



Siobhian Brown MSP
Minister for Children, Young People and The Promise
Scottish Government
St Andrew's House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

July 27, 2026

Dear Minister,

Development of Fourth Optional Protocol to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

As members of Together (Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights), we are writing regarding the ongoing process to develop a new Optional Protocol to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), aimed at strengthening the right to education across early years, pre-primary and secondary education.

The UNCRC currently recognises the right to free and compulsory primary education, but does not explicitly extend this right to pre-primary or secondary education. The proposed Optional Protocol seeks to address this. This includes recognition of at least one year of free public pre-primary education, free public secondary education, and a broader acknowledgement that the right to education encompasses access to early childhood education and care, including for the very youngest children.

Discussions around the Protocol's development are ongoing. The UN recently launched a consultation on the [Draft Principles](#) for the Protocol. We recognise there are a range of views among children's charities, national governments and international stakeholders about the best means of advancing the right to education globally.

We understand that UK Government has expressed opposition to the development of the new Optional Protocol. Given the significance of the issues under discussion, and the differing views that have emerged internationally, we believe it is particularly important that governments engage constructively with the process, helping to ensure that any future proposals are informed by evidence, lived experience and careful consideration of their potential impact.

Notwithstanding these differing perspectives, we believe the development process would benefit from meaningful engagement by governments. As a country with a strong commitment to children's rights - demonstrated through UNCRC incorporation, GIRFEC and The Promise - we

Registered Office:

Together (Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights), The Melting Pot, 15 Calton Road, Edinburgh, EH8 8DL
Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO), Charity Reg No. SC029403

believe Scottish Government is uniquely placed to play a constructive and influential role in this process. We would therefore welcome Scottish Government's active engagement with the ongoing process, including consideration of responding to consultation on the Draft Principles and sharing Scotland's experience of strengthening children's rights in law, policy and practice.

We would also encourage Scottish Government, where appropriate, to support constructive dialogue with UK Government and internationally on how the right to education can be further strengthened. It is important that any future proposals build upon and reinforce existing international human rights standards and protections.

Regardless of the eventual outcome of the process, meaningful engagement from governments will help ensure that any decisions are informed by evidence, and the lived experiences of babies, children, young people and those working to uphold their rights.

We would be very happy to meet to discuss this further and to share emerging views from our members, including those working across the early years sector. Thank you for your ongoing leadership on children's rights in Scotland. We look forward to working with you to ensure Scotland continues to play a positive and influential role in advancing children's rights globally.

Yours sincerely,

Juliet Harris
Director, Together (Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights)

Supported by:

Fiona Aitken – Director, Adoption UK Scotland

Paul Traynor – Head of External Affairs, Carers Trust Scotland

Mary Glasgow – Chief Executive, Children First

Helen Forrest – Chief Executive, Children's Health Scotland

Lauren McGregor – Children and Young Person's Team Leader, Committed to Ending Abuse (CEA Ltd)

Professor Nancy Loucks – Chief Executive, Families Outside

Steven Sweeney – CEO, Forces Children Scotland

Angela Barron – CEO, Forth Valley Rape Crisis Centre

Belinda McElhinney – Chief Executive, Imagine

Registered Office:

Together (Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights), The Melting Pot, 15 Calton Road, Edinburgh, EH8 8DL
Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO), Charity Reg No. SC029403

Dr Mhairi Crawford – CEO, LGBT Youth Scotland

Amy Woodhouse – Chief Executive, Parenting Across Scotland

Lorraine Glass – Director, *respectme*, Scotland's Anti-Bullying Service

Jamie Speirs – Principal Solicitor, Scottish Child Law Centre

Suzanne Swinton – Chief Executive, Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance

Jamie Dunlop – Chief Executive, Scottish Youth Parliament

Alyson O'Brien – Head of Service, Sleep Action

Sarah Leary – Head of Impact and Evaluation, Starcatchers

Ramona Catarig – Operational Director of Children's Services UK, TACT Care

Pamela Graham – Country Director - Scotland, The Fostering Network

Sara Redmond – Chief Officer of Development, The Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland

Celine Sinclair OBE – CEO, The Yard

Tim Frew – Chief Executive, Youthlink

Sarah Robertson – Chief Executive, Youth Scotland

Registered Office:

Together (Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights), The Melting Pot, 15 Calton Road, Edinburgh, EH8 8DL
Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO), Charity Reg No. SC029403