



**together**

Scottish Alliance for  
Children's Rights

# THE RIGHTS DETECTIVES

## Mission Update #002

### June 2023



### *Acknowledgements*

Together (Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights) would like to thank the amazing Rights Detectives Daniel, Emma, Oscar, Ramiza, Safiyah and Vange for all their hard work in carrying out the investigations that make up this report. Thanks also to the children and young people across Scotland who took part in the investigations, all organisations who supported the work, Together staff and Scottish Government for funding the project.

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## About the Rights Detectives

Together (Scottish Alliance for Children’s Rights) has been commissioned by Scottish Government to support the ‘Children and Young People Lived Experience Board’ which will help inform the development of a new Human Rights Bill for Scotland. The group, known as ‘The Rights Detectives’, is made up of six children aged 11-17, supported by Together and the following member organisations:

- Aberlour Children’s Charity (1 Detective);
- Children in Scotland (2 Detectives);
- Scottish Youth Parliament (1 Detective);
- SNAP Inverness (1 Detectives); and
- Who Cares? Scotland (1 Detective).

The Rights Detectives form one of three ‘Lived Experience Boards’ in response to recommendation 27 of the National Taskforce for Human Rights Leadership report: “The Scottish Government should adopt an innovative and human-rights based approach towards engaging the public in developing the framework, including the guidance and its implementation.”<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

*This report is the second in a series, and should be read in conjunction with [The Rights Detectives Mission Update](#) (also available as Appendix 1) and the [Mapping Research Report](#) (also available as Appendix 2). The Mission Update records the project set up and Stage 1 of the Detectives’ findings, and the Mapping Report summarises what we already know about children’s views and experiences of their human rights. The mapping report covers projects that were active between January 2020 and June 2022.*

After publishing their first Mission Update report in February 2023, the Rights Detectives continued their investigations until the end of April. Their objective was to engage with specific groups of children and young people to explore the questions raised by the Scottish Government in Missions #001, #002, and #003. To achieve this, each Detective worked with staff from Together to co-design and co-facilitate creative workshops, aiming to gather the perspectives of a wide range of children and young people.

The workshops incorporated a variety of activities, such as group discussions, collage creation, model making, storyboarding and drama performances, Minecraft world development, and drawing. You can find the series of session plans in **Appendix 3**. During these workshops, the Detectives took notes to document their findings, in addition to collecting the [artwork created by the participating children and young people](#). **(also available as Appendix 4)**

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<sup>1</sup> [National Taskforce for Human Rights Leadership Report](#)

## Investigation Questions

1. *What do children and young people need to be healthy, happy and safe? (Mission #001)*
2. *What would it be like if Scotland was the fairest and best place in the world for everyone? (Mission #001)*
3. *What difference would it make for children and young people if Scotland puts extra rights into Scottish law, especially rights for women and girls, disabled people, people from ethnic minority group and a healthy environment? (Mission #001)*
4. *Can you think of some examples when children and young people's rights might get broken? (Mission #002)*
5. *What do you think should happen if children or young people's rights are broken? (Mission #002)*
6. *Who should help and what should they do? (Mission #002)*
7. *What does "environment" mean to you? What do you think "environment" can be defined as? What makes an environment healthy or unhealthy? (Mission #003)*
8. *Is there anything in your own daily environment that could be better? Do you ever feel let down by your environment, or that people who make decisions have made choices that made your environment less healthy? (Mission #003)*
9. *Thinking about the Human Rights Bill - what practical things would be needed alongside a legal right to a healthy environment so that people could make use of it? (Mission #003)*

## More exciting statistics!

Yet again, the Detectives excelled in their investigations, conducting workshops with **a total of 105 children and young people ranging from 5 to 17 years old**. These workshops took place in various locations, including Moray, Fife, Edinburgh, East Lothian, Aberdeen, and Inverness. The groups involved were:

- Two primary five classes in East Lothian.
- A group of Rights Respecters in a primary school in Edinburgh.
- A group of care-experienced young people, some with additional support needs, in Moray.
- A group of young males involved with a youth provision in Moray.
- Children and young people attending after-school classes at a Mosque in Fife.
- Additionally, Together staff facilitated a session with the Detectives themselves.

The workshops allowed for a rich exchange of ideas and perspectives, resulting in the valuable insights reflected throughout this report. As a result, the Detectives' work has received huge appreciation from Together staff, member organisations, and the Scottish

Government. They are incredibly impressed by the exceptional quality and creativity demonstrated in the work undertaken by the Detectives.

## **Findings**

As detailed throughout this report, the much of what the Detectives discovered through their investigations directly link to the human rights enshrined in the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and wider human rights treaties that the Human Rights Bill for Scotland intends to incorporate into law. Children and young people's recognition of the importance of basic physiological needs such as food, water, and healthcare corresponds to ICESCR Article 11, which enshrines the right to an adequate standard of living, including food, clothing, and housing. Their emphasis on love, relationships, and a loving family aligns with the principles of dignity embedded throughout ICESCR and more specifically in ICESCR Article 10 of the ICESCR. The emphasis on accessible education, including diverse subjects, life skills and cultural activities resonates with ICESCR Articles 13 and 15 as well as UNCRC Article 24 which guarantee the right to education and cultural life. Furthermore, their concern for the environment reflects the importance of recognising the right to a healthy environment. The following findings explore the connections between children and young people's experiences of their rights and the international human rights framework, highlighting both the progress made and the challenges that need to be addressed through the new Human Rights Bill for Scotland

### **Examples of when children's rights might get broken?**

During their workshops, participants shared numerous examples that vividly illustrated situations where children's rights might be violated. Children and young people emphasised the necessity of protecting children from harm, include abuse, neglect and kidnapping and providing them with a safe, loving and secure environment where their rights are upheld.

Detectives also heard about experiences of discrimination faced by children and young people with disabilities and individuals from black, brown, and minority ethnic backgrounds. The participants called for equality, respect and the eradication of biases, emphasising the value of diversity and inclusivity in society.

Bullying, both in person and online, was another significant concern raised by the participants. They heard examples of children and young people being ignored and mistreated by others, including adults, which affected their self-esteem and mental well-being.

Poverty emerged as a recurring theme in many of the groups. Children and young people highlighted the hardships that families could face due to a lack of financial resources, which prevented them from meeting their basic needs.

In the areas of education and participation, children expressed their frustration at not being respected or listened to, with younger children saying this was the case, especially during school assemblies. Children in one primary school talked about the impact of bereavement and loss were deeply affecting, whilst others talked about the challenges that young carer faced. They expressed the need for support and understanding during these difficult times, recognising that trauma, bereavement and loss can profoundly affect a child's well-being and rights.

The impact of wars, armed conflicts, and violence within communities was deeply troubling to children and young people we spoke to. They expressed their fears and hopes for peace, emphasising the need for safe environments that shielded children from the horrors of war. Young people in Moray talked about the impact violence in their local communities and how this meant they could find themselves in conflict with the law, where their rights could be violated.

Finally, the lack of community based mental health services that are accessible at the point of need was recognised as a huge and recurring issue for children and young people across Scotland. They called for a comprehensive approach to mental health that removes stigmas and provides adequate support for all children and young people.

Throughout the workshops, children and young people painted a vivid picture of where rights continue to be breached, and where change is still needed to make sure all rights of all children and young people are always upheld. Their stories serve as a powerful reminder of the importance of upholding and protecting the rights of every child and young person, as well as the rights of the adults around them. In doing this Scotland can foster a nurturing environment where everyone can thrive. The report will now expand on some of the key themes that children and young people raised.

### **Healthy, happy and safe**

Primary school children in East Lothian, Fife, and Edinburgh showed a comprehensive grasp of the significance of the basic physiological requirements like food, water, and healthcare, as well as the importance of love, relationships, fairness, an education and respect for the environment, as reflected in Maslow's hierarchy of needs<sup>2</sup>

*"When it's raining and leaves are falling and you don't have a jacket."*

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<sup>2</sup> [Maslow's hierarchy of needs - Wikipedia](#)

*"you need food and clean water"*

*"nice parents" and "a loving family"*

*"you need exercise...and fitness ...and football!"*

*"you need medicine and somewhere to go if you are ill. Paramedics and the NHS will help you."*

Across all the groups, there was a strong consensus on the right to accessible education which included *"better subjects and free music, woodwork and home economics classes."* Children and young people expressed their wish for schools that respects their rights and opinions and promotes life skills and learning at an individual pace, according to their learning styles *"instead of learning by threat."*

*"Colleges are a bit better, but not schools. The education system needs to have more life skills, finances, bills, taxes and cooking."*

Children and young people attending after-school classes in a Mosque in Fife talked a lot about service to others and helping people, especially those with additional support needs, and how this made them happy. They liked to give gifts, share toys and food and see people smile.

*"making sure my friends are safe"*

*"sharing makes me happy"*

*"keeping animals safe makes me happy"*

*"staying at home with my family makes me happy"*



Figure 1: Children's pictures of what makes them happy



Yet again, the Detectives heard from young people in rural communities who highlighted the lack of services like public transport and things to do in their areas. One young person talked passionately about the connection between lack of things to do and young people getting into conflict with the law.

*“The best thing in the place I live is Tesco...so we need everything!”*

Participants in this group felt that if the new Human Rights Bill included the right to a healthy environment, this would mean *“there would be better parks”* and another young person felt *“people would be different, they’d be more educated and would have the opportunity for good jobs, have more money and more opportunities.”*

## Bullying

The issue of bullying emerged as a significant concern during the Detective's investigations. Children and young people in every group shared their personal experiences and frustrations with bullying, most prominently in schools. They raised concerns about the lack of intervention and support from both teachers and school authorities.

*“Bullying is a big problem in schools and nothing gets done. Then you lash out and the backlash, you get into trouble.”*

*“Schools don’t listen and they just shut you down, we don’t have the power to change it.”*

One participant highlighted instances where teachers themselves engaged in bullying behaviour, exacerbating the distress of students facing challenges at home. Another young person talked about speaking up and how this would only worsen the situation.

*“Teachers are bullying too. They are aware if you’ve got problems at home and then having to explain your needs in front of everyone, when they already know.”*

*“You go to school and talk to someone, but that can make it worse...much worse. If you tell guidance, we will deal with it, but they don’t.”*



Both children and young people emphasised the need for schools *“to do something different, not just move people”* without addressing the underlying issues. They felt that schools often fail to listen and dismiss their concerns, leaving them feeling powerless to bring about change. This clearly illustrates the difficulties that children and young people can face in trying to challenge breaches of their rights and in accessing justice.

Figure 2: Drawing of child being bullied by other children

The Detectives heard of the importance of creating safe and inclusive online spaces and the call from children and young people to have “*safer online services.*” They recognised the need for platforms and services to prioritise children’s right to safety, taking proactive measures to prevent cyberbullying and harassment. By advocating for these safer online environments, the children aimed to foster a sense of security and respect for all individuals.

Overall, the Detectives' findings shed light on the urgent need for comprehensive anti-bullying measures in schools, including teacher training, responsive intervention strategies, and improved support systems. The voices of children and young people provided invaluable insights for creating nurturing educational environments that prioritise the well-being and mental health of all students. Importantly, these environments need to be places where children and young people are able to confidently and safely raise concerns about their rights not being respected, and know that these concerns will be taken seriously and addressed by the adults around them.

### War and armed conflict

Children in East Lothian reflected on the profound impact of World War 1 and 2 and joined children and young people from across the groups as they expressed their fears and concerns about ongoing conflicts in Ukraine, Russia, Syria, and North Korea. The Detectives also heard concerns about the failure to protect children, women and girls, older people and disabled people from the horrors of war and invasions. They discussed the distressing reality of children being exposed to the violence and chaos of armed conflicts, which deeply impacts their wellbeing and violates their rights.



*“not protecting children from war and invasions”*

*“a young child put into war”*

Figure 3: Children's drawing of war and invasions

Participants recognised that war not only brings devastation to human lives but also causes significant harm to the environment. One young person highlighted the chemical attacks in Syria as an example, emphasising the detrimental effects on both homes and people. In their passionate plea, they urged for an end to wars, stating,

*“War damages the environment a lot, like Syria and the chemical attacks. They're harmful, it damages the environment (people, homes and wildlife), so stop wars!”*

Moreover, the children expressed their specific fears regarding potential conflicts between the UK, Russia, and Ukraine, *“I don’t want UK to have a war with Russia and Ukraine”* They voiced a collective desire for peace, hoping that their countries would not engage in war. Some of the young people urged government to prioritise diplomacy and disarmament, with one of the Detectives saying that if government really wanted to protect people and the environment, they would *“get rid of nuclear weaponry.”*

When thinking about the right to a healthy environment, a number of children drew pictures and wrote about places of safety that they would use in times where war broke out. One child drew a bunker in their garden, whilst another drew a picture of a hot air balloon, highlighting these as places where they would feel safe.



Figure 4: Children's drawings of places of safety

The accounts shared by the children shed light on the far-reaching consequences of war and armed conflict on both human lives, human rights and the environment. Their voices call for action to protect children from the horrors of war and to prioritise peaceful resolutions to global conflicts. Importantly, children and young people's concerns show the importance of international cooperation in promoting and protecting human rights, and the interconnectedness between the experience of children's rights in different countries across the world.

## Equality and diversity

People with disabilities

Equality and the need to address racism were prominent themes throughout the Detectives investigations. Children and young people recognised the importance of ensuring that **all** individuals feel respected and valued in society.

The Detectives acknowledged the existence of hidden disabilities and highlighted the stigma and judgment often faced by people with disabilities.

*“There is a stigma around people with disabilities and the way they are judged.”*

*“There are people who are physically and mentally ill – that could be hidden disabilities.”*



Concerns were raised about the accessibility and maintenance of disability equipment in schools, as well as the availability of proper access for disabled individuals in public spaces. The Detectives also noted the challenges faced by disabled people when applying for financial support to adapt their homes and vehicles to meet their needs.

*“Disability equipment gets broken at school quite a lot”*

*“access for disabled people – lifts can be broken and you can’t go up them.”*

Figure 5: Storyboard drawings from drama performance by young people in Moray

#### Race and ethnicity

Again echoing previous findings, children and young people recognised the need for equality and fairness for individuals from black, brown, and minority ethnic backgrounds. They acknowledged the biases and prejudices that exist in society, emphasising the importance of embracing diversity and combating discrimination. Young people reflected on the lack of ethnic diversity in certain areas in Scotland.

*“There’s a lot of biases against people, especially people with different coloured skin”*

*“Where we live there is less ethnicity/diversity, it’s predominantly white mainly Scottish, English and Polish (which means they blend in more [than if they had black or brown skin]. They get translators in schools and taught English.”*

*“If you move here (to Scotland) as an adult, you need a bit more rights”*

#### Gender equality

Gender equality was another important aspect discussed in the workshops. One young person expressed the belief that *“people should be paid on the quality of the work, not based on your gender.”* Children in East Lothian highlighted the persistence of sexism, particularly *“when boys are allowed to do something that girls can’t.”* Young people in Moray recognised the additional challenges faced by women in certain fields, where physical training and efforts are often required to prove themselves.

Overall, participants emphasised the importance of promoting equality, respect, and inclusivity for all individuals, regardless of their race, disability, or gender. They voiced their concerns about existing inequalities and called for action to create a fairer and more equitable world for all individuals, regardless of their race, disability, or gender. Very many of these concerns relate to rights enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), the Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (UNCERD), and the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The Detectives' findings echo the importance placed across civil society in fully incorporating these human rights treaties into law as part of the Human Rights Bill for Scotland.

## **Mental Health and wellbeing**

The priority given to mental health by the children and young people involved in the Detectives' investigations shows the importance of the right to health being seen broadly as including both physical and mental health. This is clearly articulated in Article 12 ICESCR and is embedded broadly across UNCRPD, CEDAW and UNCERD.

### Feeling unsafe

Children and young people expressed concerns about bullying and feeling unsafe, both at school and in the community, and how this affects their mental health. Some young people spoke about the challenges they face and the consequences they endure when trying to defend themselves. One participant said,

*"It feels unsafe in school and in the community. It's so bad for our mental health, and if we retaliate, we get in trouble."*

### Trauma, bereavement and loss

Echoing the findings in the Mapping report, children in East Lothian said that experiencing the death of a family member or loved one had an impact on their mental health. One child said children's rights are broken *"when a family member died and the hospitals are too busy."* Children and young people highlighted the need for support from trusted adults, accessible services and resources, specifically tailored to those who have experienced trauma, bereavement or loss. The discussions further highlighted the intersection between trauma and mental health. Children and young people expressed the profound impact that traumatic experiences can have on their well-being and emphasised the necessity of trauma-informed support and services.

We heard examples of how depression, bi-polar, PTSD and anxiety were really hard to manage and that relationships suffered at times when individuals mental health was poor. One individual expressed that they wanted to be *"loved, safe and respected"* and

highlighted the specific challenges faced by individuals with disabilities in expressing their mental health needs.

*"People with disabilities might find it harder as they can't always express themselves."*

Stigma and gender

Gender disparities and the stigma surrounding mental health were further issues that emerged from the discussions. One participant highlighted the difficulties that women and girls encounter in schools, where stigma becomes a significant factor.

*"It can be harder for women and girls in schools, as stigma is a big thing. You can get mocked for having lived experience, being care experienced, or for being different."*

Accessing CAMHS services

In addition to the shared experiences, an alarming example was shared about a young person in crisis who had engaged in self-harm and experienced suicidal thoughts. Seeking professional help, they were met with an inadequate response advising them to *"have a cup of tea and a bath."*

A number of children and young people talked about the extensive waiting times to access CAMHS (Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service) and when they did, they either didn't find them helpful, or were removed from the service if they missed appointments.

*"[Mental health] services are hard to get... there should be more services that are faster because a lot of people are taking their lives."*

Addressing the challenges

To address these challenges, participants called for high quality, accessible and compassionate mental health services with highly qualified staff. In addition, they wanted better training for teachers and school staff regarding mental health and bullying. Participants expressed the need for someone outside their immediate environment, such as home or school, who could offer a listening ear, advocate for them and provide assistance at any time. Children and young people also stressed the importance of creating social groups and support networks tailored to different locations and communities.

*"I need someone outside home and school who can listen and I can call at any time to help."*

*"there should be more social groups depending on where people are"*

Participants emphasised the importance of creating safe and inclusive spaces where children and young people can openly express their emotions and receive the support they need to navigate trauma, bereavement and loss.





Figure 6: Detectives drawing of their vision of mentally healthy schools

One of the Detectives envisioned new schools being designed in “*mental health friendly ways*” with courtyards with trees, no uniform policies and mental health breaks, individualised education and access to on-site support services.

Children in East Lothian and Fife talked about the importance of animals and how having pets can offer emotional support to children and young people.

The suggestions made by the children and young people reflect the proactive obligations on governments included in ICESCR to ensure the highest attainable standard of health, including the development and implementation of comprehensive mental health policies, eliminating discrimination in mental health provision and safeguarding people from stigmatisation by addressing societal attitudes and systemic barriers. Their innovative ideas show the importance of involving children and young people in developing mental health services and solutions.

### Alcohol, drugs and violence

Building on previous findings, children and young people expressed concerns about their right to safety being violated, particularly due to violence in their communities. The impact of such violence was illustrated by one child's response of “*being physically hit in the face*” and another child's drawing depicting, and with the words “*putting fire on people.*”

The participants also highlighted the negative effects of alcohol in certain places, describing how it can restrict others, make people behave erratically, and lead to loud and disruptive behaviour. In discussions among older groups, there were observations made about the connections between violence, alcohol, and drug use. In Moray, young people recognised that women and girls may experience fear for their personal safety, citing examples of physical assault and sexual violence.

*“On Friday nights, there's so much drinking, drugs, and violence. It's not safe to be in [certain parts of the town] after 10 pm.”*

*“Girls may not feel safe, especially if they are outnumbered by boys. Men are biologically more powerful, and that could raise the threat.”*

Additionally, one group mentioned that violence affected their right to access public transport, saying that local buses stopped running between 7:00pm and 9:00pm and “*blaming young people for vandalism.*”

These observations provide valuable insights into the impact of violence on the well-being and safety of children and young people within their communities.

## Access to justice

Who should help and what should they do? Participants emphasised the importance of trusted adults, such as carers, member of the family, a family friend or a supportive professional, who can offer advocacy and or support in accessing and claiming their rights.

Many children and young people said public services should play a crucial role in helping them when their rights are violated, with children in East Lothian and Edinburgh identifying them as duty bearers (both Rights Respecting schools). They mentioned various services like the police, social work, healthcare providers and other institutions as being responsible for providing unbiased and trauma-informed support and intervention. Within schools, children suggested talking to the Head or Deputy Head Teacher as they were in a *“position of power”* to do something and make things change. Detectives also heard from children that they should be protected by the military during times of war and armed conflict.

As identified in both the previous Mission Update and mapping report, Detectives heard once again that whilst children and young people *“wanted to see things change,”* this was often in the shape of changed behaviour, without having to go down the more formal complaints processes or routes to redress. Where things were not resolved at a local level, more formal processes such as making a complaint, needed to be widely available, easily understood and accessible. Finally, children and young people identified Ministers, Parliament, government Advisors and the King as the most senior decision makers who must ensure that children’s rights are respected, protected and upheld.

## Environment

Protecting the environment, wildlife and the oceans

In terms of preserving the environment, protecting wildlife and preventing pollution in oceans were key concerns for children and young people. This reflects many of the substantive elements of the right to a healthy environment, including the right to healthy biodiversity, non-toxic environments, and clean air. One group stressed the need for *“easy access for wildlife”* and raised concerns about hunting and fishing's adverse effects on the environment.

*“I think the most important thing for having a healthy environment whilst living in cities, is to preserve local wildlife and have lots of parks.”*

*“There should be no hunting, I’ve seen lots of dead deer and that’s damaging for the environment. And no fishing, it’s dangerous for seals, and sharks...even if they’re scary, they need to be protected.”*



Children and young people expressed their concerns about the impact of littering on the environment. They highlighted the negative consequences of litter and called for collective action to address this issue. A number of primary school children in East Lothian and Fife created artwork depicting pollution in the oceans and talked about the negative impact of trash.



Figure 7 - Child's drawing with quote - "I am unhappy with people throwing trash in the ocean."

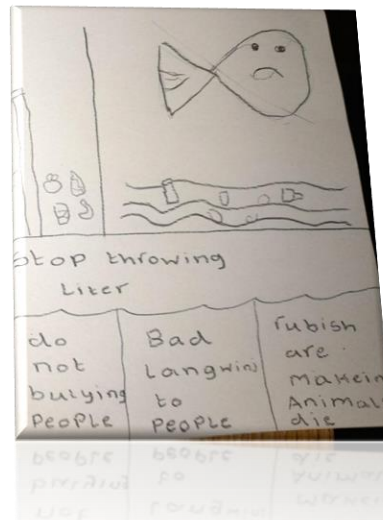


Figure 8: Child's drawing with quote – "rubbish are making animals die"

The children expressed their strong belief that everyone should take responsibility and actively participate in keeping the environment clean. One Detective vividly recalled the challenges faced during recent refuse workers strikes, emphasising the importance of having adequate waste management systems in place.



*"we need more bins and no bin strikes, they were terrible. Litter makes you dizzy and sick"*

They emphasised the need to *"stop littering"* and *"put rubbish in the bins."* and young people advocated for a commitment to a circular economy which valued *"repurposing to stop non-biodegradable materials destroying our planet."*

Figure 9: Extract from one of the Detectives "my perfect world" collage

Children frequently talked about UNCRC Article 31 and their rights to play, have fun, having things to do and rest in healthy places. This reflects the right to non-toxic environments in which to live, study and play. Many young people recognised the environmental and mental health benefits of green spaces. Across all groups, children and young people showed a deep understanding of the importance of plants and trees for a healthy environment, as seen in the many pictures in the Investigations art gallery (**See Appendix 2 – please do go**

**and have a look as there's 3.5 minutes of children and young people's brilliantly creative ideas and artwork!)**

They emphasised the need for more well-maintained play parks, gardens, communal woodland areas and one of the Detectives suggested there should free and mandatory nature retreats and access *"to mountains for hiking."*

*"Keeping the parks clean, having swings and slides to have fun at the park."*

*"There would be lots of trees and plants as science is showing they produce hormones and endorphins for mental health."*

*"All cars would be electric, the streets would be lined with trees and there would be more Doctors."*

*"There should be government funded mandatory retreats – making it mandatory to go out into nature a couple of times a year for overall healthier mind, body and soul."*



Figure 10: Children and young people's drawings of a healthy environment (Fife and East Lothian)

#### Sustainable food and fashion

Children and young people were clear about the need for more sustainable food practices and gave examples of various products that were limited or not available due to poor crops and the cost of living crisis. Again this reflects the right to healthy and sustainably produced food, a substantive element of the right to a healthy environment. Whilst one young person acknowledged the difficulty in being truly self-sustaining, many children advocated for people growing their own food and rearing their own cows and chickens. They recognised that when you consume locally sourced food, it reduces the need for long-distance transportation, which minimises the carbon emissions associated with transporting food over long distances. This helps to lower the carbon footprint associated with food production and distribution, and fundamentally, it tastes better!

*“bring farmers markets back on the scene a bit more rather than processing food.”*

One of the Detectives articulately expressed their concerns about high food prices, and the impact on families and communities.

*“Food prices need to come back down as it's hard for families! Everything is so expensive, even a McDonald's is expensive now.”*

Regarding fashion, young people advocated for demolishing fast fashion industries, reducing waste, and encouraging personal creativity in clothing choices, made from local sources.

*“Demolish fast fashion industries, use clothes that are filling up landfills and dumps, and stop overproducing for the sake of profit.”*

*“there should be no fast fashion, people can create their own clothes because resources are close.”*

*“ABOLISH CAPITALISM. LIVES OVER MONEY!”*

Children and young people used many ways to describe and depict their desire for a circular economy where nothing is wasted, as one participant mentioned, *“people respect the environment around them, and resources are not wasted; they are reused.”*

#### Accessible travel

Accessible travel was frequently raised as an essential aspect of an environmentally-friendly community. In a number of workshops, children and young people expressed the need for well-maintained roads and paths that were environmentally friendly. Many of the primary school children said these should be made *“out of earth and dirt”*

*“we should have proper roads that are well taken care of as the potholes are really bad and they hurt when you're on the bus”*

The issue of public transport accessibility and affordability was a recurring theme among the participants, mirroring the findings of the previous report. Many individuals highlighted the lack of regular and reliable public transportation options, particularly in remote rural areas of Scotland. While the provision of free bus travel for young people was acknowledged by some, there were still numerous examples of limited or non-existent bus services in these regions. Some young people felt that Scotland should follow the lead of some European cities and provide *“free transport for everyone, including adults as well.”*

In response to these challenges, participants advocated for sustainable modes of travel. Some children and young people suggested prioritising walking and biking over vehicles to reduce pollution and utilise local resources. In fact, whilst many children and young people suggested transitioning to electric vehicles, there was a growing consensus that minimising

the use of cars was essential to combat environmental issues. Bikes and walking were consistently depicted in the artwork that children and young people created

*"No cars, no pollution as batteries are bad for the environment."*

*"No vehicles or transport except bikes and walking."*

A small number of children either drew or said they would choose to travel by horse. One child passionately expressed *"I would ride a horse rather than a car. Instead of buying petrol, we buy horse food."*



Figure 11: Child's drawings of sustainable travel (Edinburgh and East Lothian)

This reflects their understanding of the environmental impact of traditional transportation methods and the need for alternative, eco-friendly options. However, some young people highlighted that cycling wasn't always safe, with *"cycle lanes in Inverness and Edinburgh being unclear, and encouraging close passing"* and there being debris on the roadside where cyclists travel.

*"we should have cycle lanes that are separate from the road."*

The importance of road and pedestrian safety was highlighted by one of the Detectives through their creative use of Minecraft. They created one Minecraft world which depicted a scenario where two friends were walking along a street, enjoying a sense of health, well-being and safety. They described this world as *"clean, with no car fumes"* which provided a safe and happy walking experience. However, in the second Minecraft world, the same two friends had to jump up on a wall to avoid being hit by a car emitting harmful and polluting fumes.



Figure 12: Screenshot of Detectives Minecraft worlds, created to show healthy and unhealthy environments



The Detective's Minecraft creations vividly illustrate the contrast between a safe and enjoyable walking experience and the potential dangers posed by traffic-related pollution. They reinforce the call for measures to improve road and pedestrian safety, promote sustainable transportation options, and reduce the negative environmental impacts associated with vehicle emissions.

### Community

When discussing the environment, children and young people stressed the significance of how people treat each other. They expressed their hope for kindness and respect within the community, emphasising the importance of inclusive spaces where no one faces judgment. One Detective captured this sentiment by saying,

*"We need kinder people because people make up the environment as well, even the language they use."*

The groups consistently emphasised the value of mutual respect and support. They strongly believed that everyone's views should be acknowledged and respected.

*"Everyone has their own views, some align, some don't. All are okay. No one judges."*



Figure 13: Detectives wooden sculpture of an inclusive and healthy community space

During our weekend session, one of the Detectives created a wooden sculpture of a place that showed the essence of community inclusion. There were many different aspects to their creation.

It included 3 routes in, so no barriers but accessible to everyone. Seating of different heights to ensure *"everyone could see."* *"Space"* round the campfire and enough room for everyone. They acknowledged that everyone has different learning styles,

so people can work in ways that are best for them. There was even space for a wee dragon!

Children and young people envisioned an inclusive environment where equal living standards are prioritised and good quality housing was accessible to everyone, including people who were experiencing homelessness. They also indicated the need for improved support services for various groups including children, young people, older people, disabled people, black, brown and ethnic minority people and young carers. They believed that by

ensuring equality in living standards, we can also foster a more environmentally friendly society.

*“everyone in an equal position in living standards which is always more environmentally friendly”*

*“we need more affordable housing, and homes for homeless people”*

*“there are more support services for children, young people, older people, young carers etc”*

*“Environment = community for people to be together, learn, have fun, eat etc.”*

Children talked about the importance of play with *“things for everyone to do”* and opportunities to engage in their cultural and social traditions. Community engagement and support were seen as fundamental for building an environmentally friendly and sustainable communities, and this takes time. Several young people called for increased involvement with local authorities and governments and stated those in positions of power needed to be brave and willing to share power. They also highlighted the value of diverse perspectives and the importance of embracing uncertainty, saying, *“Not everything has to be controlled or made to make sense.”*

*“People in power need to acknowledge it takes people and time to create a community, it’s like planting a forest – it takes more effort and time.”*

*“Local! Self-sustaining community, togetherness”*

Life in rural Pakistan

Finally, another of the Detectives felt there was a tangible difference between real healthy environments and more deceptive environments that claim to be healthy. They gave an example of life in rural Pakistan, where people have access to everything they need to live within their local community. The need for travel is reduced as people work, learn, shop and socialise in their local close proximity. Communities are self-sustaining and everyone has equal position and living standards. There is a strong sense of togetherness, with people choosing to help each other and share their skills. Employment is often in sustainable jobs such as working the land, growing crops and selling them in the local markets, or providing local services. There’s far less ‘fast fashion’ as people tend to repair clothes or make them using resources and materials that are locally sourced. When people do travel, bicycles and motor bikes are a common mode of transport and these are often shared amongst families, extended families or friendship groups.

Participants felt that living sustainably was seen as more challenging in communities that lacked a strong sense of community engagement and support.

*“it can be more difficult to live sustainably in some places that don’t have a strong sense of community e.g. cycling, sharing materials etc.*

## Conclusion

Once again, the brilliant work of the Detectives demonstrates the vital insights that children and young people can provide regarding human rights issues. Children and young people have consistently called for increased efforts to raise awareness of human rights among decision makers and society more broadly. However, they also emphasise that awareness alone is not enough.

Children and young people stress the importance of practical steps to implement human rights for everyone, but especially those whose rights are most at risk. They recognise that human rights must be translated into action through policies, processes and the behaviour of duty bearers to ensure the physical, mental and spiritual development of **all** children and young people. This entails ensuring access to quality education, healthcare, protection from violence and exploitation, and opportunities for participation and self-expression.

Moreover, children and young people insist on the establishment of an accountability mechanism to ensure that human rights are upheld. They understand that accountability is crucial for ensuring the effective implementation of rights and holding duty bearers responsible for any violations. By advocating for accountability, they seek to create a system where individuals and institutions are answerable for their actions or inactions that impact the rights of children.

The collective voices and calls to action from children and young people are a powerful reminder that they are, and must be, active participants in shaping their lives and futures. Their insights should be taken seriously by decision makers to create a society that respects and protects the rights of **all** individuals.

## Recommendations

To be read in conjunction with the recommendations in Mission Update #001

- The new Human Rights Bill for Scotland should include binding provisions that explicitly address the root causes of poverty and mental ill-health for children and families. It should result in all aspects of learning in schools, including music, woodwork, and home economics, becoming accessible and provided free of charge to all.
- In developing and implementing the new Human Rights Bill for Scotland, Scottish Government should prioritise community-rooted development work to ensure that the voices of children and their families are actively included and considered throughout the process.

- Scottish Government should give priority to the development and promotion of formal and informal child-friendly and accessible complaints procedures to enable children and young people to voice their concerns and seek redress in a safe and supportive manner.
- The incorporation of the right to health, as articulated in ICESCR and other human rights treaties, should explicitly encompass mental health and establish binding positive obligations that result in improved training on mental health and bullying for adults working with children and young people. Additionally, it should foster learning environments that promote inclusion, positive relationships, and overall wellbeing.
- Implementation of the new Human Rights Bill must prioritise efforts to eradicate bullying and violence, with particular attention to addressing the specific challenges faced by women and girls.
- In implementing the right to a healthy environment, the Scottish Government should make sustainable travel options accessible to all and address the affordability of electric cars and encourage environmentally friendly practices.

## Appendices

Appendix 1 - [Rights Detectives Mission Update Report](#)

Appendix 2 - [Mapping report of Scottish Government and Scottish Parliament engagement with children and young people between January 2020 and June 2022](#)

Appendix 3 - [Series of co-designed Investigation Session Plans](#)

Appendix 4 - [Investigations Art Gallery \(video\)](#)

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