Summary report of young people’s recommendations regarding the UNCRC Committee’s Concluding Observations [2016] on the implementation of the UNCRC in the UK
The Scottish Government is committed to creating a modern, inclusive Scotland which protects, respects and realises internationally recognised human rights principles.


Rights are rights, you can’t pick and choose them!

Young Person, Article 12 in Scotland: UNCRC Concluding Observations Seminar, Glasgow, March 25th 2017

2018 is Scotland’s ‘Year of Young People’; let’s use that platform to ensure that all of our young people are accessing and enjoying their full set of rights and entitlements.

Lynne Tammi, National Co-ordinator, Article 12 in Scotland

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Article 12 in Scotland, Young Gypsy Travellers’ Lives [YGTL]:
http://www.article12.org/gypsytravellers

Care Visions: http://carevisionsresidential.co.uk

Glasgow Association for Mental Health [GAMH], Young Carers’ Project:
http://www.gamh.org.uk/project/young-carers/

Glasgow Disability Alliance [GDA], Rights to Reality: R2R:
http://www.gda.scot

Writing and editing: Beth Cadger
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## About Article 12 in Scotland

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ABOUT ARTICLE 12 IN SCOTLAND

Established in 1996, Article 12 in Scotland is a young person focused organisation that works to promote young people's participation and information rights as set out in international human rights charters. We believe that governments, professionals, and the wider community all have a role to play in building an environment that respects, values and validates the contributions of young people.

Our work is underpinned by the principle of free participation: the right to participate as equal citizens at all levels of society, without fear or favour; a process that facilitates the participation of all young people on their own terms and according to their own realities, a principle that, if realised, facilitates informed choice, freedom, dignity, respect and demonstrates an acceptance that young people have the same human rights entitlements as adults.

We work to achieve this by supporting some of the most marginalised young people, such as young Gypsy/Travellers, care experienced young people and young people experiencing mental ill-health.1

WHAT IS THE UNCRC?

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child [UNCRC] is a list of 54 Articles that cover all aspects of life for young people under the age of eighteen. 40 of the Articles describe the rights that the government must make sure they have. The United Kingdom signed up to the UNCRC in 1991.

The UNCRC itself is not binding in Scotland [or indeed elsewhere in the UK] in a legal sense, however; some of the articles are reflected in Scots law, and Scottish Government policy and practice and it does serve to establish recognised standards that are often referred to by national and international courts and bodies in their conclusions, recommendations and decisions.

When governments [referred to as State parties] agree to put the UNCRC into practice, they must prepare a report for the Committee on the Rights of the Child after two years, and then every five years. This is known as the Reporting Process. The Committee is a group of adults from different countries who are experts on children and young people's rights. The Committee last examined the UK Government's record on implementing children and young people's human rights early in 2016, publishing its Concluding Observations on the report in June of that year.2

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1 Further information on the work of Article 12 in Scotland can be found at: www.article12.org
2 Further information on the UNCRC and the Reporting Process can be found at: Child Rights Connect - http://www.childrightscanconnect.org
ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

In 2015, Article 12 in Scotland published I Witness: The UNCRC in Scotland – Young People’s Voices⁵: a narrative rich insight into the concerns, experiences, hopes and aspirations of five of the most marginalised groups of young people in Scotland - in their own words, on their own terms and according to their own realities; ensuring that the rights of all Scotland’s young people are recognised, respected and promoted; without conditions attached.

This resource aims to provide an accessible summary of the young peoples’ key recommendations published within Article 12 in Scotland’s 2018 report I Witness: The Concluding Observations⁴ [which contains the full views, opinions and recommendations of the young people who participated in our research processes, with regards to the Concluding Observations published in 2016 and the issues which they feel continue to impact upon their lives, and those of their families, friends and communities].

PARTICIPANTS

Article 12 in Scotland and their partner organisations engaged with 76 young people, from across Scotland, in a process of rights-based peer education via workshops and a seminar [the purpose of which was to discuss the key, relevant issues and recommendations with each group of young people and the partner organisations who participated in the Reporting Process of our Alternative Reports]. Participants included: looked after young people; young carers [directly or indirectly] experiencing mental ill-health; young people with disabilities and young Gypsy/Travellers.

INTRODUCTION

“We need access to more inclusive services that everyone can access!”

— Young Person, Article 12 in Scotland: UNCRC Seminar, Glasgow, March 25th 2017

“Marginalised groups of young people can become very isolated, help make sure everyone is involved and supported!”

— Young Person, Article 12 in Scotland: UNCRC Seminar, Glasgow, March 25th 2017

Article 12 in Scotland, and the young people involved in the production of this resource, recognise the meaningful ways in which the Scottish Government has implemented change for children and young people since the Committee published its Concluding Observations in 2008, and more recently in 2016; nonetheless, it is clear that some of Scotland’s most marginalised children and young people continue to experience major inequalities regarding the realisation of their fundamental human rights, with the media, once again, reported as a key factor. These inequalities have been highlighted during the most recent Reporting Process and subsequent Concluding Observations.

The rights to live a life free from discrimination and to be respected are key rights’ entitlements; entitlements which underpin the feedback and recommendations gathered during the research phase of the report that accompanies this resource. Many children and young people continue to face discrimination, negative stereotyping and social stigmatisation on a daily basis, with marginalised young people being disproportionately affected. Barriers to the active and meaningful participation of children and young people must be removed; those in power have a responsibility to ensure that their views are taken into account [as the experts of their own realities] and enshrined in policy and practice at all levels.

Participants of the seminar and subsequent workshops were emphatic in their view that their primary rights to participation, protection, development and survival are unequivocally not being met.

PARTICIPANTS’ RECOMMENDATIONS

“We can’t just ‘offer services’

Open!

Skills to speak up

We need to bridge the gap

Isolation

Peer group education and communication works!”

“Encourage involvement, working together is the best way to move forward!”

— Young Person, Article 12 in Scotland: UNCRC Outcomes Seminar, Glasgow, March 25th 2017

WE NEED ACCESS to more inclusive services that everyone can access.
YOUNG GYPSY/TRAVELLERS

Participation:

- Young Gypsy/Travellers must be widely consulted on the issue of sites; both current and proposed;
- Young Gypsy/Travellers must be able to participate, at all levels, in the decision making processes that affect their lives, and the lives of others from their community;
- Robust monitoring of Local Authorities;
- All professionals and policy makers must be trained in the UNCRC;
- It is essential that young Gypsy/Travellers know their rights.

Development:

- More courses available for vocational skills and qualifications – young Gypsy/Travellers want to learn new skills;
- Improved transport provision near sites so young Gypsy/Travellers can travel to school, go shopping, socialise with their peers and so on;
- Increased awareness-raising in schools in order to combat discrimination;
- Training on the Gypsy/Traveller culture for all teachers; more teachers recruited from the Gypsy/Traveller community.

Protection:

- Society must treat Gypsy/Traveller culture and traditions with respect; Gypsy/Travellers continue to face inequality and discrimination;
- Increased awareness-raising with the settled community to help ease tensions; young Gypsy/Travellers want to lead on this, particularly in their relationship with the police;
- There must be robust monitoring of social media;
- Young Gypsy/Travellers want the media to use their power in a positive way.

We need to promote INCLUSION

EVERYBODY is different

People should not be labelled
Survival:

- A more flexible, culturally sensitive approach to healthcare;
- An immediate increase in the number of decent, well-appointed/located sites – the Scottish Government must introduce a legal duty on Local Authorities to provide good living standards for Gypsy/Travellers;
- Young Gypsy/Travellers have the right to good accommodation, whether living in a house or on a site;
- More accessible services;
- More training about the Gypsy/Traveller culture for health-care workers; this would help to build trust and encourage young Gypsy/Travellers to use health-care services;
- Health care workers to visit sites.

YOUNG CARERS [directly or indirectly experiencing mental ill-health]

Participation:

- Young carers must be listened to and involved in decision making processes at all levels, in order to ensure the support that is so crucial to their lives and development is relevant to their needs and the needs of their families;
- Information regarding services and support must be straightforward and accessible; young carers want to take control of finding the best fit for themselves and their families;
- An increase in young carers projects such as GAMH, the support offered by such organisations is invaluable;
- Increased help and support with work placements;
- Young carers want to be treated as individuals;
- More support with caring and child-care responsibilities;
- An increase in the places and activities available in which young carers can safely socialise;
- The UNCRC to be taught in schools to all students and staff.

Promises made by the government MUST BE DELIVERED
Development:

- Young carers want a say in how their education is delivered, and to see an increase in school support;
- More awareness-raising concerning the issues faced by young carers would increase understanding about the roles and responsibilities that come with caring; this would help stop bullying and lessen discrimination;
- Peer-led training for teachers would help to identify any young carers that may be ‘hidden’ [or unwilling to come forward], ensuring that all young carers get the support to which they are entitled;
- An increase in support and better respite care provisions.

Protection:

- Young carers want to see more national campaigns to tackle negative stereotypes and raise awareness of who young carers are and what they do;
- The government should be more transparent and use less jargon to make policy more accessible;
- Increased peer education in school: young carers want to inform others of their realities;
- Better respite care provisions so young carers can have the time to do all the things ‘regular’ young people do in order to develop and have fun;
- The government should provide increased additional support and information to young carers and families experiencing mental ill-health.

Survival:

- Mental health provisions must be at the forefront of reform and service reviews;
- Accessible support for those who need it;
- Appropriate and flexible education;
- Increased, rather than decreased, benefits.
Participation:

- Young disabled people want to have a bigger say in the services and choices that are involved in their lives [particularly with regards to personal support, housing and education]; there must be a clearer understanding of the issues faced, in order for young disabled people to fully participate at all levels of society;
- Work places must be more sensitive to the individual needs of young people living with disabilities;
- Involved professionals must work together, ensuring young people living with disabilities can access the best available support;
- Improved facilities catering to the specific needs of those living with disabilities; in particular, improved transport provisions;
- An increase in supported volunteering opportunities;
- Flexibility in services when moving areas;
- Young disabled people want more of a say in their respite care;
- It is crucial that the council and house builders consult with those living with disabilities so that they are able to influence planning and ultimately use their environment with ease and to its full potential.

Development:

- An increase in benefits in order to access essential respite care – many young people simply cannot afford to pay for care and living costs;
- Increased awareness-raising and training on the rights of those living with disabilities for education staff; schools must understand the requirement for time off;
- Teaching staff and medical professionals have a lack of understanding around the health issues of young disabled people, both mental and physical;
- To have better access to leisure facilities;
- Inclusive education;
- Improved transport provisions.
Protection:

- The **UNCRC** must go further to push the rights of young disabled people, and protect them up until the age of 25;
- An increase in awareness-raising;
- More empowerment through organisations such as **GDA**;
- Information and protection must be easily accessible and supported;
- The **Scottish Government** must work with organisations such as **GDA** in order to ensure the Independent Living in Scotland Initiative is fully implemented;
- Protection should not mean over-protection; young disabled people want to reach their full potential like any other young person;
- Young people living with disabilities want people to understand that the way mainstream society is structured restricts their lives.

Survival:

- Sensitive support should always be available for those who need it;
- Increased, rather than decreased, benefits;
- More respect, choice and control.

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**MORE AWARENESS of hidden disabilities**

**Use mainstream media for POSITIVE STORIES**
LOOKED AFTER YOUNG PEOPLE

Participation:

- Increased awareness of the *UNCRC* for all young, care-experienced, disabled people and the professionals that work with, and advocate for, them;
- Young people want regular goals set in order for them to learn essential life skills and responsibility;
- Information must be accessible and easy to understand;
- The development of professional qualifications regarding participation rights for professionals [such as teachers, social workers, managers and care staff] would help to enshrine the rights of young people living in care;
- Ensure the appropriate matching of young people and staff; the young people would like to be involved in recruitment;
- Increased skill-based, vocational learning;
- Article 12 of the *UNCRC* to be respected at all times, regardless of age and/or behaviour.

Development:

- Increased resources to supports rights education;
- More awareness-raising/peer education in schools regarding the needs of, and issues faced by, young people in care – for both young people and teachers;
- All workers must be trained on the *UNCRC*, in order for the principles to be properly implemented into policy and practice for all services;
- Increased support for further education, training and employment;
- Improved participation and citizenship within early years educational settings;
- Improved privacy provisions;
- More freedom;
- Flexible education to suit individual need.
Protection:

- The government must take more responsibility in tackling the negative perceptions of young people in care, with particular regards to education, work and crime;
- A stronger stance on bullying;
- Access to independent services and organisations that support the rights of young people living in care;
- An increase in financial support;
- No unpaid work placements;
- Those working with young people living in care must strive to protect the young people first and foremost, not themselves;
- Utilise the media [both mainstream and social] and use this power to instigate positive change, based on real, lived experiences.

Survival:

- Young people want to be able to easily access the right to specialist care and support;
- Ensure all support is easily accessible and available to all young people, including those with learning disabilities and younger children;
- Increased support when leaving care, and not being forced to leave before feeling ready;
- Improved work experience opportunities.
CONCLUSION

“The views of young people must be heard, we want to participate and have our voices heard on the issues that affect us!”
— Young Person, Article 12 in Scotland: UNCRC Outcomes Seminar, Glasgow, March 25th 2017

Protection for all children and young people under the UNCRC is more important now than ever before given the current political climate. It is essential that marginalised children and young people are adequately supported to enjoy the rights they are entitled to under the UNCRC. Whilst the Scottish Government has made dedicated efforts to raising awareness of the UNCRC, it is clear that gaps in the knowledge and understanding of children and young people's rights persist. Marginalised children and young people appear to be disproportionately affected by this, as they lack equal opportunities to learn about their rights and to voice their opinions.

Due to negative societal attitudes and limited understanding, many of the young people have stated that their rights have been confused with privileges; that their enjoyment of rights has been situational and dependent on their accommodation status, behaviour, ethnicity or perceived abilities. With support, these vulnerable, marginalised and discriminated against groups now recognise the importance of knowing their rights; the voices of the young people speak for themselves:

“Rights are more important now than ever, don’t let the current political climate erode them”;

“The government should listen to what WE think about our rights”;

“The views of young people must be heard, we want to participate and have our voices heard on the issues that affect us”;

“Promises made by the government must be delivered”;

“Young people must be confident to speak up, raise awareness and have their voices heard”;

“Keep up the pressure to implement the recommendations from the Concluding Observations”;

“The government need to listen to what we need”.

ENCOURAGE INVOLVEMENT — working together is the best way TO MOVE FORWARD
The young people involved in this report have spoken; the issues they face are commonplace amongst their peers and communities. Their message is simple: their rights to participation, protection, development and survival are not being upheld. These are basic, essential rights to which everyone is entitled; rights we are unequivocally failing to ensure are met for these stigmatised young people.

Article 12 in Scotland believes that governments, professionals, practitioners and wider society all have a role to play in building an environment that respects, values and validates the contributions of all Scotland’s children and young people.