

State of Children's Rights Survey 2021

Introduction and context

See Me is Scotland's national programme to end mental health stigma and discrimination. Our vision is to enable people who experience mental health problems to live fulfilled lives. We are working to change negative attitudes, behaviours and cultures towards mental health by creating a movement for change, bringing people together across Scotland who are passionate about tackling stigma to work as one.

We are pleased to have the chance to respond to this survey, as children and young people are amongst the groups we have worked most closely with to ensure that they can live free from mental health stigma and discrimination. We are fully invested in a rights-based approach to this task, and we are keen to cooperate with all organisations building on the positive example set by the incorporation of the UNCRC into Scots law.

Many of our policy positions reflect this commitment. For example, we believe that nationwide and consistent training and policies must be established for all health and social care professionals and workers across Scotland, driving home the legitimacy and significance of children and young people's mental health concerns. These must take a right-based approach building on the incorporation of the UNCRC into Scots law. We also believe that health and wellbeing must be established as a core focus of primary and secondary education across Scotland, replacing a targets-driven culture with a holistic focus on young people's social and emotional development.

Section 2: Highlighting key challenges

1. What do you think are the key challenges to implementing a children's rights approach in your work?	Rank (1-6)
Please rank the following with 1 being the biggest challenge, and 6 being the least challenging.	
A lack of knowledge and understanding of children's rights in general (personally or as a team)	5
A lack of knowledge and/or confidence to implement children's rights approaches in practice (personally or as a team).	4
A lack of enthusiasm or support from colleagues and/or partners.	6
Insufficient resources e.g financial or staff capacity/time.	1
A lack of external services to support, work with or make referrals to.	2
Inability to access advice and expertise on rights when you have a rights concern.	3

Other:

Section 3: What topics would you like to answer questions on?

The following section looks at measures required for taking a children's rights approach. Please select from the following list those areas which you would like to provide input on. You do not need to answer every section.

- **Participation:** Children and young people have the right to be heard in decisions that affect them.
- **Awareness and understanding of children's rights:** children can only experience their rights if everyone in Scotland knows about and understands children's rights.
- **Training for adults:** Adults whose work impacts children – either directly or indirectly - should receive training on children's rights.
- **Child rights impact assessments:** tools used to assess and help people understand how a proposed law, policy or decision could affect children.
- **Data Collection, monitoring and indicators:** data helps us to see what is going well and to identify gaps where more needs to be done to uphold children's human rights.
- **Child-rights based budgeting:** this means taking children's human rights into account when making decisions about spending money or allocating resources.
- **Child-friendly complaints and redress:** Children and young people can easily access procedures to complain and make things better if their rights have been breached.
- **Advocacy:** Supportive adults can help children to express their wishes and feelings and to make a complaint.

3.1 Participation

Children's voices are at the heart of child rights-based approaches. Children and young people have the right to be heard in decisions that affect them and to have their views taken into account (Article 12, UNCRC). This means that children and young people's voices must be heard and listened to in a range of different environments, including the classroom, the family, alternative care settings and decisions about transport and planning.

Participation plays an important part in ensuring that children and young people hold government accountable to their rights obligations. NGOs have a critical role to play in supporting engagement between government and children and young people, especially to get decisionmakers to listen to seldomly heard people's experiences.

Participation should include:

- creating a child-friendly environment and child-friendly resources.
- ensuring that there are different ways for views to be expressed.
- making sure that views are listened to and appropriately acted upon.
- Listening to a diversity of voices
- Ongoing work with children and young people which builds understanding of their rights.

Read the Children and Young People's Commissioner for Scotland's '7 Golden Rules for Participation' [here](#).

2. What challenges have you faced in relation to children’s participation? You may draw from your own work or working with other organisations, public bodies or local government.

One significant challenge we have faced is reaching and engaging with a truly representative range of children and young people. The most adversely affected children and young people are often those who don't engage. We need to think more creatively, and engage with partners and youth organisations to make sure we can involve more young people from a variety of backgrounds and experiences. This might involve working in partnership with equality groups to ensure that seldom-heard groups are engaged and supported to participate in a way that works for them, for example by offering access to BSL and other translators, activities in their local community, or free transport.

An over-reliance on online engagement has also impacted how we engage and interact with children and young people. A lot of children and young people are pretty fed up with being online after this last year, and we need to consider different approaches to participation.

See Me’s Youth Champions are a group of volunteers with lived-experience based expertise on mental health, aged 16-25. We trust them to deliver activities (with clear brief and support from See Me); however, they often mention that this is not something they experience in many other places. They report feeling not listened to, meaningfully included, or trusted with tasks.

We recently hosted a session with policy-makers at their request, wanting to hear from young people about their experiences of mental health services. The young people that took part fed back that they enjoyed the session and felt it was worthwhile. However, they felt at times that when speaking about their experiences and outlining how things could have been done differently, they were faced with defensiveness and justifications. The inability to actively listen to young people or listen to offer solutions can often present barriers to children and young people’s participation, and lead to tokenistic involvement.

3. What steps have you taken to try and overcome these challenges?

See Me has attempted to collaborate with external organisations with expertise working with specific priority groups, such as BAME and LGBTQI+ young people, to share learning and opportunities. We have also increased efforts to provide comprehensive briefings for young people, as well as for those setting up activities, so that they can create the best possible conditions for meaningful participation.

We offer pre-activity and post-activity (de)brief meetings with young people to ensure they feel equipped, confident, and able to lead or participate in activities. We capture feedback from their experiences for internal purposes, but also to help our partners and stakeholders improve the way they engage with children and young people.

4. Are there any examples of promising practice in this area that you would like to share, either from your own work or the work of others?

At See Me we are driven by the participation of our Youth Champions, who are involved in the design and development of our resources, training offers, and our work influencing policy and engaging with other youth organisations. We champion a peer-led approach, empowering young

people to know their rights in relation to mental health stigma and discrimination and to act on them. More information on See Me's Education and Young People programme can be found at [Young people's mental health \(seemescotland.org\)](https://seemescotland.org), and some specific projects and case studies have been outlined below.

See Me worked with young people to develop and coproduce Feels FM – [See Me Campaigns for Young People \(seemescotland.org\)](https://seemescotland.org) – to provide a forum where children and young people can speak about their mental health. Initially, we ran a month-long online survey to engage with 12-26-year-olds, exploring what was important to them in order to guide the campaign. This survey attracted 1,455 responses. Following this, we co-produced an online interactive platform that allowed visitors to use emojis to express their current mood; they would then be presented with a curated playlist which matched their emotions, while being asked questions about mental health, and about how young people's experiences of their mental health could be improved. This campaign achieved a huge reach, with over 63,000 visits to the Feels FM platform from 32,000 different users, and 4,829 responses to our questions. Data analysis and report-writing was carried out by young people and shared with Scottish Government officials for their consideration, particularly in relation to policy decisions that might affect children and young people. See Me recently launched FeelsFM 2, a redesigned platform with new questions, developed with young people for young people. We are in the process of capturing further evidence.

See Me's Whats On Your Mind Pack – [What's on your mind \(seemescotland.org\)](https://seemescotland.org) – was also co-produced by young people, as a resource for educational settings. Its aim is to help both teachers and pupils to learn more about mental health, and to develop the skills and confidence they need to tackle stigma and discrimination in schools and across their communities. The pack is designed for use with young people aged between 12 and 17, and is split into three modules: Building Confidence; Challenging Stigma, Discrimination and Dual Stigma; and Taking Action. We also developed, with young people support, a What's On Your Mind Card, to help young people talk about mental health and get the help and support they need: [whats-on-your-mind-card.pdf \(seemescotland.org\)](https://seemescotland.org/whats-on-your-mind-card.pdf). We also produced a Passport to Health and Wellbeing, for young people to describe and share their experiences of mental health support in schools: https://seemescotland.org/media/10363/seeme_woym_a5-passport_foreditpdf_v1.pdf

Evaluation of See Me's Education and Young People (EYP) Programme found that social contact – the engagement of young people across the delivery of the programme – was fundamental to its success. The facilitation of training in schools by Youth Champions, for example, was well received and appeared to enhance the experience for pupils, breaking down barriers to participation. Working with schools across Scotland, we empowered young people to realise their rights in relation to mental health stigma and discrimination. One example of this can be highlighted via a case study outlining one pupil's perspective at a North Ayrshire school:

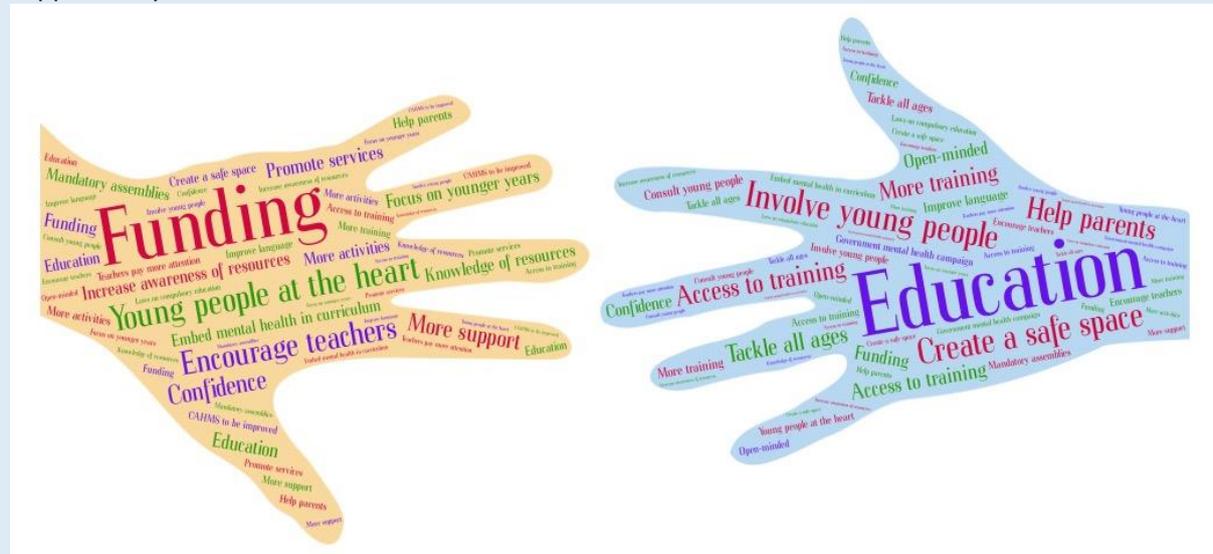
[See Me | School Pupils and Teachers Across Lanarkshire and North Ayrshire to Get Mental Health Stigma Training \(seemescotland.org\)](https://seemescotland.org/see-me-school-pupils-and-teachers-across-lanarkshire-and-north-ayrshire-to-get-mental-health-stigma-training)

What's on Your Mind event:

Our What's on Your Mind learning exchange day in 2019 highlighted the positive work being done across the country to tackle mental health stigma and discrimination for young people. The event featured speakers from a variety of organisations, from youth workers and schools to local councils. The speakers shared examples of best practice, discussed the ethos behind their work, and highlighted the outcomes they have achieved. Our speakers emphasised that, by working collaboratively with young people and providing them the right support and knowledge, we can enable them to lead the change in culture we need. By sharing this work and evidence-based practice, the event aimed to create a collective movement for change.

The whole event, from conception to the running of the day itself, was coproduced with young people. This is an example of the kind of peer facilitation which many young people want. The event showed that when young people are given the knowledge they need to learn more, the support to create their own ideas, and space to have their voices heard, they can and will change culture for the better.

The below graphic shows what young people involved in What's On Your Mind 2019 said about the support they needed:



This graphic shows their opinions on the benefits of the event:



Others' good practice examples:

CAMHS Young People's Participation Group This group, supported by NHS Dumfries & Galloway, involves a small number of young people who are 'experts by experience', either accessing CAMHS or having accessed it in the past. These young people are passionate about using the creative arts to express themselves, to tackle mental health stigma, and to raise awareness. See Me is currently funding a project delivered by this group that will focus on self-stigma and public stigma, through the creation of a short animation and an educational workbook. This will allow the young people

involved in the group to share their ideas, advice, and experiences of mental health. The resource is aimed at other children and young people in Dumfries and Galloway, as well as the wider public.

The young people involved in the group work alongside the CAMHS Participation Lead and a Professional Artist from the start of the process to completion. They are also getting the chance to work alongside mental health clinicians. One of the young people involved helped to complete the application form for See Me's Anti-stigma Art Fund, which has given her insight into third-sector development and grant capture. The young people have full ownership over the two creative projects that the group is running, and they are also creating their own group agreement, sharing their expectations, hopes and concerns around the process.

With regards to the specific creative tasks involved in this project, the young people are working alongside professionals to design the educational workbook page by page, from layout, colours, fonts, photographs, and drawings to stories and content. They are producing a storyboard for their short animation, incorporating their own photography and drawings, and they will also be involved in organising a Celebration of Achievement launch event.

With regards to the UNCRC, the participation group is particularly mindful of Article 12: "You have the right to an opinion and for it to be listened to and taken seriously," Article 24: "I have the right to good quality health care", and Article 3: "All organisations concerned with children should work towards what is best for each child." It embodies these elements of the UNCRC and others through its work. For more information about this project contact Alison Telfer, CAMHS Participation Lead, NHS D&G, alison.telfer1@nhs.scot.

3.2 Raising awareness and understanding of children's rights

Everyone in Scotland must know about and understand children's rights in order to ensure that the Bill results in lasting changes for children. This means children and young people and all adults whose decisions impact them. If children and young people as well as families and carers do not know about their rights, they cannot hold government, public bodies and organisations to account. As a result, their rights often remain unrealised.

Children and young people need to learn about their rights in a way that is accessible - using everyday language, pictures and graphics can support this process. Learning about rights is enhanced by experiencing them in practice - creating rights-respecting environments enables people to develop an understanding about their rights by seeing them reflected in their daily lives.

5. What challenges have you faced in relation to raising awareness and understanding of children's rights? You may draw from your own work or working with other organisations, public bodies or local government.

Individuals are increasingly aware of children and young people's rights. However, they often come across this information in policy or research documents. What gets in the way of real awareness and understanding is a lack of readily available examples of situations where children and young people's human rights have not been met. Funding for organisations which would allow them to support children and young people to tell their stories (preparation, resourcing, IT equipment or other creative approaches to collecting and setting out stories) is often lacking, and there are questions about the appropriateness and safety of asking children and young people to share their stories and experiences in person when the right conditions for participation have not been guaranteed. The

risks and uncertainties involved often mean that children and young people are not included in awareness-raising activities.

6. What steps have you taken to try and overcome these challenges?

We have invested time and resources in building the capacity of See Me Youth Champions to tell their stories safely by becoming media volunteers. This is a supported role with training provided by See Me which allows them to engage in media and speaking opportunities to outline their human rights and their needs for support across a number of areas: education, health and social care, communities, employment, etcetera.

7. Are there any examples of promising practice in this area that you would like to share, either from your own work or the work of others?

Within our schools training we often include a section on rights in the context of mental health stigma and discrimination, supporting young people to realise their rights and recognise when they are being overlooked or ignored. These sessions help to increase young people's knowledge and understanding of their rights, as well as building their confidence to take action around their rights.

Human rights event:

In November 2018, See Me hosted an event on Human Rights, Equality, and Mental Health, on behalf of a partnership including the Mental Welfare Commission, Scottish Human Rights Commission, The Alliance, NHS Health Scotland, Support in Mind, Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance, Greater Glasgow and Clyde Mental Health Network, and VOX. This partnership was formed following the Scottish Government's Mental Health Bi-Annual Stakeholder Forum in December 2017 to explore ways of pursuing commitments outlined in the Mental Health Strategy 2017-27 around embedding rights in mental health service delivery and policy. The group prepared and shared a proposal with Scottish Government policy leads, including a commitment to host an event to agree priorities and develop an action plan.

This event attracted 74 participants, including 12 lived-experience experts, the Minister for Mental Health, Scottish Government policy officials, local and national partner agencies, and individuals with an interest in improving mental health. Personal perspectives from lived-experience experts emphasised both the strengths and failings of current government policy, and yielded suggestions and thoughts on possible future approaches. One of See Me's Youth Champions was unable to attend the event on the day, so her response was pre-recorded and shared with the audience, feeding into the discussions that followed. You can hear Zoe's story [here](#). Participants emphasised how helpful it was for them to hear her speak about instances where her human rights had not been met, and the impact that this had on her life.

3.3 Training for Adults

Adults whose work impacts children – either directly or indirectly - should receive training on children's rights. This includes those working in "adult-focused" areas such as housing, employment, transport, criminal justice, addiction recovery etc. When high-quality, systematic and ongoing training is provided on children's rights, children and young people are more likely to be able to participate in decisions about their lives and adults are more likely to take these views into account. Training for adults must be accessible and inclusive.

8. What challenges have you, or other individuals you know, faced in relation to delivering OR accessing children’s rights training?

We have sometimes found it challenging engaging with the families of children and young people through our work. This is a significant problem as we have learned that children and young people experience a lot of mental health stigma and discrimination within the home environment: this year we carried out polling of over 1000 young people in Scotland which found that 67% of young people think that families can be dismissive when a young person says they’re struggling. Moreover, much of the implementation and protection of children's rights requires family support. We are currently looking to build in training and learning opportunities for parents and guardians as part of our children and young people programme.

9. What steps have you taken to try and overcome these challenges?

As part of our re-launched FeelsFM we are finding out from young people:

1. How can families help young people who are struggling to cope?
2. How can families make it worse if a young person says they are struggling to cope?

We will feed this information into the Scottish Government, with advice on what effective changes can be made in this area.

10. Are there any examples of promising practice in this area that you know about and would like to share (either from your own work or that you have seen provided by others)?

We are planning to engage with more parents and families in our work with schools going forwards. We are also looking to learn from partner organisations that have had success engaging with adults and families through their work.

3.6 Child rights-based budgeting

Child rights-based budgeting means taking children’s human rights into account when making decisions about spending money or allocating resources. In times of budget pressures, child rights-based budgeting can provide clarity on how resources should be allocated in order to secure children’s rights. Rights-based budgeting is important because it can lead to better decisions and outcomes for children and young people.

Child rights-based budgeting requires looking at disaggregated data to identify issues; working with children and young people and families to assess what steps should be taken to stop rights breaches and then ensuring financial decisions target the issues identified. The effects of budgeting decisions on children’s rights must be monitored and frequently reviewed.

NGOs as well as local and national government should conduct child rights-based budgeting.

11. Can you think of examples of promising practice around child rights budgeting?

12. What challenges have you faced, or know that others have faced, in this area?

Time and budget constraints have occasionally prevented us from developing effective, participation-led projects with children and young people. Having more opportunities to fund youth participation and co-production models would enable us to be more creative with our approaches, and to reward young people for their involvement.

13. What steps have you taken to ensure that resources are particularly targeted at those least likely to have their rights realised?