

## Consultation Response Form

Please note this form must be returned with your comments on the consultation questions to ensure that we handle your response appropriately.

### Name/Organisation

#### Organisation Name

Association of Directors of Social Work (ADSW)

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### Permissions

**Do you agree to your response being made available to the public?** (*Please tick as appropriate*)

Yes

No (~~We will treat your response as confidential~~)

### How to Submit Responses to the Consultation

Please use this Consultation Response Form to submit your comments to the Consultation Questions. The completed form can be emailed to [info@sccyp.org.uk](mailto:info@sccyp.org.uk)

Alternatively responses can be submitted by hard copy to:

*Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People  
85 Holyrood Road  
Edinburgh  
EH8 8AU*

An electronic version of this form is available for download at [www.sccyp.org.uk/Infoforadults](http://www.sccyp.org.uk/Infoforadults)

**Responses should be submitted no later than 31<sup>st</sup> January 2011.** Late responses will be accepted where it is practicable to do so.

## Consultation Questions

### 1. To what extent do you think that the actions associated with each of the Strategic Aims are appropriate and will be effective?

#### *a) Strategic Aim 1 is to maximise the impact of the UNCRC in Scotland.*

The actions associated with Strategic Aim 1 are appropriate and overarching in terms of the other aims. The 'Convention' declares the human rights of children as individuals in their own right. This includes the rights to participation alongside their need for protection and the provision of services. The aim also echoes those that the Scottish Government has for children.

*Action 1.1.2 Promote positive perceptions of children and young people through working with relevant agencies at local, Scottish and UK level:* -the support of Scottish Government and the influence on the general public would be welcomed. There is a need to improve the wider societal view of children and young people and to work with young people to promote the way they perceive each other, to challenge gender stereotypes and negative images which can be perpetuated by technology and the media. This could be achieved by increasing publicity on the impact of deprivation and neglect on children and young people- as well as by applauding their achievements.

In relation to 1.1.2- scrutiny bodies already hold an understanding of practice at local level and may well assist in setting the baseline for performance measurement. It will be important to measure more than processes. Organisations need to be engaged with the spirit of the work and its aims – not see the exercise as a burdensome measurement of outputs that bears no clear relation to improvement in performance. The measurements and resulting data must have a useful purpose in supporting continuous improvement of performance and not just be a means of highlighting poor performance.

*Action 1.1.3 Encourage professional bodies and educational institutions to incorporate UNCRC and a rights based approach to their training and service delivery* is already happening across most professional children's services disciplines.

Whilst it is acknowledged that the Commissioner is independent of government, there is little mention within the document of national outcomes (and no reference to the 'Getting It Right For Every Child' agenda). The use of familiar words and shared outcomes would, in our view, aid engagement and good use of current best practice.

#### *b) Strategic Aim 2 is to influence and promote the effective and sustainable involvement and widespread participation of children and young people in Scotland's society.*

This strategic aim is appropriate and in line with Article 12 of the UNCRC. The actions are seen to be appropriate and it is reasonable enough to promote new consultation practices with young people.

The actions as set out are ambitious and comprehensive, and in implementing these cognisance should be taken of local progress so as not to duplicate or cut across youth participation strategies/ action plans which are already in place. There are many examples of good practice at a local level and local authorities have had some of these validated through external evaluation and scrutiny. It is important to use what works and this might be best done by an audit of good practice.

It is also important to consider research on effective children and young people's participation. To create whole environments where children and young people are able to move beyond the concerns of individuals to challenge, more broadly, national and local policy, perhaps to change the pervading culture in society, requires a knowledge of what approaches work, how and when. Participation is multi dimensional. It is essential that creative and informed approaches are used to widen out the involvement in such processes across diverse groups of young people. We would welcome the opportunity to share existing practices with the Commissioner and also consider other approaches that are informed by research.

***c) Strategic Aim 3 is to promote and safeguard the rights of children and young people, particularly the rights of vulnerable groups, through policy scrutiny and by supporting good practice.***

This aim is welcomed and appropriate and will build on the body of work already undertaken to promote and safeguard the rights of vulnerable children, including *Protecting Children and Young People: the Charter*.

The importance of listening to children (and, of course, encouraging children's development so that they can communicate how they feel) is well documented as an essential element of good child protection practice.

In ensuring that a children's rights perspective is embedded in new legislation, policy and guidance, consideration should be given to the support and training for children's services staff to develop their practice and to the resources required to allow this.

Issues relating to children who are affected through caring responsibilities are also important. Work at national and local level on these matters will presumably be taken into cognisance.

Collaboration and co-operation across Scotland with bodies already tasked with this work will be key to ensure effectiveness without duplication.

***d) Strategic Aim 4 is to ensure that the office of the Commissioner is efficient, effective and fit for purpose.***

These actions are welcomed and appropriate.

**2. To what extent do you think that the performance measures associated with each of the Strategic Aims will provide a clear indication of progress?**

**a) Strategic Aim 1 is to maximise the impact of the UNCRC in Scotland.**

The performance measures for this aim seem in the main appropriate but the 3rd bullet point – *The adoption of a process of measurement of the impact on children of policies by two additional local authorities per year and Scottish Government by 2013-* needs more detail.

It may be helpful to establish a baseline of current performance, for example from scrutiny bodies, to set the context of future improvement

**b) Strategic Aim 2 is to influence and promote the effective and sustainable involvement and widespread participation of children and young people in Scotland's society.**

The stated vision and how it could be achieved is sound and extensive. Helping young people to look at some issues through the eyes of others can also help them grow and develop. It is right that children and young people are seen as active social beings, able to be commentators on their own lives- involved in decision making and shaping their environment. This work will encourage children and young people to contribute to the democratic process and become active members of the community. It supports the drive to strengthen communities and the role that they can play in improving quality of life. They have a key role to play in decision making within the context of public services and around individual matters that relate to them and their families. The performance measures for strategic aim 2 are practical and helpful, as they involve direct contact between the Commissioner, children and young people and practitioners.

As individuals, the opportunity for involvement and influence can enhance the children's life skills- e.g. debating; self-efficacy; decision making; prioritisation, communication etc.

Communication does need to be a two way task, however, and dialogue with young people and adults can assist respect from each for the other.

The section 'participation and education' should perhaps emphasise the development of innovative methods that ensure children and young people are INFORMED about what they can and should be consulted about rather than emphasising the communication of their views on certain matters ( which is anyway covered in the later section).

It would be helpful to have an illustration of the perceived current baseline.

**c) Strategic Aim 3 is to promote and safeguard the rights of children and young people, particularly the rights of vulnerable groups, through policy scrutiny and by supporting good practice.**

These performance measures are clear and welcomed.

***d) Strategic Aim 4 is to ensure that the office of the Commissioner is efficient, effective and fit for purpose.***

These performance measures are clear and welcomed.

***The vision of the office of the Commissioner for Children and Young People is a Scotland where all children and young people understand their rights, experience their rights and exercise their rights, every day of their lives.***

**3. Are there other things that you think the Commissioner should be doing to improve the lives of children and young people in Scotland?**

There perhaps needs to be more emphasis on relative poverty and inequality, including poverty of experience (as raised in the consultation document on 'child poverty'.) This may be related to living with substance misuse; parental ill health etc.

While acknowledging the key importance of society recognising the rights of children to life, survival and development and their interests coming first, we have some concerns that the focus of the strategy is all on the rights children must be afforded and allowing them to freely exercise those rights. As adults we only have a number of rights if we accept the responsibilities that go with them. We must take care to ensure that children understand the responsibilities that go along with rights. Aims are sound but none speak of supporting young people to accept appropriate responsibilities for their actions and in their contributions to the wider society.

The National Outcomes for children and young people include them becoming responsible citizens. There is a need for discussion on what responsibilities it is important young people are expected to carry.

As stated in the Strategic Plan, the issue of Public Sector funding is a very pertinent matter for the future of service provision in Scotland. The narrative around this matter and Early Years is very much welcomed. In addition, it is right that the role of 'non-statutory' providers in prevention be considered in the light of reduced resources and the growing demand for statutory services, some demands led by demographic change. It is essential that the needs of each generation are properly considered. This is in line with both the 'Early Years Strategy' and 'Getting It Right for Every Child' policies.

***The Commissioner and his staff will engage with a very wide range of external agencies for the realisation of the Strategic Plan 2011 – 2015.***

**4. How would your organisation like to be involved in helping the Commissioner to achieve the Strategic Aims?**

We agree that reviewing policy , practice and legislation to ensure it incorporates in an active way the views of children and young people is an important task for the Commissioner's Office.

The section 'working with partners', however, focuses solely on process and does not state the strategic aims of this particular activity.

We would welcome the opportunity to share good practice and enter into dialogue with the Commissioner about the potential impact of both funding and policy related matters.

We feel that the language used in the document could be more 'child friendly' to encourage involvement and it is a comment perhaps relevant to us all !