

MEMBERSHIP HANDBOOK

Your guide to:

- Together's work
- The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- The terms and benefits of membership



CHARITY REG NO. SC029403
COMPANY NO. SC199725





Thank you for becoming a member of Together!

Membership of Together shows your commitment to children's rights in Scotland and gives you the opportunity to share your organisation's views and experiences at the local, national, and international level. Members benefit from access to events, informative children's rights resources and networking opportunities.

This handbook provides an overview of Together's work, what you can expect from membership and how you can get involved with our work.

Together we can work towards a Scotland in which all children and young people have their human rights respected, protected and fulfilled.

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Who are we?

Established in 1996, Together (Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights) is an alliance of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and interested professionals working to improve the awareness, understanding and implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and other international human rights standards across Scotland.

We do this by:

- promoting the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- helping individuals, local authorities, companies, schools and children's organisations to integrate the UNCRC into their work;
- monitoring and reporting on progress made at a Scottish and UK level.

Membership has grown from 30 to nearly 500 organisations and individuals. Together has established a reputation as a leading source of expertise on children and young people's human rights at a Scottish and international level.

Vision and Mission

Everything we do is guided by our vision and mission.

Vision: All children and young people growing up in Scotland have their human rights respected, protected and fulfilled.

Mission: We work to inspire and enable everyone in Scotland to put children and young people's human rights at the heart of everything they do.

Read more about our values, strategies and how we monitor and evaluate our activities in our [2019-2024 Strategic Plan](#).

What does Together do?

Promote the UNCRC

Together raises awareness of children's rights and the UNCRC by working closely with our members, local authorities and parliamentarians. We also share accessible and informative resources with the public via our website and social media channels.

Together has been relentlessly pushing for children's rights to be protected in law, which has led to the passing of a Bill which, once in force, will "fully and directly" incorporate the UNCRC into Scots law. This will mean that the Scottish Government and public bodies have to put children's rights at the heart of everything they do, and children will be able to challenge them in court if their rights are breached.

Throughout the incorporation process, Together provided leadership by supporting, informing and coordinating civil society and ensuring children and young people's voices were heard.

Together will continue to play an important role in advancing children's rights in Scotland as the UNCRC Bill is implemented.

Direct engagement with children and young people

At Together, we work to ensure that children and young people's voices are listened to, respected and that they influence the world around them. Over the last two years, we supported children and young people to directly influence the UNCRC Bill and shape plans for a new human rights law for Scotland.

In 2020, we facilitated two engagement sessions with children and young people to help shape the UNCRC Bill.

In 2021, Together developed child-friendly briefings and held three events with children and young people to share their views with the National Taskforce for Human Rights Leadership. Each event focused on a specific topic: The right to a healthy environment; The rights of disabled children and young people; The rights of black and ethnic minority children and young people.

Help everyone in Scotland to integrate the UNCRC into their work

Together provides training and practical guidance to members, local authorities and Scottish Government on how to enact a child-rights-based approach to their work.

Together uses the UNCRC and recommendations from the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child as well as the expertise and experiences of our members to advocate for the implementation of policies and legislation in Scotland and the UK which respect, protect and fulfil children's rights.

Together submits consultations responses to the Scottish and UK Governments highlighting what more needs to be done to fulfil children's rights. Together also produces briefings focused on children's human rights. These can be aimed at MSPs, organisations or individuals.

Monitor and report on progress in Scotland and the UK

National: Each year, with the help of our members, Together produces a State of Children's Rights Report to monitor compliance with children's human rights in Scotland. This report highlights progress and gaps and makes recommendations to address shortcomings. This report is shared with the Scottish and UK governments.

State of Children's Rights Report 2021

Our 2021 State of Children's Rights Report will highlight promising rights-based practice from across Scotland and tips to help organisations and individuals put children's rights at the heart of everything they do. We will be working with members to shape the report throughout the summer and hope to publish it in November 2021.

International: The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (‘UN Committee’) checks what countries are doing to implement children’s rights. Every country that has ratified the UNCRC has to report on how it is fulfilling its obligations under the Convention.

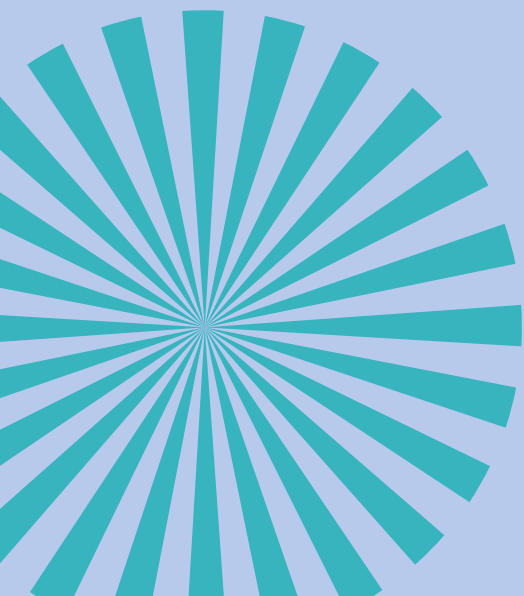
As an alliance of NGOs in Scotland, Together also gives evidence to the UN Committee on children’s rights and the implementation of the UNCRC.

This means that the UN Committee is not only listening to the UK and Scottish governments, but also to the experiences of grassroots organisations and the children that they work with. Drawing on the expertise of our members, Together produces an alternative report to the UK Government’s report highlighting specific issue areas where children’s rights are not being upheld. Recommendations in Together’s report are used to hold the Scottish and UK governments to account to their human rights obligations under the UNCRC.

Read more about the reporting procedure to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and Together’s role in this process [here](#).

State of Children’s Rights Webinars 2020:

We ran seven webinars in partnership with our member organisations. Over 500 people took part, and the findings formed the basis of our report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in December 2020.



What is the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)?



The UNCRC is the most complete statement of children’s rights ever produced and is the most widely-ratified international human rights treaty in the world.

The UNCRC has 54 articles that cover all aspects of a child’s life and set out the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights that all children everywhere are entitled to. It also explains how adults and governments must work together to make sure all children can access their rights.

The UNCRC is followed by a number of agreements that add further rights for children – these are called “Optional Protocols”:

1. [The Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict](#)
2. [The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography](#)
3. [The Optional Protocol on a communications procedure](#)

Find out more about the UNCRC and the Optional Protocols [here](#).

Where can I find out more about children's rights?

Together's website has lots of information about children's rights and the UNCRC. Access our website [here](#).

General Comments

The UN Committee produces General Comments which give extra explanation about the rights in the UNCRC. These can look at a specific right or a certain theme. They set out what governments should do.

These include:

- Implementing child rights in early childhood (No. 7)
- The right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health (No. 15).
- Children's rights in the child justice system (No. 24)

You can find all the General Comments [here](#).

Days of General Discussion

The UN Committee holds a day of General Discussion every two years. The purpose of General Discussion Days is to gain a deeper understanding of the contents and implications of different articles or topics in the UNCRC. Recent days of discussion have covered:

- [Protecting and Empowering Children as Human Rights Defenders](#) (2018)
- [Children's Rights and the Environment](#) (2016)
- [Digital media and children's rights](#) (2014)

You can find out more about Days of General Discussion [here](#).

Other Human Rights Treaties and instruments

The UNCRC is not the only international treaty which contains

essential rights protections for children. There are other human rights treaties, laws and instruments which provide rights protections for children at an international, European and UK level, such as:

- International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
- Universal Periodic Review
- Human Rights Act
- Council of Europe instruments

The UNCRC in Scotland



The UK ratified the UNCRC in 1991. Since then, Scotland began to put certain articles of the UNCRC into its laws - but not all of them. Children and young people, supported by Together and our members, led a long campaign to see their rights fully protected in law.

On 1st September 2020, the UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill was introduced to the Scottish Parliament. First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, said it would incorporate the UNCRC into Scots law "fully and directly", to the maximum extent of the Scottish Parliament's powers.

On 16th March 2021, MSPs voted unanimously to pass the Bill - a historic step that inspired children's human rights defenders across the world. Once implemented, the Bill will make children's rights under the UNCRC part of the law in Scotland. The First Minister said she wanted to deliver a "revolution in children's rights" through a Bill that went as far as possible in protecting children's rights, whilst staying within the powers of the Scottish Parliament.

The new law will start six months after it gets Royal Assent from the Queen. The Scottish Government is making preparations for commencement.

Together and our membership must continue working hard to ensure that the new law has the impact in children and young people's lives that we all want to see, and that there is a culture change through which children rights are recognised and realised across all areas of their lives.

[Read the latest news on UNCRC incorporation here.](#)

Useful Resources

Together resources

- [Report to Inform the UN Committee's List of Issues Prior to Reporting 2020](#). The report highlights 30 key issues for children in Scotland and will inform the initial stages of the UK's next review by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.
- [State of Children's Rights Report 2019](#). The State of Children's Rights report 2019 considers the extent to which children in Scotland are able to exercise their human rights as set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

General resources

- [Introducing Children's Rights](#) – a 10 minute training tool.
- [The Right Way, A Children's Rights Approach](#)
- [Children and Young People \(Scotland\) Act 2014](#)
- [7 Golden Rules for Participation](#)
- [Common Core of Skills, Knowledge & Understanding and Values for the "Children's Workforce" in Scotland](#).
- Human Rights Town App

Children's Rights Impact Assessments (CRIA)

- [Children's Rights Impact Assessments](#) - Child friendly version
- [CRIA and Self-assessment tools](#)
- [Scottish Government Guidance to using Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessments](#).



Membership of Together

As a member of Together you benefit from:

- Our fortnightly e-newsletter bringing you the latest news on children's rights.
- Access to our online resource library with extensive resources on children's rights.
- Opportunities to contribute to and support Together's child-rights-specific consultation responses to Scottish Government and Scottish Parliament.
- Opportunities to contribute to our State of Children's Rights and alternative reports to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child used to hold the UK and Scottish Government to account for their obligations under human rights treaties.
- Access to children's rights information sessions.
- Access to informative child rights-focussed briefing papers.
- Access to our UNCRC infographics for social media.
- Support to build member capacity to inform policy and direct practice.
- Opportunities for us to highlight your work, events, campaigns and job vacancies on our website, social media platforms and e-newsletter.
- Opportunity to vote for board members, stand for election as a Trustee and influence the strategic direction of Together.
- Your organisation's name featured as a member on our website.
- Networking opportunities with other organisations working in Scotland's children's sector.
- Opportunities to participate in Together's working groups.

Working groups

Member organisations can be kept updated on developments related to the UNCRC Scotland bill, contribute their expertise to plans for implementation and network with organisations in Scotland's children's sector by joining Together's working groups.

- **Implementation Strategy Group:** The Implementation Strategy Group is a forum through which Together members can work to support and scrutinise the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Member input will inform Together's contributions to the Scottish Government's Strategic Implementation Board.

To find out more, please read the group's [Terms of Reference](#).

Together has also set up two Task Groups to influence the content of the Children's Scheme, Scottish Government's plan for implementation of the UNCRC Scotland Bill. These groups will have an important role in scrutinizing and holding Scottish Government to account to their commitments in the Children's Scheme.

- **Access to advocacy and access to justice Task Group.**
- **Children whose rights are most at risk of being breached Task Group**

These groups meet every 6-8 weeks on Zoom. If you are interested in joining any of the above groups, please contact isla@togetherscotland.org.uk to be added to the mailing list.

Advisory groups

Together sits on a number of governmental and non-government advisory groups to ensure that children's rights, as outlined in the UNCRC, are considered in decision-making.

To read about groups that Together is currently part of, see [here](#).

Elections and the Board of Trustees

As a Together member, you have the opportunity to stand for election as a trustee. Together's Board is made up of trustees elected by Together's membership and drawn from its member organisations and individual members. The Together Board comprises 10 Trustees, elected to the Board on a rolling basis.

Together's Board of Trustees has overall decision-making authority and is involved in governance and recruitment. Trustees are elected at Together's AGM, which takes place in Autumn, and sit for a three-year term. Trustees may participate in subgroups to advance the goals of the organisation.

As a trustee, all members of the Board are expected to act in the interests of Together. Trustees do not represent the interests of any organisations to which they are connected through employment, personal relationship or any other role but are trustees in an individual capacity.

The Board meets four times a year unless there is a need for an Extraordinary Board meeting(s) due to specific circumstances. The role of trustees usually requires a time commitment of up to one day per month for all trustees and up to two days a month for trustees who are office bearers. There may be occasions when additional time commitment is required.

Standing for election

Trustee vacancies are advertised via social media, e-newsletter and directly to Together members. Together encourages applicants to have an informal discussion with the Director or other trustees in advance of applying.

Applicants are requested to submit Biographies and Expression of Interests prior to the AGM, at which the election takes place.

All trustees are expected to have an expressed commitment to

children's human rights in line with Together's vision and strategic plan.

- Read more about trustees' responsibilities and the role descriptions [here](#).
- You can read about our current Trustees [here](#).

Please direct any questions about election for the board of trustees to Together's director Juliet, juliet@togetherscotland.org.uk.

Terms of membership

Responsibilities of Together members

All Together members must sign up to the responsibilities of being a Together member. These are:

- Sign up and commit to Together's vision, mission, values and to base their work according to the principles enshrined in the UNCRC and broader international human rights treaties.
- Take measures to raise awareness of children and young people's human rights among colleagues, supporters and partner organisations and bodies.
- Make efforts to put children and young people's human rights at the heart of everything they do and share knowledge and experience to help partners and other organisations to do the same.
- Share developments in the sector, expertise in the form of reports or resources, information about upcoming events etc. with Together to advertise in our fortnightly e-newsletter.
- Contribute to the financial sustainability and independence of Together by paying an annual membership fee.
- Promote Together's work and amplify Together's messages, resources, blogs, consultation responses etc.
- Not knowingly or negligently act in a way that could discredit Together or bring it into disrepute.

Resignation

Members may give notice of their resignation from Together at any time by written notice with reason for leaving. Resignation is effective as of the date that Together receives this written notice.

Exclusion

Members can have their relationship with Together terminated for the following reasons:

Non-payment of membership fee:

Organisations receive an invoice for the annual membership fee after being approved by the board and thereafter in February each year.

1. For any organisation which has not paid the membership fee or had communication with Together to give a reason five months after first invoiced and which has received at least one reminder.
2. If no communication or payment is made a further email is sent with a 30-day deadline for response, stating that membership will be terminated unless payment is received.
3. The membership benefits are suspended and the organisation is removed from mailing lists.
4. The organisation will be presented as withdrawn at the following board meeting.

Organisations can re-join as members as soon as the membership fee is paid.

Bringing Together into disrepute, lack of commitment to Together's mission, vision, values and/or acting incompatibly with the UNCRC:

1. If a member's behaviour or position is, or has the potential to be, detrimental to the interests or reputation of Together, this can be raised by Trustees at a board meeting. If a member has a concern about another member, they should raise this with the director of Together via the [complaints procedure](#).

Members can be excluded for acting incompatibly with Together's mission, vision, values, the responsibilities of being a member and the principles enshrined in the UNCRC.

2. Exclusion of members may be put forward by the Board of Trustees, after they have heard the defence of the party concerned and if two thirds of Trustees present agree.

3. If exclusion is recommended by the board, the member is informed and receives a written notice explaining the reason for exclusion. All membership benefits and rights will be suspended.

4. Within two weeks of expulsion, the member is able to appeal that decision. If the Together Director receives any such notice of appeal within that period (time being of the essence), the Trustees shall convene an Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) for a date no later than two months after the date of expulsion, and the organisation or individual concerned shall be entitled to make representations to the members at that EGM. Together may, at any such EGM, resolve by ordinary resolution that the organisation or individual concerned should be re-admitted to membership or become a supporter.

To re-join as a member, the organisation must be able to demonstrate how they have taken steps to align with Together's values, mission and vision. Re-admission remains at the discretion of the board.



Stay in touch!

Together has six members of staff who are always happy to help you out, provide advice or answer your questions.



Director: Juliet Harris

As the director of Together since 2009 Juliet leads the organisation in promoting and monitoring the implementation of Scotland's international human rights obligations to children and young people. She liaises with parliamentarians and sits on the Taskforce for the UN Committee's Day of General Discussion on Children as Human Rights Defenders, as well as on a number of advisory groups with the Scottish Government and Scottish Human Rights Commission.



Development Manager: Sarah McDermott

Sarah is working with Together's members to support the implementation of the UNCRC. Her role involves developing training and events as well as opportunities for members to contribute their expertise to Together's advisory groups.



Legal and Policy Manager: Maria Doyle

Maria leads on the development of responses to Scottish and UK Government consultations and drafts reports and briefings explaining Together's policy positions. Maria might contact you to gather evidence or case studies for our reports or to liaise on joint reports. However, if you have questions about our policy positions you can contact her on maria@togetherscotland.org.uk



Policy & Communications Assistant: Naomi Sutton

Naomi writes our consultation responses and puts together all of our fantastic graphics, social media posts and fortnightly e-newsletter. Get in touch with her on naomi@togetherscotland.org.uk if you would like us to share your events, research or resources with our other members.



Membership Outreach Assistant: Isla Kitching

Reach out to Isla with any ideas, queries or concerns that you have related to membership of Together as well as to update your website profile or contact details. Do you have ideas about other organisations we should be encouraging to join as members? Let her know at isla@togetherscotland.org.uk.



Business Support Officer: Christine Klien

Christine is always busy working behind the scenes to ensure that everything at Together runs smoothly. She works with Isla on some membership processes and will be in touch to invoice you for your annual membership fee. Get in touch with Christine on christine@togetherscotland.org.uk.

Our work is also supported by a number of interns who you can read about [here](#).



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