Worker position from Early Years Scotland to boost Children's Parliament's experience in early years practice and to bring rights-based practice experience into Early Years Scotland**
- **We invited members of the Early Years Sector to share their practice with us through an online survey to get a greater understanding of the sector's experience and confidence in children's human-rights.**
- **The information we collected from the survey directly informed the topics for our Webinar Series, with the aim of addressing the information needs of practitioners and the wider sector with regards to implementation of UNCRC.**

There was a unique opportunity through Year of Childhood to establish a foothold in the minds of the wider community of the critical need to ensure children's human rights are embedded from children's earliest years. We know that lifelong health and wellbeing outcomes are established in our earliest years and that this is a time when habits of a lifetime are set. Year of Childhood drew attention to the benefits and impact of embedding children's human rights and worked closely with members of the Early Years Sector to illustrate the kind of processes, systems and

behaviours that lead to a sustainable and consistent rights-based environment. This engagement has helped frame our understanding of current practice and its journey towards the realisation of children's rights.



Engaging with the Early Years Sector

The aim when we started the project was not to find answers, but rather to ask the questions; we wanted to understand what the current level of understanding and good practice of a children's rights-based approach was within Scotland's Early Years Sector and invite practitioners

and interested parties into our conversation. To help get people started we offered an initial model to establish which aspects of current practice could be considered rights-based, and from this, key themes were identified and developed.

Five key themes:

- *Relationships, culture and ethos*
How do the relationships in your setting support the rights of the child?
- *Agency*
How does your setting support children with things like having their say, being part of planning, leading activities, being recognised as an individual?
- *The Importance of You*
What are your expectations of adults in the setting when it comes to how they are with children and indeed with each other?
- *Awareness of Rights*
How do you help children understand their rights? You could think about how adults are in their interactions with children, or perhaps some of the activities or resources you use?
- *Use of rights-based language*
Do you ever use the language of rights?

By engaging parents/carers in conversations/webinars around the importance of embedding children's rights in their earliest years and identifying good practice internationally via a webinar series, we highlighted

the challenges and opportunities of embedding children's rights in the early years and encouraged new contacts (parents/carers, professionals) to join the wider Unfeartie network.

Online questionnaires were created to invite members of the Sector to share their understanding with us, and practitioners were invited to self-nominate and let us know about their practice. The purpose of these questionnaires was to find out where

Scotland's Early Years Sector currently is in terms of children's human rights, what barriers to offering a rights-based approach and naming rights-based language existed and what was needed to aid the embedding of rights in practice.

Our Webinar Series

1. *Where Are We Now?*

We invited the Care Inspectorate, the Cattanach Trust, Starcatchers and Early Years Scotland to set the stage for where the Early Years Sector currently sits in relation to the incorporation of the UNCRC.

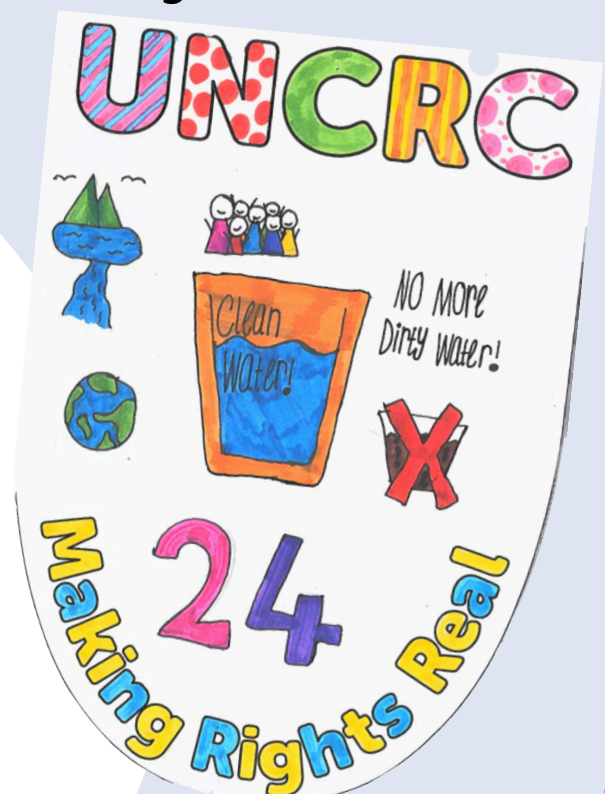
2. *Children's Rights in Practice*

We invited practitioners to help us establish what a children's rights-based approach looks like and feels like in practice.

3. *A Parents' Discussion*

We invited parents - and practitioners who work directly with parents - to discuss with us the support parents need in order to engage with and have knowledge of the UNCRC.

The webinars included participation from policy makers, practitioners and parents, offering insights to children's rights in the Early Years. Our practitioners' webinar, which featured Sarah Laing (Innerwick ELC), Lynn McNair (Cowgate Under 5s) and Jane Brumpton (Early Years Scotland) was particularly popular with 307 tickets "sold" (all of our webinars were free to attendees). **This supports our understanding that there is interest and engagement with the UNCRC from practitioners in the sector, and a real need for easy-to-find resources and support to grow confidence in their own skillsets.**



For our third webinar, we were delighted to be joined on our Parents' Panel by Liliane Umutesi, a parent from Rwanda who shared her experiences of parenting before and after she learned about children's rights. She felt that her older children - parented prior to her knowledge of the UNCRC - were warier, and less confident in their own skills as they went about the world. Her two younger children, who had benefited from her knowledge about children's rights, were much more confident in themselves, and more well-rounded as young citizens.

"One of my children asked me one day, he said why do you do this? Because I was disciplining him, and he said - he was the older (one) - why do you do this? And then I looked at him and I said, because my mom did it to me. And then he looked at me and said, but why do you have to do what your mom did to you? That's when I realised, why am I repeating the same thing?"

- Liliane Umutesi

We invited feedback from practitioners who took part in our webinar series to help identify gaps in practice and guidance required. Examples of this are shown below and highlight that while there is a passion for rights in the Early Years Sector, guidance is still sought in how to implement this in the best way.

How can ELC work in partnership with primary schools to promote a cohesive approach to robust implementation of children's rights?

How do we involve parents more in using rights-based practice?

How do we uphold children's rights when other factors such as employment law or rurality impact on a child's right/equality of access to funded ELC provision?

How do we help the very young children become aware that they have rights and what those rights are?

I would like to see people that are implementing the practice also have experience of working with children, and not some off-the-wall bonkers kind of idea of how they should be implemented.

Spotlight: Unfearties



Recognising the growing awareness of children's human rights, Unfearties was launched in 2017. An Unfeartie is brave because they recognise the power of human rights at home, in school and in the community and will speak up for and stand alongside children. Unfearties took off very quickly with high profile, professional and regular folk signing up in large numbers. Unfearties became a

key element of Children's Parliament's strategic plan - we saw huge potential in the movement, but didn't have the capacity to harness and use it.

Year of Childhood gave us a framework to establish an Unfeartie Network. Our first dedicated Unfeartie Project Worker was employed as part of the team, and set to work on a plan of action.



"She upholds children's rights through her everyday attitudes and behaviours. She listens to children and respects their views. She also bravely talks about rights with other people."

- An #UnsungUnfearties nomination.

MY JOURNEY TO UNFEARTIENESS



Manifesto and Journal

Through a Team Deep Dive and a Community Consultation, we assessed the best plan of action to reconnect with and revitalise our current Unfearties. First, the Unfeartie Manifesto was refreshed with the help of some Members of Children's Parliament, which ensured that children's voices and opinions were at its very heart. Unfearties also told us they wanted to be able to reflect more on their journey to Unfeartieness, and consider their own practice in relation

to a children's rights-based approach. Our new Unfeartie Journal offers key questions leading Unfearties along this reflective journey, either solo or as a team discussion. New Unfearties now receive a Journal, our Manifesto, three sticker designs, a postcard, and of course their Unfeartie badge. The Journal and Manifesto has provided absolute clarity for all on what it means to be an Unfeartie in an everyday way.

Network

We had initially hoped that Unfearties would be facilitated by an online interactive network map, but after exploring options, decided that a website redesign (currently in development) will better suit the needs of our Unfearties. This will provide a landing spot for Unfearties to enable them to share and access resources and experiences, and gain confidence in their roles as Adult Children's Human Rights Defenders.

#UnsungUnfearties

Our most exciting Unfearties campaign was linked to Children's Parliament's 25th birthday celebrations. Through our Community Consultation, we discovered that all Unfearties love our Unfeartie badge. To build on this, we designed a limited-edition 25th birthday silver badge. The #UnsungUnfearties campaign asked our Unfearties to nominate someone they knew who used a children's rights-based approach in their work, but didn't realise they were an Unfeartie. This campaign's alternative approach inspired both the referring Unfearties, and the new Unfeartie, and is a successful approach that we would like to develop going forward. We received 80 nominations in all, some truly wonderful, and the reactions on social media were incredibly touching. It felt really special to be able to celebrate people's Unfeartieness in such a personal way.



Unsung Unfearties were celebrated through posts on our social media channels, example here.

"This is amazing news. Thank you so much. I am so touched. Please pass my thanks on to Katie. That was really kind of her to think of me and our team. Nothing makes me happier than to know we facilitate opportunities to give children their voice. The work our school has done with the Children's Parliament is without doubt, some of the most important work we have done. Thank you for your continued support of our wee school."

- Quote from an #UnsungUnfeartie

Communications

During Year of Childhood we refreshed and redeveloped our newsletter to be shared on a monthly basis with Unfearties, spotlighting a current Children's Parliament project or sharing the work of an Unfeartie. Our "Welcome Wednesday" celebrates new Unfeartie members, sharing their reasons for

joining and photographs. We also have an Unfearties Facebook group with a growing membership, currently at 188. This page shares news, upcoming events, and generates conversation and feedback, to bring the network together in an accessible, everyday way.

Partner Networks

Through the Year of Childhood, we learned the benefits of introducing the Unfearties through new partner networks. Fathers Network Scotland, Barnardo's Scotland, the Intergenerational Network and the National Rural Mental Health Forum were all introduced to our work and to the concept of Unfeartieness. Our Unfearties network was also highlighted at our Year of Childhood webinars and events. This all boosted awareness and sign-ups.

We hosted a special online panel discussion for our Unfearties with panelists Cathy McCulloch (Co-Director, Children's Parliament), Clare MacGillivray (Trustee, Children's Parliament and Founder, Make Rights Real) and Maff Potts (Founder, Camerados) sharing their experiences of generating momentum within movements, and the importance of creating connections with others.

Spreading Unfeartieness Through All of Our Work

The Children's Parliament team played a major role throughout the year by integrating Unfeartieness into our wider work. For example, our Dignity in Schools project team formed a school staff panel to reflect on their in-school project. Naming the panel the "Unfearties Working Group" brought the language of Unfeartieness to staff who work towards a children's rights-based approach on a daily basis but hadn't previously recognised themselves as Unfearties.

Whilst it takes decades to change culture, we are confident that it is the slow burn of this style of campaign that wins over hearts and minds.



Spotlight: Celebrations

Year of Childhood 2021 not only coincided with the year Scottish Parliament voted unanimously to incorporate United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) into Scots Law – it was also Children's Parliament's 25th Birthday!

Year of Childhood deliberately took a celebratory approach to our activities because we wanted to inspire the wider public, acknowledge the good practice that is already out there and challenge the negative dialogue that there is around children's rights and move that into the direction of one which is positive, opportunistic and celebratory.

We used our 25th Birthday to honour the importance of a continued children's rights-based approach. Rights aren't upheld in one activity; they are secured and protected through consistent interrogation on our language, our behaviour and our relationships. We've been demonstrating a children's rights-based approach for the past 25 years, and we have evidence of the impact:



When asked what children's human rights means for children, one Member of Children's Parliament (MCP) said: **"Adults might think children's rights means children get to do what they want. But that's not what it is. Children don't want to be able to do what we want all the time. Rights means that adults have to be kind to us and not shout or do bad things to us. They have to help us be the best we can be."**

Our celebrations gave us an opportunity to bring together MCPs old and new, and we were delighted to see so many familiar faces at our own Incorporation Party, the party we supported Together to host, and through the videos we collected later in the year to celebrate our Birthday in November.

Our theme of celebration also allowed us ample opportunity to spotlight not just the historic work of our MCPs, but their current projects too. 2021 was also the year of COP26, and the children we'd been supporting to join Scotland's Climate Assembly really took possession of this moment to sound the klaxon about the ongoing, often frightening impact of the climate emergency and what we need to do about it. The Year of Childhood supported them to host a webinar, in partnership with Scotland's Climate Assembly and Edinburgh Futures Institute where they shared their reflections on the learning journey they had been on through the project, and the exciting ideas and potential solutions they were sharing with the Scottish Parliament and other key world leaders via COP26.

"It's about making that time, making that space available - not just for children but for adults as well - to express their emotion, all of the emotion that comes along with loss and bereavement...they need to be expressed in a safe way."

- Bruce Adamson, Children and Young People's Commissioner for Scotland

We also shared a wonderful short webinar, designed and pre-recorded by the MCPs who developed mindyertime.scot in partnership with Scottish Youth Parliament. This webinar was for children, by children, with children, and sought to explain to any child who was interested, how they could best use the Mind Yer Time website to support their digital rights and online mental health and wellbeing. This recording was shared with every primary school in Scotland, and (at time of writing) has 98 views on YouTube.

Our celebratory approach to the news of Incorporation allowed us the opportunity to reach a wider, newer audience who might have been hearing about children's rights for the first time in a positive, upbeat manner. By positioning Incorporation as something exciting, something that benefits everyone, we could gently challenge the fear and misunderstandings we know about the impact of children's rights and children's right to redress. Our #PassTheParty campaign, with a social media reach of 596,000, catapulted our UNCRC Incorporation celebrations across Twitter. Our Party Bag - which included a variety of activities for children and adult alike (namely the opportunity to share their thoughts on what made them feel happy, healthy and safe on our bunting design and a dance-along playlist) - was viewed 3,890 times and we received 79 different bunting designs in return. When the UNCRC is officially incorporated into Scots Law, we will print these designs onto "real" bunting to decorate the Scottish Parliament building!

What We Learned

Our ambition at Children's Parliament is for children to grow up in an atmosphere of love, happiness and understanding. To achieve this we need a fundamental cultural shift across civil society which drives behavioural and attitudinal change towards children.

Year of Childhood has demonstrated the need for greater emphasis on building the confidence and capacity of the workforce to understand and implement children's rights as duty bearers and as a result CP has strengthened its focus on this work. Adults across Scotland want to know more about children's rights; they want support and examples of practice to understand and embed children's rights.

Additionally Year of Childhood has also demonstrated the need to bring children's rights to life in an 'everyday' way with all citizens as delivering on children's rights through everyday actions and behaviours improves outcomes for children, their families and communities.

Throughout the stories we were entrusted with, the key messages stayed the same. Our adults reflected positively on the periods of their childhood where they were met with love, happiness and understanding - where their dignity was upheld and where they felt safe and healthy within their environments. We know this to be the same for children today; we have heard through our wider Children's Parliament projects that



children are looking for safe, private spaces in schools where they can talk to their teachers about things that might be worrying them; spaces where their ideas are listened to and taken forward, and to be treated with dignity and care as citizens in their own right. We know that there are still challenges to children's rights, and there is still fear and a lack of understanding of the power and opportunities of children's rights.

We received lots of enthusiasm and engagement with Year of Childhood. The theme struck a chord with lots of people, and as we had hoped, the opportunity to reflect on each own's childhood enabled children's rights to be understood outside of a practice concept. We had hoped that other organisations might feel ownership over Year of Childhood too, and be able to carry their own events throughout the year. This did happen, but not always in a way that was reported directly back to us, so we have limited data that is not true to reality when it comes to capturing such ownership. Moving forward, we would like to work more closely with targeted strategic partners to develop this campaign building through our future Grow The Movement work.

Of the 596,000 reached with our #PassTheParty campaign, we reached 11,172 ourselves, through our own channels, which supports our understanding that we can have the greatest impact in the general public/social sphere when we partner with other influential voices in the sector.

What we were most struck by was the fact that there is so much fantastic work happening all over Scotland; children are being treated with dignity, love and trust, but those who are behaving in this manner do not always

identify this as upholding children's rights. As we've seen through our Early Years consultation and our Unfearties engagement, what everyone wants (alongside demonstrations, trainings and partnerships) is resources. They want specific, targeted, easy-to-use examples of ways in which they can interrogate their own practice, debrief with their colleagues and expand their own knowledge and skillset to ensure the children in their care are growing up in an atmosphere of love, happiness and understanding.

Next Steps

Children's Parliament is currently finalising its three-year strategic plan, 2022-2025. Year of Childhood has directly contributed to the direction of this plan; specifically, our greater emphasis on the need for Capacity Building (with a sectoral focus on Early Years) and Grow The Movement.

From our strategic plan, we will:

- **Build capacity:**
We will work with individuals, organisations and public bodies to build their capacity to deliver children's rights. Through a co-working and partnership approach, we will develop resources with children to build the knowledge, skills and confidence of duty bearers to deliver children's human rights.
- **Grow public awareness:**
We will help drive cultural change across civil society to create a nation that values children and delivers their human rights by working across civil society to create a national conversation that will positively impact on adults' knowledge, understanding and perception of children's rights.

"The Children's Parliament is the most amazing organisation, which makes sure that children's voices are heard, that children are right at the heart of policymaking in Scotland, and makes sure that children's rights are respected. What more could you want? Happy Birthday! Here's to another 25 years!"
- Maree Todd, MSP

Year of Childhood and the Impact on Children's Parliament's Future

Building Capacity

Through the webinars and feedback received, it is clear that there is a passion for children's rights within sections of the Early Years Sector in Scotland, and great practice to be seen. However, there is also a lack of confidence in how to identify and implement good rights-based practice and Practitioners feel that there is a lack of information and resources on the subject and therefore a lack of understanding and confidence.

Within the Early Years Sector, different settings are at differing stages of their learning journey, however all practitioners that we spoke to are seeking formal guidance, practical ideas and resources that they can use to support their development in this area. All of this highlights the interest in the

subject of children's rights where it pertains to Early Years, but also the need for information, further resources and a sector-wide level of knowledge. Following engagement with this subject, Children's Parliament has been invited to take part in online training for Early Years Scotland, and to support workshops for both HomeStart and Thrive's Conference in May 2022. We have also been invited to review guidance including the Care Inspectorate Quality Framework. This work will also continue to be built upon through the Cattanach Trust's next project, *Growing With Rights* and our own capacity building focus on Early Years.

Growing Public Awareness

We also know that whilst there are still misunderstandings of what children's rights look like and feel like, there is a great desire for everyone to be treated with love, happiness and understanding during their childhoods. When we consider what was shared in our stories, we can see that what everyone valued the most when they were younger were the light-hearted moments where they felt safe, loved and treated with dignity. Our Members of Children's Parliament (MCPs) regularly share experiences with us of adults shouting at them, of not feeling welcome within their local communities and of having a lack of spaces to call their own.



"Change
your
attitudes."

Member of Children's Parliament, age 10

Every adult in Scotland should know that children have the right to be treated fairly and with dignity – and should be upholding these rights in their actions and behaviours on an everyday basis. Year of Childhood has demonstrated the need to bring children's rights to life in an 'everyday' way with all citizens delivering on children's rights through everyday actions and behaviours to improve the lives of our children, their families and communities. It is this engagement with the wider population in Scotland that our new Grow The Movement programme focuses on.

230 new Unfearties joined the movement during the Year of Childhood, and Unfearties now total 1,215. Moving forward, within our new Grow The Movement strand of work we will build on our existing Unfearties partnerships,

and continue to embed Unfeartieness into all Children's Parliament projects. We see Unfearties as an ongoing inspiring campaign, and will focus on families and caring adults, looking at intergenerational links - a gap we've identified through our Early Years work that will best be tackled by Unfearties' positive, uplifting, and inspirational approach. We believe that an inspirational, innovative campaign focusing directly on adults in Scotland who are not duty-bearers would boost the movement.

We will continue to nominate and spotlight our #UnsungUnfearties to reach our ultimate goal -

for Scotland to be a nation of Unfearties, where every child in Scotland lives in an atmosphere of love, and is happy, healthy and safe.



About Children's Parliament

Established in 1996, Children's Parliament is Scotland's centre of excellence for children's participation and engagement. It is our ambition 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 the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) across Scotland. With 25 years of experience and our growing, dynamic and passionate team, we demonstrate children's rights in action; we build the capacity of others to deliver children's rights, we support children to influence policy, practice and legislation and we ensure as an organisation we are fit for purpose to do this.

