

# Children in Scotland

every child - every childhood

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## Children in Scotland General Election Calls 2017

**Ahead of the UK General Election on Thursday 8 June 2017, Children in Scotland has identified six key calls for action, which we believe will have a positive impact on the lives of children, young people and their families.**

**We urge MPs in Scotland and across the UK to help ensure these are upheld.**

### **Six key calls from Children in Scotland**

#### **1. Real participation for young people**

16 and 17-year-olds must be given the opportunity to vote in all future elections. Under Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), children and young people have the right to be heard in decisions that affect them. A far more coherent approach is required to support this. The current situation means young people are able to vote in Scottish and local government elections but not at UK level and this must change. There must also be far more concerted efforts across the UK to involve children and young people in developing policy and legislation.

#### **2. Put the needs of children and young people at the heart of Brexit negotiations**

Children and young people are going to feel the impact of leaving the EU for the rest of their lives. As such we must ensure that the process does not negatively impact on their outcomes or rights. They must be meaningfully involved in the accountability process and parties must consider them throughout the Repeal Bill process. The UK Government should also consider the use of Child Rights Impact Assessments throughout the process to ensure children and young people will not lose out on rights in the future.

#### **3. Help raise families out of poverty through social security measures**

Poverty negatively affects every aspect of children and young people's lives, from their home environment to health and education. Current poverty rates are unacceptable and the UK government must take action to reduce these.

There must be a commitment to remove the Benefit Cap, which will have a hugely negative impact on the lives of children, young people and their families, and increase Child Benefit. Children in Scotland has consistently called for a £5 Child Benefit top-up in Scotland, which evidence suggests will contribute to a 14% reduction in child poverty. The incoming Westminster

Government should acknowledge this research and implement this benefit increase across the UK. Short-term spending to reduce poverty will mean a decrease in government spending in the long-term as children and young people's outcomes improve and they are also more likely to enter into meaningful employment.

**4. Make a positive commitment to human rights throughout the current parliament and beyond**

The Human Rights Act is vital to ensuring that children and young people are afforded equality in the eyes of the law and frames the decisions that are taken about them in an ethical manner. Such ideals are key to British identity and should be gladly championed by MPs as we enter a period that will redefine our country. A commitment to Human Rights will support the embedding of children's rights across the UK.

**5. Reverse the decision to close or cap the Dubs amendment**

Refugee children require sustained support from the UK and there has to be commitment to increased numbers of asylum seekers. As one of the world's largest economies, the UK Government must show greater compassion and morality, and provide more support for these vulnerable children and young people.

**6. Accept the recommendations of Missing Children Europe**

Migrant children are at risk of going missing from care and require specific protections from the state to support their wellbeing. We hope all parties take on board the recommendations made in January, including:

- Better reception and accommodation
- More efficient procedures and international co-operation
- Better information for children and respect of their right to be heard.

Children in Scotland is the collective voice for children, young people and families in Scotland, and organisations and businesses that have a significant positive impact on children's lives.

We are an influencing and membership organisation, comprised of representatives from the voluntary, public and private sectors. Our vision is that Scotland will become a world leader in securing the wellbeing of every child and improving the quality of every childhood.

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