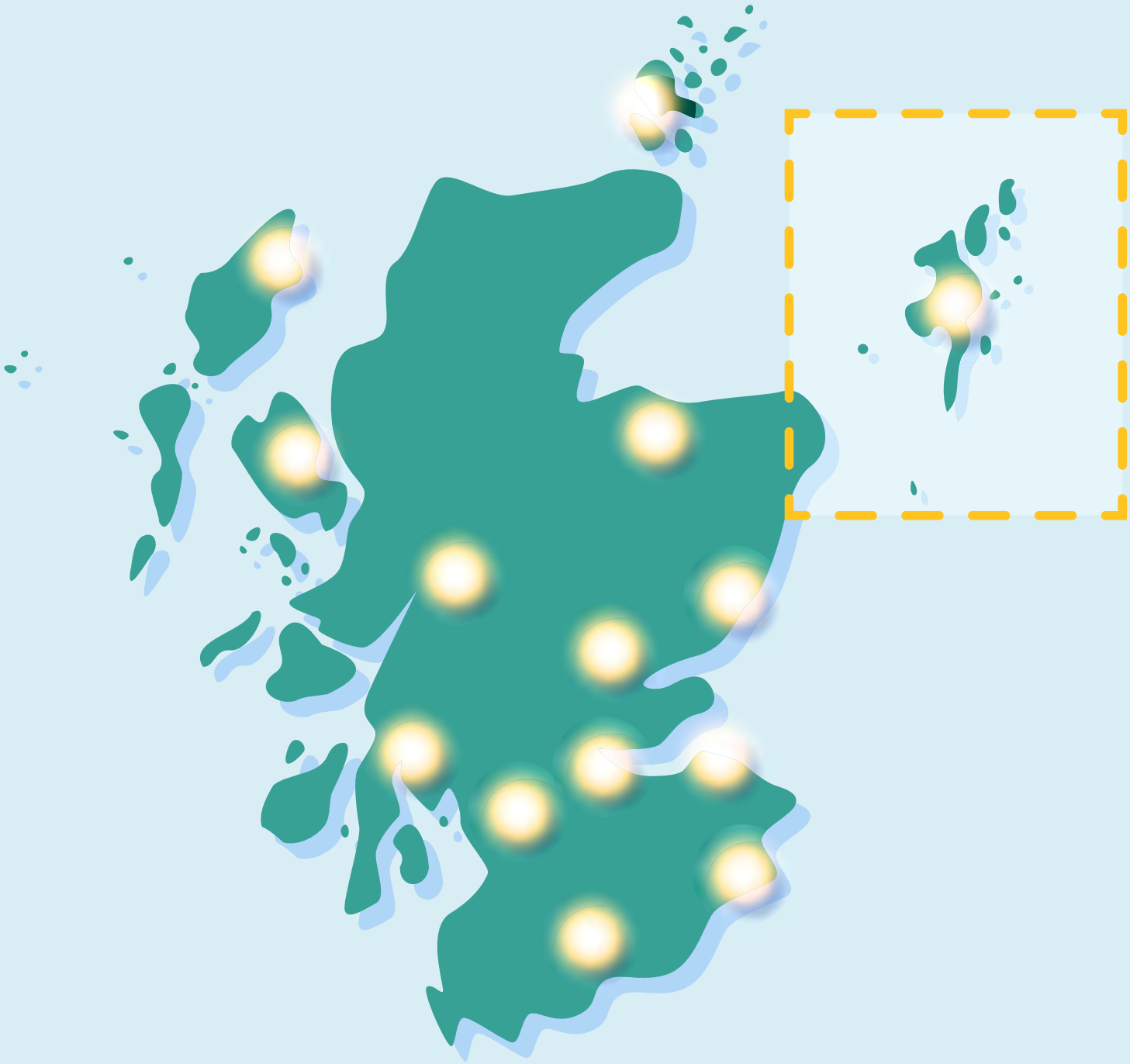
Child Friendly Report

children's hearings scotland

What we've done to support children's rights

1 April 2023 to 31 March 2026



Our Experts have had an impact all over Scotland, including delivering important work in these locations. By listening to the experiences of children and young people it helps us to improve our work.

Introduction

Children's rights have always been important to Children's Hearings Scotland (CHS).

Now, we have been asked to write a report every 3 years to tell you about what we have done to support them.

This is because, in 2024, Scotland made children's rights part of the law by bringing in the UNCRC. The UNCRC is a set of rights that help make sure children are safe, listened to and treated fairly.

The new law helps to support your rights and stop your rights from being taken away from you.

This report is split into 'clusters' which look at the different sections of the UNCRC.

We spoke to a lot of people to help write this report, including the children and young people we work with. You will hear from them in this version and in the longer report.

One of the groups of young people we work closely with are called **Experts by Experience**. We call them '**our Experts**' for short. They help us to understand what it's like for a child to go through the hearings system, because they all have that experience.

We are proud of what we have done in the last three years to make children's rights more visible. By working with other organisations on the redesign of the children's hearings system, we get closer to fulfilling the Promise by 2030.

We hope you enjoy finding out about our progress.

Cluster 2







What does this cluster ask us to do?

Make sure that all staff and volunteers know about children's rights.

We have done this by:

- making children's rights part of our daily work and our future planning
- sharing our views about new laws
- working with other organisations who want the best for children and their rights
- providing training to staff and volunteers
- involving **our Experts** in choosing the right people to work at CHS

In the future, we want to:

- make children's rights an even bigger focus
- support changes in the law
- be better at telling children and young people about what we do to uphold their rights

What our Experts think

"I was given the opportunity to be involved with recruitment – it was really insightful, meeting the candidates and getting to know them was great.

I feel that involving young people in the recruitment process is really important, we had influence over who would be appointed for specific roles within CHS and we felt involved in creating meaningful change at CHS."

Oliwia

Cluster 3



What does this cluster ask us to do?

Do what is best for children, listen to and respect their views, help them grow and develop, and treat everyone equally.

We have done this by:

- creating our **Experts by Experience** group
- watching Panel Members in children's hearings to see what's working well and how things can be improved
- letting the Chair greet the child before a hearing starts
- supporting local projects for children
- making new advice and information for Panel Members

In the future, we want to:

- ask more young people to join our **Experts by Experience** group
- make sure children's voices help improve hearings

What our Experts think

"ExE are planning to speak with other hearings experienced young people in our regions to advertise the role. We want more young people to join the group and have their voices heard throughout CHS, enabling them to express their views and have them listened to! We want to embed young person's voice throughout."

Ryden

Cluster 4



What does this cluster ask us to do?

Make sure children can be themselves, have their voices heard, get the information they need, keep personal things private, and get help when something has hurt them.

We have done this by:

- making sure staff and volunteers know about trauma-informed practice and what this means
- helping children see the same Panel Members again when possible
- making more child-friendly information
- involving **our Experts** in supporting Panel Member profiles being introduced again

In the future, we want to:

- see trauma-informed skills being used in all hearings
- make more child-friendly versions of information, like this report
- create better ways for children to give feedback about their hearings
- launch the Voicebank, a way for children aged 12 and over to sign up to complete regular feedback surveys

What our Experts think

"Voicebank is a really important resource for CHS and the panel member community as it is giving a wider group of children and young people a voice to let us know what is working well in the hearing room and what needs to change, how we can improve. It's a really important tool to make sure young peoples voice is at the heart of the life long positive change."

Liam

Cluster 5



What does this cluster ask us to do?

Focus on children having the right to be protected from being hurt or treated badly.

We have done this by:

- supporting Panel Members to make decisions that keep children safe
- making sure children can leave the hearing if they need a break or don't need to attend if this would cause harm
- providing training and more information for staff and volunteers about the different ways children can be hurt or treated badly

In the future, we want to:

- help Panel Members think more about harm to very young children
- help make difficult hearings feel easier and safe for children and their families

What our Experts think

"I was delighted to join panel members for the event with Highland, where we focused on the topic of children using their voice and creating spaces where they feel safe and truly heard. We gathered valuable ideas and perspectives from both current panel members and those in training, who shared their own suggestions on what would help make children feel secure, confident, and comfortable speaking up."

Lisa

Cluster 6



What does this cluster ask us to do?

Think about the importance of keeping families together if possible, and what needs to happen if children need to live away from home.

We have done this by:

- supporting children to spend time with people who are important to them
- taking action when councils don't do what they should
- visiting children who live away from home, and listening to them about their experiences

In the future, we want to:

- encourage children and young people to tell us about what is important to them and what they want Panel Members to know

What our Experts think

"I was part of the animation group – we designed and voiced an animation around feedback. It was a really good experience, we hope it will make it easier and less scary for younger kids to have a say and get their voices, worries and feedback heard. CHS can then take their feedback and improve the hearing process for children and young people."

Amelia

Cluster 7



What does this cluster ask us to do?

Focus on what children need every day in order to live well, have their different needs thought about and protected.

We have done this by:

- training Panel Members in using sign language
- asking independent experts to write reports to help understand children's needs
- working with other organisations who can give our volunteers advice on different groups of children such as very young children or older children
- listening to **our Experts**; they chose homelessness as a topic to include in Panel Member interviews because young people need help with where they will live when they get older

In the future, we want to:

- encourage more professionals to get involved in writing independent reports
- keep working with **our Experts** to help people understand what being a Panel Member involves
- help volunteers make hearings easier for everyone to take part in

What our Experts think

"We chose homelessness as a priority for the Panel Member recruitment campaign as it is one of the most profound issues for young people leaving care. Support can end there and then when a young person comes off their Compulsory Supervision Order and Panel Members have a duty of care to ensure this doesn't happen. Young people can't be forgotten by the system when they turn 16/18/24 or when they come off their Compulsory Supervision Order."

Liam

Cluster 8



What does this cluster ask us to do?

Remember the importance of children's access to education.

We have done this by:

- asking independent experts to write reports about the support a child needs at school or with their learning
- helping Panel Members listen to and involve children who join hearings online, so that children don't miss out on lessons
- supporting **our Experts** to learn and develop new skills

In the future, we want to:

- work with others to continue to improve children's experiences at hearings, such as thinking about when hearings are arranged

What our Experts think

"We recognised how important it is not just to think about how we educate panel members and other professionals joining a young person's hearing, but to keep everything truly child-centred at its heart. That's why we've been developing an animation, built from conversations and insights with experts at Children's Hearings Scotland"

Lisa

Cluster 9





What does this cluster ask us to do?

Consider how to protect children from abuse and support children who have been accused of breaking the law.





We have done this by:

- working with other organisations to prepare for more children aged 16 and 17 coming into the Children's Hearings System
- giving training and information to volunteers about a new law that will help children who have broken the law and need support
- calling for further changes to the law to protect children rights





In the future, we want to:

- roll out more training and support for volunteers and staff
- support the changes to the Children's Hearing System
- update the large guide that Panel Members use for hearings to include lots of new information about changes to the law



What our Experts think

"I had the privilege to be able to help produce a podcast where we discuss the new Care & Justice Legislation. We got to voice our opinions and discuss the finer details of the new legislation and what the changes may mean for young people. This was a great opportunity for young people to have a say and have their opinions taken into account and taken seriously."

Looking forward

In the next three years, we will continue to make changes to improve the way we uphold children's rights.

This is one of the ways CHS are working towards keeping the Promise, so that all Scotland's children and young people grow up loved, safe and respected so they can be the best they can be.

Tell us what YOU think

We are so excited to hear from children and young people, like you, about what you think and how we can keep improving the Children's Hearings System.

If you'd like to tell us what you think about your hearing, and read more child-friendly information like this, visit our **website**.

Scan to go straight to our Children and Young People section on our website!

We can't wait to hear from you!

What are YOUR rights at a children's hearing?

- You have the right to have a say about how you would like to take part
- You have the right to talk and have your voice heard at your hearing
- You can bring someone along to the hearing with you like a friend or family member
- You have the right to an advocacy worker, to help represent your views
- You can also bring a legal representative, called a solicitor, with you
- You can ask for a break during your hearing
- You do not have to agree with the reasons why you are at a hearing and you can say this
- You can appeal against the decision, if you're not happy with it
- You can ask for another hearing after three months
- You can give us feedback or complain if you want to tell us about your hearing or if you are not happy about the way you were treated

To make your hearing easier, you can also ask the Panel Members to consider:

- Speaking to you on your own
- Having one of the same Panel Members on your next hearing if you have another hearing coming up

Remember, it's YOUR hearing

To learn more about your rights visit **www.cypcs.org.uk/rights/**

children's hearings scotland

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