

Taking Part

Bulletin of the Participation Network



Children

IN SCOTLAND

CLANN AN ALBA

working for children and their families

Welcome to the fifth bulletin of the Participation Network. Children in Scotland is undertaking a three year project in conjunction with the Carnegie UK Trust to assist in the development of children's and young people's participation throughout Scotland. The main focus of this work is a participation network. The network provides those working with and on behalf of children and young people with the opportunity to exchange ideas and develop their own practice. The network is open to any organisation in Scotland that has a commitment to enabling children and young people to participate effectively.

In this bulletin we look at children and young people's involvement in government policy at national, European and international level. Youth-led organisation Article 12 takes a look at the latest developments for young people's participation in Europe, while SACR reviews the UN's viewpoint on the implementation of Article 12 in the UK. We have a sneak preview of the Scottish Youth Parliament's manifesto for 2003 and we look at the challenges of participation from a young traveller's point of view.

Participation and citizenship in Europe

by Lynne Tammi, National Co-ordinator, Article 12, a youth-led network that works across Scotland to promote the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The European White Paper on Youth is a report about the circumstances of young people that was published by the European Commission in Brussels in November 2001. It makes suggestions about how European countries can improve things for young people aged 15 – 25.

The recommendations cover two main areas: work for individual countries and work for the European Union with help from member and applicant countries.

The White Paper identifies four priority areas that it wants individual countries to look at. These four priority areas are:

- participation of young people;
- information for young people;
- voluntary service for young people;
- getting a better understanding of issues that affect young people.

Each country will review what it is already doing under these four headings and then, with other European countries, start to look at how things can be improved.

Now that the White Paper has been published the 15 member states have embarked on a process to decide how to address the issues it

raises. Between January and June 2002 the UK worked with the other member states. As a result of the consultation process with a wide range of young people and organisations, it was agreed the first two priority areas should be information and participation.

Consultation on these two priority areas began in August 2002. The Children and Young People's Unit (CYPU) in England and the Children and Young People's Group in Scotland have responsibility for co-ordinating

this second phase. The

outcomes will identify current examples of best practice in the UK and use those examples, along with examples from other participating countries, to help member states to agree common targets and guidelines for ensuring that young people have access to relevant information and the opportunity to participate at all levels of society.

To find out more about the European Union and the White Paper on Youth, visit www.europa.eu.int/comm/education/youth/ywp/index.html or go to www.cypu.gov.uk for more information about the UK government's role in the White Paper.

delegates at the international seminar enjoy a discussion on the European White Paper



In November 2002 Article 12 in Scotland, in partnership with Save the Children, hosted an international seminar, attended by young people and youth workers from Italy, Sweden, Poland, Lithuania, Portugal, Holland, Austria and Scotland, to look at how young people from member and applicant states could work together to monitor and promote the progress of the European White Paper on Youth.

The key outcomes of this seminar were proposals to establish a Young People's Commission to monitor progress and the production of an International Training Pack to help promote the White Paper to young people across Europe. The work begins with a Training Event in Sweden in 2003.

For further information on the International Seminar visit: www.article12.org.



Children, young people and the UN

by Jennifer Turpie, Co-ordinator, Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights

Jennifer Turpie is the Co-ordinator for SACR - the Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights. This coalition group work on co-ordinating efforts for children's rights in Scotland. Here she explains the relevance of the Concluding Observations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child for the UK and its implications for children's rights in Scotland.

1. State parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.
2. For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.

(Article 12, United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989)

Article 12 is fundamentally important to all aspects of the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and to the interpretation of all of its articles (Hodgkin & Newell 2002). The UN Convention is about extending human rights to children and the Committee on the Rights of the Child has consistently emphasised that the child must be regarded as an active subject of rights. Nothing could be more central to this, than the essential ingredient of Article 12; children's right to participate.

On 4 October 2002, the Committee on the Rights of the Child published their Concluding Observations on the United Kingdom. (A copy of the full report is available at www.sacr.org.uk/artman/uploads/united_kingdomco2_1_.doc.) This followed the Committee's second review on how the UK is progressing at implementing the UN Convention into domestic law, policy and practice. The concluding observations were very thorough and gave praise where it was due, but it also highlighted areas where further progress is needed.



The Concluding Observations point to many areas for consideration. For example, Scotland was given praise in recent education legislation; however, it was noted that most children are not actually aware of their rights. The Committee recommends that the government "substantially increase the Convention to children and parents. If children are then greater awareness of it and the Convention."

Overall the committee welcomed the increased participation of local authorities where there is clear evidence of children being consulted. However, there was concern for the fulfilment of obligations under Article 12. As such, they recommended further steps to "promote, facilitate and ensure the participation of all groups of children in Scotland."

Meaningful children's participation requires the involvement of government and those of us working to promote children's rights. Perhaps most significantly the mindset of some of those who are not always heard. As the Committee on the Rights of the Child, much work to be done to ensure the full and meaningful participation of young people in Scotland.

Young Travellers Speak Out

by Wendy Lee Lindsay, Travellers' Education and Information Project, Aberdeen

Things happen! How? When? Where? As a member of the Young Travellers' Group, which meets in Aberdeen, I do not know the answers to such questions; no one has ever consulted me or my group about anything. Wouldn't it be great if young people like us from minority groups could have a say in things that matter to us and which affect our lives?

Even meeting together has its difficulties. There are always obstacles to be overcome. Funding, location and access are the main ones. The local authorised Gypsy Travellers' site is 12 miles out of town with a two-mile walk to the nearest bus stop. Transport in two directions is needed if young Travellers are to meet in town. Funding from central or local government could help

young people from minority groups meet more often.

It is difficult for Travellers to make a commitment to attend meetings as they could be travelling at the time. If meetings were spread over Scotland then we could meet up nationally without any one group having to fork out for expenses all the time.

Access to the internet would help groups stay in touch and the use of web-cams would allow people from outlying districts to take part.

Our group feels we could participate in future by listening or watching broadcasts, debating issues ourselves, watching information videos, filling out questionnaires and by voting on the internet, if it was available to us.

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Shout It Out!!

Room 13 host a workshop at the Shout It Out!! conference



My thoughts on the young people's conference

The Shout It Out!! conference was very informative for me, having just moved back to Scotland from eight years of living in Oxford.

Scotland is doing well as far as I can see in putting children's issues into the agenda. I was particularly heartened by the Scottish Youth Parliament representative. They seemed to me to be wanting to be as inclusive as possible and to take on board the views and needs of young disabled people. The SYP need support and funding to do this.

I do think that the whole agenda around consulting young people and respecting their views, feelings and so on, is still a vast area that is undeveloped and is not answered by just having self advocacy groups; it is all about participation with young people and shouting it out... We will keep on going with it.

Catherine Lacey
National development worker for self advocacy groups
ENABLE

The Participation Network's annual event **Shout It Out!!** in September 2002 brought together young people's groups and workers to draw on shared experiences of participation. Workshops identified that the main problems of involving young people are:

- Young people's confidence in becoming involved.
- Feedback - young people need to see that there are results when they are consulted for them to continue to participate.
- A lack of understanding by many organisations about the value of children and young people's participation in consultation.

Children in Scotland would like to thank all the young people's groups involved in Shout It Out!! for their hard work and enthusiasm. The input and participation of the attendees was also much appreciated and we look forward to more PN events in the coming months.

Resources

Publications

Involving young people in the recruitment of staff, volunteers and mentors

Emma Michel and Di Hart (2002)
Produced by NCB and the Princes Trust

A pack to assist organisations wishing to involve young people in the recruitment process, including guidance and training materials.

Available from the NCB website at www.ncb-books.org.uk.

Taking the Initiative - Update

David Cutler (2002)

An update on how much progress government and local authorities have made in involving young people in public decision making.

Available from the Carnegie Young People Initiative.

Websites:

www.highlandyouthvoice.org

Highland Youth Voice - an opportunity for highland youth to take action and have their say on this interactive website.

<http://atschool.eduweb.co.uk/allans1/draft4.html>

The website for Allan's Primary School in Stirling gives details about their school council and pupil participation.

www.sacr.org.uk

The Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights work to promote implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. To find out about becoming a member, visit the website or call their enquiry desk on 0131 551 4091.

Article 12 conference



Citizenship & participation: creating opportunities for young people to participate as equal citizens at local, national and international level.

Montrose Park Hotel
Thursday 6 February 2003

Featuring:

- **Jim Bartholemew, British Council - international issues**
- **Save the Children - local issues**
- **Shelley Gray and Ingrid Fitzsimons, Children in Scotland - barriers to participation at national level**

Aimed at:

Young activists and participation workers

Contact Lynne Tammi at Article 12 on 0776 456 0937 for more information.



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