



EXPLORING PATHWAYS TO JUSTICE FOR BABIES

CHILD-FRIENDLY VERSION
FEBRUARY 2025



In partnership with:





Thank you!

A huge thank you to the Senior Rights Detectives, Oscar and Safiyah, for all their hard work in supporting this investigation. Thanks also to the babies, young children, and grown-ups who took part, as well as our amazing partners:

- Craigmillar Literacy Trust
- Home-Start Wigtownshire
- Play Scotland
- Starcatchers

A special thank you to Cattanach for generously funding this project and making this work possible.

We also really appreciate the support from Parenting Across Scotland, Home-Start UK, and Licketyspit for their advice on this project.



Senior Rights Detectives Oscar (left) and Safiyah (right)



Who are the Rights Detectives?

How it all started

The Rights Detectives are children and young people who investigate and influence decisions that affect babies, children, and young people's rights.

- The first Rights Detectives project ran from 2022 to 2023.
- A group of children and young people (aged 11-17) worked with Together to help shape the Human Rights Bill for Scotland.
- They spoke to 269 children and young people across Scotland and shared their findings with the Scottish Government.
- Their work helped make sure children's rights were reflected in the new law!



[Read our last child-friendly mission update report here](#)

Making the Human Rights Bill child-friendly (2023-2024)

Two of the original Rights Detectives went on to design and lead a child-friendly consultation on the Human Rights Bill.

- They helped create a version of the consultation questions that was easier for children to understand.
- Almost 400 children, young people, and adults shared their views!
- Their findings were published in a child-friendly version of the consultation report in March 2024.

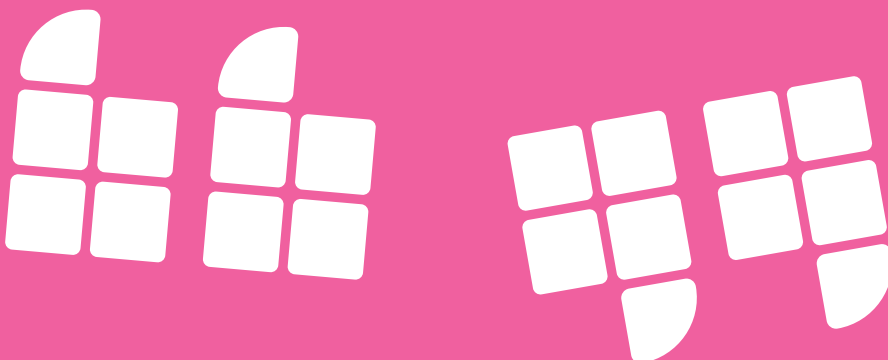


[Read the child-friendly Human Rights Bill Consultation Analysis Report here](#)

The next step: Tiny Rights Detectives (2024)

- This project expanded the Rights Detectives to include babies, younger children, and their families.
- It focused on how babies communicate their rights and the barriers they face in being heard.

This was the first time anyone had run an investigation like this in Scotland!





Why does this project matter?

In July 2024, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) became law in Scotland. This means:

- Babies and young children now have legally enforceable rights.
- Public services (hospitals, nurseries, social work, etc.) must put children's rights at the heart of everything they do.
- Families should have clear ways to challenge when their babies' rights are not met.

But there's a problem: current complaints systems don't work for babies.

- Babies can't write letters or fill out forms when their rights aren't met.
- Families often don't know where to turn when things go wrong.
- Services don't always listen to what babies are telling them through their actions and behaviours.



This project set out to change that by finding new ways for babies to be heard and for their rights to be respected.



How did we have Tiny Rights Detectives Investigations?

Who was involved?

We worked with member organisations that specialise in working with babies and families:

- Craigmillar Literacy Trust (Edinburgh)
- Home-Start Wigtownshire (Dumfries & Galloway)
- Play Scotland (Scottish Borders)
- Starcatchers (Fife)

What we did

The Tiny Rights Detectives held investigation sessions across four locations.

- Babies and families took part in fun, creative activities to help them express their needs and experiences.
- We used music, movement, sensory play, and art to explore rights.
- Senior Rights Detectives observed how babies communicated their feelings and needs.



What did we find out?

1. Babies know what they want – but adults don't always listen

Babies show their rights through their actions—for example:

- Choosing what toys or snacks they want (right to participation – Article 12).
- Showing they need a rest when they're tired (right to rest – Article 31).
- Reacting differently to friendly or scary places (right to safety – Article 19).

But many adults hadn't thought about this as “rights” before.

One parent said: *“Babies tell you what they don't want.”*

Another asked: *“It's great having all these rights, but what weight do they really have?”*



2. Babies face real barriers in everyday life

Families told us that simple things make life harder for babies, like:

- Not enough parent-and-child parking spaces.
- Buses that don't fit prams, stopping families from going out.
- Broken glass in play areas, making them unsafe.
- Housing problems, like cold, damp homes that affect babies' health.

One parent said: *“I had to choose between heating and hot water for six months, and I had a baby in the house.”*



3. Families struggle to get help when babies' rights aren't met

Even when families wanted to raise concerns, they didn't always know how.

- Some parents said doctors ignored them when they knew something was wrong with their baby.
- Others said they had to get upset or cry before being taken seriously.
- Many said they didn't feel confident in speaking up.

One young mum told us: *“I feel silenced by the medical profession.”*





Starcatchers – artists setting up the space with autumn themed activities



What needs to change?

1. Complaints systems don't work for babies – we need something new

Right now, most complaints systems involve writing things down or filling out online forms.

That doesn't work for babies! Instead, we need:

- A** Staff who understand babies' signals and respond to their needs.
- B** A way for families to raise concerns early—before things get worse.
- C** Stronger relationships between families and the services that support them.

2. Parents and caregivers need support to understand babies' rights

When parents learn about babies' rights, they feel more confident in speaking up.

- We need better information to help parents recognise rights violations.
- Professionals need training on how to listen to families properly.



3. Systems need to change, not just individuals

Some of the problems we found weren't just about individual babies and families.

- Transport, housing, and public spaces all need to be designed with babies in mind.
- Decision-makers need to think about babies' rights in every policy they make.

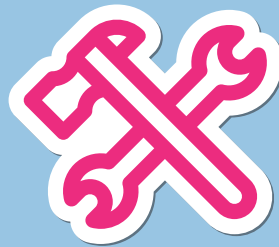


What does Together need to do next?

This project showed that babies' rights matter, and that we need to find new ways to make sure their voices are heard.

Together will now try to get money to:

- Create tools and resources to help organisations understand and support babies' rights.
- Build a Tiny Rights Champions network to help more people learn about babies' rights.
- Help families and organisations speak up about problems like unsafe play areas or not getting the healthcare they need.
- Share what we've learned with people who make decisions, so they can make things better for babies.



The Tiny Rights Detectives project isn't over – it's just beginning a new phase.



Babies' mark making during a session run by Starcatchers



Our final thoughts

- Babies already communicate their rights – we need to get better at listening!
- Families need more support and confidence to speak up when babies' rights aren't met!
- The system needs to change to make sure babies aren't left out of important decisions!

This report is just the start of the journey. Now it's time to make change happen!



For more information about the Rights Detectives click here

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Together (Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights) is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO), charity number SC029403.

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