



THE RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

CONVERSATIONS WITH THE NATIONAL TASKFORCE 2021

WELCOME!

Everyone has **human rights**. These are based on things like dignity, fairness and respect. We are born with these rights and they can't be taken away.

Countries can promise to respect people's human rights by signing **special agreements**. They can keep this promise by changing their laws and making sure everyone's human rights are protected.



WHAT IS THIS LEAFLET ABOUT?

The Scottish Government wants to write a **new human rights law for Scotland**. A law is a rule. It tells people what they can and can't do. Sometimes a law says that you have to do something.

The new law would put all your human rights directly into Scotland's law. This is sometimes called '**incorporation**'. The new law would include the right to a healthy environment, the right to food, the right to housing, the right to health and all the other rights you have.

The Scottish Government has asked a group of experts to help with the new law. This group is called the **National Taskforce** and they want to know what you think!

This leaflet will help you get ready to tell the National Taskforce what you think about the idea for a new human rights law. It focuses on your **right to a healthy environment**.



THE RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

Everyone has a right to a **safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment**. Sustainable means we must think about how we use natural resources, so we don't use them all up. Natural resources are things we can use from nature – like water, trees and oil.

The right to a healthy environment is a very important human right. It is connected to all the other human rights that children and young people have - when the environment is harmed, other rights can also suffer, like the right to life, food, health, and play. A healthy environment is **essential for human survival!**

The right to a healthy environment includes:

- The right to **clean water**.
- The right to **food** that is healthy to eat and has been made in a way that does not harm the environment.
- The right to live in a **safe climate**.
- The right to **live, work, study and play** in spaces that are **not dangerous** for your health.
- The right to **get information about the environment** in a way that all children and young people can understand.
- The right to **learn** about the environment **at school**.
- The right to **have a say** in decisions about the environment.

Adults need to think carefully about children and young people's rights when making decisions that affect the environment. This is really important because children will live with the effect of decisions for longer than adults. There is a guide for governments (the people who run countries) that says what they need to do to make sure that these rights are respected.

Adults need to make sure **all** children are able to enjoy the natural environment. This might mean giving some children **extra help** or protection - for example young children, children in poverty, disabled children, girls, and children who are part of a minority ethnic group.

Some of the things you might want to think about are **climate change** and **pollution**.

Climate change is causing heavier rain and warmer temperatures which we are not prepared for.

Pollution is when the environment is made dirty by rubbish, chemicals or other things which are bad for you. Pollution is very dangerous for children and young people's health. If it harms them, this can last for their whole life. In many parts of the world, there is too much pollution. Nature is also suffering with one in nine species at risk of extinction.



WHAT IF ADULTS DON'T RESPECT MY RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT?

The right to a healthy environment isn't fully part of the law in Scotland. This can sometimes make it difficult for children and young people to challenge things if this right isn't respected. The new human rights law could help to change this by making the right to a healthy environment part of the law in Scotland.

More than **100 countries** have put the right to a healthy environment into their laws. This is important to protect the environment, and to protect people's other human rights.



WHAT WOULD MAKING IT PART OF THE LAW MEAN?

If the right to a healthy environment is made part of the law, it would mean **the Scottish Government has to follow it**. For example, Scottish Government would have to:

- Think about the right to a healthy environment when it's making decisions,
- Make sure children have information on the environment that is easy to understand – including young children and disabled children.
- Make sure children and young people have a say in decisions about the environment.

If the Scottish Government doesn't respect these rights, then you would be able to complain and **have something done about it**. This might mean asking a judge to decide if the Scottish Government has broken the law.

You would also be able to complain if public bodies haven't respected your rights. Public bodies are organisations like schools, health services, councils and the police. They make decisions that affect you.



You can send drawings, paintings, poems or anything you'd like to the **National Taskforce** to say what you think. You can ask someone to help you if you need it. You can do this until the **31st January 2021**. Their email address is **allourrightsinlaw@gmail.com**

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

The National Taskforce wants to hear what you think about a new human rights law. **What you think is really important** - it will help adults understand if your human rights are being respected and what adults could be doing better.

- Do you think your right to a healthy environment is always respected?
- How would a new human rights law help you, your family and your community?
- What needs to be in the new law?
- Is there anything else that needs to happen to protect your right to a healthy environment?
- What extra help do you think children and young people might need if their rights are not respected?