

Children in Scotland

every child - every childhood

MEDIA RELEASE

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Right of way: moving ahead on children's rights

Twenty years on from the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), what improvements have there been in the lives of children and young people, and what more must be done? These will be the main points for debate at Children in Scotland's international conference, 'Children's rights – looking ahead with 2020 vision', taking place in Edinburgh next week.

With Scotland itself witnessing democratic change in the past decade, and with the recent Government pledge to focus on children's rights, the nation is well placed to offer a distinct perspective on securing and building a role for children as responsible and contributing citizens.

While much has also been done globally to promote and increase children's rights, more action needs to be taken before children are truly both seen and heard, and this major event, organised in partnership with Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People, will provide a unique platform for policy-makers and practitioners to talk, debate and generate practical strategies to implement change in the children's rights arena.

Chaired by Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People, Tam Baillie, the event will consider the developing agenda across Europe, and internationally, and delegates will hear from children and young people about their experiences of 21st century life.

There will also be presentations from children's rights expert Dr Kay Tisdall, Professor of Childhood Policy at the University of Edinburgh; Helen Penn, Professor of Early Childhood at the University of East London, and co-author of the forthcoming Children in Scotland publication, *Siyabonana*, which focuses on child rights in South Africa, alongside international perspectives from Afua Twum-Danso, Lecturer in the Sociology of Childhood, University of Sheffield, Agata D'Addato, Policy Officer at Eurochild and Gianfranco Zavelloni from Brazil who will present a charter on children's natural rights.

Speaking ahead of this important event, Tam Baillie said: "If we want to live in a society which values and respects our children and young people we must ensure that their rights are respected as an every day reality. This conference gives both policy makers and practitioners the opportunity to debate ideas and create practical strategies with the aim of making lasting improvements for Scotland's children and young people.

I am particularly looking forward to listening to, and learning from the children and young people who will be at the event to tell us first hand about their lives and about their understanding and experience of their rights.”

Children in Scotland’s latest publication, *Siyabonana* which launches at the event, coincides with the 20th anniversary of Nelson Mandela’s release, and provides a timely evaluation of a less-examined nation. Co-author Helen Penn, who will be speaking at the conference, said: “South Africa faces exceptional challenges in trying to implement UNCRC. Early Childhood policy makers and activists in South Africa, from many different kinds of background, are engaged in an heroic task to improve life for young children. But they also draw on cultural strengths and richness that we can learn from.”

Chief Executive of Children in Scotland, Bronwen Cohen, said: “Sharing experiences from Scotland with practitioners and experts from around the world and really listening to young people themselves will challenge our understanding of children’s rights and help us build a role for children as responsible and contributing citizens.”

Notes for Editors –

1. The conference, ‘Children’s rights –looking ahead with 2020 vision’, takes place in Edinburgh on Tuesday 23 February.
For more information, contact Tracey Francis, tfrancis@childreninscotland.org.uk, 0131 222 2419, or Lynn Gilmour, lgilmour@childreninscotland.org.uk, 0131 222 2443.
2. **Children in Scotland** is the longstanding national agency for the whole of the children’s sector, reaching over 250,000 individuals through our extensive membership of more than 450 statutory agencies, voluntary sector organisations, professional associations and community groups. For further information visit www.childreninscotland.org.uk.
3. The conference is being organized in partnership with Scotland’s Commissioner for Children and Young People, and in association with Eurochild, Save the Children in Scotland, and the Scottish alliance for Children’s Rights.
4. The event marks the launch of ***Siyabonana: we all see each other***, co-authored by Helen Penn and Trisha Maynard, Price: £13.99
Early childhood experiences in South Africa are very different from the UK, but this vivid snapshot of early childhood development services holds useful lessons for practitioners and policy makers here. Personal and heartfelt observations are presented within the context of South Africa’s complex national landscape – a country that is striving to repair the damage of apartheid and address severe problems of child poverty. The latest in Children in Scotland’s ‘Building better childhoods: international perspectives’ series.
Review copies available.
5. Delegates will also receive a copy of Children in Europe – Issue 17, an examination of twenty years of children’s rights. Review copies available.