



Together (Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights)

Strategic Plan 2019-24 (2022 refresh)

Vision:

- All children and young people growing up in Scotland have their human rights respected, protected and fulfilled.

Mission:

- We work to inspire and enable everyone in Scotland to put children and young people's human rights at the heart of everything they do.

Values:

- **Courageous:** We are independent and we challenge when we need to. We always stand up for children's human rights.
- **Collaborative:** We involve, engage and consult our members, children and young people and the government. We are representative, open and transparent in all we do.
- **Constructive:** We do things in a respectful way. We support our staff, interns and children and young people to reach their potential.
- **Inclusive:** We actively enable everyone to participate equally, especially those children and young people whose rights are most at risk.
- **Creative:** We bring creativity to everything we do, embracing imaginative and innovative thinking.

Our strategic aims:

During the next five years (2019-2024) Together will work to ensure:

1. Law in Scotland is fully compliant with the UNCRC and other international human rights standards.
2. Law and policy in Scotland is fully implemented in line with the UNCRC and other international human rights standards.
3. Children in Scotland experience a culture change in which they are listened to, respected and are able to influence the world around them.
4. Scotland is recognised internationally and within the UK as a pioneer and an innovator in taking forward children and young people's human rights.
5. Our impact and reach continues to grow, and we develop as a sustainably funded, independent organisation.

Our strategies:

We will develop and pursue the following strategies throughout 2019-2024 to ensure we achieve our strategic aims:

- 1. Law in Scotland is fully compliant with the UNCRC and other international human rights standards.**
 - Advocate for the full incorporation of the UNCRC and other international human rights standards into Scots and UK law.
 - Identify where Scots law falls short of the standards enshrined in the UNCRC and advocate for legislation that meets and exceeds international human rights standards.
 - Influence and inform new legislation brought forward by the Scottish and UK Government to ensure it meets international human rights standards.
- 2. Law and policy in Scotland is fully implemented in line with the UNCRC and other international human rights standards.**
 - Work with our members to raise public and professional awareness and understanding of children and young people's human rights.
 - Influence and build the capacity of our members and duty bearers to inform policy and direct practice and monitor and evaluate change.
 - Develop, test and promote innovative ideas to lead best practice in implementing children and young people's human rights, doing this in ways which are proactive, agile and seize new opportunities.
 - Undertake robust monitoring and reporting to support UN bodies to hold the Scottish and UK Government to account in implementing international human rights obligations.
- 3. Children and young people in Scotland experience a culture change in which they are listened to, respected and are able to influence the world around them.**
 - Consistently explore, embed and develop opportunities to ensure that children and young people's views, experiences and concerns are listened to and acted on at all levels. Achieve this through partnerships with our members and all levels of government.
- 4. Scotland is recognised internationally and within the UK as a pioneer and an innovator in taking forward children and young people's human rights.**
 - Bring learning from the international community to inform and develop work in Scotland to further children and young people's human rights.
 - Promote and share good practice from Scotland with partners in the international community.
 - Create and promote opportunities for our members to learn from – and bring learning to – the international human rights community.
- 5. Our impact and reach continues to grow, and we develop as a sustainably funded independent organisation.**
 - Ensure operational compliance and good governance in all we do.
 - Develop and implement a funding strategy that promotes a diversity of income sources, including support from government, charitable trusts and membership.
 - Develop a diverse and talented team of staff, volunteers, interns and trustees to ensure there is a strong foundation from which we can progress our mission.
 - Assess and measure our impact to ensure we learn from successes and challenges and develop our approaches and strategies.

Background and history

Together (Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights) is an alliance of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and interested professionals that works to improve the awareness, understanding and implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and other international human rights standards across Scotland. It has established a reputation as a leading source of expertise on children and young people's human rights at a Scottish and international level. Membership includes over 500 organisations and individuals, ranging from small local playgroups and youthwork projects through to large international charities, academics and professionals. Recent achievements have included:

- Securing the incorporation of the UNCRC in Scots law through unanimous cross-party support in passing the UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill. Together has been at the forefront of calls for to bring forward amendments to the Bill to address the 2021 UK Supreme Court judgment to ensure it can be commenced as a matter of urgency.
- Coordinating civil society reporting for the UK to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2023 and leading what the UN Committee described as the 'most child-led' Pre-Session ever, which will serve as a model for future UN activity. This resulted in nearly 200 recommendations to the Scottish and UK governments that were rooted in experiences of the children and young people that Together works with.
- Establishing the 'Rights Detectives' - a group of children aged 11-17 from across Together's membership who are helping to shape a new Human Rights Bill for Scotland through widespread investigations with children and young people across Scotland.
- Cofounding the Observatory for Children's Human Rights, a collaborative of Scottish organisations working to drive implementation of children's human rights in Scotland, with local impact and global learning, in partnership with CELCIS, Moray House School of Education (University of Edinburgh), Children & Young People's Commissioner Scotland, Inspiring Children's Futures (University of Strathclyde) and the Scottish Youth Parliament.
- Supporting a delegation of children and young people to participate in the 2018 UN Day of Discussion on Children as Human Rights Defenders as workshop leaders, moderators and speakers. This resulted in a child from Scotland becoming the 'youngest ever moderator' at the UN, and the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child reviewing how children and young people could become more involved in its work.
- Continuously advocating for a raise in the age of criminal responsibility and for children to be given equal protection from violence. This has led to Acts of the Scottish Parliament that specifically take forward recommendations from the UN, secured by Together in 2016.
- Maintaining a comprehensive website, resource library, fortnightly e-newsletter and social media channels to raise awareness and understanding of children and young people's human rights. The website and resource library is used by over 5,500 visitors each month, there are nearly 2000 subscribers to the e-newsletter and our social media channels are followed by nearly 10,000 people.

Organisational and internal governance

Governance

Together's SCIO Constitution underpins our work. This is complemented by Together's policies and procedures, which are published on Together's website. The Board of Trustees has overall decision-making authority and comprises of 10 members, appointed by the Together membership at the Annual General Meeting. Trustees are elected for a three-year term, after which they may be re-elected for a further three years. Within the Board of Trustees, a Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and Honorary Treasurer are appointed by the Together membership through a vote at the AGM. Each officeholder is elected for a three-year term and is eligible for a second term of three years. The Board of Trustees meet every quarter. The Board delegates day to day authority to the Director who is responsible for overseeing the implementation of Together's strategic plan.

Working structures

Together has the following working structures:

- **Finance subgroup:** This comprises of the Treasurer, Director and nominated Board members and meets prior to every meeting of the Board of Trustees. The role of the subgroup is to oversee and scrutinise the monthly management accounts and annual financial statements, before presenting them for approval to the Board of Trustees. The subgroup's role is also to revise and develop financial policies and procedures as appropriate.
- **Executive subgroup:** This comprises of the Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer and Director to provide regular contact, support and advice to the Director between Board meetings. The role of the subgroup is to discuss agendas and focus of Board activities and to make proposals to the Board about its business; provide a fast and accessible response to issues raised by the Director where required; make recommendations on decisions and actions where required between Board meetings; and to represent or facilitate Board engagement to external bodies.
- **Operations subgroup (as of 2023):** This comprises of at least three Board members, with a role to oversee the operations of Together on a routine basis in line with the objectives in the SCIO constitution supported by the Policies and Procedures and Strategic Plan. The Operations Subgroup's role is to make recommendations to the Board with regards to all policies and procedures, all aspects of human resources and any such matters deemed the responsibility of the Subgroup
- **Ad-hoc subgroups:** The Board of Trustees may set up ad-hoc subgroups to work on specific issues. These are established for a definite period of time and work towards delivering clear tangible outputs. Subgroups must contain a minimum of three Trustees and may include up to two co-opted Advisors. Subgroups are chaired by a Trustee, who is responsible for reporting to Together Board meetings. The Director will also be a member of each subgroup.

Membership structure

Membership is available to organisations and individuals with an interest in promoting the full implementation of the UNCRC across Scotland. Members must:

- Be based or working in Scotland;
- Sign up and commit to Together's vision, mission and values;
- Fulfil formal application procedures and be approved as a member through the Board of Trustees;
- Base their work on the principles enshrined in the UNCRC and other international human rights conventions.

Membership types

- **Voting member** - Voting membership is open to local, national and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) with an interest in improving the awareness, understanding and implementation of the UNCRC in Scotland. Voting is limited to one vote per organisation.
- **Non-voting member** - Non-voting membership is open to public bodies (including health, education and social work), academic and research institutions and individuals, with an interest in improving the awareness, understanding and implementation of the UNCRC in Scotland.

Membership process

Applications for membership are assessed by the Director and approved by the Board of Trustees at quarterly Board meetings. All new members for the previous year are announced at the Annual General Meeting (AGM). Members can resign from Together at any time by giving written notice to the Board of Trustees. Their withdrawal is notified to other members at the Together AGM. The Board of Trustees is able to exclude members if the need arises. Reasons for exclusion can include bringing Together in disrepute or lack of commitment to Together's mission, vision and values. Members can only be excluded after being given the opportunity to put forward a case for their defence to the Board of Trustees.

Membership disclaimer

Together members commit, upon application, to Together's vision, mission and values. Together strives to ensure that its members take forward Together's values and act in accordance with national and international legal standards. However, Together cannot be held responsible for the positions or actions of any of its members (or their employees). The views and opinions expressed by individual members do not necessarily represent those of Together unless officially endorsed.