

Scottish Children's Rights Implementation Monitoring Group (SCRIMG)

Summary Briefing

Monday 27th June 2016, Victoria Quay / Attendees: Together, the Scottish Government, CYPCS

1. Matters arising

- Attendees engaged in a general discussion about the UNCRC examination in Geneva. Together noted that the Scottish Government's responses were very appropriate and represented their interests very effectively. CYPCS commended the strong engagement of Children and Young people with committee members. The Scottish Government asked if questions could be made available to officials prior to examination. Together clarified that this is not possible due to some questions only being decided upon the night before session. The Scottish Government said they would consider issuing a statement on Concluding Observations in response to Together's request that they be acknowledged.

2. Key themes

UK Examination by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child

- Attendees focused discussion on the unexpected recommendation within the Concluding Observations to raise the age of marriage to 18. CYPCS noted that the Committee has a long-standing interest in this issue and Together cited a UNICEF piece on child marriages, indicating concern about 16-17-year-old girls from ethnic minority groups marrying much older men non-consensually. Together are undertaking research to ascertain the validity of this connection.
- SG suggested the issue is more concerned with vulnerability than age and queried how young people reacted to raising the age of marriage. All parties agreed it is a grey area that needs further consideration and analysis.
- Together shared its next steps, including publishing the 2016 State of Children's Rights report, which will draw from consultation with members and cross-referencing issues raised in connection with treaty bodies, to provide a fully informed baseline against the Concluding Observations. Together commented that the COs reflect member concerns.
- SG confirmed they have had preliminary discussions with Whitehall colleagues and that any decisions were on hold until after the EU referendum. CYPCS asked how SG is taking forward COs on a Scottish level beyond SCRIMG meetings, to which SG responded by noting that Ministers are obligated to report under part 1 of the CYP Act.
- CYPCS are keen for Ministers to clearly spearhead children's rights by delivering on COs and sharing this with COSLA. SG agreed ministerial ownership would be beneficial but that there should be further consideration around COSLA.
- Together queried whether CRWIAs should be made mandatory in law, following a CO recommendation to do so. SG suggested they are wary of making this mandatory as it could potentially result in a tick-box exercise.
- CYPCS acknowledged progress on family violence in SG's SCRIMG update and sought confirmation on SG's post CO plans. SG noted that it wants to put effort into getting things right prior to sharing COs with colleagues for comment.

Review of UNCRC Monitoring Structures

- In discussion with members, Together developed the idea of a new panel structure for SCRIMG, which would allow Together and CYP to push for greater UNCRC progress at a ministerial level. SG noted they would consider this proposal, while stressing that funding for such panels must be drawn from current resources (unallocated as yet).
- It was also proposed that there should be Ministerial participation at future SCRIMG meetings, possibly taking the form of the Group reporting back to Ministers rather than attendance.
- SG agreed it is open to the panel idea and would discuss the frequency and purpose of Ministerial involvement. Together and SG agreed a paper on Monitoring structures should be produced and taken to Ministers. Together has agreed to produce this by the end of summer, followed up by a meeting in October.

Child Rights & Wellbeing Impact Assessments

- Together welcomed the CRWIA on part 1 (public bodies reporting). SG stated analysis of responses for Part 3 was currently underway and would be completed by August 2016. SG also confirmed that Together and its members will be invited to comment on the findings of the CRWIA in order to inform development of the final Part 3 guidance.

3. Standing Items

- SG confirmed that its equal protection update to Ministers is general and that SG's position remains unchanged.
- SG currently running low on UNCRC rights booklets due to budget changes. Agreed to evaluate use of booklets.