

UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill

Scottish Parliament Community Outreach - Virtual Session

Session with children under 12

Hosted by Together (Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights)

Saturday 7 November 2020 10.30-11.30am

Purpose of the session:

The purpose of the online session was to provide members of the Equalities and Human Rights Committee with an opportunity to hear children's views and opinions about their rights and the UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill.

In attendance

- 18 children aged under 12 years old.
- Ruth Maguire MSP (Convener)
- Gillian Martin MSP

Organisations (supporting children on the call)

- [Children's Parliament](#)
- [Licketyspit](#)

Background

Prior to the session, Licketyspit and Children's Parliament worked with the children to explore their rights and the consultation questions through a range of activities.

During the session, the children split into two breakout rooms supported by the above organisations. Ruth Maguire MSP joined the breakout group to listen to views of Members of the Children's Parliament (MCPs), while Gillian Martin MSP listened to the views of children from Licketyspit's Children & Families Network. The sessions were facilitated by staff from each organisation.

Notes from the session

The discussions and activities in each breakout room covered a range of topics. The child-friendly consultation questions have been used to frame the following notes:

1. How can adults learn about children's rights?

Members of the Children's Parliament (MCPs) said it was important that all adults should know and understand children's rights. They said adults sometimes do the wrong thing because they don't understand children's rights:

"The right to education has been lost by some children in quarantine."

"If a child doesn't know how to tie their shoelaces, then people teach them. If a child doesn't know how to behave, then people punish them. That makes no sense."

"The right to food has been lost by some children in the holidays. I have four brothers and sisters so it's very expensive to feed us!"

MCPs felt that adults would listen more if they knew children's rights were the law.

2. Can you think of any groups of children who might need more help to make sure their rights are respected?

The children in both groups felt some children needed extra help to make sure their rights are respected, including:

- Children whose first language is not English
- Children with different religions and cultures
- Children who don't have very much food
- Children living in poverty
- Children who can't see their family
- Children who can't go to school

Children from Licketyspit played the "Hello Game" – they introduced themselves and how to say "hello" in their language inviting a collective response before passing on to the next child who did the same. The children said it was important that every child has the right to speak their language and to live in their culture, even if the people in the country where they lived spoke a different language.

3. What should people who make decisions do to make sure children's views are heard?

MCPs felt that adults should listen to children more – and that making children's rights part of the law would help with this. The children said that worrying about a problem can make it worse. They said it was important to have people they can talk to and places where they are involved in decisions.

"If you have somewhere to go or someone to talk to, it then does not feel like a big deal."

The sessions also showed the power of using games, songs and fun activities to support children in sharing their views.

4. Will the Bill make it easier to have your rights respected?

MCPs were happy and excited about incorporation. They said having their rights made them feel happy, loved, excited, safe, well and that people cared about them.

They felt incorporation would:

- Make it easier for children to have their rights respected.
- Children would be able to speak up about their rights and tell someone if they were worried
- Adults would pay more attention to children's rights if they were the law.
- Teachers would get better at listening to children.
- Children will have what they need to live

If adults didn't follow children's rights, incorporation would mean they might get into trouble. No one wants to get in trouble so everyone would respect rights. MCPs recognised that some people still break laws, but there are repercussions if they do.

"Not a choice anymore, you have to do it, it's not a blurred area."

"Not everyone will follow incorporation, but people will support it."

MCPs said important parts of the Bill included:

- Rights are a law that cannot be broken – they aren't a choice anymore
- Children have the power to complain if their rights aren't respected

- Government and public bodies (like schools and councils) have to respect children's rights

"Sometimes if a few children have been talking in class, the whole class will be punished. Teachers keep the whole class inside over breaktime so they have no right to play or to buy snacks from the café if they're hungry. This isn't fair and should change when rights are law."

"Set of rules that we need to follow, no longer a guidance, for example like wearing masks, to keep people safe, now UNCRC is something we have to do because it is important."

5. How would you like to learn about your rights and what to do if they're not respected?

Children recognised the importance of learning about their rights so they could stand up for their rights if something was wrong:

"It's important that children know about their rights so if someone disrespects them, they can stand up for them."

"I ran a campaign called 'We Want Grass'. It was because our playground was full of concrete and dirt and there was sharp bits of wood on the paths. We wanted grass to play on."

Children from Licketyspit showed the power of fun activities, art, games and songs to help learn about their rights. Activities included:

- **"Lets Bake a Rights Cake!"** – The children took turns to sing the rights cake song and act out making a cake. They added ingredients such as eggs, flour and jam but also rights that were important to them, including: the right to make friends; the right to talk; the right for everyone to be treated fairly; and the right to food.
- **"What's the time Mr No-Rights Wolf"** – Children dressed up as woodland creatures using household objects. They took turns at being Mr No-Rights Wolf. Mr No-Rights Wolf didn't like rights. When the children asked "what's the time Mr No-Rights Wolf?", Mr Wolf chose something he wanted to destroy:

Wolf one said 'Time to destroy a supermarket!'. The children argued with him – "But But But!– then people couldn't buy food!... would lose their jobs!... children wouldn't be able to play there!"

Another Mr No-Rights Wolf (who lived near an enchanted lake) said " Time to burn down all the buildings and the school buildings". The children argued "If you burn down the schools that means children won't have the right to learn!", "no time to learn!"... "If you burn the buildings you wouldn't be able to have money or shelter!" "all the people won't have a house or be able to learn!"

Mr No-Rights Wolf was always persuaded by the children: *"I'll have to think a bit more!"*

- **"Reflective Drawing Gallery"** – I drew the:

"right of clothing, food and a safe home"

"right to minority culture and language"

"there is still racism but it's a bit better"

"right 28 when I go to school and learn a lot of things and my Mum & Dad always encourages me"

"This is article 18, about the responsibility of the parent...there's the house...with the child and the parents, they're having dinner...I drew a love heart around it"

"I drew the Rights Cake!"

"Right 31 when I get to play at school, go on my tablets, have naps and chill on my bed"

"You have love, you have love-hearts all around because you have to have a lot of love for it to actually work, you have to have a lot of love and a lot of teamwork!"

"I have the right as a child to be what I want to be in future"

Some children used animals to represent their rights – including unicorns, cats, dogs and a whale:

"Children should be as free as a fish!"

6. What do you think about the idea that courts could cancel a law if it doesn't respect children's rights?

7. What else is needed to make your rights stronger in Scotland?

The children said adults need to listen. They said not all children get on with their teachers and they're not always comfortable talking to them. Children worry that if they talk to them about their problems, they might not listen, and might not do what children have asked them to do to help them. They felt adults sometimes makes make things worse by making a big deal out of the problem. Incorporation should mean that teachers listen to children better.

Plenary

Ruth Maguire MSP and Gillian Martin MSP gave their comments on the session.

Ruth Maguire MSP said that the new Bill was about making children's rights the law and not just a guideline. She said she had heard examples of adults not respecting children's rights and this showed how important it was that adults know about the new law.

Gillian Martin MSP said she had seen how important games and play were to helping children learn about their rights. She said when the UNCRC is the law, then all children should be able to learn about their rights through fun activities and songs.