

Progressing the Human Rights of Children in Scotland:

An Action Plan 2018-2021

Progress Report 2020



Ministerial Foreword



The current year has been incredibly challenging for Scotland's children, young people and their families, with the global coronavirus pandemic and the impact of necessary measures to protect public health and our NHS. I am immensely proud and impressed with the way in which our children and young people have responded to these unprecedented circumstances.

Throughout the pandemic, we have taken steps to hear the views and lived experiences of children and young people and to empower them to participate in decisions around the crisis that affect them. We have also worked with partners to take a holistic approach to our response, consistent with the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child's [11 recommended areas](#) for governments to focus on when considering the rights of children in relation to the pandemic.

Now is a time when children and young people's rights matter more than ever. I am delighted, therefore, that on 1 September 2020, we introduced to Parliament the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation)(Scotland) Bill. The Bill aims to make Scotland the first country in the UK to directly incorporate the UNCRC - the gold standard for children's rights - into domestic law. It is one of the most significant pieces of legislation to be introduced to the Scottish Parliament since devolution and, if passed, will revolutionise the way in which we listen to children and take their rights into account.

In line with the commitment that the Deputy First Minister made on the 30th anniversary of the UNCRC in November 2019, the Bill will seek to incorporate the Convention directly into Scots law to the maximum extent possible within the powers of the Scottish Parliament. This will ensure that the rights contained in the UNCRC are afforded the highest protection and respect possible within our constitutional settlement. The Bill aims to ensure that children, young people and their families will experience public bodies acting consistently to uphold the rights of all children in Scotland. If they don't, children, young people and their representatives will be able to use the courts to enforce their rights. The Bill will require the Scottish Ministers to publish a Children's Rights Scheme to set out what arrangements it has, or will have in place, to comply with the compatibility duty outlined in the Bill. The Scheme will include arrangements for undertaking Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessments (CRWIA), which will become a statutory requirement for new legislation and relevant strategic decisions. The Children's Rights Scheme will ensure that Scottish Ministers are not only accountable for their actions in relation to the compatibility duty under the Bill, but that they are accountable for planning and reporting on how they will fulfil the rights and obligations under the Bill in practice.

I want to express my heartfelt thanks to the many children, young people and stakeholders who have contributed towards the development of the draft legislation. The Bill is intended to complete its passage through Parliament by the end of the current session in spring next year.

The commitment to incorporate the UNCRC into Scots law and to further promoting the use of the CRWIA are 2 of 4 strategic actions listed in our *Progressing the Human Rights of Children in Scotland: An Action Plan 2018-21*. The Action Plan also includes commitments to develop a strategic approach to participation and a programme to raise awareness and understanding of children's rights across all sectors of society in Scotland. These are vital elements in preparing for and implementing the incorporation of the UNCRC and key to ensuring that all children and young people have their human rights protected, respected and fulfilled.

This report is our second annual update on progress made in taking forward these strategic actions. It also updates on the wider work that we have taken forward this year with the aim of giving further and fuller effect to children's rights including:

- The Children (Scotland) Act 2020, which will improve the experiences of children and young people in child contact and residence cases.
- Our commitment to taking forward "The Promise" (which is the main report published by the Independent Care Review), to transform how Scotland cares so that all children grow up loved, safe and respected.
- The consultation on increasing the age at which children can be referred to the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration on care, protection and offence grounds.
- Work to implement the Children (Equal Protection from Assault) (Scotland) Act 2019, which provides children with the same legal protection from assault as adults.
- Our ongoing commitment to take account of the views and needs of children and young people as we take forward ambitious action to help tackle the global climate and nature crises.

Further information about current actions, key strategic plans and other initiatives relevant to progressing the human rights of all children and young people in Scotland is provided in the **Annex** to the report.

Underpinning all of this work is our continued focus on our vision of a Scotland where children are recognised as citizens in their own right, where their human rights are embedded in all aspects of society; a Scotland where policy, law and decision-making take account of children's rights and where all children have a voice and are empowered to be human rights defenders.

This is an exciting time to be involved in ambitious reforms which will deliver wide-ranging benefits for Scotland's children and young people, particularly those who are most vulnerable. I look forward to continuing to work in partnership to deliver this important and transformational agenda in the year ahead.



Maree Todd MSP

Minister for Children and Young People

Introduction

This Report provides an update on progress made in taking forward the actions set out in the [Progressing the Human Rights of Children in Scotland: An Action Plan 2018-2021](#) since the publication of the [First Annual Update](#) on 20 November 2019. It also includes an update on the actions taken during 2020 to protect and promote the human rights of children and young people in the specific context of the coronavirus pandemic.

Duties on Scottish Ministers under Part 1, section 1(4) of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 (CYP Act) require Ministers to report to the Scottish Parliament every 3 years on the steps they have taken in that period to secure better or further effect in Scotland of the UNCRC requirements and to promote public awareness and understanding of the rights of the child. Ministers must also set out their plans for taking forward children's rights until the end of the next 3 year period. The Scottish Government's responsibilities are restricted to devolved matters.

In accordance with these duties, the [Progressing the Human Rights of Children in Scotland: A Report 2015-2018](#) was laid before Parliament in December 2018. The Report sets out progress made in relation to children's rights from June 2015, when the duties first commenced, until June 2018. The separate Action Plan, published alongside this Report, set out the Scottish Ministers' planned activity to further children's rights from June 2018 until June 2021. The Plan was developed following public consultation and engagement with children and young people. It included the following 4 strategic actions which aim to support transformational change in how children and young people experience their rights:

- Incorporate the UNCRC into Scots law.
- Develop and deliver through co-production, an ambitious programme to raise awareness and understanding of children's rights across all sectors of society in Scotland.
- Develop a strategic approach to children and young people's participation, as part of the Year of Young People legacy.
- Evaluate the Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (CRWIA) process and further support and promote its use.

This second Annual Report provides an update on progress made in taking forward the 4 strategic actions in the Action Plan since November 2019. The Report also provides an account of the actions taken to consider and respond to the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the rights of Scotland's children and young people during 2020.

Responsibility for taking forward children's rights is mainstreamed across portfolios within the Scottish Government. The principles of the UNCRC are, therefore, taken into account in the development of relevant Scottish Government policies, strategic frameworks, action plans and other key documents, covering all areas relating to the health and wellbeing of children and families. To more fully capture the actions that the Scottish Ministers intend to take forward to progress the rights of the child in Scotland from 2018 to 2021, the Annex to this second Annual Report includes an updated list of policy specific initiatives being progressed across the Scottish Government relevant to children's rights.

Children's Rights in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic

During 2020, the global COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted on the lives of children and young people across Scotland and on the delivery of the vital services on which they, and their families, rely.

The Scottish Ministers have emphasised that they see now as a time when children's rights and wellbeing matter more than ever and have taken steps to ensure that the human rights of children and young people, particularly those who are most vulnerable, are at the heart of the government's approach to the COVID-19 crisis.

Our response is underpinned by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child's 11 recommended areas for governments to focus on when considering the rights of children in relation to the pandemic. In a [statement](#) published on 8 April 2020, the UN Committee asked States to respect the rights of the child in taking measures to tackle the public health threat posed by the pandemic, particularly in relation to 11 areas. The Scottish Government has committed to report regularly on the actions it is taking relevant to the 11 areas. To date, it has produced four reports which can be accessed via the Scottish Government's [website](#).

Our approach to Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessments (CRWIA) is supporting and informing our response to the pandemic. The CRWIA ensures that all areas of the Scottish Government consider the possible direct and indirect impacts of proposed policies and legislation on the rights and wellbeing of children and young people, particularly the most vulnerable. A full [CRWIA](#) was prepared and published in respect of the Coronavirus (Scotland) Act 2020 and the Scottish Government was commended for doing so. CRWIAs were also undertaken in respect of the Coronavirus (Scotland) (No.2) Act 2020, the Education (Miscellaneous Amendments) (Coronavirus) (Scotland) Regulations 2020, on the closure and reopening of schools, and the impact of restrictions on social gatherings on children and young people as part of the response to COVID-19 in Scotland.¹ The Scottish Government's Children's Rights Unit refocused its work during the pandemic to support colleagues across the Scottish Government in undertaking these impact assessments.

The Scottish Government has also taken steps throughout the crisis to hear the views, concerns and lived experiences of children and young people in relation to COVID-19 and to empower them to participate in the decisions around the response that affect them. Further information on this is provided in the Participation section of this Report.

The Scottish Ministers have aimed to develop a holistic approach to the needs of children and young people who are at risk during the pandemic. Three [evidence and intelligence reports](#) were published in April, May and July 2020 which provided an overview of the research evidence about the impact of COVID-19 on children and families available at the time and reported on service responses based on intelligence gathered from local partnerships and third sector organisations. In addition, we continue to monitor and develop the evidence base on the impact of COVID-19 on children and young people. This has included monthly evidence summaries which have fed into the data intelligence reports and informed policy decisions around our COVID-19 response, as well as supporting a range of new research activities to address evidence gaps. Some specific examples of actions taken to support the needs of vulnerable children and young people during the pandemic include:

¹ [Coronavirus \(Scotland\) \(No 2\) Bill: CRWIA; The Education \(Miscellaneous Amendments\) \(Coronavirus\) \(Scotland\) Regulations 2020: CRWIA; Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Closure and Re-opening of Schools: CRWIA; Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Impact of restrictions on children and young people: CRWIA](#)

- Providing local authorities and schools with flexibility to redirect Attainment Scotland Funding to help mitigate the impacts of school closures for the most disadvantaged families and to make adjustments to existing plans to be delivered as schools returned.
- Making over £120m available to tackle food insecurity caused by the pandemic, including supporting the provision of Free School Meals over all of the school holiday periods until Easter 2021.
- Providing £25m to support digital inclusion among school-aged children and young people, through the provision of connectivity, devices or both. All councils have been allocated funds and are in the process of securing and distributing devices to meet local needs.
- Allocating £43m to the Scottish Government’s “Connecting Scotland” project, working with industry and other partners to identify and support digitally excluded households, through devices, connectivity and skills, allowing us to reach up to 50,000 households by the end of 2021.
- Working closely with young carers and our third sectors partners to ensure that the support on offer is responsive to young carers’ needs as these change through the pandemic.
- Publication of additional supplementary child protection guidance during the pandemic, including in relation to children affected by domestic abuse.
- Enhanced funding to the Childline service to adapt and respond to rising demand during the pandemic.

We are continuing to work with partners to ensure robust ongoing processes for monitoring the impact of the pandemic on children and young people, particularly those most at risk. In May 2020, the Scottish Government established a COVID-19 Children and Families Collective Leadership Group. The Leadership Group, which includes members from the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers (SOLACE), the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA), Police Scotland, the Scottish Children’s Reporter Administration (SCRA), Children’s Hearings Scotland (CHS), as well as representatives from Health, Education, Social Work, the third sector and other key organisations, receives regular intelligence updates and identifies actions to address current and emerging issues. The Leadership Group has a focus on children, young people and families experiencing vulnerabilities and those who are on the edges of becoming vulnerable. In June 2020, the Scottish Government established an Advisory Group to support the work of the Leadership Group and to ensure that those who are considered most vulnerable during the pandemic are able to share their lived experiences and participate in solution-based discussions. Further information on the work of the Advisory Group is provided in the Participation section of this Report.

In May 2020, the Scottish Ministers published the [COVID-19: Framework for Decision-making - Scotland’s Route Map Through and Out of the Crisis](#). The Route Map set out a phased approach to easing lockdown restrictions while suppressing the virus. On 23 October 2020, the Scottish Government published the [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Scotland’s Strategic Framework](#). This document set out a five-level framework for suppressing coronavirus outbreaks across Scotland. Consideration of human rights, including children’s rights, will continue to inform the process of recovery and renewal as we respond to and emerge from the global pandemic.

Our Vision

A Scotland where children are recognised as citizens in their own right and where their human rights are embedded in all aspects of society is the **Vision** we aspire to; a Scotland where policy, law and decision making take account of children's rights and where all children have a voice and are empowered to be human rights defenders.

Governance

Improving Outcomes for Children and Young People Strategic Forum

To provide a leadership space to discuss ideas and issues, to make children's rights real in Scotland and oversee the action plan.

INCORPORATION



We will incorporate the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) into Scots law.

Actions:

- We will consult widely including with children, young people and families, local authorities and other public bodies across Scotland, as well as third sector partners on the right model of incorporation.
- We will also consider where it may be possible for Scots law to go further than the UNCRC requires, where that is demonstrably beneficial for children and young people.
- In the meantime, we will continue to consider ways in which rights under the UNCRC can be given better or further effect across individual policy areas.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT



We will evaluate the Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (CRWIA) process and further support and promote its use.

Actions:

- We will update the templates, guidance and training materials for the CRWIA process and make these publicly available on the Scottish Government website.
- We will encourage the use of the CRWIA materials by public authorities and children & young people's organisations.
- We will develop an impact evaluation process for the CRWIA.

Progressing the Human Rights of Children in Scotland: An Action Plan 2018-2021

RAISING AWARENESS



We will develop and deliver through co-production, an ambitious programme to raise awareness and understanding of children's rights across all sectors of society in Scotland.

Actions:

- We will map existing rights-based awareness resources, programmes and training packages
- We will recruit a group of young leaders to organise and co-facilitate 6 unConference Events and local discussion groups in different locations across Scotland. Participants will be invited to attend from across different areas of society. Particular attention will be paid to engaging with those that are seldom heard.
- Where gaps or weaknesses have been identified we will, through co-production, develop resources and training programmes to strengthen rights awareness and understanding across all areas of society.
- We will work alongside Education Scotland to strengthen awareness and understanding of children's rights through a range of activities which supports the development of a rights-based culture and ethos in schools and early learning and childcare centres.

STRATEGIC APPROACH TO PARTICIPATION



We will develop a strategic approach to children and young people's participation, as part of the Year of Young People (YoYP) legacy. Our aim is to mainstream the participation of children and young people in decision making across Scottish society.

Actions:

- We will work in partnership with our stakeholders, and importantly with children and young people, to develop our strategic approach.
- We will make sure that we listen to 'representative' voices of children and young people, in particular ensuring that the voices of the seldom heard, vulnerable and younger children are routinely heard.
- We will consider resourcing and how participation is made sustainable.
- We will consider access, including digital technology, to support wider engagement.
- We will publish an evidence base of existing research, good practice and policy areas that have consulted with children and young people.

How will we know we are making progress?

We will provide an update on progress in taking forward these strategic actions each year.

Incorporation

We will incorporate the UNCRC into Scots law.

The Scottish Government is committed to a revolution in children's rights. The dual impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union underline the importance of human rights being further built into the fabric of our society. This is particularly important in relation to children and young people, whose futures depend on the action taken by all public authorities to implement their rights in practice.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is the global "gold standard" for children's rights. A [public consultation](#) was undertaken in the summer of 2019 on incorporating the UNCRC into our domestic law in Scotland. Non-confidential [consultation responses](#) along with an [independent analysis of the consultation responses](#) by ARAD Research were published on 20 November 2019 on the Scottish Government website.

Following wide public consultation and engagement in 2019, including with children and young people, the Deputy First Minister announced on 20 November 2019 that incorporation would take a maximalist approach to ensure that children's rights are protected, respected and fulfilled in Scotland to the maximum extent of the Scottish Parliament's powers.

Decisions around the approach to incorporation were also informed by the Incorporating the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child into Domestic Law in Scotland Working Group. The short-life Working Group, made up of stakeholders from public authorities, the third sector, the Scottish Youth Parliament, academia and the legal profession, met eight times from 25 June 2019 to 24 February 2020. A final Summary Report, was published on 27 July 2020 on the Scottish Government's [website](#).

The [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child \(Incorporation\)\(Scotland\) Bill](#) ("the Bill") was introduced to Parliament on 1 September 2020. The Bill and its accompanying documents were published on the Scottish Parliament's [website](#) on 2 September. The Bill will make it unlawful for public authorities to act incompatibly with the incorporated UNCRC requirements, giving children, young people and their representatives the power to go to court to enforce their rights. The Bill:

- directly incorporates the UNCRC as far as possible within the powers of the Scottish Parliament;
- makes it unlawful for public authorities to act incompatibly with the incorporated UNCRC requirements;
- gives power to the Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland to take certain legal actions in relation to children's rights;
- requires Scottish Ministers to produce a Children's Rights Scheme, setting out how they comply with children's rights and to report annually; and
- requires listed public authorities to report every three years on how they comply with children's rights.

The Bill also allows for incorporation of the articles of the UNCRC currently beyond the powers of the Scottish Parliament, should these powers change in the future.

The introduction of the Bill was met with widespread support:

Bruce Adamson, Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland

Incorporation of United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is the most important thing we can do to protect children's human rights. Amazing to hear @scotgov announce the legislation which will take a maximalist approach. Huge credit to all #HumanRightsDefenders who fought for it!

"After decades of campaigning.... this is amazing"

Children in Scotland

"We're delighted by @scotgov announcement that the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child will be incorporated into Scots law by the end of this @ScotParl term."

*This will ensure that the rights of cyp/families are built into all aspects of public life.
#UNCRCScotland*

Children's Parliament

"Every child deserves to be happy, healthy and safe."

This is a milestone after years of campaigning by children, young people & wider civil society. The UNCRC Incorporation bill represents growing support for children's rights across Scotland.

Scottish Youth Parliament

In these uncertain times, the legal protection for children and young people's rights is more important than ever.

Today marks a milestone in over 10 years of campaigning by children, young people and wider civil society, and we're proud to be a part of it! #UNCRCScotland

The Equalities and Human Rights Committee is the designated lead parliamentary Committee for Stage 1 scrutiny of the Bill. The Committee's [call for views](#) on the Bill was live from 7 September to 16 October 2020. In addition, the Committee has invited views from children and young people up to Friday 20 November 2020.

Whilst incorporation of the UNCRC will be a monumental moment for Scotland, we recognise that legislation by itself will not deliver our ambitions for children's rights in Scotland. One of the most fundamental tests of success in respecting and protecting those rights is whether they are part of the day-to-day lived experience of every child and young person in Scotland. Incorporation will undoubtedly provide the catalyst for change, but ensuring that every child and young person experiences their rights through the services they receive will require a co-ordinated programme of work developed and delivered with public authorities, the third sector, children, young people and their families. We are therefore developing a 3 year implementation programme, informed by the [3-step Improvement Framework for Scotland's Public Services](#), to ensure that the Bill's duties are fulfilled with children's rights being

embedded in decision-making at all levels in public services. As set out in the [Financial Memorandum to the Bill](#), this will include activity under 3 main themes. While it is helpful to package activities in this way, these themes will not be exclusive of one another and all will require appropriate engagement with relevant stakeholders, including children, young people and their families.

Leadership – The Scottish Government is fully committed to ensuring that accessible guidance and training is developed as part of an implementation programme in support of the Bill and for public authorities to support preparation and planning in advance of commencement of the Bill. This will be supported by a central implementation team within the Scottish Government who will be dedicated to co-producing and delivering effective guidance and training with public authorities and the third sector so that it best meets the needs of practitioners, and the rights of the children and young people they serve. The Scottish Government will ensure that an appropriate governance structure provides collective leadership to the implementation programme. The central implementation team will also be responsible for delivery of the Scottish Government’s Children’s Rights Scheme. The Scottish Government will continue to make the CRWIA guidance and templates freely available so partners in the public sector and the third sector can assess how their policy and practice impacts on children’s rights and wellbeing.

Empowering children to claim their rights – Ensuring that children, young people and their families can claim their rights is central to delivering a Scotland where human rights are made real. Children’s rights awareness-raising and children and young people’s participation are two of the strategic priorities to which the Scottish Government is already committed. The Scottish Government will make available a fund of £250,000 for awareness-raising in each of the three years of the implementation programme, with a commitment to increase funding to enable the participation of children and young people in decision-making in public services by £100,000 in each year for the same period. The awareness-raising activities aim to support children and young people across Scotland to be human rights defenders and challenge breaches of their and others’ rights. The fund for participation will look to provide a sustainable approach to the strategic participation of children and young people in decision-making, and to enable the voices of those children and young people who are seldom heard to be listened to. A social marketing campaign, at a cost of £200,000, will also be developed and delivered. This campaign will aim to raise the profile and support for children’s rights across Scottish society.

Embedding children’s rights in public services – The Scottish Government recognises the vital role that public services play in delivering for children, young people and their communities. To ensure that public services are appropriately supported in delivering the step change in respecting, protecting and fulfilling children’s rights that the Bill seeks to deliver, the Scottish Government will create a fund of £835,000 to support the delivery of this implementation. The fund will provide flexibility for an innovative implementation programme that gives the public sector access to the expertise of the third sector and the central implementation team. This fund will include a design phase to listen to children, young people and their families about what will make a difference to their experience of rights respecting public services and to engage with public bodies on their priorities for fulfilling their duties. This approach will enable public authorities to tailor implementation activities to best meet the rights of the children and communities they serve. £85,000 will be made available in the first year for the design phase. The fund will deliver capacity-building and awareness-raising activities to practitioners in public services in Scotland. The fund will also be used to provide intensive support to senior leaders in public services to take proactive steps to embed children’s rights in their organisations and communities. Over the implementation programme, the fund will also make available £750,000 to support public services to consider how to progressively realise the rights of children by utilising available resources to the maximum extent.

The Scottish Government recognises that consultation and engagement with children and young people and the full range of duty bearers and stakeholders is key to bringing about the fundamental change required to make rights a reality for all children in Scotland. The Scottish Government has had further discussions with a range of organisations including COSLA and local authorities, child protection committees, justice and courts partners, social work bodies, and children's rights stakeholders to explore the implications of the Bill. We will continue this dialogue with public authorities and stakeholders, including children, young people and their families, in the development and delivery of an implementation plan in support of the Bill.

Raising Awareness

We will develop and deliver through co-production, an ambitious programme to raise awareness and understanding of children's rights across all sectors of society in Scotland.

Alongside the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation)(Scotland) Bill (the Bill), the Scottish Government is continuing to progress its 3 year programme to raise awareness of children's rights across all sectors of society in Scotland. The programme will contribute towards Ministers' aim for Scotland-wide knowledge and understanding of children's rights and how to act on them, which is fundamental to the implementation of the Bill and to embedding children's human rights into the fabric of Scottish society.

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has emphasised that awareness-raising about children's rights is most effective when progressed through interaction and dialogue, including with children and young people.² Co-production is, therefore, central to the development and delivery of the 3 year programme.

As part of this approach, the Scottish Government commissioned Young Scot, in partnership with Children in Scotland, to lead the co-production strand of this important work. Building upon existing materials and resources, an #ActivateYourRights panel of 20 children and young people, aged 8 to 18 years old, with 50% of them having come from seldom heard groups, was established. Working together with Young Scot and Children in Scotland, they co-produced a range of materials to support raising awareness of children's rights amongst children and young people to be used in a variety of settings across Scotland. The resources seek to aid progressive learning about children's rights, introduce activities to help children and young people understand what rights look like in practice, and build their confidence to defend their rights when these are not being respected.

The #ActivateYourRights resources, which include an Activity Facilitation Pack, a Q&A podcast from the Minister for Children and Young People and the Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland, Bruce Adamson, and a host of online, interactive articles, are available on Young Scot's [website](#). The co-produced materials were published in September 2020 to coincide with the introduction of the Bill to the Scottish Parliament.

To support parents and carers in ensuring they are aware of and understand the human rights of children, a Reference Group of key partners was initiated in March 2020. The Group aims to develop and design resources to increase the awareness of children's rights amongst parents and carers and to advise on the best approach to test these resources. In light of the pandemic, in April 2020, the Group took the strategic decision to pause commencement of this work until such times as parents and carers could be meaningfully engaged with and also in recognition of the need for partners to focus their time and resources on crucial, emergency response work. Consideration is currently being given to the recommencement of this Group and how its work will inform preparations for the incorporation of the UNCRC into Scots law.

Raising awareness of children's rights amongst public authorities with duties under Part 1, section 2 of the CYP Act is also critical to making rights real for children, young people and their families. These duties require public authorities listed in [Schedule 1](#) of the CYP Act, to publish a report every 3 years on the steps that they have taken in that period to secure better or further effect of the UNCRC requirements within their areas of responsibility. The first reports

² [Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No.5, paragraph 69.](#)

under these provisions are due to be published as soon as practicable after 1 April 2020. Support meetings continue to be offered to assist listed public authorities in meeting these duties.

In light of pressures placed on public authorities in responding to the current coronavirus pandemic, paragraph 8 of schedule 6 of the Coronavirus (Scotland) Act 2020, allows for Scottish public authorities to postpone publishing or laying certain reports before the Scottish Parliament if they are of the view that doing so is likely to impede their ability to take effective action to prevent, protect against, delay or otherwise control the incidence or transmission of coronavirus. If a public authority decides to postpone the publication of a report, they must publish a statement to that effect on or before the date by which the report is due, or as soon as is reasonably practicable after that date. Such a statement must also indicate that the report will be published or laid as soon as reasonably practicable.

We are continuing to work alongside Education Scotland and YouthLink Scotland to strengthen awareness and understanding of children's rights through the refresh and testing of the Community Learning and Development (CLD) version of the [Recognising and Realising Children's Rights](#) training tool, which aims to support the development of a rights-based culture and ethos across CLD practitioners and settings. In November 2020, Education Scotland published the [Children's Rights and Participation Strategy 2020 – 2022](#). The Strategy sets out how Education Scotland will strive to protect and respect the rights of all children, as set out in the UNCRC.

Strategic Approach to Participation

We will develop a strategic approach to children and young people's participation, as part of the Year of Young People (YOYP) legacy. Our aim is to mainstream the participation of children and young people in decision-making across Scottish society.

We are also continuing to develop the strategic approach to participation. As part of this work, four working groups – Strategic, Resource, Access and Research – are being established to help develop the strategic approach. Volunteers from the third sector, local government, health and academia are working in partnership with the Scottish Government to take this agenda forward.

The Research Group was convened in early 2019, with a remit to consider the evidence base of existing guidance and research on the participation of children and young people in decision-making and to identify practice examples and policy areas that have consulted with children and young people. In early March 2020, the '[Decision-making: children and young people's participation](#)' webpages, developed by the Research Group, went live on the Scottish Government's website. The new resource includes practice examples from projects, programmes and policies in Scotland; published reports capturing the views of children and young people; and publicly available research reports and papers on children and young people's participation in decision-making.

The Access Working Group was established to consider how best to support and promote wider engagement with children and young people so they can participate in decision-making, and will look at the methods that might be best utilised - including digital media. The Group had its first meeting on 8 October 2019. During January and February 2020, a survey was issued to gather views on how stakeholders work with children and young people to support their participation in decision-making, and to identify barriers respondents have experienced or witnessed that hinder this engagement. The survey received 451 responses. Young Scot facilitated two sessions with a number of children and young people from the #ActivateYourRights cohort via Zoom in April 2020. This was used to gain insight into their digital engagement experience as a result of the COVID-19 Lockdown. Findings will be used to inform the work of the Access Working Group.

As with other areas of work across the Government, activity on participation has been adapted and re-directed during the COVID-19 pandemic. In these unprecedented times, Scottish Ministers remain committed to ensuring that children and young people are at the heart of decisions which affect them. We want our young people to have the confidence and skills to influence decisions around them, including how we learn and recover from COVID-19. In May 2020, the Scottish Government established a COVID-19 Children and Families Collective Leadership Group to review regular intelligence on the impact of the pandemic with a focus on children, young people and families experiencing vulnerabilities. The Leadership Group works to identify issues requiring action and to provide local and national leadership in delivering a response. The membership and work of the Group is discussed in more detail in the COVID-19 section of this report. In June 2020, the Scottish Government established an Advisory Group to support the work of the Leadership Group and ensure that those children and young people considered most vulnerable during the pandemic are able to share their lived experiences and participate in solution-based discussions.

Additionally, in partnership with Young Scot, we have supported a quick fire Q&A session on the pandemic with both the First Minister and Jason Leitch, Clinical Director, which was filmed and broadcast for young people on 23 March 2020. The First Minister subsequently filmed a further Q&A session with Young Scot on 29 April 2020.

The Scottish Youth Parliament, in partnership with Young Scot and YouthLink Scotland, delivered “Lockdown Lowdown”, an online survey developed by young people for young people, to help identify what they need from the Scottish Government, the NHS, COSLA, local authorities and others during the initial COVID-19 lockdown. The reports from the survey have been shared widely with Scottish Government officials and will inform ongoing policy development, and the work of the Advisory Group as it captures the lived experiences of children, young people and families.

A follow-up survey, funded by the Scottish Government, launched on 28 September 2020, with a further survey scheduled to take place in early 2021. The second survey process also featured focus groups, which ran from mid-October 2020 for 5 weeks. The focus groups heard about the lived experiences of the pandemic for groups of children and young people from a range of backgrounds, exploring themes and other relevant insights from the surveys along with issues which are particularly pertinent to these groups. The groups included were:

- Young carers;
- BME young people;
- Disabled young people;
- Young people with experience of custody and/or the criminal justice system; and
- Care experienced young people.

The Children’s Parliament has also been supported by the Scottish Government to develop a number of approaches to hearing the lived experiences of children, young people and their families during the pandemic. Using pre-validated questions, the survey ‘How are you doing?’, which took place from April to June 2020, received responses from children aged 8 to 14 years old on their experiences during this period. A further survey was conducted in September to capture children’s views as they returned to school. The findings from the survey will be published.

Alongside the surveys, Members of the Children’s Parliament have been writing blog articles about their experiences. These are published in the [Corona Times Journal](#) on the Children’s Parliament website. The Children’s Parliament has also been gathering through direct engagement, the views and lived experiences of 15 families who have a child aged 3 to 7 years old living at home. Through digital interviews, the Children’s Parliament were able to capture insights of the families’ experiences during lockdown and the return to education in autumn.

With reference to education, funding is now in place and recruitment is underway for the Education Recovery Youth Panel. Young Scot, supported by Children in Scotland, will recruit and support a panel of approximately 15 young learners, aged 9 to 18 years old (primary 5 – secondary 6) from across Scotland. The Panel’s aim is to ensure that learners themselves help develop the response and recovery of the education system. The Panel will help shape the Scottish Government’s COVID-19 education recovery work, ensuring young people from a range of backgrounds and experiences are included in the coronavirus (COVID-19) recovery plans for education. The panel will help to raise key issues that are important to learners, and the Scottish Government will ensure that those issues are highlighted to the COVID-19 Education Recovery Group (CERG).

The Scottish Government has also worked with the Scottish Youth Parliament to identify and support a young person to join the CERG itself. Liam Fowley MSYP, the new SYP vice chair, will sit on the Group to gather, represent and directly feedback the voices and views of children and young people. Liam will also be supported to connect the discussions at the CERG with the work of the Education Recovery Youth Panel.

The Deputy First Minister (DFM) met with a group of young people on 1 October 2020 to discuss future decisions concerning the 2020-21 assessment approach and exam diet and what can be done to ensure that work undertaken this year by learners is fairly accredited. This followed similar conversations the DFM held with learners in September 2020 following the downgrading of SQA awards and in June 2020 during the period of school closures where DFM listened and acted on the feedback from young people regarding their experiences of remote learning.

The Marketing and Insights Unit has been developing an information toolkit for schools to help explain the guidance and encourage compliance with restrictions amongst 12-17 year olds. Working in partnership with Young Scot's Health panel, they were able to identify insights and obtain guidance on messages that would engage and motivate young people.

Impact Assessment

We will evaluate the Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (CRWIA) process to further support and promote its use.

The Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (CRWIA) aims to ensure that all areas of the Scottish Government consider the possible direct and indirect impacts of proposed policies and legislation on the rights and wellbeing of children and young people. The views of children and young people are integral to the CRWIA process.

The CRWIA, which is currently non-statutory, is assisting the Scottish Government and other relevant organisations who choose to use this resource, to take a rights-based approach to the development of policies and services. A [list](#) of CRWIAs prepared by the Scottish Government is available on the website. The CRWIA is also supporting and informing the Scottish Government's approach to the current coronavirus pandemic, ensuring that the human rights of children and young people, particularly the most vulnerable, are at the heart of our response to the crisis and ongoing considerations around renewal and recovery.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation)(Scotland) Bill (the Bill) will place the CRWIA on a statutory footing, requiring the Scottish Ministers to prepare a CRWIA for new Bills introduced by the Scottish Ministers or Scottish statutory instruments made by Scottish Ministers. It will also require the Scottish Ministers to prepare a CRWIA for decisions of a strategic nature relating to the rights and wellbeing of children, as they consider appropriate. Provisions in the Bill will also require the Scottish Ministers to include in the proposed Children's Rights Scheme, a statement setting out the circumstances in which it would be appropriate for them to prepare a CRWIA. The Bill is discussed in more detail in the Incorporation section of this Report.

The *Progressing the Human Rights of Children in Scotland: An Action Plan 2018-21* included the commitment to evaluate the CRWIA process and to further support and promote its use. The CRWIA [guidance](#), templates and training tool were updated in March 2019. These materials, which are available on the Scottish Government website, were shared widely with public authorities and third sector organisations. Moving forward, we will continue to raise awareness and understanding of the CRWIA process across the wider public sector.

Work began in September 2020, to determine the scope of a full review of the CRWIA. This will seek to evaluate the procedures and outcomes of the CRWIA to ensure an efficient, effective and accessible process. It is expected that the evaluation will be completed by April 2021.

Governance Arrangements

To provide a leadership space to discuss ideas and issues, to make children's rights real in Scotland and oversee the action plan.

High-level oversight of progress made in relation to the strategic actions in the Action Plan was provided by the Improving Outcomes for Children and Young People Strategic Forum. The Forum was chaired jointly by the Scottish Government Director of Children and Families and Director of Learning and included representatives from local government, public authorities and the third sector. The Forum last met on 4 March 2020.

In addition, the Director of Children and Families has convened a cross-government group of Directors within the Scottish Government to ensure co-ordinated approaches to policy and outcomes relevant to the rights and wellbeing of children and young people.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, since March 2020, governance activity has focused on the collective response to the health emergency and its impact for children and young people, especially those who are vulnerable. As set out in earlier sections of this Report, in May 2020, the Scottish Government established a COVID-19 Children and Families Collective Leadership Group, which receives regular intelligence and identifies actions in response to the impact of the pandemic. In June 2020, an Advisory Group was established to support the work of the Leadership Group, by sharing the lived experiences of particular groups.

Future governance arrangements are being considered in the context of the passage of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation)(Scotland) Bill, the new reporting requirements in the Bill and the associated development of a Children's Rights Scheme.

Annex

KEY FORWARD ACTIONS AND STRATEGIC PLANS

Responsibility for taking forward children's rights is mainstreamed across portfolios within the Scottish Government. The principles of the UNCRC are, therefore, taken into account in the development of relevant Scottish Government policies, strategic frameworks, action plans and other key documents and initiatives, covering all areas relating to the health and wellbeing of children and families.

The progress and actions that Scottish Ministers intend to achieve in relation to the rights of the child between 2018 and 2021 are, therefore, set out within a wide range of individual policy documents and action plans. A non-exhaustive list of summaries and links to some of these key documents and policy initiatives is provided below. These are organised under the cluster groups used in reporting to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. Where relevant, monitoring and reporting arrangements for individual initiatives are also included. An update on actions being taken forward during the COVID-19 pandemic can be found in the COVID-19 section of this Report.

General Measure of Implementation

[National Performance Framework](#) (June 2018)

The revised National Performance Framework was developed together with the people of Scotland to reflect our values as a nation and the aspirations we hold for our future. It has also been formulated to link with and promote our commitment to the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals which are aimed at improving wellbeing across the world. The high level outcomes for the Framework include: *"We respect, protect and fulfil human rights and live free from discrimination"* and *"We grow up loved, safe and respected so that we realise our full potential"*.

[The National Taskforce for Human Rights Leadership](#)

The First Minister's Advisory Group on Human Rights Leadership reported on 10 December 2018 and a National Taskforce has been established to progress the report's [recommendations](#). The National Taskforce is Co-chaired by Shirley Anne Somerville, the Cabinet Secretary for Social Security and Older People, and Professor Alan Miller, the Special Envoy for the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions. The priority work for the National Taskforce will be a statutory human rights framework that gives effect to internationally-recognised human rights by incorporating them into domestic law. The National Taskforce will also oversee wider work on participation and capacity building as part of the development and implementation of the new legislation, before providing its recommendations to government in March 2021.

[United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child \(Incorporation\)\(Scotland\) Bill](#)

The Bill, which was introduced to the Scottish Parliament on 1 September 2020, seeks to incorporate the UNCRC fully and directly into Scots law to the maximum extent possible within the Scottish Parliament's powers. The Scottish Government aims for the Bill to complete its passage through Parliament within the current Parliamentary session.

[UNCRC Incorporation Bill leaflet](#) (September 2020)

The leaflet provides details of the rights that children and young people are entitled to under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill.

[Consultation on incorporating the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child into our domestic law in Scotland - Analysis of Responses](#) (2019)

A public [consultation](#) seeking views on the model of incorporation that will deliver the best outcomes for children, young people and families in Scotland took place between 22 May 2019 and 28 August 2019. The Scottish Government commissioned Arad Research to analyse the 162 [responses](#) received and engagement events with children and young people, which took place over summer 2019. Arad also produced an [Easy Read](#) (2019) summary of the responses to the consultation.

[Progressing the Human Rights of Children in Scotland: An Action Plan 2018-2021](#) (2018)

The 3 year Action Plan, developed in line with Part 1 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, was published in December 2018. The first [Report](#) on progress made in taking forward the strategic actions in the Action Plan was published on 20 November 2019.

[Child Rights Wellbeing Impact Assessments \(CRWIA\) Guidance](#) (2019)

Scottish Government guidance on when and how best to use the Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (CRWIA) was first published in 2015 for Scottish Government officials, alongside draft templates and a training tool. The guidance has been shared more widely with public bodies and third sector organisations. The CRWIA guidance, templates and training tool were updated in early 2019 following an independent evaluation of the CRWIA process.

[Equality and Fairer Scotland Budget Statement 2020-21](#) (February 2020)

The Equality and Fairer Scotland Budget Statement was published alongside the Scottish Government Draft Budget 2020-21, to reflect and report the impacts of policy and spending decisions on equality outcomes. The equality budgeting process for the Scottish Government is developed with the involvement of an expert advisory group. For 2020-21, the Statement included a specific chapter on the impact of budget decisions on all portfolios including that of education and skills. The Scottish Government is continually striving to improve its equality budgeting processes.

[Global Citizenship: Scotland's International Development Strategy](#) (2016)

In 2016, the Scottish Government's refreshed International Development Strategy set the direction for Scotland's international activity to contribute to the fight against global poverty, inequality, injustice, and promote sustainable development via the mechanism of the UN Global Goals. The Scottish Government is currently [refreshing](#) its International Development Strategy in light of COVID-19. The Scottish Government is also committed to implementing the Sustainable Development Goals via the mechanisms of the National Performance Framework (NPF) in order to reduce inequality domestically and to contribute internationally.

[National Action Plan to Implement the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights](#)

The Scottish Government is working with partners to develop a co-ordinated plan of action in Scotland to implement the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs). A national baseline assessment (NBA), which was published in October 2016, sets out how law, policy and practice in Scotland aligns with the UNGPs. Further engagement with stakeholders, including children and young people, has helped to prioritise the NBA's recommendations and will inform the drafting of an action plan.

[Economic Recovery Implementation Plan. The Scottish Government's Response to the Advisory Group on Economic Recovery](#) (5 August 2020)

The Scottish Government's response to the Advisory Group on Economic Recovery report [Towards a Robust, Resilient Wellbeing Economy for Scotland](#) (June 2020) was published in August 2020. It sets out commitments to tackle inequalities and improve the wellbeing of our communities, businesses and natural environment; to create a socially just economy that protects and grows our assets, to support the wellbeing of current and future generations; and to embed equalities and human rights at the heart of the Scottish Government's approach to the economy.

[Common Core of Skills, Knowledge & Understanding and Values for the 'Children's Workforce' in Scotland](#) (2012)

The Common Core describes the skills, knowledge and understanding, and values that everyone should have if they work with children, young people and their families, whether they are paid or unpaid. The skills, knowledge and understanding are explicitly cross-referenced to the guiding principles of the UNCRC.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

[Getting it right for every child](#)

Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC) is Scotland's national approach to improving outcomes for children and young people. It provides a shared framework for the many services and agencies that work with children and families to take a co-ordinated, holistic approach which puts the rights of the child at the centre. For over a decade, GIRFEC has shaped the way children's services are planned and delivered in Scotland, and it is well-embedded in policy and practice.

The Scottish Government is committed to updating the over-arching policy statement and national practice material on GIRFEC. This will include guidance on information sharing, following the Practice Development Panel's recommendation that an authoritative code of practice is not possible given the complexity of the issues and the need for accessibility. Work had been progressing well, in partnership with key delivery partners, although it had to be paused as a result of COVID-19. Steps are now being taken to resume this important piece of work and to re-engage with stakeholders. The pandemic brought to the fore the importance of Getting it right for every child.

[Fairer Scotland Action Plan](#) (2016)

The Fairer Scotland Action Plan was produced following Fairer Scotland conversations held in 2015. It sets out 50 actions that will help build a fairer and more prosperous country - one with low levels of poverty and inequality, genuine equality of opportunity, stronger life chances, and support for all those who need it. It is based on five ambitions for the period to 2030: a fairer Scotland for all; ending child poverty; a strong start for all young people; fairer working lives; and a thriving third age. The [Fairer Scotland Action Plan: Progress Report 2018](#), which was published in December 2018, outlines progress made since the previous Progress Report in November 2017.

The 2019 [Progress Report](#), which was published in December 2019, provides an update on the actions within the Fairer Scotland Action Plan, and also the progress made in respect of the recommendations in two reports produced by our Independent Advisor on Poverty and Inequality, Naomi Eisenstadt: '[Shifting the Curve](#)' and '[The Life Chances of Young People in Scotland](#)'.

[Equality Outcomes and Mainstreaming Report 2017](#) (2017)

The Report provides an update on the Scottish Government's progress in promoting and mainstreaming equality across its activities and in delivering on the 2013 equality outcomes. It also sets new equality outcomes covering the period 2017-21. The two most relevant outcomes relate to: ensuring that children affected by domestic abuse are increasingly recognised and supported in the justice system; and, making progress in the educational experience of children whose success, according to the evidence, is hampered by having a protected characteristic. The document includes measurement tools for progress on each of the outcomes.

[Equality Outcomes and Mainstreaming Report 2019](#) (2019)

The Report provides an update on the progress made by the Scottish Government in mainstreaming and promoting equality across its activities. It also provides an update on progress on the equality outcomes set in 2017. These include an update on the Children Affected by Domestic Abuse and the Justice System. This outcome aims to ensure that children affected by domestic abuse are increasingly recognised and supported in the justice system. A final report will be published on these outcomes in 2021.

[Race Equality Framework for Scotland 2016-2030](#) (2016)

The Race Equality Framework for Scotland sets out the Scottish Government's approach to promoting race equality and tackling racism and inequality between 2016 and 2030. The first Goal within the document is for the establishment of an accountable approach to support and drive forward the implementation of the Framework.

[A Fairer Scotland for All: Race Equality Action Plan 2017-21](#) (2017)

The Race Equality Action Plan outlines actions being taken over the course of the Parliament to make improvements in the lives and experiences of minority ethnic communities in Scotland as part of the 15 year Race Equality Framework. The Plan seeks to advance race equality, tackle racism and address the barriers that prevent people from minority ethnic communities from realising their potential.

[Race Equality Action Plan: Year 2: Progress Update](#) (March 2020)

The report provides a concise interim update on progress made in the second year of the Race Equality Action Plan. It is not intended to provide an exhaustive update of progress against all actions in the Action Plan. The [Year 1 Progress Update](#) was published in June 2019 and we will publish an end of year 3 report in the spring of 2021.

[Improving the lives of Scotland's Gypsy/Travellers](#) (2019)

This is a joint Action Plan by the Scottish Government and COSLA to improve outcomes for Scotland's Gypsy/Travellers in the key areas of accommodation, education, health and poverty. It sets out five long-term goals which are to ensure that Gypsy/Travellers:

- have safe and culturally appropriate places to live and travel;
- understand their rights and have positive experiences of accessing services;
- have support to maximise incomes, increase employment opportunities, and improve the standard of living;
- feel safe, respected and valued members of Scotland's diverse population; and
- have a seat at the table, are listened to, and have a say in decisions that affect their lives.

The plan sets out 33 actions to be delivered in the current parliamentary term to make progress towards these goals, while also laying the foundation for lasting change that will see an end to deeply-embedded inequalities. The actions have been developed with the advice, support and challenge of advocates, activists and members of the Gypsy/Traveller communities, as well as being informed by the expertise of those who are responsible for developing and delivering policies and services, nationally and locally. Members of the Ministerial Working Group and COSLA will meet every six months with members of the Gypsy/Traveller community to monitor and discuss progress and find solutions to any challenges that might arise.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, a Gypsy/Traveller Action Group was also set up. Its members cover the Scottish Government, COSLA and third sector partners and have been meeting on a regular basis since March.

[Minority Ethnic Leadership & Development Programme](#) (September 2020)

The Scottish Government is investing in a new development programme which will aim to remove barriers that can be faced by minority ethnic people moving into leadership positions in society. Up to 50 people will benefit from a nine-month professional and personal development programme backed by mentoring, and living wage placements across the public, third and private sectors. The programme will focus on young people, and will be delivered by the John Smith Centre, backed up by £470,000 of Scottish Government funding. The programme will focus on developing the professional and personal skills of participants, including negotiating and communication.

[British Sign Language National Plan 2017-2023](#) (2017)

The British Sign Language National Plan 2017-2023 sets out the ambition to make Scotland the best place in the world for BSL users to live, work and visit. The plan is framed around ten long-term goals and contains a number of actions relevant to children and their families. A progress report and a further set of actions were due to be published in 2020. However, this was rescheduled until 2021 in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

[Adverse Childhood Experiences \(ACEs\)](#)

ACEs are stressful or traumatic experiences that can have a huge impact on children and young people throughout their lives. 71% of the Scottish adult population report having experienced at least one ACE and 15% have experienced four or more ACEs. Experiencing multiple adversities in childhood impacts on health behaviours, mental health and physical health in adulthood. The Scottish Government is committed to preventing ACEs and helping to reduce the negative impacts of these where they occur and supporting the resilience of children, families and adults in overcoming adversity. Work is underway to help reduce the incidence and impact of all types of childhood adversity, focusing on:

- support for children, parents and families to prevent ACEs;
- mitigating ACEs for children and young people;
- training for staff across the workforce in supporting people who have experienced trauma; and
- raising wider awareness about ACEs and supporting action across communities.

Work to address ACEs is also related to actions underway to address the social and economic circumstances in which people live. Social inequalities, such as poverty or gender inequality, can influence the levels of childhood adversity and people's ability to overcome that experience. The 2020-21 Programme for Government outlined a range of commitments which continue to drive progress on the agenda to address ACEs, including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation)(Scotland) Bill, tackling child poverty, fulfilling the Independent Care Review (The Promise), supporting families, and expansion of the National Trauma Training Programme. Current and future levels of childhood adversity are likely to be affected by the COVID-19 crisis and we are monitoring data and evidence about the impact on children and young people closely to inform policy decisions.

Participation

[Children and Young People's Participation: Decision-making](#) (2 March 2020)

[Children and Young People's Participation: Practice Examples](#) (2 March 2020)

As part of the work to develop a strategic approach to children and young people's participation, the Scottish Government established and published an evidence base of existing research, good practice and policy areas that have consulted with children and young people. The output from this exercise is published as a series of webpages on the Scottish Government's website.

[Annual Cabinet Meeting with Children and Young People](#)

The fourth annual Cabinet meeting with children and young people took place on 3 March 2020. Members of the Children's Parliament, the Scottish Youth Parliament and Cabinet Ministers discussed the most important issues affecting children and young people in Scotland. Topics included: a childhood free from the impact of alcohol; food security; children's human dignity at school; environmental protection; young carers' mental health; suicide awareness training at school; gender recognition; youth work budget cuts; housing and homelessness; and the quality of school meals.

[Children and Young People's Voices Matter: Progress Report](#) (January 2020)

In January 2020, the Scottish Government published a Report on progress made in taking forward the actions agreed at the third annual Cabinet meeting with children and young people, which took place on 5 March 2019.

[Scottish Elections \(Franchise and Representation\) Act 2020](#) (1 April 2020)

The Act extends the right to vote in Scottish Parliament and local government elections to all foreign nationals with leave to remain, including all those granted refugee status. This includes 16 and 17 year olds. The Act also extends candidacy rights to foreign nationals with indefinite leave to remain, and to those with pre-settled status. Candidates standing for election have to be 18 years or over. The legislation also ensures that Scotland complies with the European Convention on Human Rights when it comes to the issue of prisoner voting, by making provision for the franchise to be extended to those serving a custodial sentence of 12 months or less.

[Scottish Elections \(Reform\) Act 2020](#) (8 July 2020)

The Act clarifies that all persons aged 14 or 15 can register as attainers prior to obtaining voting rights in Scottish devolved elections at the age of 16.

[Rethinking Legal Aid An Independent Strategic Review](#) (2018)

Rethinking Legal Aid: An Independent Strategic Review, commissioned by Scottish Ministers and chaired by Martyn Evans, was published in February 2018. It set out an ambitious vision for publicly funded legal assistance in Scotland, through a citizen-focused approach, including for children's legal aid. A Scottish Government [consultation](#) on possible actions following from the recommendations made in the Review closed on 19 September 2019. The [Consultation Analysis](#) was published on 16 June 2020.

CIVIL RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS

[Biometric Data](#)

The Scottish Government's response to the Report by the Independent Advisory Group (IAG) on the Use of Biometric Data was published in March 2018. The Scottish Government agreed with the Group's recommendation for considering a different approach to children aged between 12 and 17 to ensure that their biometric data is taken, used and retained in a proportionate manner that reduces any unintended negative risks or consequences. This approach is consistent with wider Scottish policy approaches including *Getting it right for every child* and the *Whole System Approach for Children and Young People who Offend*. Police Scotland established a short life working group to develop the new policy; new investigative options; and the decision-making model required to progress this recommendation, in parallel with considerations arising from proposals to increase the minimum age of criminal responsibility in Scotland. Police Scotland are currently taking forward the recommendations of the short life working group in respect of:

- Altering the presumption to one of not taking biometrics from children arrested and released without charge unless the case is one of serious violent or sexual offending.
- That in instances when biometric data is taken, this should be authorised by the custody sergeant and the rationale and decision-making process is recorded and as such the National Custody System should be amended to allow the recording of this information.

The remaining recommendations around the taking of samples, including from vulnerable children, are intended to be taken forward in liaison with the Scottish Biometrics Commissioner. The [Scottish Biometrics Commissioner Act 2020](#) provides for the role and functions of the Commissioner. The Commissioner is expected to promote the interests of children and young people and have a role in raising their awareness of police powers and duties in relation to biometric data - and of how these powers and duties can be monitored and challenged. The Commissioner is expected to be appointed in 2021.

[Code of Practice on the Use of Stop and Search](#) (2017)

The Code of Practice, which was developed by the Independent Advisory Group on Stop and Search, came into force on 11 May 2017. The Code and its use is a matter for Police Scotland and it has been designed to ensure that searches are carried out with fairness, integrity and respect. Chapter 7 of the Code is targeted specifically at children and young people and sets out additional consideration and specific guidance for police officers on the conduct of searches in cases where a child or young person is involved. The Code specifies that the police must have the child's wellbeing as a primary consideration in deciding whether to proceed with a stop and search and, where that is necessary, to conduct searches in a way that minimises potential distress. A separate guidance document, [Stop and Search in Scotland: What you need to know - A Guide for Children and Young People](#), was also published in 2017. In June 2019, the Independent Advisory Group published a twelve month [Review](#) of the Code of Practice.

Since 2015, in the interests of accountability and transparency, Police Scotland has published stop and search data on its website. All searches carried out are subject to governance and review in line with scrutiny arrangements in place to confirm they comply with the Code of Practice as being lawful, necessary and proportionate.

[Connecting Scotland](#)

The Connecting Scotland programme was set up in May 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. It aims to provide a national, human-centred, consistent and comprehensive approach to reducing the rates of digital exclusion and digital marginalisation due to low income.

Phase One of the programme provides up to 9,000 digitally excluded people at high clinical risk of COVID-19 with access to a device, internet connection and data, and training and support to be online for up to a year. The £5 million first phase of the Connecting Scotland programme was delivered in partnership with SCVO, local authorities, third sector organisations, Healthcare Improvement Scotland, and the digital and IT sectors led by ScotlandIS. This Phase was completed in September 2020.

Phase Two of the Connecting Scotland Programme aims to provide up to a further 22,000-23,000 digitally excluded or marginalized people with a device, internet connection and data, and training and support to enable them to become confident and take advantage of the opportunities a digital Scotland can offer. Phase Two of Connecting Scotland was launched on 18 August 2020, an additional £15m funding will focus on providing support for low income households with children and young care leavers who are digitally excluded to get online.

In the 2020-21 Programme for Government, the Scottish Government further committed to the Connecting Scotland programme by pledging to reach a total of up to 50,000 digitally excluded or marginalized people by the end of 2021.

Violence Against Children

[Child Protection Improvement Programme Report and Child Protection Systems Review Report Recommendations](#) (2017)

The Child Protection Improvement Programme report sets out 35 Actions covering children's hearings; leadership and workforce development; inspections of children's services; neglect; data and evidence; child sexual exploitation; child internet safety; and trafficking. [The Systems Review report](#) makes 12 recommendations, covering Initial and Significant Case Reviews, Child Protection Committees, the Child Protection Register, and matters of leadership, governance and accountability. The Scottish Government has accepted all of the recommendations made in the Report and progress is being monitored through the National Child Protection Leadership Group.

[Consultation on the Revised National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland](#) (October 2020)

The Scottish Government is looking to revise the 2014 [National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland](#). A consultation on the draft revised guidance opened on 21 October and will run until 17 January 2021. The revised National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland is due to be published in spring 2021.

[National Action Plan to Prevent & Tackle Child Sexual Exploitation 2016-2020 - Delivery Report](#) (July 2020)

The Delivery Report sets out the wealth of achievements delivered since the publication of [Scotland's 2016 National Action Plan to Prevent & Tackle Child Sexual Exploitation Update](#) as well as continued action to further embed a focus on tackling child sexual exploitation. Action also continues through cross-directorate Government-supported work-streams in Health, Justice, Safer Communities and Equalities, which collectively take action to prevent and protect children in Scotland from child sexual abuse, child sexual exploitation and provide appropriate support to victims and survivors.

[National Action Plan on Internet Safety for Children and Young People](#) (2017)

The Action Plan sets out specific actions under three broad aims – giving everybody the skills, knowledge and understanding to help children and young people stay safe online; inspiring safe and responsible use and behaviour online; and creating a safer online environment. Action also includes working with the UK Government on their regulatory proposals to tackle online harms which include legislative and non-legislative measures to make companies more responsible for their users' safety online, in particular, children and vulnerable groups. The Scottish Government also continues its participation as an executive board member of the UK Council for Internet Safety (UKCIS) and its subgroups, to engage in UK-wide discussions with social media companies and technology firms, focusing on their responsibilities to society and improving online safety.

[Expert Group on Preventing Sexual Offending Involving Children and Young People - Final Report](#) (January 2020)

The Scottish Government is committed to preventing all types of harmful sexual behaviour and sexual offending involving children and young people. The Group's report contains findings relating to the nature, causes and frequency of harmful sexual behaviour by children towards other children, highlights existing best practice, and sets out 19 proposals for further action. We are committed to driving forward action, which will involve collaborative working between statutory and third sector organisations across Scotland.

[Protecting Children: Review of section 12 of the Children and Young Persons \(Scotland\) Act 1937 and section 42 of the Sexual Offences \(Scotland\) Act 2009](#) (2018)

The PfG 2017/18 included the commitment to consult on revising the criminal offence of abuse and neglect of children to ensure it reflects a modern understanding of such terms. A formal consultation on the proposed amendments took place during 2018. The Scottish Government's [analysis report](#) of the consultation responses was published on 30 September 2019. We are currently considering how best to amend criminal legislation to reflect our modern understanding of the nature and impact of neglect in a way which does not unfairly criminalise vulnerable groups of parents in light of analysis of these responses and further engagement with key stakeholders.

[Disclosure \(Scotland\) Act 2020](#)

Once implemented, the Disclosure (Scotland) Act 2020 will strengthen safeguarding by making the Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) Scheme mandatory for anyone carrying out regulated roles with children and adults. This includes individuals working in sports, for example, youth coaches and agents.

The Act will introduce a unique approach to childhood offending behaviour, including significantly limiting disclosure. It will amend the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 so that the disclosure period for the majority of childhood convictions will be zero, meaning these will immediately become 'spent'. As such, most childhood convictions will not be disclosable on Level 1 disclosures (replacing the basic disclosure). It will also end the automatic disclosure of childhood offending behaviour on Level 2 disclosures (replacing the current higher level disclosures). Instead, decisions on disclosing such information will be on a case by case basis, following statutory guidance. There will also be an opportunity for the applicant to make 'representations', explaining why they believe the information should not be disclosed, and a right to an independent review of decisions to include information.

[Children \(Equal Protection from Assault\) \(Scotland\) Act 2019](#)

This Act will remove the common law defence of "reasonable chastisement" from the law of Scotland, making all physical punishment of children in Scotland unlawful. The removal of this defence came into force on 7 November 2020. The Act also requires the Scottish Ministers to take steps to promote public understanding and awareness about the removal of the reasonable chastisement defence.

The Scottish Government formed an Implementation Group which considered what was required to implement this legislation. Information about the work of the Group can be found on the Scottish Government's [website](#). As part of its implementation work, the Scottish Government developed resources intended to inform children and young people about this change in the law, and worked with stakeholders to share these resources across Scotland.

[The Forensic Medical Services \(Victims of Sexual Offences\)\(Scotland\) Bill](#)

The Bill continues to proceed to a new timetable and, subject to scrutiny by the Scottish Parliament, it is hoped that it can be passed by the end of the calendar year. The Bill underpins the ongoing work of the [Chief Medical Officer's Rape and Sexual Assault Taskforce](#), to provide national leadership for the improvement of healthcare and forensic medical services for victims of sexual crime. A series of virtual roadshows will take place, ahead of the go-live and launch of the package of resources in late November 2020. The delay caused by the pandemic has also provided an opportunity for this package of resources to be expanded, so it will now include the national children and young people clinical pathway and a revised children's pro-forma to align with a new national dataset for this age group. The purpose of the children and

young people clinical pathway is to ensure a consistent approach to the provision of healthcare and forensic medical examination services for children and young people who may have experienced sexual abuse.

[Trafficking and Exploitation Strategy](#) (2017)

Scotland's first Trafficking and Exploitation Strategy sets out the Scottish Government's ambition to work with partners to eliminate human trafficking and exploitation. The Strategy identifies the following areas for action: identify victims and support them to safety and recovery; identify perpetrators and disrupt their activity; and address the conditions, both local and global, that foster trafficking and exploitation, as well as a dedicated section on actions related to Child Trafficking.

[Third Annual Progress Report and Strategy Review](#) (29 May 2020)

The Third Progress Report and Strategy Review was published on 29 May 2020, in line with our statutory obligations set out in the Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Scotland) Act 2015.

A [consultation](#), about the duty to notify and provide information about victims (section 38 of the Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Scotland) Act 2015), closed in September 2019. We have published all consultation responses online and the consultation analysis report was published on 30 April 2020. Overall there was strong support for the Scottish Government proposals. Legislative implementation of the duty has been delayed until 1 April 2021 at the earliest due to the fast moving response to COVID-19 and its impact on public services.

[Unaccompanied Children](#)

The Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Scotland) Act 2015 provided for the provision of Independent Child Trafficking Guardians for children and young people, for whom no one in the UK holds parental responsibilities, and who have been trafficked or at risk of being trafficked. A [consultation](#) seeking views on the role, functions and responsibilities of an Independent Child Trafficking Guardian ran from August 2019 until November 2019. The consultation was split into two themes with part one considering the technical aspects of the role of the Guardian as set out in Section 11(7) of the Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Scotland) Act 2015; and part two considering the broader functions of the guardian's role. The [responses to the consultation](#) were published in December 2019 and an [analysis of the responses](#) was published on 11 May 2020. Work is currently underway to develop this service and it is anticipated that the new service will be implemented in 2021.

[Equally Safe: Scotland's Strategy for Preventing and Eradicating Violence Against Women and Girls](#) (2018)

Equally Safe, Scotland's Strategy for preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls, seeks to work with stakeholders, to prevent violence from occurring in the first place, build the capability and capacity of mainstream and specialist services to support survivors and those at risk, and strengthen the Justice response to victims and perpetrators. The Strategy was updated in March 2016 and further updated in April 2018.

[Equally Safe - A Delivery Plan for Scotland's Strategy to Prevent and Eradicate Violence Against Women and Girls 2017-21](#) (2017)

The Delivery Plan sets out the actions the Scottish Government, COSLA and partners will take to prevent and ultimately eradicate all forms of violence against women and girls (VAWG), including the impact for children and young people. The Delivery Plan includes a range of actions relevant to children and young people, including prevention within schools and ensuring more effective, trauma-informed support for children and young people affected by VAWG. Progress on the specific actions in the delivery plan is reported annually. The Equally

Safe Delivery Plan: Final Report, which will be published shortly, will provide an overview of progress made to date and set out priorities for the year ahead.

[Scotland's National Action Plan to Prevent and Eradicate Female Genital Mutilation \(FGM\) 2016-2020](#) (2016)

The National Action Plan sets out an agreed range of actions and associated activities to be taken forward by the Scottish Government and its partners to prevent and ultimately eradicate FGM. Progress against actions from the plan is being monitored by a Multi-Agency Implementation Group. The FGM National Action Plan [Year 3 Report](#) was published in November 2019. The Action Plan is due to expire in 2020, the Scottish Government is now considering our next steps in this area.

[Female Genital Mutilation \(Protection and Guidance\)\(Scotland\) Act 2020](#)

The new Act, which was passed in March 2020, will introduce FGM Protection Orders, which are specifically designed to safeguard women and children at risk of FGM; it will also provide for the development of statutory guidance for professionals and agencies working in this area. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, work on implementing this Act was paused in order to focus resources on combating issues arising out of the pandemic and the subsequent lockdown. This work is currently recommencing and plans for consulting on and drafting the guidance are being developed.

[Domestic Abuse \(Scotland\) Act 2018](#)

Ground breaking legislation that criminalises psychological domestic abuse and coercive and controlling behaviour came into force on 1 April 2019. This includes a specific statutory sentencing aggravation to reflect the harm that can be caused to children growing up in an environment where domestic abuse takes place.

[Domestic Abuse \(Protection\)\(Scotland\) Bill](#)

The Bill, which was introduced to the Scottish Parliament on 2 October 2020, will create new protective orders to keep a suspected perpetrator away from the household of someone at risk of abuse and prohibit them from contacting or approaching the person at risk. In contrast with existing civil measures such as Non-Harassment Orders and Exclusion Orders, protective orders would not require the person at risk to make the application to the court themselves. Police would be able to impose a short-term order directly and to apply to a court to put in place a longer-term order.

[Domestic Abuse Awareness Raising Tool \(DAART\)](#) (August 2020)

The Domestic Abuse Awareness Raising Tool was developed for professionals in the housing, social work, health, education and other sectors with an interest in the new domestic abuse legislation and aims to improve understanding of coercive controlling behaviours, and where to direct people for further assistance. The resource was developed in partnership with stakeholders by the domestic abuse charity SafeLives, backed by £10,000 Scottish Government investment. It forms part of a wider programme of accessible resources to improve the capacity of public service staff in Scotland to recognise and safely respond to survivors of domestic abuse.

Family Environment and Alternative Care

[Children \(Scotland\) Act 2020](#) (1 October 2020)

[The Family Justice Modernisation Strategy](#) (2019)

The Children (Scotland) Act 2020 makes a number of changes to family law, in particular to further ensure that the child's best interests are at the centre of any contact and residence cases and that the views of the child are heard. The Scottish Government recognises that primary legislation is only part of the action necessary to improve the operation of family justice. A Family Justice Modernisation Strategy, published on 3 September 2019, sets out work that is ongoing by Scottish Government and others; work that can be delivered via secondary legislation or by improved guidance; areas covered by the Bill (now an Act); and areas that are for longer-term work. It also includes work on prioritising sibling relationships for children in care.

[The Promise](#)

The Scottish Government remains fully committed to deliver on its pledge to care experienced people in Scotland by accepting and responding to the independent Care Review conclusions in order to '#KeepThePromise'. The 2020/21 Programme for Government illustrates our unwavering commitment to delivering The Promise, highlighting three early steps:

- Firstly, we are committed to creating a structure that can facilitate the redesign of whole system approaches to care and support. This begins with embedding the commitments that have already been made to care experienced people into policy and delivery, with significant and intensive work across the entirety of government policy.
- Secondly, an Oversight Board is being established to hold us all to account, with Fiona Duncan – Chair of the Care Review – appointed to lead it. At least half of the members of the Oversight Board will be care experienced, because we cannot build a new approach without having those with lived experience at the heart of accountability. Recruitment for the Oversight Board commenced in October 2020.
- Finally, we are also supporting the establishment of a dedicated, independent Promise Team, including investing £4 million in the Promise Partnership Fund that will help embed and scale-up holistic family support. We will also support and develop the workforce so that they have the opportunity to keep The Promise.

[Getting it Right for Looked After Children and Young People Strategy](#) (2015)

The Strategy sets out the Scottish Government's priorities to improve the lives of looked after children and young people. The Strategy, which has relationships at its heart, has 3 priority areas of work: early engagement; early permanence; and improving the quality of care. The Strategy proposed that different approaches would be required in monitoring and assessing progress on the priorities identified through the strategy. In taking forward the conclusions within The Promise, the Scottish Government will consider next steps for this Strategy, as well as other related documents.

[Youth Homelessness Prevention Pathway](#) (2019)

In November 2019, the Youth Homelessness Prevention Pathway: Improving Care Leaver Housing Pathway was published. The Pathway was developed by a working group, co-ordinated by the A Way Home Scotland Coalition. The coalition was set-up and launched by the Rock Trust in 2017, and is funded by the Scottish Government. It brings together organisations and professionals from across Scotland working in the fields of housing, homelessness, education, youth work, families, health and justice to create and implement plans to address youth homelessness in their localities.

The Improving Care Leaver Housing Pathway report sets out sensible, evidence-based next steps to ensure corporate parents act on their legal and moral duties to prevent care leavers experiencing homelessness, at the point of leaving care and later, by fully implementing existing policy and legislative frameworks. The Scottish Government accepted the recommendations in principal. The members of A Way Home Scotland are now working on the pathway to prevent homelessness for young people who are most vulnerable to homelessness. This includes young people who are care experienced/on the edges of care, LGBTI+, involved in the justice or health system and those who have multiple and complex needs.

[Realigning Children's Services](#)

The Realigning Children's Services programme (RCS) was set up in 2015. The Programme aims to improve outcomes for children by supporting a number of Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs) to improve the decision-making around children and family services through the provision of high quality local evidence in the form of school-based child health and wellbeing surveys, and through development support. The programme helped CPPs to make best use of the evidence, identify improvements, and plan how to take these forward. Since 2015, the RCS programme has engaged with eight CPPs and 77,000 school children have taken part in the RCS health and wellbeing surveys. An [Evaluation](#) of the first and second tranches of Realigning Children's Services (RCS) was published in 2019.

The RCS Programme ceased in its current iteration at the end of March 2020, with the intention of integrating and streamlining this improvement offer within the Children and Young People's Improvement Collaborative (CYPIC). The introduction of a national school health and wellbeing census (which is expected to be piloted in the 2020/21 school year) will also result in CPPs having access to the school population data that has proved to be so useful in the RCS evidence programme.

[National Review of Care Allowances](#) (2018)

A National Review of Care Allowances for children living in foster care, kinship care and adoptive placements was carried out between November 2017 and August 2018. The Review Group's final report, including 12 recommendations for Scottish Ministers and COSLA leaders, was published in September 2018. Following a delay due to COVID-19, the Scottish Government is continuing to work with COSLA to agree how best to take forward the Group's recommendations, with a view to implementation in the coming months. This will improve consistency and transparency for looked after children, their families and their carers across Scotland.

[National Missing Persons Framework for Scotland](#) (2017)

The National Missing Persons Framework for Scotland sets out the roles and responsibilities of respective agencies, as well as key national objectives and supporting commitments to focus efforts on preventing people from going missing and limiting the harm associated when they do go missing. The Framework clarifies responsibilities and sets out a clear set of objectives and supporting commitments. The Working Group for Missing People was asked by the Minister of Community Safety to support and assess the implementation of the National Framework for Missing People aims and recommendations in 2019. The Group's [Report](#), which was published in September 2020, sets out the findings and next steps from their implementation review.

[Support for Young Carers](#)

We are continuing work to embed the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 and focusing on priorities highlighted in the [National Implementation Plan](#) for the Act, which is currently in the process of being updated and refreshed. As well as the [Carers' charter](#), we have funded partners to develop resources aimed at supporting young carers to understand their rights under the Act, including a Carers Act [Young Carers Jargon Buster](#). In addition to this, we continue to fund Young Scot to provide an [exclusive platform for young carers](#) with tailored e-vouchers, discounts and opportunities to help support young carers' wellbeing and enable them to relax and have fun. This package is available to all young carers aged 11 to 18. We have also used this platform to host specific up to date information for young carers, particularly around support and COVID-19.

We continue to fund a full time post in Carers Trust Scotland for an Education Officer. They have been working closely with us, Education Scotland, the GTC and SQA to ensure that education staff are aware of young carers and they have the understanding and resources to be able to support them appropriately. This includes the launch of a dedicated page on the Education Scotland National Improvement Hub, on [young carers and how they can be supported through education during COVID-19](#).

[Carers Strategic Policy Statement Consultation](#)

We consulted on a draft Carers Strategic Policy Statement in September-December 2019. The draft set out the Scottish Government's priorities and the overall outcomes it is working to achieve for unpaid carers across all policy areas, including social security, fair work and social inclusion. It also mapped existing policies to support carers and young carers across different Ministerial portfolios. The final publication of this has been delayed due to the ongoing pandemic. However, throughout the crisis we continue to communicate with carer and young carer services to understand the challenges they are facing at this time.

[Young Carer Grant](#)

On 21 October 2019, Social Security Scotland began accepting applications for the Young Carer Grant. The first of its kind in the UK, the Young Carer Grant will help eligible young carers aged 16, 17 and 18 with a payment of £305.10, which can be applied for annually, to help them access life opportunities which are the norm for many other young people. The Grant builds on wider support planned or underway for young carers, for example through the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016, and benefit take-up activity targeted at carers aged 16-24. In February 2020, the Scottish Government [extended eligibility](#) for the Young Carer Grant to young carers going through the immigration process, allowing relevant young people to apply for the Grant without fear of this risking their immigration status. The change comes following lengthy discussions between the Scottish and UK Governments to amend Home Office regulations.

[National Parenting Strategy](#) (2012)

The National Parenting Strategy seeks to strengthen the support on offer to parents and make it easier for them to access this support. When we refer to parents, we mean anyone with a parenting role for children of all ages.

Disability, Basic Health and Welfare

[A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People: Our Delivery Plan to 2021 for the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) (2016)

The Delivery Plan has five long-term ambitions and 93 actions aimed at transforming the lives of disabled people in Scotland and ensuring that their human rights are realised. The actions include a range of measures relevant to children and young people and supporting the families with disabled children and young people.

Progress is monitored through: the review process for the UK State Party in relation to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; the [Fairer Scotland Action Plan: Progress Report 2018](#) (December 2018) and the [Equality Outcomes and Mainstreaming Report](#) (April 2019). We plan to report on progress to the Scottish Parliament in early 2021.

[Supporting Disabled Children, Young People and Their Families: Guidance](#) (2019)

In 2016, the Scottish Government funded a survey of families with disabled children and young people across Scotland to gather evidence about their information needs. Families said they would favour a centralised resource which signposts to relevant information and organisations. In response to this consultation, online guidance to help improve the experiences of disabled children, young people, and their families was published in April 2019. The aim was to provide clear, accessible information on national policies, entitlements, rights and the different options for support available. We have used real life stories of children and young people which highlight how support or a service available in their area has helped them. The online resource was updated in April 2020 with a COVID-19 support page which provides specific information to families in relation to supports available during the pandemic.

[Autism and Learning Disabilities](#)

On top of the existing actions outlined in the previous policies, the Scottish Government continues to take specific action to improve the lives of autistic children and young people and/or children and young people with a learning disability. Since 2019, the Scottish Government has continued to champion human rights through the [Scottish Strategy for Autism](#) and the [Keys to Life](#) policies. Both strategies focus on outcomes intended to ensure people live healthier lives, enjoy choice and control over the services they use, and are supported to be independent and active citizens.

However having experienced the impact of the coronavirus pandemic together, we recognise autistic children and young people, and/or children and young people with learning/intellectual disability have faced and responded to a wider range of challenges than the general population. We see the benefits of shared values and have identified a range of outcomes that we believe can usefully be delivered together. Over the next 18 months, we will work collectively with key stakeholders to deliver joint outcomes as the COVID-19 pandemic continues and beyond.

Recognising that as we make the transition into the next phase of recovery from the pandemic, returning to how services previously were isn't good enough. The Scottish Government will continue to work collaboratively together to deliver shared outcomes and by consulting and involving people with lived experience early on, we ensure they are at the heart of our decision-making and planning. We will shortly publish a joint 'Learning/Intellectual Disability and Autism Framework for Transition and Transformation' that will shape public services and attitudes to ensure that the human rights of people with learning disabilities and autistic people are respected and protected and they are empowered to live their lives, the same as everyone else.

[See Hear](#) (2014)

This strategic framework aims to meet the needs of people with a sensory impairment in Scotland and commits to ensuring that children, young people and adults have the same access to opportunities and public services as everyone else. The strategy is being implemented through local partnerships of statutory and third sector organisations. Sensory Impairment Leads have been nominated to help drive progress across priority areas within the local partnerships insofar as local resources allow. Local partnerships will adopt different approaches and the level and pace of progress towards the achievement of outcomes will accord with local circumstances.

There is a See Hear Coordinator who sits on both the Visual Impairment Network for Children and Young People (VINCIP) and the Hearing Impairment Network for Children and Young People (HINCYP) steering groups, as well as working closely with colleagues engaged with Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC) at The Health and Social Care Alliance (The ALLIANCE), ensuring inclusive communication and rights-based practice are central to the experience of children and young people living with sensory loss across Scotland.

We are now reviewing what has been achieved so far and reflecting on what outcomes we would collectively like to achieve and what success will look like in the medium to longer-term. A key part of this will be engaging with service users and stakeholders to capture their views and experiences. To this end we are currently considering responses to a survey sent out to all See Hear Leads, as well as third sector organisations.

[Part 4 of the Health \(Tobacco, Nicotine etc. and Care\) \(Scotland\) Act 2016 – Provision of Communication Equipment](#)

Part 4 of the Act, which commenced on 19 March 2018, places a duty on NHS Boards to ensure communication equipment, as well as the support to use it, are provided free of charge to people of all ages, from all care groups, who cannot speak or who have difficulty speaking. To support the delivery of legislation the following tools have been developed: [Guidance on the Provision of Communication Equipment and Support in using that Equipment](#), [Easy Read version of the Guidance](#) and a [National AAC Core Pathway](#). The [2019 Progress Report](#) was published on 21 February 2020. Work is now underway to co-produce, with our national advisory group members and stakeholders, a refresh of the national Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) high level work plan, reflecting the broader and ongoing program of work on AAC.

[Going Further: Scotland's Accessible Travel Framework](#) (2016)

Scotland's Accessible Travel Framework is about improving the door to door journeys that disabled people make whilst working to remove the barriers which prevent them travelling. The ten year Framework has been shaped by disabled people themselves, together with organisations that represent them; this ensures the experiences and voices of disabled people are heard. It is built around one vision, four outcomes and 48 actions that were collectively agreed by disabled people's organisations, transport providers and government. We have worked with partners to respond to stakeholders' concerns to progress the Framework more quickly and ramped up implementation of the Framework by moving to an annual delivery plan for this and future years. The first annual [Delivery Plan](#) was published in June 2019 and focuses on 8 priority areas.

Our vision set out in the Framework remains the same. COVID-19 has not changed that vision, but it has changed what it looks like in practice, and the steps we have to take to achieve it in a post-pandemic context. All work on the Framework was paused in March this year and new challenges have emerged rapidly, and the priorities we identified with disabled people pre-

pandemic, whilst still important, are no longer the most pressing issues we are facing. Future delivery plans will be driven by emerging evidence on the impact of COVID-19 for disabled travellers. The intention is to close the 2019-2020 Delivery plan with a progress report and to publish the next Delivery Plan by the end of the year in co-production with disabled people and the organisations that represent them.

[A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People: Employment Action Plan](#) (2018)

The Plan sets out the steps the Scottish Government will take to reduce the employment gap between disabled people and the rest of the working age population by at least half, by 2038. These actions cover three key themes that emerged during the development of the plan: supporting employers to recruit and retain disabled people; supporting disabled people to enter employment; and young people and transitions. Key commitments within the Plan to support young disabled people making the transition from school to further or higher education include:

- Building on the Seven Principles of Good Transitions, and broader recommendations from sector experts, disabled young people and their families and carers, and work across Government to improve transitions. This includes considering how we can extend the current public sector internship scheme to see greater use by the private sector.
- Launch a new [Careers Strategy](#) to align career information, advice and guidance services in Scotland. Enhancing our lifelong careers service, which is responsive to labour market change and user needs, including those of young disabled people making their first steps in the world of work.
- Undertake a review of supported employment across Scotland, as part of implementing the employment actions agreed in Scotland's Learning Disability Strategy, [Keys to Life](#).

We will continue to work across Scottish Government, and with partners (including: local government; Scottish Funding Council; and Skills Development Scotland) to ensure delivery of these commitments.

Transitions

As part of our commitment to improving transitions for young people, the Scottish Government has been working in partnership with ARC (Association for Real Change) Scotland to develop a trial of their draft framework '[Principles into Practice](#)'. The purpose of this trial is to:

- Support the improvement of transitions support available to young people and their parents and carers in the participating trial areas.
- Test and bring the draft of Principles into Practice and associated resources to completion to support its implementation more widely.

The trial aims to improve the lived experiences of young people (14 to 25 years) who require additional support to make the transition to young adult life, and to address long running and well-documented challenges associated with co-ordinating support at this important time.

[No One Left Behind – Next Steps for the Integration and Alignment of Employability Support in Scotland](#) (2018)

In March 2018, the Scottish Government published No One Left Behind – Next Steps for the Integration and Alignment of Employability Support in Scotland, which contains a comprehensive range of activities to deliver more effective and joined-up employability support across Scotland. The document recognises that better integration and alignment of employability with other services is a vital part of its ambition to tackle labour market inequalities and help more people into work. The new No One Left Behind Employability partnership approach commenced in April 2019. Funding was allocated to all 32 local authorities to deliver our key objectives, which includes providing tailored support to some young people who have left school to help them prepare for employment, training or education. We are currently planning the next phase of implementation and will publish our No One Left Behind Delivery Plan in November this year, providing a renewed focus on partnership working across the employability system, building consensus with partners on the approach to be taken and providing clarity on future funding arrangements, timeline of implementation and governance of No One Left Behind.

[Scottish Government Position Paper: Child Disability Payment](#) (February 2020)

The position paper sets out the Scottish Government's policy position on Child Disability Payment, the Scottish replacement for Disability Living Allowance for Children. The Scottish Government is committed to co-designing Scotland's devolved social security system with disabled children and young people, and to build a system that is built on the principles of fairness, dignity and respect. When the Scottish Government begins delivery of Child Disability Payment, we will automatically extend an award of this benefit for all young people who are entitled immediately prior to age 16, to age 18. We recognise that age 16 is a key transition point in the lives of children and young people, and this will help to reduce stress for young people and their families. The document is part of a wider series of papers providing an update on the Scottish Government's position on various matters relating to the development of the devolved disability benefits in Scotland.

[Winter Heating Assistance for Children and Young People \(Scotland\) Regulations 2020](#) (August 2020)

The Regulations provide for the Child Winter Heating Assistance, the first disability benefit to be introduced using new social security powers. The new benefit, which will be delivered from winter 2020, will provide families of children and young people in receipt of the highest rate of the care component of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) for children with an extra £200 to help with their winter heating costs. These payments will be made automatically to eligible families through Social Security Scotland, and will make a difference to the lives of up to 14,000 children and young people in 2020/21.

Health and Wellbeing

[The Best Start: A Five-Year Forward Plan for Maternity and Neonatal Care in Scotland](#) (2017)

The Best Start sets out the vision for the delivery of high quality and safe maternity and neonatal services across Scotland where services regard mother and baby as one entity and truly put the mother, baby and family at the centre of service planning delivery. Implementation of a number of key policies in the report is well underway. This will see the introduction of continuity of carer for women throughout pregnancy which will improve relationships and evidence tells us will lead to improved clinical outcomes for mothers and babies and a range of changes for neonatal services which will keep mothers and babies together as much as possible which will improve bonding and attachment.

[Improving Maternal and Infant Nutrition: A Framework for Action](#) (2011)

The Framework sets out the action to be taken by NHS Boards, local authorities and others to improve the diet and nutrition of pregnant women, babies and young children in Scotland, including the ongoing commitment to promoting, supporting and protecting breastfeeding as the normal nutrition for babies.

[A Universal Health Visiting Pathway for Scotland](#) (2015)

The Pathway sets out the minimum core home visiting programme to be offered to all families by Health Visitors. The programme consists of 11 home visits to all families - 8 within the first year of life and 3 child health reviews between 13 months and 4-5 years.

[Family Nurse Partnership](#) (FNP)

The FNP is an intensive, preventive, one-to-one home visiting programme for first-time mothers aged 19 and under and their children (as well as some mothers aged up to 24 years in some areas). It covers early pregnancy until the child reaches 2. The FNP programme aims to improve pregnancy and birth outcomes and break the cycle of disadvantage by working directly with young mothers and their children to improve their health and wellbeing.

[Pregnancy and Parenthood in Young People Strategy 2016-2026](#) (2016)

The Pregnancy and Parenthood in Young People Strategy sets out the action required to support young people around pregnancy and parenthood. It aims to address the cycle of deprivation that is often associated with pregnancy in young people and supports young parents. The Strategy focuses on increasing the opportunities available to young people, to support their wellbeing and prosperity across the life course and to help young people develop the appropriate knowledge, skills and confidence they need around pregnancy and parenthood through a partnership approach between professionals and young people.

The [National Progress Report](#) (June 2019) outlines how the Scottish Government is working to support young people around pregnancy and parenthood, through the implementation of the Pregnancy and Parenthood in Young People Strategy as well as wider work across government.

Improving Outcomes for Children, Young People and Families

An Outcomes Framework for Children, Young People and Families is being developed based on the commitment to ensure that all children and young people in Scotland 'grow up loved, safe and respected so they can realise their full potential'. The Framework is intended to follow the strategic approach used in the National Performance Framework. Engagement with key stakeholders had taken place prior to COVID-19 but the work was then paused. There are plans to resume this activity and further engagement on an Outcomes Framework.

[A Healthier Future: Scotland's Diet & Healthy Weight Delivery Plan](#) (2018)

The Diet & Healthy Weight Delivery Plan sets out our vision for everyone in Scotland to eat well and have a healthy weight. Central to the plan is our ambition to halve childhood obesity by 2030, and to significantly reduce diet-related health inequalities. The plan has over 60 broad ranging actions including more support for women to have a healthy weight in pregnancy; support for breastfeeding; improving food served in early learning and childcare settings and schools; and better access to quality weight management services. We will progress legislation on Restricting Foods Promotions as soon as possible, having taken into account the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

[Best Start Foods](#)

As part of our programme of support, alongside measures such as Best Start Grant payments and the Baby Box initiative which target the formative early years of a child's life, Best Start Foods support young families in establishing and maintaining healthy diets, improve health outcomes and tackle inequality. It does this by providing direct financial support to families on certain low income benefits to access affordable nutritious food at critical points in their lives – pregnancy, birth and early childhood. Best Start Foods has replaced the UK Government's Healthy Start Vouchers and has: increased payments; introduced a new payment card to remove the stigma of the current paper vouchers; improved choice by including a wider range of foods for families to purchase; and increased access to a wider range of retailers.

[A More Active Scotland: Scotland's Physical Activity Delivery Plan](#) (2018)

Following from the [Active Scotland Outcomes Framework](#) (2017), the Delivery Plan outlines the actions that the Scottish Government and a wide range of partner organisations will take to support and enable people in Scotland to be more physically active. This includes actions which particularly target the needs of girls and young women and those children and young people who face barriers to participation. The Active Scotland Delivery Group is monitoring delivery of the actions in the Plan. The minutes of meetings of the Group are available on the Scottish Government's [website](#).

[Oral Health Improvement Plan](#) (2018)

As part of the Oral Health Improvement Plan, we continue to develop the Childsmile Programme of toothbrushing and fluoride varnish application for children up to 5 years of age. The programme has been expanded to include all children in the 20 per cent most deprived areas of Scotland. The percentage of Primary 1 children with 'no obvious decay experience' has increased to 74 per cent in 2020, compared with 58 per cent in 2008. As the programme is accessed via schools and nurseries COVID-19 has meant Childsmile has been halted in the last few months. A provisional timeline for the remobilisation is January 2021.

[Oral Health Community Challenge Fund](#) (June 2019)

The Oral Health Improvement Plan also included a key commitment to introduce a new three-year Oral Health Community Challenge Fund. This seeks to enable third sector organisations to deliver projects that support families with young children living in areas of multiple deprivation to reduce oral health inequalities and support better early years oral health. The Fund was launched in February 2019 and 21 projects across Scotland have received funding to deliver a range of oral health interventions.

[Mental Health – Transition and Recovery Plan](#) (October 2020)

This Plan outlines the Scottish Government’s response to the mental health impacts of COVID-19 and lockdown. It addresses the challenges that the pandemic has had, and will continue to have, on the population’s mental health. The plan lays out key areas of mental health need that have arisen as a result of COVID-19 and lockdown, and the actions that the Scottish Government will take to respond to that need. Children, young people and families are key groups where we have outlined specific actions to improve mental health and wellbeing.

[Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services \(CAMHS\) NHS Scotland National Service Specification](#) (February 2020)

The CAMHS Service Specification, which outlines provisions young people and families can expect from the NHS, is a product of the [Children and Young People’s Mental Health and Wellbeing Programme Board](#).

[Every Life Matters](#) (August 2018)

Every Life Matters is Scotland’s Suicide Prevention Action Plan and envisages a Scotland where suicide is preventable; where help and support is available to anyone contemplating suicide and to those who have lost a loved one to suicide. The Plan sets out ambitious actions which leaders at national, regional and local level must take to transform society’s response and attitudes towards suicide, including the targets to further reduce the suicide rate by 20% by 2022 (from a 2017 baseline) and to consider, in particular, the needs of children and young people. The National Suicide Prevention Leadership Group (NSPLG) has been established to recommend how actions in the action plan are to be implemented, to influence change and remove barriers to progress. The NSPLG published its [second Annual Report](#) on 30 September 2020.

[The Perinatal and Infant Mental Health Fund](#)

The Perinatal and Infant Mental Health Fund was established by the Scottish Government to provide crucial help for mothers, infants and their families who are in need of mental health support. The Fund supports third sector organisations so they can provide enhanced peer support, parenting support and perinatal counselling services during pregnancy and in the early stages of life. Inspiring Scotland manages the Fund, which will provide annual funding of up to £1 million. The Fund will run for three years, from August 2020–March 2023.

[A Connected Scotland: Our Strategy for Tackling Social Isolation and Loneliness and Building Stronger Social Connections](#) (2018)

The Scottish Government’s first national strategy to tackle social isolation and loneliness sets out a vision for a Scotland where everyone has the opportunity to develop meaningful relationships, regardless of age, status, circumstance, or identity. The Strategy was published in December 2018, and since then we have formed both the National Implementation Group and Ministerial steering group to drive forward implementation of the strategy. The coronavirus delayed publication of the planned Delivery Plan, however a Highlight Report will be published in December 2020 which will look at what has been achieved and how our next steps will be informed.

[Sexual Health and Blood Borne Virus Framework 2015-2020 Update](#) (2015)

The Sexual Health and Blood Borne Virus Framework was first published in 2011 and updated in 2015 to run to 2020. The Scottish Government and its partners have continued to use the Framework as a vehicle to improve sexual and reproductive health outcomes among young people in Scotland. However, we recognise that COVID-19 has presented sexual and reproductive health services with unprecedented challenges, and has also had a disproportionate impact on young people (those under the age of 20). During lockdown all dedicated sexual health services for young people were closed and, while urgent sexual health care was available in many areas of Scotland, much of this involved telemedicine models, and was provided in ways that created barriers for young people.

The Scottish Government has committed to developing a Recovery Sexual Health and Blood Borne Viruses Framework. This Framework will take stock of the impacts of COVID-19 on sexual health; it will seek to address the challenges services now face as a result of the pandemic, while harnessing the positive examples of innovation displayed throughout the crisis. We will ensure that this Framework takes account of the needs of young people and is informed by their experiences.

[Alcohol and Drug Treatment Strategy - Rights, Respect and Recovery](#) (2018)

The Strategy presents a combined approach to the treatment of drugs and alcohol in recognition of the many shared underlying causes and similarities in treatment services. Rights, Respect and Recovery has a commitment to children and families affected by alcohol and drug use, that they will be safe, healthy, included and supported. We have established a working group who are currently developing at a national level, new approaches for a whole family approach and family inclusive practice, to reduce alcohol and drug-related harms to families. Human, family and child rights are at the centre of this approach.

[Alcohol Framework](#) (2018)

The Alcohol Framework outlines the Scottish Government's national prevention aims on alcohol including a strong focus on doing more to protect children and young people from alcohol-related harm and putting their voices at the heart of developing policy. We commissioned Young Scot to facilitate a co-design project on alcohol marketing with young people in Scotland. This will report shortly and feed into proposals for our upcoming consultation on potential alcohol marketing restrictions.

[Raising Scotland's Tobacco-free Generation](#) (2018)

This five-year action plan sets out interventions and policies to help reduce the use of, and associated harms from using, tobacco in Scotland. It aims to protect children born since 2013 from tobacco so that when they begin to turn 21 (from 2034) they will be, and remain, tobacco-free. Bi-annual evaluations of progress will be published every two years from 2020.

[Strategic Framework for Action on Palliative and End of Life Care \(2016-2021\)](#) (2015)

The Strategic Framework committed explicitly to better supporting children and families by promoting the further development of holistic palliative care for the 0-25 year age group, recognising that many of their needs may differ from those of adults. In 2019, the Paediatric End of Life Care Network (PELiCaN) was established to bring together medical professionals working in children's palliative care to improve on the care and support provided to children and their families when they need it most. Throughout 2020, PELiCaN has worked to connect paediatric palliative care professionals together in order to help ensure that young people and their families can continue to get the support they need at this difficult time.

Support for Families

[The Child Poverty \(Scotland\) Act 2017](#)

The Act sets in statute the ambition to eradicate child poverty in Scotland underpinned by four ambitious income-based targets for child poverty reduction to be met by 2030 (final targets), alongside interim targets to be met by 2023. It places duties on Scottish Ministers to produce three 'delivery plans' (in 2018, 2022 and 2026) setting out action to be taken to meet the targets and report annually on progress. In addition, local authorities and Health Boards are also required to jointly produce Local Child Poverty Action Reports, outlining the action they have taken in the reporting year, and plan to take in future, to contribute to reducing child poverty. The Act was passed unanimously in the Scottish Parliament in December 2017.

[Every Child, Every Chance - The Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2018-22](#) (2018)

The first Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan, published in March 2018, sets out the action we will take to make progress towards Scotland's ambitious child poverty targets. The Plan outlines a comprehensive range of actions to tackle the three key drivers of child poverty reduction (income from work and earnings; costs of living; income from social security) and action to mitigate the impacts of poverty on children living in low income households. This includes transformative new actions such as the Scottish Child Payment which will be delivered in full by the end of 2022.

The [second annual progress report](#), published in August 2020, sets out the considerable progress made in implementing the Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan. This includes delivering all three elements of the new Best Start Grant and launching Best Start Foods, launching the new Parental Employability Support Fund and delivering continued progress in relation to the supply of affordable homes and the expansion of funded Early Learning and Childcare. The report also highlights that our estimated investment targeted at children living in poverty increased by £144 million to over £672 million in 2019-20 from the last year - part of over £1.96 billion invested to support low income households. Scottish Ministers will continue to report annually on the progress being made against delivery of the actions within the Plan and against the targets set.

[Fairer Scotland Duty](#) (2018)

The Fairer Scotland Duty, Part 1 of the Equality Act 2010, came into force in Scotland from April 2018 following consultation in 2017. The Duty places a legal responsibility on particular public bodies in Scotland to actively consider how they can reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage, when making strategic decisions. [Interim Guidance](#) on the Duty was published by Scottish Ministers in March 2018. The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) is the Regulator for the Fairer Scotland Duty and will be closely involved with monitoring and the development of best practice for the Duty; particularly in the first three years, seen by the Scottish Government as an implementation phase.

[Social Security](#)

The Scotland Act 2016 devolved new social security powers to Scotland. Section 1 of the Social Security (Scotland) Act 2018 sets out eight core principles in the Scottish social security system's founding legislation. These principles will define all aspects of the design, development and implementation of this new system. The Act also proposes a statutory requirement on Scottish Ministers to produce a publicly accessible charter that reflects the key principles and communicates in clear terms what people are entitled to expect from the new system, and how it will be delivered in practice.

[Our Charter](#), which was published in January 2019, was co-designed with people who have lived experience of social security, organisations that help or represent people who may use the new system and Scottish Government and Social Security Scotland staff. The Charter was approved by the Scottish Parliament.

A [Measurement Framework](#) relating to commitments set out in the Charter was published in October 2019. It sets out a strong commitment from Scottish Government and Social Security Scotland to openly and honestly report on the extent to which we are delivering the commitments in the Charter. Like the new Social Security System in Scotland, the Framework is innovative and challenging and as such will require bespoke data collection which we will develop and roll-out as the system rolls out.

[Benefit Take-up Strategy](#) (2019)

Since publishing the first Benefit Take-up Strategy, under the Social Security (Scotland) Act, on 21 October 2019, the Scottish Government has taken forward a number of initiatives to address barriers to accessing Scottish benefits, including:

- Two new funds totalling £600,000 to assist 26 third sector organisations to support people who will be applying for Scottish benefits and to ensure people are aware of the financial support available to them.
- A Stakeholder Take-up Reference Group to provide advice and support in the implementation of our Strategy, as well as feeding into the development of the next strategy.
- Developing a Take-up Stakeholder Toolkit to help existing services to support their clients with Scottish benefits, and – in particular – with issues related to non-take-up.
- Ongoing work on mainstreaming best practice guidance to support third sector organisations and local authorities to borrow from the examples practice in promoting/ supporting benefit take-up within and across those sectors.

[Best Start Grant](#)

The Best Start Grant (BSG) has replaced and improved upon the UK Government's Sure Start Maternity Grant in Scotland. Split into 3 payments, the BSG offers financial support to low income families at key transition points in a child's early years. The Pregnancy and Baby Payment opened for applications in December 2018 and provides £600 for a first child and £300 for second and subsequent children. The Early Learning Payment, which launched in April 2019, provides £250 per child around the time a child starts nursery. The School Age Payment launched in June 2019 and provides £250 per child around the time a child is first old enough to start Primary 1. By 31 August 2020, more than 106,000 BSG payments had been authorised, providing over £31 million to those families who need it most.

[Scottish Child Payment](#)

The Scottish Child Payment for under 6s will open for applications in November 2020, with first payments beginning from the end of February 2021. This is a delay of only two months from the original timetable, despite the significant impact of COVID-19. This game changing new payment means that low-income families with a child under six in receipt of qualifying benefits, will be eligible for a payment of £10 per child per week – this is equivalent to £520 per year. There are no limits on the number of eligible children supported by the Scottish Child Payment. The latest Scottish Fiscal Commission forecast suggests that the payment could support up to 194,000 children this year (2020/21).

[Fuel Poverty \(Targets, Definition and Strategy\) \(Scotland\) Act 2019](#)

A [Draft Fuel Poverty Strategy](#) for Scotland was published alongside the Fuel Poverty (Target, Definition and Strategy) (Scotland) Bill, on 27 June 2018. The Bill became an Act in July 2019. It sets out that the final Strategy will outline the actions that will be taken to drive progress towards meeting our ambitious targets for reducing fuel poverty. The final Strategy was originally due to be published in September 2020. However, work on its development was paused and planning is now underway to consider the practicalities of developing the final Strategy, which the Programme for Government commits us to publishing in 2021. The final Strategy will set out the actions we will take to bring people out of fuel poverty, improving their lives and ensuring support is provided to those who need it most. This will be based on our guiding principles of fairness and equality for all, and reflect the different needs of all of Scotland's urban, suburban, rural, island and remote communities. We will ensure this work is aligned with policies across government to tackle poverty and improve homes, including the Fairer Scotland Action Plan and Child Poverty Action Plan.

[Ending Homelessness Together: High Level Action Plan](#) (2018)

The Ending Homelessness Together: High Level Action Plan takes forward the 70 recommendations from the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group and sets out a five year programme, to be delivered in partnership with local authorities and others, to end homelessness and transform temporary accommodation in Scotland. An [Annual Report](#) detailing progress being made in delivering the work outlined in the Action Plan was published in January 2020.

In October 2020, we updated the [Ending Homelessness Together Action Plan](#) to reflect actions needed in response to the global coronavirus pandemic. The Action Plan was updated following the reconvening of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group in June, to guide us on what we need to do now and in the future to end homelessness in light of COVID-19.

Climate and Environment

[The Environment Strategy for Scotland: Vision and Outcomes](#) (25 February 2020)

The Environment Strategy creates an overarching framework for Scotland's strategies and plans on the environment and climate change. The Strategy's 2045 vision was published in February 2020, with a set of supporting outcomes. The vision describes our ambitions for Scotland's natural environment and our role in tackling the global climate and nature crises. It also highlights the significant benefits this will create for the health and wellbeing of Scotland's people, our economy and our global citizenship. Next steps for the Strategy include developing 'pathways' for achieving outcomes and a monitoring framework to track progress. A range of issues within the scope of the Strategy are linked to children's wellbeing, including outdoor play and education; fuel and transport poverty; and the health impacts of air pollution and access to nature. More broadly, tackling the crises of climate change and biodiversity loss is fundamental to the wellbeing and prosperity of countries around the world, and of future generations. Children in Scotland are calling for urgent action on these issues through initiatives such as school strikes.

[Scotland's Biodiversity: A Route Map to 2020](#) (2015)

The Route Map is the overarching plan for delivering Scotland's Biodiversity Strategy. It sets out the Six Big Steps for Nature that we need to see to reverse the long-term decline in our biodiversity through a series of 12 Priority Projects. Big Step 3 - Quality Greenspace for health and education benefits, focuses on people's engagement with nature and includes two particularly relevant Projects: Taking Learning Outdoors; and Developing Scotland's

Natural Health Service. Taking Learning Outdoors aims to increase secondary and primary schools' access to greenspace and nature for outdoor learning as part of the wider 'Learning for Sustainability' agenda. This will see provision of outdoor learning information and opportunities, support for teachers to ensure that they are able to deliver outdoor learning in practice, and the development and improvement of greenspace provision and opportunities for outdoor learning close to schools. Developing Scotland's Natural Health Service aims to use NHS Health Boards to promote health benefits from physical outdoors activity and contact with nature. NatureScot are leading on the development of this service, which will see nature-based health programmes used as part of health promotion and improvement, and encourage healthier lifestyle behaviours.

[Climate Change \(Emissions Reduction Targets\) \(Scotland\) Act 2019](#)

The Act, which amends the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009, sets targets to reduce Scotland's emissions of all greenhouse gases to net-zero by 2045 at the latest, with interim targets for reductions of at least 56% by 2020, 75% by 2030, 90% by 2040. The 2019 Act embeds the principles of a Just Transition, which means reducing emissions in a way which tackles inequality and promotes fair work, at the heart of Scotland's approach to reaching net-zero.

[Climate Ready Scotland: Climate Change Adaptation Programme 2019-2024](#)

(September 2019)

The second Scottish Climate Change Adaptation Programme sets out around 170 policies and proposals to prepare Scotland for the challenges we will face as our climate continues to change. The five-year Programme takes an outcomes-based approach taken from the UN Sustainable Development Goals and Scotland's National Performance Framework. The [first annual report](#) of the Programme, laid in Parliament on 29 May 2020 – constitutes good early progress of policy and research delivery towards implementing the Programme. The Programme recognises that babies and young children face disproportionately high health effects as a result of climate change impacts. Case studies set out within the Programme include Scottish Natural Heritage's CivTech 3.0 Challenge to use tech to enhance the experience of the outdoors in a way that will deliver its benefits to young people, and the 2050 Young Malawian Climate Leaders project; designed to build a network of young people who will be active in advocating for action on climate change.

[Energy Efficient Scotland: Route Map](#) (2018)

Published in May 2018, the route map for the Energy Efficient Scotland sets out the journey for homes, businesses and public buildings to become more energy efficient. It proposes clear long-term energy efficiency standards for buildings to be warmer, greener and more efficient by 2040. It sets out the pathways that different building sectors will take between now and then to achieve those standards, through two key objectives: removing poor energy efficiency as a driver for fuel poverty; and reducing greenhouse gas emissions by improving the energy efficiency of our buildings and decarbonising our heat supply.

[Cleaner Air for Scotland - The Road to a Healthier Future](#) (2015)

Scotland's first distinct air quality strategy, sets out a comprehensive series of actions intended to deliver further reductions in air pollution. Progress is monitored through regular reporting on the key outcomes and objectives. Additionally, for central government and local authorities, a series of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) is proposed. An independent review of the strategy was completed in July 2019, which assessed progress to date and identified priorities for additional action. The conclusions and recommendations arising from the review have been used to develop a revised and updated strategy, which will be issued for consultation before the end of 2020. The final strategy will be published in the first part of 2021.

[Scotland's Forestry Strategy 2019–2029](#) (February 2019)

The Scottish Government's Forestry Strategy sets out a long-term framework for the expansion and sustainable management of Scotland's forests and woodland. It recognises the critical role forestry can play in combating climate change, building a growing and inclusive economy, and improving peoples' health, wellbeing and life chances. The Strategy presents evidence that children that are given the opportunity to experience outdoor learning and play show improvements in their physical, social and emotional development. It commits to supporting greater opportunities for children to play and learn in forests and woodlands, so more of Scotland's young people can realise these benefits.

Scotland's [Forestry Strategy Implementation Plan 2020-2022](#) has been published, although it should be noted that this Plan was prepared before the coronavirus pandemic. The Scottish Government and its partners will undertake activities such as rolling out the Forest Kindergarten 'training the trainers' programme; promote and support access provision in forests and woodlands; and support community organisations involved in using, managing or owning woodland, and the provision of independent advice for community woodland groups.

Education, leisure and cultural activity

[2020 National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan](#) (December 2019)

The National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan is designed to help deliver the twin aims of excellence and equity in education. It serves as the single, definitive plan for securing educational improvement through six key improvement drivers: school leadership; teacher professionalism; parental engagement; assessment of children's progress; school improvement; and performance information. Through the National Improvement Framework and the annual [NIF Interactive Evidence Report](#), we will build up a clear picture of progress across the key drivers and of overall progress towards our key priorities. The National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan is updated annually.

[Scottish Attainment Challenge](#)

The Scottish Attainment Challenge was launched by the First Minister in February 2015. This was expanded in 2016 to be supported by the £750 million Attainment Scotland Fund over the course of this parliament (2016/17–2020/21), including since 2017/18, £120 million in Pupil Equity Funding annually issued directly to over 95% of schools. It is underpinned by the National Improvement Framework, Curriculum for Excellence and Getting it right for every child. It focuses on improvement activity in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing in schools across Scotland to close the poverty-related attainment gap. It will also support and complement the broader range of initiatives and programmes to ensure that all of Scotland's children and young people reach their full potential.

Continued funding for the Challenge in 2021/22 was confirmed in the 2019 Programme for Government and re-iterated in the 2020 Programme for Government. This investment is making a difference, with nine out of ten headteachers (91%) saying that the Attainment Scotland Fund is making an impact. We also know that almost all headteachers (98%) expect to see improvement in closing the attainment gap over 5 years as a consequence of the Attainment Scotland Fund. In October 2020, the Scottish Government published its [headteacher survey](#) report and [interim evaluation](#) of year 4 (2018/19) of the programme. This follows the already published [interim evaluation of years 1 & 2](#), and [of year 3](#).

[Scotland's Ten Year Strategy for the Learning Provision for Children and Young People with Complex Additional Support Needs 2017-2026](#) (2017)

In response to recommendations of the Doran Review, a National Commissioning Group was established to develop a 10 year strategy for strategically commissioned national services. Scotland's Ten Year Strategy for the Learning Provision for Children and Young People with Complex Additional Support Needs was the subject of a public consultation in 2017. The full [consultation analysis](#) was published in April 2019 and the [final version](#) of the 10 year strategy was published in September 2019.

[Guidance on the Presumption to Provide Education in a Mainstream Setting](#) (March 2019)

The Scottish Government's new guidance on mainstreaming provides clear, updated information to help decide the best learning environment for a young person. For the first time, it includes a Scottish definition of inclusion and practical guidance to deliver inclusion in schools.

[Additional Support for Learning Review](#) (June 2020)

The review of the implementation of additional support for learning in schools was announced in January 2019. The report outlines the approach taken, the evidence heard and draws out a number of interconnected themes in making recommendations for improvement. The Scottish Government and COSLA's joint response to the review and an associated [Action Plan](#) was published in October 2020.

[Respect for All: National Approach to Anti-Bullying](#) (2017)

Scotland's national approach to anti-bullying aims to build capacity, resilience and skills in children and young people to prevent and deal with bullying. The approach is underpinned by the values of fairness; respect; equality and inclusion. It includes an explicit commitment to addressing prejudice-based bullying. The report sets expectations for the recording and monitoring of bullying and anti-bullying activity.

[STEM Education and Training Strategy](#) (2017)

The Strategy aims to build Scotland's capacity to deliver excellent STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) learning, and to close equity gaps in participation and attainment in STEM. It also aims to inspire young people and adults to study STEM, and to provide a better connection between STEM education and training and the needs of the labour market in Scotland. The remit of the STEM Strategy Implementation Group includes to develop and oversee a delivery plan for the actions within the Strategy. The first STEM Strategy [Annual Report](#) was published in February 2019, with the [Second Annual Report](#) published in March 2020.

[Review of Personal and Social Education: Preparing Scotland's Children and Young People for Learning, Work and Life](#) (2019)

The Scottish Government announced in March 2017 that as part of the Mental Health Strategy the intention was to undertake a national review of Personal and Social Education (PSE). This report outlines findings and the steps to take to strengthen PSE delivery and a wider network of pastoral guidance. Sixteen recommendations have been identified as a result of the findings of the Thematic Inspection and feedback received from delivery partners, young people, trade unions and third sector organisations. A joint approach will be taken between the Scottish Government, COSLA, ADES, local authorities and specialist third sector partners where appropriate to deliver a shared policy aim.

[Key Messages for Young People on Healthy Relationships and Consent](#) (2019)

In May 2019, the Scottish Government published a new resource for professionals to help them support young people's understanding of healthy relationships and consent. This means that wherever a young person seeks advice - whether from a teacher, a health professional or a youth worker – they should receive consistent, age appropriate information. The messages set out that relationships should be mutually respectful, consensual, positive, healthy – and enjoyable. They are applicable to all romantic relationships regardless of whether they are in same sex or mixed sex relationships.

[Learning for Sustainability Action Plan](#) (2019)

Learning for Sustainability is a cross-curricular approach to learning which enables young people to develop the skills, knowledge and values to live sustainable lives. In recent years Learning for Sustainability policy has been informed by the Learning for Sustainability National Implementation Group which made 14 recommendations to the Scottish Government. In 2019, the Scottish Government published a new Learning for Sustainability Action Plan to give effect to those recommendations. The plan's actions are developed around:

- developing a strategic national approach to Learning for Sustainability;
- adapting curriculum and assessment guidance to provide further opportunities for Learning for Sustainability;
- increasing the skills and confidence of practitioners in relation to Learning for Sustainability;
- ensuring that education leaders and decision-makers understand the value of Learning for Sustainability; and
- adapting the learning estate to allow increased opportunities for the delivery of Learning for Sustainability.

[A Blueprint for 2020: The Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare in Scotland.- 17-18 Action Plan](#) (2017)

In joint agreement with local government, the Scottish Government is delivering a transformative change in the provision of early learning and childcare (ELC), almost doubling the funded entitlement from 600 to 1140 hours per year for all 3 and 4 year olds and for eligible 2 year olds. A Blueprint for 2020, sets out the Scottish Government's vision for the expansion of ELC, underpinned by four principles of quality, flexibility, accessibility and affordability.

When the extent of the COVID-19 pandemic became clear, the Scottish Government took the difficult decision to suspend the statutory duty on local authorities to provide 1140 hours of ELC from August 2020. The statutory entitlement to ELC from 11 August 2020 will remain 600 hours. The Scottish Government and local authorities remain firmly committed to the roll-out of the transformational 1140 hours expansion, and the benefits we know it will bring to children and families. We are working with local government and the sector to discuss and agree a realistic timetable for full roll-out of 1140 hours entitlement.

[Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare in Scotland: Quality Action Plan](#) (2017).

The Quality Action Plan sets out 15 actions to further embed and strengthen quality of funded early learning and childcare (ELC) in taking forward the expansion to 1140 hours of funded entitlement. The Plan is clear that the most important driver of the quality of a child's experience is a high quality workforce. There is, therefore, a very strong focus in the Plan on supporting professional learning and development within the ELC workforce. This Action Plan reflects the international research and evidence which tells us that high quality ELC is a cornerstone for closing the poverty-related attainment gap.

[Learning Together: Scotland's National Action Plan on Parental Involvement, Parental Engagement, Family Learning and Learning at Home 2018 – 2021](#) (2018)

Parental engagement and involvement in children's learning makes an important contribution to their attainment and achievement, and this supports a number of rights under the UNCRC. The Scottish Government's Action Plan "Learning Together", which contains over 50 actions, sets out a vision for parental involvement and engagement to support the learning and development of children and young people, from pre-birth to age 18, and takes account of national and international evidence base and Scottish education system expertise. Key actions include a new census on Parental Involvement and Engagement (piloted in 2019), the development of strengthened statutory guidance and the funding of "Equalities and Equity" projects to assist involvement and engagement amongst families who may face additional barriers, for instance those from more deprived circumstances or those from black and minority ethnic backgrounds. A final report will be published at the end of the plan's lifecycle in late 2021.

[Play Strategy for Scotland: Our Vision](#) (2013)

The Strategy is built on the views of children and young people, parents and carers, the play sector and others involved in their wellbeing. Together with the Action Plan, the Strategy seeks to improve the play experiences of all children and young people, including those with disabilities or from disadvantaged backgrounds.

[Play Strategy for Scotland: Our Action Plan](#) (2013)

The Action Plan supports the earlier Play Strategy by setting out the steps needed to realise a vision for play, underpinned by partnership working. A Play Strategy Implementation Group led by the Scottish Government and made up of representatives of statutory bodies, local authorities, third sector organisations and funders was established in order to support and monitor our progress.

[Playing with Quality and Equality: a Review of Inclusive Play in Scotland](#) (2015)

This Review of inclusive play in Scotland aimed to identify context, current practices, barriers and aspirations and to build the knowledge base to inform implementation of the Play Strategy for all children.

[Scotland's National Position Statement on Outdoor Play Based Learning](#)

A coalition of over 100 influential national bodies and organisations have committed to work together to embed playing and learning outdoors as an everyday activity for all children and to celebrate this as a fundamental part of growing up in Scotland.

[Out to Play: Practical Guidance for Creating Outdoor Play Experiences in Early Learning and Childcare](#) (2018)

Out to Play provides practical guidance and advice for early learning and childcare settings and childcare practitioners on how to access outdoor spaces, including land or forest areas owned by local authorities, private landowners or national bodies; to create safe, nurturing and inspiring outdoor learning experiences. Additional chapters of this document will be published in early 2021, supporting outdoor experiences for the Out of School Care Sector, Childminders and practitioners working with Additional Support Needs children.

[Our Ambitions for Improving the Life Chances of Young People in Scotland: National Youth Work Strategy 2014-2019](#)

The Strategy, developed jointly by the Scottish Government, Education Scotland and YouthLink Scotland, aims to set out our ambitions for improving outcomes for young people through youth work. It also aims to ensure that we harness and build on our partnerships across the youth work sector and develop what we know works well in delivering vibrant and effective youth work practice. The Strategy recognises the contribution that youth work makes towards the National Outcomes and the wide range of activities and policies that impact on young people's lives. It also recognises that both universal and more targeted specific work have equal validity and importance.

A new youth work strategy is under development. As well as reflecting our learning to date, this will build on the success of the previous strategy, commitments made to children and young people's participation through the Year of Young People and lessons learned during the coronavirus pandemic. A co-production approach is being taken. We are working with a national cohort of representative young people and a national stakeholders group to drive this work. Local conversations are also underway with young people and youth workers across the country to create a strategy grounded in the issues that affect youth work in Scotland.

Widening access to Higher Education

[15-24 Learner Journey Review](#) (2018)

The Scottish Government will take forward the recommendations of the 15-24 Learner Journey Review, the report of the review of education provision for 15-24 year olds. The report sets out the Scottish Government's ambition for a world class education and skills system. Year One implementation has concluded and the Scottish Government is committed to continuing to improve the experience for the learner and setting a clear expectation for more purposeful collaboration between schools, colleges, universities and employers.

[A Blueprint for Fairness](#) (2016)

The Commission on Widening Access was established in 2015 to advise Scottish Ministers on the steps necessary to achieve their ambition that every child, irrespective of socio-economic background, should have an equal chance of accessing university. The Commission published its final report, *A Blueprint for Fairness*, in March 2016. This included 34 recommendations, which were accepted in full by the Scottish Government. We are making progress on implementing, co-ordinating and monitoring the recommendations through the [Access Delivery Group](#). The latest statistics from the Higher Education Statistics Agency, published in January 2019, show that 15.6% of Scottish full time first degree entrants to Scottish universities were from the 20% most deprived areas. We are now only 0.4 percentage points away from the Commission on Widening Access' interim target for 2021 of 16%.

Following the introduction of the Care Experienced Bursary in 2017, minimum entry requirements for SIMD students have now been set by all Scottish universities and were published for the first time in this year's prospectuses for 2020-21 entrants. All of Scotland's higher education institutions have also committed to guaranteeing an offer of an undergraduate place at university to care-experienced applicants who meet minimum entry requirements, which will be in place for learners entering university in autumn 2020.

In May 2019, the Commissioner for Fair Access launched Scotland's [Framework for Fair Access](#), comprising an online toolkit for Scotland's Community of Access and Participation Practitioners. The Commissioner also published a [discussion paper](#) on disabled students at university in February 2019, as well as his second annual report, [Building on Progress towards Fair Access](#), in June 2019, in which he stated that Scotland was leading the way in the UK on widening access.

[Developing the Young Workforce: Scotland's Youth Employment Strategy](#) (2014)

Scotland's Youth Employment Strategy sets out how the Scottish Government will implement the recommendations from the Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce, including the commitment to reduce the 2014 level of youth unemployment by 40% by 2021 – a target that was met 4 years early in 2017. Together with Getting it right for every child and Curriculum for Excellence, Developing the Young Workforce is the key policy approach through which the Scottish Government is creating excellence and equity in Scottish education. Progress continues to be reported on annually.

[Support for Youth Jobs](#) (July 2020).

In July 2020, Scottish Ministers announced additional assistance for people looking for work or those at risk of redundancy to help them move into work or retrain. The package of support is backed by £100 million for 2020/21, with at least £60 million of that funding set aside to help young people access all available opportunities. The measures include a guarantee for young people; a new national retraining scheme; and more funding to provide immediate assistance and advice if people are made redundant.

[Job Start Payment](#) (August 2020)

In August 2020, a new benefit to support 16 to 24 year olds into work who have been unemployed for six months was opened for applications. Job Start Payment is a one off £250 payment to help with the costs of starting a new job. The upper age limit rises to 25 for care leavers and the payment rises to £400 if the person has a child. Initial estimates were that around 5,000 young people would benefit from this new financial support in its first year. However, that estimate will be subject to revision in light of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Culture

[A Culture Strategy for Scotland](#) (Feb 2020)

The Culture Strategy sets out a vision and priorities for the future development of culture in Scotland. The Strategy, which is supported by almost £1.25 million funding, recognises the fundamental value of culture and its transformative and empowering potential, which everyone in Scotland, including children and young people, should have an equal opportunity to experience.

[Ambition and Opportunity. A Strategy for Public Libraries in Scotland 2015 - 2020](#) (2015)

Scotland's first National Strategy for Public Libraries sets out recommendations for all those involved: Scottish Government, local authorities, library services, library staff, publishers and more. A leadership body will oversee activity relating to each of the six strategic aims within the Strategy and monitor implementation. Strategic Aim 4 focuses on the contribution that public libraries make to promoting social wellbeing, including improving the life chances for children, young people and families at risk.

In early 2019, the [Ambition and Opportunity Refresh](#) was published, highlighting the progress which has been made since the launch of the original Strategy. The Refresh includes 'The Next Chapter', co-designed with Young Scot to ensure young people's views were represented. The new National Strategy for Public Libraries (2021-2025) is now in development. This will articulate a national vision for libraries and how this can be achieved, building on the work of Ambition and Opportunity and the ambitions of the Culture Strategy for Scotland. The five-year strategy will focus on people, place and partnerships.

Special Protections

[Justice in Scotland: Vision and Priorities](#) (2017)

The Vision and Priorities document, agreed jointly by the Scottish Government and key justice organisations, sets out collective priorities to ensure a just, safe and resilient Scotland, with established priorities for 2017 to 2020. The document focuses specifically on prevention and early intervention. The Justice Vision and Priorities is accompanied by a [Delivery Plan](#) that sets out actions to help progress the priorities.

[Children's Hearings](#)

Better Hearings Partnership

The Better Hearings Partnership is an initiative resulting from 2016 research on what makes a hearing work well from the perspective of those involved. It involves multi-agency partnership working in all areas of Scotland to identify points for improvement, plan actions and deliver change at a local level. In the first year of implementation, local areas have undertaken baseline assessments against agreed standards, which has helped them to identify priority areas for improvement. A [progress report](#) on the first year of implementation was published by the Children's Hearings Improvement Partnership.

[Children's Hearings \(Scotland\) Act 2011: section 122 children's advocacy services](#)

The Scottish Government is making provision to ensure access to children's advocacy services for children and young people referred to Children's Hearings by the Principal Reporter of the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration. The role of children's advocacy services is to make sure children's rights are respected and their views and wishes are fully considered within the decision-making within their children's hearing.

[Advocacy in the Children's Hearings System: National Practice Model: Guidance](#) (March 2020)

The Scottish Government has worked with sector partners to test various models of advocacy to consider the best ways of delivering a sustainable, supportive advocacy service. Published in March 2020, the National Practice Model outlines the role of advocacy workers within the Children's Hearings System, including their independent status, to ensure consistent excellence of practice across Scotland. Since March 2020, the Scottish Government has established grant arrangements with a portfolio of 10 advocacy organisations to bring Scotland-wide coverage for children and young people. The national children's hearings advocacy scheme, is backed by £1.5 million.

[The Children's Hearings \(Scotland\) Act 2011 \(Children's Advocacy Services\) Regulations 2020](#)

These Regulations have been developed further to section 122(4) of the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011 and cover areas of grant-based arrangements between Scottish Ministers and providers of advocacy services including training, qualifications, fees, allowances and expenses. The Regulations were laid in Parliament on 11 September 2020 and, subject to the Parliament's approval, will come into force on 21 November 2020, when the new duties on children's hearings chairs are activated.

Youth Offending

[Whole System Approach](#)

The Whole System Approach (WSA) is our programme for addressing the needs of young people involved in offending. It takes a strong focus on early and effective intervention, diversion and appropriate support to address offending behaviour by young people. This is done in a timely and effective way through a whole system approach to offending behaviour, based on multi-agency partnerships. Based on the principles of Getting it right for every child, the approach aims to prevent the use of custody and secure accommodation wherever possible. It ensures that young people get the right support at the right time, providing better outcomes for young people, victims and communities.

[Preventing Offending: Getting it Right for Children and Young People](#) (2015)

The Youth Justice Strategy sets out priorities for 2015 to 2020, building on the progress already made over the past decade in reducing offending and keeping children and young people out of the criminal justice system. It focuses on 3 priority areas: Advancing the Whole System Approach; Improving Life Chances; and Developing Capacity and Improvement to support the workforce and improve systems. In [2017 an update report](#) was published, delivering the 2016-17 Programme for Government commitment to report on progress by June 2017.

The Strategy came to a conclusion in July 2020 and a new Vision and Action Plan, which will build on the work of the Strategy, is currently being developed for publication in 2021. A final report on the Youth Justice Strategy will be published shortly.

[Age of Criminal Responsibility \(Scotland\) Act 2019](#)

The Age of Criminal Responsibility (Scotland) Act 2019 will raise the age of criminal responsibility in Scotland from 8 to 12 years. There will be a phased implementation of the legislation to ensure children benefit from this reform as quickly as possible. From 29 November 2019, there have been no new convictions or criminal records for children under 12. An Advisory Group has been established to review the operation of the Act as well as to consider a future age of criminal responsibility. Provisions relating to disclosure of convictions and other information are due to commence at end-November 2020.

[Consultation: Raising the Age of Referral to the Principal Reporter](#) (June 2020)

The 2019-20 Programme for Government made a commitment to consult on 'enabling joint reporting to the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service and the Principal Reporter of all 16 and 17 year olds' offence cases'. Scottish Ministers agreed to widen the consultation to seek views on increasing the age at which children can be referred to the Reporter for care, protection and offence grounds. This includes young people at risk of exploitation, abuse or harm due to their own behaviour or the behaviour of others. The proposed changes will enable agencies to provide child-centred support for all under 18s. The Consultation took place from 17 June to 7 October 2020. Responses are now being independently analysed and are due to be published by the end of the year.

[Secure Care Pathway and Standards Scotland](#) (October 2020)

The Pathway and Standards were published on the 5 October 2020. They set out what all children in or on the edges of secure care in Scotland should expect across the continuum of intensive supports and services. They provide a framework for ensuring the rights of children and young people are respected and improve experiences and outcomes. When fully implemented, the new Standards will deliver a consistent, unified approach to caring for this vulnerable group in all council areas. Children and young people in care and with experience of care were fully involved in developing the Standards along with secure care staff, local government and the Children and Young People's Centre for Justice (CYCJ).

The Standards are supported by the [Secure Care Standards website](#) which was fully co-designed using materials supplied by STARR, young people and staff in secure care. The website provides information on why these Standards matter to children and young people, includes links to guidance, legislation, the Health and Social Care Standards and How Good is Our School? The Scottish Government is working closely with stakeholders to monitor progress and ensure the Standards are implemented.

[SPS Family Strategy](#) (2017)

The Scottish Prison Service (SPS) launched a Family Strategy in 2017 that sets a clear direction for the improved delivery and alignment of family engagement and activities for people in custody and a focus on how SPS can play its part in avoiding the intergenerational impact of parental imprisonment. This includes actions for SPS establishments to have a Family Strategy Group and an improvement plan in place to support this.

[National Performance Framework for Prison Visitors' Centres in Scotland](#) (2017)

The National Performance Framework for Prison Visitors' Centres in Scotland was developed by the National Prison Visitors Centre Steering Group in collaboration with the Scottish Government and the Scottish Prison Service. Agencies will report on their progress towards achieving the outcomes within the document using shared measurement tools and a standardised reporting framework.

Victims and Witnesses

[Vulnerable Witnesses \(Criminal Evidence\) \(Scotland\) Act 2019 \(Commencement No. 1 and Transitional Provision\) Regulations 2019](#)

The Regulations, which came into force on 20 January 2020, will ensure that any child witness under the age of 18 giving evidence in the most serious cases in the High Court, will be allowed to have it pre-recorded, sparing them the trauma of giving evidence during a trial. The Regulations will have a practical effect to all relevant cases in the High Court from autumn 2020.

Going forward, it remains essential that future commencement and roll-out of the provisions of the Act continue to be undertaken in a managed and effective way, to ensure that the intended benefits are delivered to those involved in these most serious cases. The [draft implementation plan](#) (on the Scottish Parliament website) details the initial stages of the roll-out, including suitable periods of evaluation and monitoring.

[Barnahus](#)

The Scottish Government has commissioned Healthcare Improvement Scotland and the Care Inspectorate to develop Scotland-specific standards for Barnahus, based on the European PROMISE quality standards which outline best practice for countries who wish to develop the model. The Scottish Barnahus Standards will provide a roadmap for a genuinely child-centred approach to delivering justice, care and recovery for children who have experienced trauma. A stakeholder scoping event took place in June 2019 involving a wide range of participants across health, justice and child protection. The standards development group, which includes clinical expertise, health boards, children's services, the third sector and statutory justice partners, had its second meeting on 31 October 2019. The development work will be informed by the lived experiences of children and young people and their families.

This work was paused due to COVID-19. Consideration is currently being given to new proposals for a phased approach for resuming work on the development of Barnahus Standards with an initial phase to undertake an appraisal of the current landscape and policy context relevant to Barnahus to inform a revision of the scope of the standards.

[Joint Investigative Interviews](#)

The Scottish Government continues to fund and work with justice and social work agencies to improve the quality and process for Joint Investigative Interviews (JIIs) with vulnerable child witnesses, including the updating of national guidance and improving technology and facilities.

From 1 April 2020, we have entered the second year of piloting activity in relation to the new model (the Scottish Child Interview Model) for joint investigative interviewing, which is both trauma informed and achieves best evidence through more robust planning and interview techniques. Current considerations focus on continuing to support implementation of the new model in the first two pilot sites (Lanarkshire and North Strathclyde). These sites began to prepare for implementation of the new model in autumn 2019 and, to date, continue to progress their implementation plans. In addition, work progresses on recruiting further pilot sites to begin implementing the new model, piloting newly developed training courses for others in the local child protection system with specific roles in supporting the new model for joint investigative interviewing, and testing a range of tools developed in the first year of piloting.

A new National JII Governance Group has been established, co-chaired by COSLA and Police Scotland, to consider the practical challenges, including those presented by the pandemic, around how best and to what timescale, it would be possible to phase the implementation of the new model across Scotland.

Child Safety

[Building Safer Communities](#)

Building Safer Communities (BSC) is a collaborative approach which seeks to help national and local partners and communities work together to make Scotland safer and stronger, and is focused on building capacity within our communities. In looking to drive a co-ordinated approach to Unintentional Harm and Injury, we are working in partnership to implement the key findings from Scotland's first ever national strategic assessment of unintentional harm and injury, published in April 2017. The key findings from this work are being progressed by an Executive Working Group, chaired by Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, and there is a clear action plan to drive forward progress.

[CashBack for Communities](#)

The CashBack for Communities Programme is a unique Scottish Government initiative, which takes funds recovered through the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 and invests them back into communities. The Programme is designed to focus on positive outcomes for young people aged 10 to 24, and their communities. Since 2008, £110 million seized from criminal activity has been committed to community initiatives to improve the quality of life for young people right across Scotland. Phase 5 of the Programme runs from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2023, with a commitment of £19 million to support projects for disadvantaged young people. The evaluation report on Phase 4 of the CashBack for Communities Programme is due to be published in the autumn.

[Fireworks Action Plan - Promoting the Safe and Appropriate Use of Fireworks in Scotland](#) (2019)

The Fireworks Action Plan sets out how the Scottish Government will address the concerns expressed through the [consultation on fireworks](#). The Action Plan sets out activities that will be taken forward immediately, as well as longer-term actions that will collectively support a change in how fireworks are used in Scotland. The Action plan committed to establishing a Firework Review Group, chaired by Alasdair Hay CBE QSM, to provide clear recommendations on tightening devolved legislation on fireworks in Scotland. The Group is currently considering all available options and is due to make a series of evidence-based recommendations to Scottish Ministers by the end of October 2020. The Scottish Government recognises that legislation in and of itself is not enough to tackle the issue of fireworks misuse. The Action Plan also sets out the range of non-legislative actions that have been progressing over the year, including greater awareness-raising, education and preventative activity in communities across Scotland.

Refugee and Asylum Seeking Children

[New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy 2018-2022](#) (2018)

The New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy sets out an approach to support the vision of a welcoming Scotland. Children and young people can arrive with their families through the asylum dispersal process and through refugee resettlement programmes, or they may arrive unaccompanied. Some of these children will have had traumatic experiences in their formative years. They may also have missed significant amounts of education, which can be challenging, particularly if they are having to learn a new language. The Strategy recognises that children and young people may require additional support to access the services they need and opportunities to participate in society. The New Scots Strategy is led in partnership by the Scottish Government, COSLA and the Scottish Refugee Council. The [New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy 2018-2022: First Year Progress Report](#) (April 2019) provides a summary of progress made during the first year of the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy. A report of progress made during the second year of the Strategy has been delayed, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



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