

NSPCC: Consultation Response

Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People, Draft Strategic Plan 2011 – 2015: for consultation

Consultation Questions

1. To what extent do you think that the actions associated with each of the Strategic Aims are appropriate and will be effective?

a) Strategic Aim 1 is to maximise the impact of the UNCRC in Scotland.

The NSPCC agrees that the Children's Commissioner role is strategic and we are supportive of the aim to maximize the impact of the UNCRC in Scotland. The United Nations Convention for the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) informs and guides the NSPCC in its work to end cruelty to children throughout the UK.

b) Strategic Aim 2 is to influence and promote the effective and sustainable involvement and widespread participation of children and young people in Scotland's society.

The NSPCC is supportive of this aim. We note that a child's right to have their views taken into account about decisions that affect them is one of the Convention's key articles. It is vital that all those who make decisions about children actively listen to them and take their views into account.

c) Strategic Aim 3 is to promote and safeguard the rights of children and young people, particularly the rights of vulnerable groups, through policy scrutiny and by supporting good practice.

We welcome the focus on the rights of vulnerable groups of children in Scotland. Given the economic constraints affecting the provision of services in Scotland and the increased pressure on families and individuals, NSPCC Scotland is committed to ensuring that those most at risk are not further disadvantaged over the course of the next few years.

It is essential during this period that Scotland continues to build services and that those who shape and implement policy and practice are mindful of the impact of their decisions on the country's most vulnerable young people and their families. NSPCC Scotland therefore believes that in order to end cruelty to children and support at risk children and young people we must:

- Focus on early years intervention initiatives as a priority for national and local Government and those agencies and organisations able to intervene in this area
- Encourage debate and raise the profile of these issues with the general public to raise awareness, improve understanding and improve outcomes.

d) Strategic Aim 4 is to ensure that the office of the Commissioner is efficient, effective and fit for purpose.

2. To what extent do you think that the performance measures associated with each of the Strategic Aims will provide a clear indication of progress?

a) Strategic Aim 1 is to maximise the impact of the UNCRC in Scotland.

NSPCC: Consultation Response

Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People, Draft Strategic Plan 2011 – 2015: for consultation

We believe that the Commissioner should be a visible and vocal advocate for children's human rights, with children being aware of the post and understanding how it can support them. We support practical measures of the increasing level of use of the UNCRC in Scotland and of its incorporation into law. Systematic awareness-raising about the Convention among children, parents or professional working with children is important and therefore the specific measures make sense. The Convention being visible in schools is consistent with the aim to ensure that all of the provisions of the Convention are widely known and understood by adults and children alike, and the measures proposed here can assist progress towards integrating principles and values into the practice of all schools.

b) Strategic Aim 2 is to influence and promote the effective and sustainable involvement and widespread participation of children and young people in Scotland's society.

NSPCC Scotland agrees that specific measures as proposed reflect the importance of the work of the Commissioner. Children should be aware of the post and understand how it can support them. A key function of the office should be to promote awareness and understanding about children's rights, particularly among children and young people themselves. Scotland's 1 million children represent almost a fifth of its population. High-profile recognition of and respect for their human rights would enable them more effectively to participate in a manner which is appropriate to their age and development and would help to engage them in a positive way.

c) Strategic Aim 3 is to promote and safeguard the rights of children and young people, particularly the rights of vulnerable groups, through policy scrutiny and by supporting good practice.

These measures are consistent with the aspiration for the Commissioner to have a positive impact not only on national policy and legislative programmes, and on the improvement of the position of children.

d) Strategic Aim 4 is to ensure that the office of the Commissioner is efficient, effective and fit for purpose.

Click here to enter text.

The vision of the office of the Commissioner for Children and Young People is a Scotland where all children and young people understand their rights, experience their rights and exercise their rights, every day of their lives.

3. Are there other things that you think the Commissioner should be doing to improve the lives of children and young people in Scotland?

In 2010, NSPCC extended its involvement in Scotland, aiming to work in partnership with other leading children's charities to fund and introduce new services to add value to the existing provision for vulnerable children and their families.

It is therefore able to offer a well-informed and independent perspective on the current and future issues affecting the lives of vulnerable children and young people as well as sharing knowledge about evidence-based services that can make a genuine improvement to some of the Scotland's most at risk children. We believe that in

NSPCC: Consultation Response

Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People, Draft Strategic Plan 2011 – 2015: for consultation

Scotland there is potential for learning and positive change that can influence the whole UK. We see the role of the Commissioner as a vital and potentially hugely influential role in promoting better lives for our children.

We note that many countries which score highly in child wellbeing indices, such as Sweden, Norway and New Zealand, have a strong rights focus and have strong children's champions. In the Scandinavian countries children's ombudsmen/champions have made a positive impact not only on national policy and legislative programmes, but also on communities, neighbourhoods and individual attitudes towards children and young people. They help to ensure that children's best interests underpin local arrangements and activities, making them inclusive and attentive to their needs and rights. These are aspirations that resonate in Scotland and we wish to support the work of the Commissioner for children and young people. We see the potential for the Commissioner helping to place children higher up the political agenda and to ensure that children are aware of the office and its functions. Evidently the Commissioner has opportunity to be instrumental in promoting acceptance of the idea that children have rights and are entitled to be heard and in promoting the needs of children in policy and services.

The Commissioner and his staff will engage with a very wide range of external agencies for the realisation of the Strategic Plan 2011 – 2015.

4. How would your organisation like to be involved in helping the Commissioner to achieve the Strategic Aims?

NSPCC Scotland believes there are genuine opportunities for Scotland to lead the way in developing and evaluating effective services that can be rolled out across the UK. NSPCC's work is guided by four principles: to focus on those areas where it can make the biggest difference; to prioritise the children who are most at risk; learn what works best for them; and create leverage for change. We wish to support the work of the Commissioner and to champion the cause of vulnerable children and to provide new research and evidence that will inform policy and the delivery of improved services in the years to come. NSPCC's strategy is based on helping many more children than we do now and enabling us, through our learning and experience, to improve child protection across the UK. We will work in partnership with others, as we know we cannot do this on our own. The direct services we offer are of course a crucial part of this, as is ensuring that we share learning from these services to implement improvements in the safeguarding arena.

We will work on seven priority themes and areas – neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse, children under one, disabled children, children from certain BME communities and looked after children. These are critical if we are going to break the relentless cycle of abuse of too many children and young people. The NSPCC strategy aims to bring about change by focussing resources on development, delivery and evaluation of innovative evidence based services. In this activity we will be active supporters of the strategic aims set out for the Commissioner for Children And Young People.