

Scottish Government Consultation on the Pregnancy and Parenthood in Young People Strategy



September 2015

Background to Together

Together (Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights) is an alliance of children's charities that works to improve the awareness, understanding and implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in Scotland. With nearly 300 members, our key aims include progressing children's rights at a local and national level through the provision of support and expertise, and providing robust monitoring of UNCRC implementation in Scotland at a national and international level.

The views expressed in this submission are based on the UNCRC and its General Comments, and do not necessarily reflect the specific views of each Together member organisation.

Key points

- **Undertake a Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment**

Together recommends that the Scottish Government undertakes a Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment on the draft Strategy, in order to fully identify, analyse, strengthen or mitigate its likely impacts on the rights and wellbeing of all children, young people and young adults.

- **Continue and enhance the meaningful involvement of young people in the development, monitoring and evaluation of the Strategy**

The draft Strategy notes that a report will be submitted by an Independent Advisory Group to the Minister on their views of the implementation progress of the Strategy. Together strongly encourages the Scottish Government to continue working with the young people and young parents who were involved in the Young Scot co-design project, alongside other children and young people, to ensure that they are meaningfully included in the further development, monitoring and evaluation of the Strategy.ⁱ

- **Take account of UNCRC jurisprudence in the further development of the Strategy**

Together's 2015 non-government report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child on implementation of the UNCRC in Scotland comments on the extent to which children and young people's right to health and adolescent health services are being met.ⁱⁱ Together recommends that the Scottish Government takes forward the following report recommendation, to:

Ensure a multi-agency approach is taken to improve the provision of sexual health services that recognises wider health inequalities and is informed by the views and experiences of young people.

Together further recommends that the Scottish Government refers to UNCRC General Comment Number 4 (2003) on adolescent health, in order to ensure that the Strategy is created in a way which supports the government's CRC obligations. This includes ensuring access to health services, sexual

and reproductive information, including family planning and contraceptives that are sensitive to children's rights and their particular needs.ⁱⁱⁱ

- **Complement the Strategy with a coherent approach across Scottish Government to positive parenting**

In line with the Scottish Government's commitment in the draft Strategy to supporting positive parenting practices of young parents, Together is keen to highlight that this is at odds with the existing 'justifiable assault' defence in Scots law. As per Together's non-government report to the UN, we recommend that the Scottish Government:

Ensure children have the same protection as adults from violence by repealing the defence of "justifiable assault" with immediate effect.

In addition, Together recommends that:

Positive parenting approaches to discipline should be promoted, alongside professional training in positive childrearing.

The Scottish Government should take a coherent, right-based approach to positive parenting across all legislation and policies.

- **Link the Strategy to the wider preventative agenda**

Together's 2015 non-government report to the UN Committee states that children's right to an adequate standard of living should not be negatively impacted upon as a result of welfare reform. Benefits sanctions should not be applied in a manner which discriminates against families including children from particular groups, such as children in single parent families and children in larger families.

The draft Strategy highlights that young mothers under 20 are considerably more reliant on State benefits and tax credits than older mothers. Whilst updated information on entitlements and how to access welfare resources is necessary, this needs to be linked to the wider preventative agenda to ensure that young mothers are supported so that they do not need to rely on state benefits and tax credits and are not disproportionately affected by welfare reforms.

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ⁱ Together suggests that the Scottish Government uses General Comment Number 12 to the UNCRC on the child's right to be heard to inform this participation process. See: GENERAL COMMENT NO. 12 (2009) The right of the child to be heard.

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ⁱⁱ See: http://www.togetherscotland.org.uk/pdfs/UNCRC_Scotland_NGO_Alternative_Report_2015.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ See:

<http://docstore.ohchr.org/SelfServices/FilesHandler.ashx?enc=6QkG1d%2fPPRiCAqhKb7yhsiQql8qX5Zxh0cQqS/Rzx6ZfAlCbDzm5DUreYo1tIYOkZcPE%2bQh98dqWJaknr%2bF7jm441Z8qGwY%2f51yCBYAGhdoP935ZqmvuRbTJmwMpuaFoZ>