



Together (Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights)
Rosebery House
9 Haymarket Terrace
Edinburgh EH12 5EZ

Tel. 0131 337 9015
info@togetherscotland.org.uk
www.togetherscotland.org.uk
@together_sacr

Dr Hywel Francis MP
Chair
Joint Committee on Human Rights
Committee Office
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

Friday 13th February 2015

Dear Dr Francis

Re: Inquiry into the UK's compliance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

On behalf of Together (Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights), I am writing to welcome the inquiry being undertaken by the Joint Committee on Human Rights into the UK's compliance with the UNCRC. Together recognises the significant work that is being undertaken and welcomes the focus given to the issues of the rights of migrant children, child trafficking, children in custody, special educational needs and legal aid. We also acknowledge the range and depth of expertise in children's rights of those being called to give evidence to the Joint Committee.

However, we are deeply concerned that no representatives from the devolved nations have been called to give evidence. As such, there has been a lack of consideration given to the impact of devolution on the UK's compliance with the UNCRC. It is essential that the Committee's inquiry takes account of the complexities of devolution, such as the impact Scotland's separate justice system has on children in custody, its education system has on children with additional support for learning needs and its forthcoming Human Trafficking Bill will have on child trafficking. The interaction between reserved and devolved powers significantly impacts on the implementation of the UNCRC across the UK. In the circumstances, it is important that the Committee's inquiry includes an assessment of how the UK Government's exercise of reserved powers impacts on the rights of children living in the devolved nations.

Registered Office:

Together – Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights, Rosebery House, 9 Haymarket Terrace, Edinburgh EH12 5EZ
Charity Reg No. SC029403 Company No. SC199725

In the evidence presented to date, it has often been unclear whether the issues outlined are of significance to all children living in the UK or just those living within specific jurisdictions. There has been little mention of the important developments made in Scotland and other devolved nations in implementing children's rights. For example, there has been no reflection on the Scottish Government's recently passed Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, which puts the UNCRC on a statutory basis. Nor has there been any consideration given to the different approaches taken to implementing international human rights obligations throughout the devolved nations, as demonstrated through the commitment of rights-holders and duty-bearers to work together to take forward Scotland's National Action Plan for Human Rights.

I would like to request that the Joint Committee considers taking evidence from witnesses able to reflect on the differences in the legislative and administrative mechanisms across the UK and comment on the impact this has on compliance with the UNCRC. This would ensure the Joint Committee's report can present a rounded and fully-informed view of UNCRC compliance across the UK. Together would be keen to submit additional evidence for the Committee's consideration if required.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light-colored background. The signature reads "Fiona Jones" in a cursive, slightly slanted script.

Fiona Jones
Chair of Together (Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights)