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of Glasgow

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ABSTRACT

In recent years there has been a focus on the implications of young people gaining more political autonomy in Scotland. This dissertation focuses on a qualitative study conducted with youth charities and organisations working with young people to foster youth engagement. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with six organisations. Models of participation along with mobilization theory were used to understand how organisations work with young people and why. The results indicate that organisations play a positive role in young people's lives, equipping them with tools to engage in society and providing opportunities for them to connect with politics. This role is most successful when specific strategies are used to encourage participation amongst young people, creating an essential culture that embraces the views and involvement of young people. Overall, organisation can act as an important agent in youth political socialisation. However, the extent to which these can be applied to all young people in Scotland is less clear due to the selective nature of young people involved with organisations. The dissertation will conclude with broad societal implications along with thought for future debate and research around the issues of young people's political participation.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

As traditional forms of political participation such as election turnout and party membership have declined (O’Toole et al, 2003), political engagement has struggled within society. These problems have been concentrated amongst young people (Bromley et al, 2004). Acknowledging that younger generations are less likely to engage in politics, it is necessary to understand ways this can be tackled. By promoting youth engagement and participation, this enhances citizenship which is fundamental to a healthy democracy. This study explores the role that youth organisations play at addressing these issues.

Evidence shows support for young people gaining more autonomy within the political sphere. Birch (2014) mentions “widespread support” across the voluntary sector in addition to efforts to formalise and embed citizenship into education, in a bid to strengthen political participation. Further support is demonstrated in the Scottish Parliament’s decision to lower the voting age to 16 for its Independence Referendum. With 90.1% of previously disenfranchised 16 and 17 year olds registered to vote (Brooks, 2014), this shows willingness amongst youth to participate.

Reasons for young people’s lack of participation include limited access to opportunities (Burns et al, 2008; Henn and Foard, 2014) which can result in overall disengagement in decision-making. A link has been made between political and social exclusion (Park in O’Toole et al, 2003) showing that denying young people the right to engage and participate, could have a long-term negative impact by undermining democratic citizenship and reinforcing inequalities of opportunity. Tackling these issues prior to the age of political consent could ensure the best long-term impact stemming from positive participatory experiences and opportunities.

Vulnerable young people in Scotland defined in terms of at risk due to a number of issues, experience worse circumstances than their better off counterparts (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997). Of which, poverty is acknowledged as one of the issues (Thomas, 2000; East Renfrewshire, 2003). Facing disadvantage during stages of development can influence individuals' adulthood and impact levels of engagement and participation within society. Disengaged through poverty and social exclusion, those living in adverse conditions are amongst those who are less likely to participate in politics as a whole.

Young people facing a lack of opportunities coupled with poverty and vulnerability can be seen as the most unlikely to be engaged within society. Organisations provide opportunities for young people and focus their work around improving situations. This introduces the potential of organisations to have a positive influence on vulnerable young people's status within society.

Key theories underpinning this study include a range of participation models. Hart's 'Ladder of Participation' (1992) is discussed in relation to contemporary guidelines such as Shier's 'Model of Participation' (2001) and the International Association for Public Participation's 'Public Participation Spectrum' (2007). They demonstrate levels of participation, each containing different actions and outcomes. Understanding theoretical accounts help to identify, evaluate and compare organisation's methods of facilitating participation. Additionally, Kirby et al's Handbook of 'Building a Culture of Participation' (2003) is of importance when exploring organisations cultures. It provides instruction to organisations that work with children and young people. A lot of work has been done to develop theories and guidelines of participation but not enough empirical evidence shows the testing of theory in practice. Exploring how and why organisations foster participation will allow a comparison between theory and practice of models of participation.

Furthermore, the application of the civic voluntarism model introduced by Sydney Verba and colleagues provides an account of mobilization behind political participation. It supports the claim that organisations can introduce and develop civic skills amongst youth, allowing organisations to play an important role in young people's socialisation. Organisations have a great deal of influence in society, including many youth's lives and little has been done to explore the extent of their work. The current research adds more scope to youth socialisation theory and helps to understand how young people's engagement and participation can be improved through organisations.

The research at hand focuses around the question of how and why organisations advocating on behalf of young people in Scotland work to foster youth political participation. Youth charities and organisations that value, embrace and enhance participation in society were selected with representatives from these organisations interviewed. The range of participants demonstrates differing missions with society, methods used to involve young people and outcomes on political participation. These help to understand efforts of organisations to foster youth engagement.

A literature review will introduce key theories, highlight benefits and barriers of participation and explore studies that have used interviews with organisations as a method of data collection. The following chapter will explain the methodology of the research design and introduce each organisation involved in the research process. These brief introductions will lay out their aims and missions, why they are appropriate subjects and the suitability of each representative's role.

The results of thematic analysis will be displayed in the next chapter demonstrating how and why each organisation works to foster youth participation. The discussion will follow, interpreting and discussing the results in light of theories and literature explored. The

broad implications of this study will demonstrate its significance and highlight what we now know about youth participation and the role of organisations. In addition, this study provides useful information for organisations who are interested in facilitating and improving young people's participation.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Models of Participation

Many models have been designed to illustrate how to enhance young people’s participation. Hart’s ‘Ladder of Participation’ (Figure 1), demonstrates degrees of non-participation and participation. In addition, Shier’s model (Figure 2) includes levels of participation. It is useful to explore these models as Hart’s “remains the model which most organisations cite as being most helpful in the operationalising of youth participation” (MacLeod, 2009: 58-59). In addition, Shier’s model sits alongside the ladder to act as an additional tool for practitioners (Shier, 2001). Understanding if and how these models are implemented into organisations’ methods of participation will allow a contemporary analysis of their relevance and effectiveness. The types of participation represented higher up the ladder show meaningful and effective methods and this requires young people to have a significant impact on the outcome (James and James, 2012).

8	Child-initiated, shared decisions with adults	}	Participation
7	Child-initiated and directed		
6	Adult-initiated, shared decisions with children		
5	Consulted and informed		
4	Assigned but informed	}	Non-participation
3	Tokenism		
2	Decoration		
1	Manipulation		

Figure 1: Hart’s Ladder of

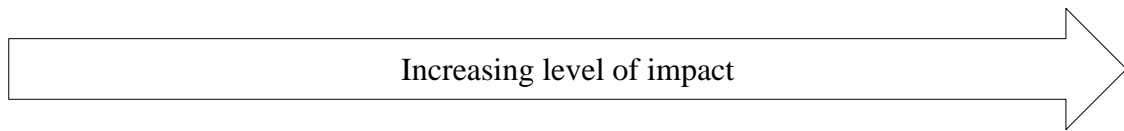
Participation

An important step in the ladder is tokenism as it is seen as a challenge to participation. Tokenism occurs when young people are consulted upon but do not receive any feedback (Tisdall and Davis, 2004). They are unaware of the impact of their participation resulting in input having no direct influence on decision-making (Elsley and Tisdall, 2011). Hart (1997) describes this as a common form of involving young people but is more symbolic than effective. Furthermore, Elsley and Tisdall (2011) speak of the difficulty in stepping away from tokenism and understanding how to alter the culture towards youth participation.

Level of participation	
1	Children are listened to.
2	Children are supported in expressing their views.
3	Children's views are taken into account.
4	Children are involved in decision-making processes.
5	Children share power and responsibility for decision-making.

Figure 2: Shier's Model

The 'Public Participation Spectrum' (Figure 3), similar to other models shows a scale to which the impact of participation can be measured. Organisations with the aim to ensuring meaningful participation should provide scope for shared decision-making allowing young people to feel empowered by their level of responsibility. If organisations merely inform or consult with young people at a basic level, this could negatively affect the impact that information has on outcomes and might be seen as a token.



Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
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Figure 3: The Public Participation Spectrum

There are several attributes of organisations that enhance youth engagement. The methods adopted to encourage youth participation inform where organisations sit in terms of the models and scales illustrated. The methods used allow an understanding of the culture adopted by organisations, which helps to underpin the reasoning for involving young people (Kirby et al, 2003). The reasoning for enhancing youth participation can be adapted from whether the aim of a process involves consultation, participation, empowerment or self-advocacy (Lansdown, 2001). Tisdall and Davis (2004) highlight the use of Lansdown’s typology as a useful means to review participatory projects. Kirby et al (2003) outline different cultures as consultation-focused, participation-focused and youth-focused (comprising of empowerment and self-advocacy). A consultative process would gain information, a participatory process would involve young people and a youth-focus would empower individuals to identify their own agendas.

The aims of organisations can determine the culture and model of participation adopted. Although each culture has different ways of encouraging youth participation, a young person-focused culture embraces the view that young people have a right to a voice in all decisions affecting their lives (Kirby et al, 2003). The expectation is that the higher the degree or level of participation adopted by organisations, the more effective these methods will be at influencing youth participation. By sharing responsibility with young people and aiming to empower them, this could have a positive impact on their political participation.

What Motivates Young People to Participate?

Exploring what motivates young people to participate is central to understanding how to enhance engagement and is helpful for organisations embedding a youth-focused culture. A discussion of the civic voluntarism model provides a theory of why people vote which is useful to think about influences to political participation.

The civic voluntarism model (Verba et al, 1995) includes two key points to this research. Firstly, it advocates that citizen's political participation norms are shaped by involvement in non-political institutions, such as organisations where civic skills are gained (Rubenson, 2000). Secondly a concentration on resources, defined in terms of "time, money and civic skills" provides the means for engagement in politics (Birch et al, 2014: 7). Taken together, the theory assumes that resources are gained through non-political institutions with those having more resources being more likely to participate in politics. Rubenson (2000) argues that the theory assumes civic skills to be the most important element at influencing political engagement, however Birch et al (ibid) takes all three resources together to conclude that the theory assumes those with higher status are more likely to be involved in politics than those of lower status. This distinction is important because it separates individuals' access to opportunities being an influencer to political engagement.

Further support for examining young people's participation within organisations comes from Lister et al (2000) in their examining of youth perceptions of citizenship. Their findings show 'Constructive Social Participation' amongst young people involving informal participation through political action and implications – including engagement in support and advocacy groups (O'Toole et al, 2003). With perceived notions that young people are disengaged from political processes, some accounts disregard this notion and argue that young people are interested in politics and committed to the democratic process (Henn et al,

1999). This encourages exploration into areas where youth *are* active, something which debates have failed to consider (Eden and Roker, 2000 in O'Toole, 2003). There is a need to explore new venues of youth socialisation which allow an understanding of the agents, activities and interactions that shape young people's view of politics (Dudley and Gitelson, 2002).

Socialisation is seen as the process in which individuals interact and understand their position within society through norms and values (White and White, 2011). It is acknowledged that family, school, media and peers are the key agents of socialisation (Lee et al, 2012), understanding these at an organisational level, can allow practitioners to formulate how their participation work might positively influence young people's position within society. For this research, family and education will be explored due to their close association.

There is a view that "the family into which a person is born largely determines the individual's social position for the rest of his or her life" (Giddens, 1993: 76). This is significant as the civic voluntarism model assumes that high status people in society are more likely to participate in politics. Thus, if children are born into low status they are more likely to remain low status and therefore disengaged. It is also recognised that family socialisation can be negative to children, with abuse and neglect taking place (Giddens, *ibid*). This creates vulnerability and as more attention is paid to the vulnerability subjected to children and young people by their families, this has strengthened concern for ensuring the best interests of a child or young person in need (Thomas, 2000). Necessary intervention and ensuring best interests are conditioned by a lot of organisations aimed at improving the lives of vulnerable young people.

Education is important as it is demanded of all, echoing notions of equal opportunity (Giddens, 1993). However, Giddens (ibid) explores the reality that schools reinforce inequality. Young people attending school from poorer households might receive less encouragement from family, and schools in deprived areas may not have the same facilities or resources as schools in more affluent areas. “The region and social class of the family into which an individual is born affect patterns of socialisation quite sharply” (Giddens, ibid: 77), which links education and family as close agents.

The theme portrayed is that young people from lower socio-economic positions are less likely to gain the resources needed for civic engagement. In addition, Henn and Foard (2014) reinforce those variables indicating social class and educational achievement having an important influence on political engagement. These demonstrate the ability of vulnerable and low status positions to negatively affect young people’s engagement and participation. If organisations are able to intervene and alter this, they can play a crucial role in youth socialisation.

Barriers to Participation

Continuing with the notion that disadvantage in a young person’s life could lead to low levels of engagement, qualitative research has found the negative implications that poverty can have on children’s participation and inclusion within society (Ridge, 2006). Children as young as eight feel left out due to lack of income in their homes, resulting in a decreased capacity to participate effectively. Children’s accounts are able to show that “barriers to participation are occurring at all levels of children’s lives” (2006: 33). Ridge’s study shows widespread inequality of access to opportunities and activities for children.

With the notion that early experiences of socialisation affect individuals in the long-term, children who face disadvantage, social exclusion and lack of opportunity are more likely to experience these traits later in life. This has implications for their status within society and the resources they gain which in turn impacts chances of participating in politics. With this said, it is appropriate to discuss political maturity and what age is suitable for the introduction of political activities.

A lot of discussion about political maturity stems from rigid assumptions. For example, the notion that “children lack competence, it is perhaps unsurprising that they should be denied the status of citizenship” (James and James, 2012) is an indicator of a rigid assumption. Additionally, looking at young people as citizens, Winter (1997) highlights a common question used to argue against full inclusion:

"To what extent can we expect autonomy, independence and responsibility of young people, whereas their age, their development and their world, on the contrary, presuppose dependence, inequality, trust in adults and intimacy?"
(Winter, 1997: 31).

However competence, maturity and responsibility are capacities that children and young people gain gradually through opportunities for participation (James and James, 2012; Earls, 2011; Munro, 2001; Eekelaar, 1992). Introducing opportunities at a young age can act as a positive influence on their perceptions of being included and participating. This is reinforced by Earls (2011) who explains that exposure to opportunities during development could improve levels of maturity needed to become a citizen, foster civic engagement and create habits of responsibility. By adopting a belief that children and young people lack maturity to participate in politics, denies them the ability to learn and develop whilst limiting their capacity to participate later in life. No indication has been made about what is the ‘right’ age

to allow children and young people to be politically active, however early experiences of positive participation has implications for creating a habits.

If organisations promote the political involvement of young people, this is a means for introducing them to political processes allowing knowledge and understanding to be gained as well as encouraging an interest and commitment to democracy (Lansdown, 2011). If organisations value young people's views as a means to connect them to politics, it is expected that they will be more willing to become involved in processes of democracy and participate in politics further afield.

Question of Rights

The adoption of a right-based approach by organisations is a way to develop an attitude towards young people embracing full inclusion and participation. This is echoed by Klasen (2001) in connecting rights-based approaches to capability approaches. In particular, Sen's (1992) capability approach stresses the importance of equal access to opportunities within society, showing that a rights-based approach would embrace the participation of all. Kay et al (2012) identify the paradigm of children's rights and the view of young social actors and citizens have been beneficial at changing the attitudes towards young people's abilities to participate.

It is important to mention the long-standing debate within the literature between protection and participation. The need to protect young people is echoed by the welfare paradigm that has dominated traditional concepts (Kay et al, 2012). The notion of protection stems from lack of capacities however is relevant to the discussion of rights because of the widespread support for the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Rights within the Convention are divided into provision, protection and participation

(Alderson, 2000). Although protection and participation are fundamental aims of the UNCRC, there is a tension between them (Archard, 0072). Article 12 of the UNCRC is the main participatory provision allowing anyone under the age of 18 the right to express their views in matters and decision affecting their lives (UNCRC, 1989). The fulfilment of this provision is dependent on the age and maturity of young people, reinforcing that “rights are constrained by the competence of the claim holder” (Cowden, 2012: 363).

Earls (2011) advocates that progressive policies alone cannot push further implementation of the UNCRC into practice. At an individual level, awareness of the UNCRC amongst youth could be significantly improved in Scotland (Elsley et al, 2013). However at an organisational level, organisations are very keen to express their adoption of the UNCRC principles within their work. This takes an approach that in order for young people to be further listened to and able to participate, it needs to come from adults’ perspective. The view that legislation on its own will not further implement the Convention gives more scope to the influence that organisations can have at fulfilling the UNCRC and putting it into practice. It is assumed that the more respect young people’s rights receive, the more likely they will participate in politics.

Gaps in the research

Little work has explored the role of organisations at fostering youth political participation. Studies that have interviewed organisations have explored useful ways to promote the involvement of children and young people within services and policy-making (Kirby et al, 2003). The aim of Kirby et al’s study was to provide guidance to organisations working with young people on how to implement practices that would allow for the appropriate environment for participation, rather than the actual outcomes of participatory processes. However, the in-depth discussion of different cultures of participation available to

organisations within that study has been invaluable to the theoretical framework underpinning this research. The findings of this current study will complement previous work. Combining the guidance of how organisations can include young people and the potential political outcomes of these practices will help organisations in their reasoning for encouraging youth participation.

MacLeod (2009) studied accessibility and participation in the Scottish Parliament business for children and young people. He interviewed MSPs, young people and representatives from organisations, charities and advocacy groups. His decision to interview organisations came from the legislative and inquiry work done by Parliament committees relying upon contributions from adult representatives. In addition, the particular organisations decided upon for research depended on their activity levels within Parliamentary work which deemed them to be the “most politically active” organisations (ibid: 133).

Expectations

Through exploration of relevant literature, the expectations are that organisations embedding a youth-focused culture, respecting and implementing rights-based approaches to how young people work on a political level within the organisation will have more impact on youth political participation. In order for this to be established, specific research methods were applied to explore how and why organisations foster youth participation.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The research design is qualitative in focus and this approach is suitable to provide explanations about experiences, attitudes and behaviours (Bryman, 2004). This study comprises in-depth qualitative interviews with organisations to understand the experiences given to young people and the attitudes underpinning particular behaviours of organisations. This approach will be able to assess how and why organisations work to foster youth political participation.

Sample

When choosing a sampling method it is empirical to consider the objectives of the research question (Given, 2008). As the study aims to explore the role of young people's organisations at fostering youth political participation, it is clear that specific organisations working with young people in a political capacity needed to be identified. In order for these organisations to be identified, the importance of young people's rights and participation needed to be clear. A purposive sampling method was chosen to ensure organisations have an understanding of the research problem and study (Cresswell, 2013).

Access to organisations was gained prior to ethical approval (see Appendix A). Initial contact was made with gatekeepers, except one where the direct participant was contacted and agreed in the first contact. A gatekeeper is described as the entry point to an organisation who will have "inside information that can help the researcher in determining who are the best participants in the given community or organization" (Given, 2008: 3). Those identified were representatives of youth charities or organisations and had a role within the organisation as Director, Manager or Officer. Specific remits included Service Development, Engagement

and Involvement, Participation and Education, Community Programmes as well as Policy and Communications.

Six interviews were conducted and took place in a six week period between November and December 2014. The average duration of interview was 50 minutes and all were audio-recorded and fully transcribed (see Appendix E). As the interviews were in-depth in nature, it was felt that a small sample would be sufficient to answer the research question. In addition, qualitative research tends to sample a small number of people and cover in-depth material and “it is quite common to see studies with fewer than 10 respondents” (Litchman, 2014: 251).

Organisations

Action for Children (AfC)

AfC is a charity aimed at helping and supporting vulnerable children. They run services all across the UK working directly with over 300,000 children, young people, parents and carers to tackle issues of neglect and abuse. In addition to this, AfC run campaigns, lobby for change in the law and carry out research.

In their participation strategy they reinforce that “participation has always been central to the work of Action for Children” (AfC, 2008: 1). They have a commitment to empowering young people and believe that effective participation is a method to achieve this. Participation is closely related to children’s rights and the UNCRC within the organisation. Their focus is on communication, engagement, creating opportunities, allowing dialogue to produce change whilst enabling a space to learn and share. These elements combined are described as “completing the circle” (AfC, *ibid*: 3) to ensure a meaningful process. The centrality of youth participation along with their involvement with government deems AfC to be an appropriate participant.

The Children's Parliament (TCP)

TCP gives children an opportunity to voice their ideas which help shape the social and political landscape. They work through direct contact, consultation and projects with children as well as work with adults, educating and equipping with knowledge and skills (TCP, 2014). By working with children on various initiatives, gaining their views on different issues through community based programmes they believe that given the right support and environment, children are able to advocate for themselves (TCP, 2012).

Interaction between children within TCP allows responsibility to be built, diversity to be learned and friendships developed, thus potentially shaping and influencing how they might interact with others in a wider context. To be more explicit, being involved with TCP could positively affect youth engagement and participation. The level of interaction between children and TCP and the outcome of these, makes them an appropriate participant for this research.

Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA)

SCRA is an organisation that administers the Children's Hearing System (CHS). The Children's Hearing (Scotland) Act 2011 sets out the duties and provisions in relation to this unique and vital element of child care in Scotland (Kendrick, 2000). During these hearings, participation and full involvement of young people are crucial (Murray, 1992). It has been acknowledged and explicitly stated by the Scottish Government that "Scotland has a proud track record in promoting the welfare of children and young people. The establishment and development of the Children's Hearing System is a clear testimony" (Aldgate, 2013: 2).

SCRA are responsible for facilitating Children's Hearings and have the responsibility of enabling participation (SCRA, 2014). This is informed through listening to young people that helps SCRA to provide information to allow young people to prepare for hearings. This

organisation was chosen to explore the strategies and methods used to facilitate and encourage the goal of participation.

Scottish Commissioner for Children and Young People (SCCYP)

With a strong focus on young people’s rights, the SCCYP works to raise awareness of rights through communication with children and young people, input into law and policy and striving for best practice (SCCYP, 2013). They believe strongly in meaningful participation and created the ‘Golden Rules for Participation’ (Figure 4) which include seven fundamental principles which they believe need to be met in order for meaningful participation with young people to be achieved.

1	Understand my rights
2	A chance to be involved
3	Remember – it’s my choice
4	Value me
5	Support me
6	Work together
7	Keep in touch

Figure 4: The Golden Rules for Participation

The SCCYP commitment to ensure young people’s participatory rights are fulfilled, makes them suitable for this research. The Scottish Commissioner’s work has been informed and defined by children and young people to ensure that it focuses on current needs – in total the consultation included a vote from 74,059 children and young people (SCCYP, 2010).

Together Scottish Alliance for Children’s Rights (Together)

Together is an alliance of different organisations in Scotland working together to ensure children’s rights that works to “improve the awareness, understanding and implementation of the UNCRC” (Together, n.d.). Together works closely in conjunction with Scottish Government and produce a ‘State of Children’s Rights’ report every year outlining the extent to which young people in Scotland are able to exercise their rights under the UNCRC. It specifically discussed current progress and areas that need to be further developed to ensure the goal of full implementation of the convention.

Together were selected due to their involvement with a vast range of organisations working with young people and their ability to showcase trends and patterns identified in their publications and were interviewed to broaden the generalizability of the findings.

Who Cares? Scotland (WC?S)

WC?S is a charity “offering independent, rights-based advocacy service to children and young people who are, or who have been, looked after and accommodated” (McManus, 2007: 37). They ensure that young people’s views and experiences shape their practice, helping them to speak out and effectively participate using a rights-based approach (WC?S, 2013). By allowing experiences to shape their services, young people need to participate to allow their experiences to be heard. To enable this to happen on a wide scale, methods and strategies should be employed to facilitate the participation work. Because of this, WC?S is a suitable charity to be explored within this study.

By protecting, promoting and upholding the individual and collective rights of young people in, or with experience of, care, WC?S influence key decision makers developing policy, practice and legislation as well as attitudes and cultures within communities (WC?S,

2013). In addition, their suitability extends to the political influence they have and the capacity to facilitate youth political participation.

Research Methods

The data was collected through qualitative in-depth face-to-face interviews and this method is appropriate due to the exploratory nature of the dissertation. A semi-structured interview guide (see Appendix C) allowed specific topics to be covered whilst allowing flexibility in how participant's reply and enabling the opportunity for follow-up or probing questions. Full consent (see Appendix D) was sought and confidentiality protected throughout the research process.

The interview guide was designed to understand what an organisation does and how it works with young people. It was important to explore the benefits and barriers to participation and what variables might encourage or discourage a young person. Issues were discussed and related to broader topics of: young people's rights, citizenship and democracy as well as development and competence. Lastly, there was a discussion of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 which identified the impact this will have on the organisation and levels of youth participation. Some of the key questions asked were:

Can you give me some examples of participation with young people?

What do you see as the factors that would encourage a young person to participate?

Acknowledging Article 12 of the UNCRC and its provision to allow young people to participate being dependent on age and maturity, how are you able to implement this right whilst ensuring the right to protection?

After transcription, data analysis took place and this involved coding and identification of themes (Lichtman, 2014). To allow themes to contribute to our understanding, specific themes identified in one interview are compared and contrasted with similar content in the other interviews (Fielding and Thomas, 2008). This process enabled broad themes across interviews to be selected and examined in relation to the research question and broader concepts.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Results

The strategies used by organisations allow the question of how they foster youth political participation to be explored. Focal points around this question were the importance of communication and experiences, young-person led initiatives and consistency in approaches. Key themes centred on the question of why organisations work to foster youth political participation were benefits for the organisation and young people separately. The current barriers to participation were an additional theme. The findings will be displayed through each individual organisation which allows distinct strategies, outcomes and benefits to be highlighted.

Action for Children (AfC)

Committed to involving the hardest to reach young people, AfC encourage involvement in political processes to allow them to influence, be heard and feel valued. When asked about the impact of political participation on citizenship and democracy, they felt it was important to understand these implications and describe the irony of those with the worst outcomes being excluded.

“...the great irony is that some people who have had the worst experiences, are the most disadvantaged, have had the most challenges and they are the people who you want to hear from more.”

AfC work to support young people to be involved within the work of the charity as a means to channel negative emotions away from disadvantage and into something positive having a lasting impact.

The commitment to facilitate participation with young people was strong. Ensuring that strategies work, AfC allow young people to inform their inclusion strategy, a piece of work designed to achieve “co-production and joint understanding” between young people and the organisation. These strategies are implemented across the board and remain a consistent method of participation.

“We try and include young people as much as we can across the piece so that would be at a project level, a macro level and a micro level...”

Consistency is important to ensure the strategy is taken seriously by staff and young people believing their voices are heard. An example was given later in the interview of a participation day designed for young people with disabilities. At this event, it was important for AfC to enable and facilitate meaningful participation in light of individual’s challenges.

Supporting youth involvement at events is a goal of the organisation. In response to the success of participation and the standard set for other organisations, they spoke of a meeting held to plan an event. AfC made the suggestion that young people should be given the opportunity to organise, plan and manage the event themselves, rather than representatives of the charity. They believe it is more powerful to have a “service-user focus” allowing those with the experiences, the opportunity to set their own agendas. This displays a youth-led focus, initiated by adults.

Work was undertaken with young people to help them understand information about the referendum, encouraging them to vote. This included providing tools for engagement and participation.

“...it’s about trying to provide the tools for them to engage, to learn, to make sure they voted, how they did it, make sure they were registered so it was about supporting them to and encourage them all to have a voice and have a say...”

This work was important to ensure that young people were able to utilise their power and make their voice heard. When asked about involving youth in decisions, AfC demonstrated that young people can be engaged and interested in politics. The organisation facilitated a meeting with young people and politicians and talked of the tough and important questions asked of politicians about the referendum.

“They were interested in talking about the referendum and the country and what their views were...”

The success of providing tools for engagement is demonstrated and young people are given an opportunity they might not have had elsewhere. AfC utilise their involvement with young people as a means to encourage political interest and participation.

In response to their views of young people’s participation as a whole, they felt it is “patchy” with a need to improve. In order to achieve this they spoke of a progressive culture with politicians having the ability to set the tone for change. This tone would embrace listening to youths and hearing what they have to say.

The Children’s Parliament (TCP)

TCP referred to “real participation” and when asked what they meant they spoke of engaging in dialogue with children from the very start, building good relationships and putting power into the hands of children. This is something they respect throughout their services, aims and missions.

“...participation, we’re as well thinking about it as an approach that is embedded into everything we do on a day to day basis...”

By doing so, this allows children to express thoughts and learn during the process. It is believed that professionals should nurture participation with all children and young people to ensure this becomes an essential part of society.

TCP work mostly with children aged 14 and under, when asked how they ensure children's protection during participation, they focused on processes being led by children. The protective factor stems naturally if children are able to set their own agenda.

“...participation is based on children's agenda emerging and not being led by the adults...”

By facilitating child-led processes, this allows children to initiate their own right to participation and has the potential to transform. Transformative participation was discussed in relation to lifting aspirations, building confidence, instilling a sense of belief through the provision of experiences.

“...it gives them an experience that you can't teach by knowledge exchange alone, you can't just tell children they have rights they need to experience it to believe it...”

The organisation views these benefits of participation as a means over and above providing information and knowledge alone.

The evidence of political influence stems from the outcomes achieved. When asked about the political influence young people have within the organisation, TCP talked of the consultation process undertaken prior to the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. Their aim was to ensure policy-makers were aware of the views of children and did this by working with groups of children capturing their needs, supporting them to understand their rights under the Act and allowing them to articulate their responses.

TCP feels that there requires an appetite for children's rights in order for them to be improved. A continued reliance on teaching young people about their rights limits this capacity and in order for their rights to be fully embedded into society, TCP believe that what is needed is a "game-changer to shift that culture", and this needs to come from politicians.

"Leadership, political leadership is what it needs. That's absolutely what it needs."

This is a challenge for TCP, as they do not see the appetite required and therefore not able to support its implementation. Understanding how policy can be transferred into practice has been a main consideration since the new Act was passed.

Who Cares? Scotland (WC?S)

WC?S acknowledge the influence adults have on young people. As "adults are often the gatekeepers to children's lives, rights and opportunities", allowing adults to determine how young people participate. This was discussed in relation to barriers to participation, showing that adults can discourage participation. However, WC?S respect young people as more than a number and believe that concentrating on statistics does not represent a young person's life. By supporting them to feel safe and comfortable to express their experiences, this provides essential information and understanding behind outcomes.

"...that why is really important because to look at an outcome, to purely look at a statistical outcome doesn't reflect their experiences, it doesn't reflect all of the issues..."

They accept that statistics identify patterns about how the organisation is doing, however this only tells them if there is a problem and does not outline why. They believe that young

people with experiences of what they are advocating for should be involved as much as possible.

The organisation view “participation as a thread that goes through all our work”. The impact of this was demonstrated when the involvement of young people with politicians in consultation about the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 was explored. Young people on their own initiative contacted politicians to encourage members of government to listen to their views rather than adult representatives. This displays a youth-led process, initiated by youths themselves. However adults facilitated this process, politicians met with young people to discuss their experiences and opinions which had direct benefits for the young people and politicians. For young people,

“it was really really big ... a lot of these young people for the first time in their lives they had actually said something and politicians had enacted...”

In addition, there was a lasting impact on politicians.

“...the politicians had never heard evidence like this before and they went away and reflected quite strongly on it...”;

“...they were actually really really blown away by some of the comments made by the young people”.

Establishing an environment where young people feel heard by politicians has benefits for their interest in politics as a whole.

WC?S described how they witnessed young people taking a real interest in politics in response to how participation impacts citizenship. Interest was demonstrated through voting in the referendum and wanting to fill seats in the Scottish Youth Parliament. These factors

encouraged the organisation to think about their practices and how they can incorporate proper democracy.

“...to bring in proper democracy with groups all over Scotland, surely we should then look at nominating members and nominating them and have a proper sort of voting and selection through our membership so we are starting to, I suppose politicise young people a wee bit and to take an interest...”

WC?S view young people as genuine assets to the community and are seen as at-promise with a desire to support them to participate. The engagement seen around the time of the referendum has opened the organisations eyes to new ways they can support young people to gain knowledge and experience of democratic decision-making, and in turn help to develop an interest in politics.

WC?S view levels of participation and respect for young people’s rights in Scotland as improving. However, acknowledge that more still needs to be done and believe improvement can stem from a political will. They feel that “when there’s a political will that tends to filter down” which influences local authorities and organisations. This stresses the need for leadership and ownership to be taken on these issues and recognise that greater participation can lead to stronger rights.

The Scottish Commissioner for Children and Young People (SCCYP)

The SCCYP acknowledge the role of adults, having the ability to shape the opportunities presented to young people. This acknowledgement from the organisation emphasises respect between adults and young people and was discussed in relation to the challenges to participation.

“...you can understand that as an adult you’ve got lots more choices and chances and autonomy than children have, children’s lives are very controlled by adults at every turn so it’s about using that disparity wisely...”

However, this displays the notion that if the disparity between adults and young people is used wisely, this diminishes the challenges. In addition, further disparity is spoken in account of political disengagement.

“...there are a lot of very politically disengaged people and the disengagement is about disparity in power, disengagement is about the distance between experience of those lives and the experience of the powerful.”

Recognising that life is political, the SCCYP believe that in order to minimise disparity, quality experiences need to be given to young people. This would stem from children being involved in decision-making on a day-to-day basis as early as possible. It is believed that this would build relationships on a foundation of respect – a fundamental necessity for the SCCYP. The result of minimised disparity would help to increase political awareness, literacy and awareness by developing a passion for engagement, seen by the organisation as a benefit of participation.

When asked about the impact of participation on citizenship and democracy, the SCCYP strongly advocate that without experiences, these would be incomplete.

“...unless you have the lived experience of being a respected citizen, unless you have the lived experience of the process of democracy, making the world a better place, how can you learn about it, you learn about something out there that doesn’t belong to you.”

This quote stresses the importance of giving young people experiences in order to understand how they can exercise their rights as citizens and be involved in political processes.

When talking about Article 12 of the UNCRC, the most significant part of the provision was identified as taking young people's views into account.

“taking into account is a complex phrase that actually means unpicking it, looking it at, looking at it from different perspectives, challenging yourself as an adult of power duty-holder about what that might mean going back and checking it and ensuring that the views and the impact of those views informing something is also absolutely re-informed back to the child so that process doesn't stop with a child giving their view about something or a child feeding into something, that its circular.”

These processes are designed to ensure that participation is meaningful.

Together Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights (Together)

Together stated that the information they provided does not reflect the opinions of all of their members but were able to discuss trends identified. The main limitation highlighted when asked of themes portrayed in their annual report along with the views of levels of participation and rights in Scotland as a whole, was the patchy implementation of participatory processes and embedment of rights. These themes are described in relation to inconsistency of approaches when working with young people with limited knowledge and understanding of the UNCRC.

“...our members will comment on the patchy implementation of children's rights and the inconsistency in approaches so that something every year we find is a theme that runs throughout every chapter.”

In addition the exclusion of particular groups of vulnerable young people further demonstrates patchy implementation and inconsistency, according to Together. Specifically groups of young people not in mainstream education are a barrier to ensuring greater awareness of rights amongst young people.

“...the key point is that there are vulnerable groups of children that are continuously left out of these either consultation processes or any kind of decisions making process...”

These groups, examples were given of black and minority ethnic communities, LGBT young people as well as those with specific care experiences of adoption are being excluded from participatory processes. Together speak of how young people in schools or part of organisations are consulted upon regularly and have experience of decision-making.

Continuing with school, the organisation spoke highly of work undertaken with young people in schools as an avenue to encourage and increase political involvement.

“I think through schools as well, perhaps the recognition that information about politics, about the awareness of political decisions making and what’s going on in their communities and how that can be influenced using politics as a gateway...”

In addition, schools were also seen as an institution that could positively increase young people’s awareness of rights. Together mentioned the Rights Respecting School programme that has been able to make young people more attune to their rights.

Together believe that allowing young people the vote in the referendum was a step forward in recognising their rights. The engagement and empowerment portrayed was described as being very positive.

“...the numbers of children that participated is a reflection of how important that vote was for them and how politically engaged they were and a reflection of how important it is for that to continue.”

Seen as a means to portray young people’s right to participation in practice, it is acknowledged that this vote and level of engagement highlighted the importance for young people being continually involved in political decision-making.

Scottish Children’s Reporters Administration (SCRA)

SCRA identified a need to improve their services for young people and felt that the most appropriate way to do this would be giving young people with experience of the Children’s Hearing System (CHS), the opportunity to work with the organisation. There was a need for their participation strategy to change in order to improve engagement from young people.

“...improve the participation and engagement of children and young people within our processes so we thought that the only realistic way of doing that was through and one of the best ways to do that was to offer young people who have experience of the system to come, to have an opportunity to work here and see how we work and to get experience and a vocational qualification...”

When discussing how the Modern Apprentice (MA) programme began, SCRA spoke of the benefits that were anticipated. These included giving young people experience to gain a qualification and improving the services of the organisation.

Based on consultation and research with children and young people, factors have been identified that enable young people to be more likely to engage and participate.

“...we can provide children and young people with information and also try make the environment a little bit more comfortable, it may be easier for them to feel

more comfortable to participate and engage in the process by submit their views...”

By providing information and setting the right environment, young people can be more prepared, more aware of their rights and have a deeper understanding of the process – all contributing to the aim of increasing young people’s participation.

The organisation also appreciates the use of research as a means to improve services for young people. An example of participation from young people was given where they had the responsibility of leading their own research, with the aim of providing useful information that would help SCRA improve its work.

“...the young people work the SCRA’s research and information team and they design the questionnaire themselves and come up with questions, things that they are looking for, they do that themselves and they are supported by the research team in terms of collating it but it’s very much led by the young people...”

By looking at if the work within the organisation had a clear influence on young people’s political participation, SCRA described the lack of discussion around the referendum within the organisation and the young people it works with. It was felt that views and opinions around this were private although:

“...one of the Modern Apprentices asked me about it but more she just wanted to find out a bit more information because she wasn’t really sure herself so I directed her to, I said you should go online and look up the pros and cons and that’s up to you.” (SCRA)

This shows that the young person felt able and identified the organisation as one where they would be able to ask for advice and seek more information from.

Summary

The discussion of each organisation's model of participation and reasoning underpin how and why they foster youth political participation. However, prominent themes displayed across each interview demonstrate prevalence to the discussion of young people's political participation. These include the culture of participation within an organisation and society, what factors encourage mobilization amongst young people and the continuing issue of tokenism.

The organisations saw culture as important to embracing a rights-based approach, a means to shift attitudes in society and a factor to encourage mobilization. This included having young people's views respected within decisions, allowing significant impact. The culture within society was viewed as a barrier to participation as young people's rights are not fully respected and protected throughout, causing reluctance between young people. It is acknowledged that in order for culture to change, this requires starting from the beginning again, changing the way in which participation is done. Organisations felt that this would effectively stem from political leadership which would enable an appropriate tone to be set that would induce a political will. One organisation mentioned the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act as a step in the right direction. Furthermore, the right culture was seen as a means that would encourage mobilization between young people.

In addition to culture, key attributes that would encourage mobilization were identified as experience of consistent effective participation and the feelings associated. This is rooted in good relationships built upon trust and respect. In addition the increased knowledge, awareness and understanding of rights amongst young people would create an expectation for them to participate in decisions. Having youth participate as much as possible would embed these expectations into daily life and extend beyond the work of organisations.

However, a current challenge to participation is tokenism. All organisations identified with this notion where participation is not meaningful or effective. It is a strategic method which is applied to fit the agenda of practitioners rather than the needs of young people. It lacks the feedback, monitoring and evaluation that meaningful participation applies and can discourage youth participation. These challenges inform the last consensus that a lot more work is still to be done in Scotland to ensure young people's participation is fully embedded and respected within all organisations and society.

Discussion

Through analysis of the results, certain attributes of organisations that increase the likelihood of youth political participation are highlighted as well as the role that organisations play in young people's socialisation. These attributes are outlined below, organisations:

- provide experiences of benefits from participation;
- equip individuals with tools to engage;
- facilitate opportunities for individuals to connect with politics and
- raise awareness of young people's rights.

These attributes are facilitated through consistent strategies that influence the culture of participation within organisations. The most successful strategy is youth-led initiatives which embrace a youth-focused culture, however this does not mean that this is the most consistent method.

The expectation that with more power and control within an organisation, the greater influence this would have on young people's political participation was supported. All organisations working directly with young people displayed a level of youth-led initiatives. Furthermore, the instances where direct political influence and participation were

demonstrated showed that youth-led processes have an impact. However, these don't necessarily reflect Hart's 'youth-initiated' steps in the ladder. One example reflects a 'youth-initiated, shared decision with adults' activity however this was initiated by adults. Hart (1992) speaks of the commonality of tokenism and the rareness of young person initiated and led processes. He believes this not because of absent young people wanting to take an interest, but "the absence of caring adults attuned to the particular interests of young people" (1992: 14). However, this research shows that youth-led initiatives are taking place in the context of adults believing in the important of young people's meaningful participation.

Although organisations spoke of the importance of participation in their work and the consistency of listening to young people throughout decision-making, consultation and participation in the eyes of Kirby et al (2003) are incorporated frequently. This displays a mixed method approach showing that organisations can determine what focus will be appropriate, showing the impact adults have on youth participation. Moreover, the view that a truly youth-focused culture cannot be embedded due to the inevitable impact adults will have on young people's actions within an organisation is supported by Shier. Shier (2001) speaks of the difference between Hart's ladder and his model. His model does not have a separate level representing youth participation independent of adults, his model is centred around the interaction between young people and adults.

By acknowledging that methods determine outcome and impact, the results provide guidance to organisations about what they can do to achieve outcomes. This will help to justify reasoning and be explicit from the outset which can help to avoid tokenism. If organisations or anyone working with children and young people adopt specific strategies that encourage a youth-focused culture, this could increase participation across society.

The research establishes organisations provide young people with civic skills needed for engagement. The civic voluntarism model disclosed the potential for organisations to encourage political participation and the findings show that young people are able to learn through active participation within organisations. Civic skills have been emphasised as the significant element of the civic voluntarism model (Rubenson, 2000), this is due to the acquisition of civic skills allowing individuals to use the other resources effectively. This research would support this claim as organisations can equip young people with tools to engage. Although it is claimed the model argues that “high-status, well-resourced individuals are the most likely to participate” (Birch, 2014: 3), this research further shows civic skills to be the main predictor as young people involved with these organisations are not high-status or well-resourced.

By exposing young people to the benefits of participation this encourages a motivation, creating an environment where learning can take place and relationships built. These are elements from family and education as socialising agents and shows that organisations are able to fill gaps if these agents are not providing for young people. This resonates with Dudley and Gitelson’s (2002) position that new venues of youth socialisation need to be explored. Organisations provide activities and interactions that can shape young people’s views of politics. This can be achieved through the opportunities young people are given to connect with politics. As acknowledged that notions of competence, maturity and responsibility are gained gradually through experiences, organisations provide these experiences in a political capacity directly resonating with young people’s opinions about politics.

As the organisations respected young people’s rights, this shows that embedding a rights-based approach positively affects youth participation. By using rights as a means to

encourage their engagement within society, this can increase personal interest in politics. Having knowledge of their rights, understanding how it can be used and an awareness of these rights across society, all positively impact youth participation. As organisations embed these through an avenue of political decision-making, this influences young people's political participation. Rights-based approaches can be attached to capability approaches (Klasen, 2001) showing that adoption of rights-based approaches respects the equality of access to opportunities and appreciates that young people have the capability to participate.

All organisations felt there were good examples of meaningful participation taking place, however there was a sense that a lot more could be done to ensure these practices across the board. With patchy implementation, selective groups of young people participating and the persistence of tokenism these can be seen as the current barriers to youth participation. However this research has demonstrated how meaningful participation can take place and what elements encourage a culture shift. A culture that embraces young people's views, ensures effective and meaningful methods, allowing young people to experience autonomy and participation in decisions affecting their lives. The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act could be a step in this direction however the implications of this legislation are unclear at this stage. Further work to develop a clear understanding of the legislation in practice along with the impact on young people's participation will be necessary after provisions are embedded into practice.

The limitations of this study include the lack of direct contact with young people. Due to ethical and resources constraints, this was not possible. However interviewing young people, facilitating focus groups or observation of participatory processes would allow personal views and opinions to be heard. As there has been no observation of interactions between

organisations and young people there is a potential scope for bias from the interviewees. Speaking to young people would counter this issue and complement the research conducted. It could ask individuals about experiences of methods used for participation, how effective they feel these are along with the outcomes achieved. Additionally, a direct question could be explored about the impact organisations have on their political engagement and participation.

A further limitation includes the lack of understanding of how young people became involved with organisations and how they were selected for intervention and involvement in services. It is not clear if these were voluntary decisions on the part of young people or if this directly came from the organisations themselves. By asking these questions and understanding how individuals are identified, would establish more detail about the demographics of youth along with the willingness or compulsory measures within these organisations.

Furthermore, the sample size of organisations limits the generalizations that can be made about this research. Although key methods that can be use by organisations to improve the engagement and participation of young people have been highlighted, thus expanding the scope of meaningful processes and influencing cultures of participation. If all organisations working with young people were to adopt a youth-focused culture and rights-based approaches, this could have huge implications on how societal attitudes towards young people are constructed.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

The study set out to explore the concept of youth political participation and has identified the role of organisations as a positive influencer of this behaviour. Understanding these concepts is important for increasing young people's engagement and participation within society, something that has been acknowledged as lacking. Although, research has demonstrated young people's interest in politics and undermined perceived political disengagement – further research showing youth participation in certain capacities supports the claim that young people are able to be politically active. This research sought to answer the question of how and why organisations advocating on behalf of young people in Scotland work to foster youth political participation.

From analysis of the results, the following can be concluded. Organisations provide experiences for young people to understand the benefits of participation, equip them with the tools to engage, provide opportunities to connect them with politics which increases the likelihood of political participation and improves the awareness of young people's rights. In order for the above to be successful, they need to be incorporated into a culture of participation within the organisation which is made up of consistent strategies. Therefore, organisations play a role in young people's socialisation.

Overall findings compliment earlier models and scales of participation, providing context and understanding to the outcomes of participation methods. It is however, noted from this study that incorporation of one single culture might not be possible due to the desired outcome of each participatory process. In addition, embracing a youth-focused culture that gives young people shared power and responsibility (Shier, 2001) to initiate their

own agendas without the lead from adults (Hart, 1992) is difficult due to the input from adults in young people's lives.

In particular it supports the civic voluntarism model of participation, setting out that individual's key civic skills needed for political engagement stem from involvement with non-political institutions (Verba et al, 1995). However, the findings have not been able to answer the research question fully due to the small number of organisations interviewed along with the selective nature of backgrounds and circumstances of young people involved. To some extent, organisations role of fostering youth political participation has been demonstrated through work with vulnerable and hard to reach individuals. What is known now in regards to these groups of young people is that organisations can act as an agent of socialisation, influencing how they act within society. In addition, these findings now provide useful guidelines for other organisations wishing to incorporate participation with young people into their work.

To allow the acknowledgement of organisation's role in young people's lives and for culture within society to shift, respecting and allowing children and youths to have meaningful input into decisions on a daily basis, requires a much larger scaled debate. This could be centred on commitment to children's rights and increased political autonomy, aiming to improve engagement within society. There is need for further research into the observation of the interaction between organisations and young people as well as the direct influence they have on young people's decision making.

Overall it has been established that organisations play an important role for young people involved in their work. By appreciating the abilities of young people and working hard to facilitate participatory, rights-based processes these have implications on levels of participation in society. This research emphasises the importance of acknowledging and

understanding the avenues where young people are interested, engaged and participating within society.

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Appendix A – Ethical Approval Application Form and Approval

Appendix B – Participant Information Sheet

Participant Information Sheet

Study title and Researcher Details

Investigating the Implications of Young People's Participation in Scotland

Sarah Weir

Undergraduate Politics Student

Contact: 1103798w@student.gla.ac.uk

Supervisor: Dr Philip Habel

This is an invitation to take part in a research study. It is important for you to understand the purpose of the research and what it will involve, in order for you to decide whether or not you would like to take part. Please take your time to read the information included and discuss it with others if you wish. If there is anything that is not clear to you or if you would like more information, please get in touch and ask.

What is the purpose of the study?

This study will explore how and why organisations, advocating on behalf of young people work to foster youth political participation. It will identify ways that young people participate with organisations, the barriers and facilitators to that participation as well as the effectiveness of their involvement. This study will also outline the implications following recent legislative decisions made by the Scottish Government with regards to young people's participation in decisions that affect their lives. Underpinning this study are theories of children's rights, participation and empowerment, citizenship and democracy, as well as development and competence.

Why have I been chosen?

In selecting participants for the study, it was important to identify organisations that will be affected by children's legislation as well as those who have responded to, or been involved in consultation with the Scottish Government regarding the newly passed Children and Young People (Scotland) Act. In total, six participants across the sector will be interviewed.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you if you decide whether or not to take part. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

What will happen to me if I take part?

If you decide to take part, the research will involve one interview lasting approximately 45 minutes. This will include having interviews audio recorded at the time of interview. Research will be able to proceed from early November 2014 and the project is due to be completed by early March 2015.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

All information, which is collected about you during the research process, will be kept strictly confidential. You will be identified by an ID number and any information about will have your name and location removed so that you cannot be recognised from it.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The final results will be submitted in early March 2015 to the University of Glasgow for assessment. Thereafter, you will be informed that the study is complete and at that point, be able to request a copy. Please note that within the study you will not be identified and a pseudonym will be used, however the title and description of the organisation will be part of the study.

Who is organising and funding the research? (If relevant)

This research is undertaken for the requirements of an undergraduate degree and will be monitored by the University of Glasgow.

Who has reviewed the study?

The study has been reviewed by the College of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee.

Contact for Further Information

Researcher: Sarah Weir (1103798w@student.gla.ac.uk)

Supervisor: Dr Philip Habel (Philip.Habel@glasgow.ac.uk)

If you have any concerns regarding the conduct of the research project, you are free to contact the College of Social Sciences Ethics Officer: Dr Muir Houston (Muir.Houston@glasgow.ac.uk)

Appendix C – Interview Guide

The first section will aim to understand the ethos and culture of the organisation, what it does and how it works with young people.

Q1. What is your specific role within the organisation?

Q2. Can you tell me more about the aims and missions of [name of organisation] and what is the value of young people's participation within the organisation?

- *What political influence does [organisation] have?*

Q3. Can you give me some examples of participation with young people?

- *What were the outcomes/long-lasting impacts of these methods? Why were they successful/not so successful?*
- *What challenges were encountered?*
- *What methods/strategies/approaches are used?*
- *Why are these so important to your organisation?*
- *What political influence is there for young people?*

This section is designed to identify benefits and barriers to participation.

Q4. What are the benefits of participation:

- ...to a young person?
- ...to an organisation?
- ...to a community?

Q5. Can you think of some factors that might encourage young people to participate?

- *Probe for specific variables/examples.*

Q6. What about the factors that might discourage young people to participate – also referred to as a barrier or challenges?

- *Probe for specific variables/examples.*

Q7. Can you think of any arguments against increasing political participation amongst young people?

Q8. What do you think would be the impact of increasing young people's political participation?

- *How could greater political participation be achieved?*

This section will discuss specific topic areas: children's rights, citizenship and democracy, development and competence.

Q9. The UNCRC sets out a range of rights for children and young people. Article 12 which is the main participatory right that gives a child the right to express their views depending on their age and maturity, highlights the conflict between allowing young people the opportunity to participate but that being dependent on their ability and competence. How does [organisation] implement this right and approach the conflict between these concepts?

- *Probe for more information depending on answer.*

Q10. It is sometimes argued that the development and competence of a young person can directly impact their ability to make rational choices and participate and therefore children and young people are not granted full citizenship status (i.e. the right to vote) until they are 18. It would be good to know your take on this, if you agree or disagree on the principle and why?

- *Probe for more information depending on answer.*

Q11. In what ways do you think levels of young people's political participation could impact citizenship and democracy?

The interview will close discussing the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 and the impact this will have on how the organisation functions as well as levels of participation.

Q12. What considerations have needed to be taken since the consultation process with the Scottish Government and now that the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act is passed?

- *In what ways has the Act affected [organisation]?*
- *What changes have needed to be made?*
- *How do you think this could impact young people's levels of participation?*
 - *Probe to establish if this is a positive or negative impact – specific examples.*

Q13. How do you feel about the new Act?

Q14. What are your views on children's rights and levels of participation in Scotland, as a whole?

- *Probe to establish if they think they are improving/not improving and in what ways.*

That is the end of my questions, is there anything you would like to add or say?

Have you got any questions for me?

Appendix D – Consent Forms



CONSENT TO THE USE OF DATA

University of Glasgow, College of Arts Research Ethics Committee

I understand that SARAH WEIR
(name of researcher)

is collecting data in the form of
INTERVIEW

for use in an academic research project at the University of Glasgow.

I give my consent to the use of data for this purpose on the understanding that:

- All names and other material likely to identify individuals will be anonymised.
- The material will be treated as confidential and kept in secure storage at all times.
- The material will be destroyed once the project is complete.

Signed by the contributor:  Date: 15.12.2014

Researcher's name and email contact: Sarah Weir 1103798w@student.gla.ac.uk

Supervisor's name and email contact: Dr Philip Habel Philip.Habel@glasgow.ac.uk



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- The material will be destroyed once the project is complete.

Signed by the contributor: [Signature] Date: 21/11/2014

Researcher's name and email contact: Sarah Weir 1103798w@student.gla.ac.uk

Supervisor's name and email contact: Dr Philip Habel Philip.Habel@glasgow.ac.uk



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- The material will be destroyed once the project is complete.

Signed by the contributor: *DFair* Date:

Researcher's name and email contact: Sarah Weir 1103798w@student.gla.ac.uk

Supervisor's name and email contact: Dr Philip Habel Philip.Habel@glasgow.ac.uk



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- The material will be destroyed once the project is complete.

Signed by the contributor:  Date: 19.11.14

Researcher's name and email contact: Sarah Weir 1103798w@student.gla.ac.uk

Supervisor's name and email contact: Dr Philip Habel Philip.Habel@glasgow.ac.uk



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- The material will be destroyed once the project is complete.

Signed by the contributor: Katie Bunn, Date: 24/11/2014

Researcher's name and email contact: Sarah Weir 1103798w@student.gla.ac.uk

Supervisor's name and email contact: Dr Philip Habel Philip.Habel@glasgow.ac.uk



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- The material will be treated as confidential and kept in secure storage at all times.
- The material will be destroyed once the project is complete.

Signed by the contributor:  Date:

Researcher's name and email contact: Sarah Weir 1103798w@student.gla.ac.uk

Supervisor's name and email contact: Dr Philip Habel Philip.Habel@glasgow.ac.uk



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- The material will be destroyed once the project is complete.

Signed by the contributor: Emindulis Date: 5/12/14

Researcher's name and email contact: Sarah Weir 1103798w@student.gla.ac.uk

Supervisor's name and email contact: Dr Philip Habel Philip.Habel@glasgow.ac.uk

Appendix E – Interview Transcripts

Interview 1 – Action for Children

Interviewer: What is your specific role with the organisation?

Participant: My role currently is Director of Service Development for UK North which is Scotland and the North of England, so my role currently is essentially head up business development strategy, growth strategy and sustainability. I do all the external facing work for the organisation so I work with government, local government, health boards, other stakeholders so it is a very external facing role I've got developing new work.

I: Can you tell me more about the aims and missions of Action for Children and what is the value of young people's participation?

P: Our previous strapline was about passion, hope, equality. The ethos is about an organisation that genuinely empowers young people particularly from a Scottish perspective and we have done for 20 years so we are working with the hardest to reach young people and families and to support them, help them turn the lights around, to empower them and enable them to make a contribution themselves.

I: What political influence does the organisation have?

P: Depends what you call political influence, for example I sit on two ministerial taskforces so I would be representing the organisation to ministerial taskforces. We have frequent contact with politicians from different political parties, from time to time we will be asked to give evidence to committees. At a local government level as well we would come into contact with elected members and a whole range of officers across a whole range of public sector organisations so we would have quite significant political, we would have access to a range of people from political backgrounds and key people within the public sector in Scotland.

I: Can you give me some examples of how young people have been involved in the organisation's work and participated?

P: This can go back over a long period of time from young people. I remember young people being invited and interviewed, and given evidence to the home affairs select committee, regularly meeting government ministers, MSPs. Young people regularly speaking at conferences, young people representing Action for Children on television and radio speaking about their views and beliefs, their aspirations and about the systems and structures so it is something that we do day in, day out. In fact, I've just been looking at a DVD that came in this week about a conference we had in September and

we had a young person on the same bill as the cabinet secretary for justice and chief constable for Scotland so a young person coming from a particular background talking about his views and his experiences so it is something that we, I think it is a culture that we embrace, that we are serious about, that we believe in. We have within the organisation young people who are ambassadors, we have young people who are involved in the recruitment of all our senior staff plus our committee members and we've got a set of young people who have been service users and now work for us and employed by us across the organisation so everything from young offenders to young carers – our whole organisation isn't populated by service users but if I had my way, we probably would be. I think it's moving in the right way as an organisation.

I: You mentioned young ambassadors and young people being involved in the recruitment process, what kind of strategies do you use to get them involved in those kinds of things?

P: We have an inclusion strategy and a UK inclusion strategy. We did have a Scottish group which I used to head up that managed inclusion within Scotland so participation has been a very significant part of that so that was about providing and letting young people understand the strategy, allowing young people to influence the strategy so what should a participation strategy look like? What would they like to do, what kind of opportunities, what kind of training would they think would be most helpful to them, what are the bits of the business they want to comment on and how, and to make in meaningful. We tried and include young people as much as we can across the piece so that would be at a project level, a macro level and a micro level as well and we try to make sure that everybody takes it seriously and people do, they want to be involved in it and young people, I think they believe that their voices are heard. By and large, there will be times when they have felt frustrated...

I: By frustrations, do you mean challenges?

P: Well, yeah I remember we brought our committee together, our Scotland committee together with young people and we began a process of dialogue and how we could progress things and I'm sure at times young people will have felt frustrated or other times they would have felt it was really worthwhile, really powerful and all of that, so it is about recognising, obviously some people will approach these things differently from others, you could be a committee members and what they perceive to be participating about and there is a journey you need to go through in terms of well this is what we are trying to achieve, these are the criteria we're looking for about co-production and joint understanding of how we are trying to progress things.

I: What are the kinds of outcomes of the participation processes?

P: I think they are really good, I think when we talk to young people they feel valued and they feel that they have had an influence. Our young ambassadors, we have a group of young ambassadors and

peer mentors who come together now and it was just before the summer a dozen of them were media trained so they would represent the organisation and speak at conferences, they would speak at fundraising events so I think we're on a journey of giving young people the skills and tools and there will be a time when some people, building up on that participation process and as result will because of other positive things that are happening will be maybe off and working and employment and they're at college and they will leave that behind.

I: What kind of political influence young people have, I know you mentioned that they have spoken in front of politicians?

P: Well hopefully the political influence is important in the sense that they will get to meet ministers and get to stand on the stage, they will get to speak in front of ministers, they will get to be in dialogue with ministers and get to express their views about their experiences, being in the childcare system or criminal justice system and they will get to express their views openly and honestly and as frankly as they wish to. I'm on the executive governance group for the centre for youth justice and criminal justice for Scotland and in fact, last week we had an evening meeting with a number of young people throughout the country but there was four young people from Action for Children who were there as well so they were basically, all of them had been through a process of media training and they were pretty vocal in it, it's getting them to shut up occasionally but they are fab and the youth justice and criminal justice centre is about looking at strategy for Scotland and they were having a lot of say in about what kind of strategy should be put in place, what changes we need to try and encourage within the system and getting to talk to a full range of stakeholders from Scottish government, SCRA and organisations about some of the changes and make recommendations about how the system might be different so I think the process we are involved with young people over a period of time is about allowing them the opportunity to discuss the issues properly, allow the opportunity to be and feel confident, to feel empowered, to be supported and understanding that we genuinely believe it and nobody is there to tell them what to say but obviously we would always encourage and young person to say things in a balanced way.

I: A positive experience for them?

P: I would hope so, yeah.

I: What are the benefits of participation to a young person, an organisation and to a community?

P: The benefits for a young person are being listened to, about having a voice, being respected, understanding their lived experience, for them it's about their growth and development and a lot of the young people we work with – young carers and they have spent a lot of their free time looking after parents or it could be young offenders who are marginalised and it is about giving them the

opportunity to feel their worth, which they are and to feel valued and listened to and heard so that is really important. It is important for us as an organisation because we need to listen, we need to learn, we need to listen to – there is no point in us being a service provider if we don't provide the services that young people need and they want that make a difference to them. There is no point in us doing it unless we are prepared to, unless what we do is validated by young people and they continually make recommendations and we find the right approach, co-production, we find the right approach – if something is not working then they have to say that is not working, this is why it's not working and what they would suggest or teasing out together what would be the right type of intervention or service – that's quite important. For example, we've got a service for serious and organised crime for young people and it is the first of its kind in the UK and we spent time talking to young people who have been through the system in terms of what would work for them, what would be relevant for them, what would work for them, what kind of approach would have the biggest impact. It is about trying to design an intervention targeted particularly at young people with experiences and similar experiences.

I: It seems like you very much want to include people that are hard to reach and you mentioned that a group that otherwise be political disengaged from society, it's really focussing on the hard to reach ones, getting them involved in decisions.

P: Yeah, absolutely and they've got lots to say and we recently had an event in Edinburgh and we had 12 young people and had the solicitor general in the room and cabinet secretary and justice and it was good. It was before the referendum and he was providing us with some money so he wanted to have a chat with them and they asked him some really tough questions about the referendum and it was good and they were really good questions and he was good, he was put on the spot and the solicitor general was killing herself laughing cause she was like "that was a tough gig" and that's how it should be but he handled it and he was up for it and they were just going for it and that was fine. They were interested in talking about the referendum and the country and what their views were so that was quite important.

I: Is that something you have worked with young people, talking about the referendum?

P: Staff in here have yeah, not me particularly – I have in the past – the staff in here particularly would talk to them about the referendum and it's more about encouraging young people to vote, to try and understand the facts such as they were, to try get their heads around it to be as informed as possible without in any way influencing them about the direction of travel and how they should vote. It is about maintaining that neutrality and objectivity but it's about trying to provide the tools for them to engage, to learn, to make sure they voted, how they did it, make sure they were registered so it was about supporting them to and encourage them all to have a voice and have a say and that was really

important and encouraging debates, we have been having discussions with politicians but on their terms and there was in fact, there was a big event for kids either at the SECC or the Clyde Auditorium and we had young people asking questions at that so that was really important so at every opportunity get them to have a voice and to make that voice heard and feel confident enough.

I: It seems like they were quite politically engaged in the whole process, which is nice.

P: Yeah.

I: What are some of the factors that might encourage young people to participate, broadly or within the organisation?

P: Culture is the most important one, it is having the right culture and having a culture where people will believe it and that's got to come from the leadership that's about and you want to listen and learn and if young people say things, then we should listen. So we ask them their views or you ask them to make recommendations then if you think something can be done, explain why and if you think it's not the right thing then you will need to explain why. If it was something that the organisation couldn't do, I can't think of anything on the top of my head but if they do make recommendations and suggestions and they're useful, it is up to us to deliver on it so there is no point in listening to their views unless we do something about it so that's been part and parcel of what we have done. For example, we talked about a bit in the past when I was heading up the inclusion bit and some young people talked about that they would like to speak on behalf of the organisation at times so we created that young ambassador scheme so that is what has happened so there is lots of them in their training or they think they would be good mentors and we've got lots of young people employed by us as peer mentors and some as volunteers and some employed so these are the things if they are asking, we need to do something about it, we don't do anything then we don't ask.

I: What about the kinds of things that might discourage young people from getting involved and participating?

P: I think what might discourage young people, tokenism will definitely discourage them – people that are not serious. If you don't create the environment to enable it to happen for young people to come together and if they don't think that people are approaching it in the way they should, that's about tokenism as well so there is a bit about needing to be on board with it. I think sometimes we need to be giving an opportunity and an environment so say a bit meeting and they had the opportunity to discuss it informally and help to focus their thoughts as well and be prepared and some young people don't need that, they just get right in about it and they've got really great things to say and really important things to say, other kids might need a bit of space with their pals and their peers then that is facilitated to allow them to put their own thoughts together and to express them.

I: I know that you said that you try to target the hard to reach young people , what do you think the impact would be if across the board young people were more politically engaged, more able to participate in a range of processes?

P: Well, it's got to be good for Scotland as a whole in the country, in our cities. If young people currently marginalised, disengaged, have had poor upbringings, haven't done well at school, it's about trying to give them an opportunity to realise their potential and realise their value and their worth and they've got something to offer and they've got something to offer in their communities. It's about linking them in with other parts of the community so that's got to be good for communities, that's got to be good for things like fear of crime, it's got to be good in terms of young people participating democratically, vocally by voting, by taking an interest in their community by taking an interest in their fellow citizens, by taking an interest in people who live up the next close, whoever that might be. That's all got to be of value and so it's got to only be good. The more we encourage participation and the more we encourage inclusion, the more we encourage young people being involved in the democratic process then that is can only be to our betterment really.

I: The UNCRC sets out rights for children and young people with Article 12 being the more participatory right, it gives a right to a child to express their views but also dependent on their age and maturity so that highlights a conflict between allowing them the opportunity to be heard but also having that dependent on their competence and ability. How does Action for Children implements this right and approaches this conflict between those concepts?

P: If you look at our organisation, we have a lot of kids that are deemed hard to reach from pretty challenging backgrounds, all range of kids with different age groups, backgrounds. Some of the kids with disabilities and what we do is we work really hard to actually find the means to enable participation of these children, so for example as part of our whole participation thing we had a day with lots of kids who had disabilities, so that was physical disabilities, learning disabilities and with staff supporting it to try and have the dialogue to get the young people's views about what they think about the services they get, how responsive the services are, what do they think about the staff, what do they think outside of school or whatever it is so it is important that we enable that to happen, we facilitate it. We work hard and we work really hard to ensure that we do that as meaningfully as we possibly can so we take that seriously so that's really important and it's about learning what we're doing well, what we're not doing well, what the needs of the kids are and as an organisation these are things that we should be champion on you know with them in terms of politically, strategically, at a policy level so it is important to actually do that with them. For a lot of kids, there are kids we talk to for example who are looked after children or their in supervision so, in fact, I was in a conversation just the other day with a young person who was talking about their reports and not by us, but they

talked what the children's hearing and feeling that the social worker who they didn't see an awful lot had written stuff that was inaccurate and didn't represent the facts and it is how we challenge that. But then we also that's about a general issue about data, sharing data about them so you have that conflict in terms of that young person not wanting data shared about them but then there is the issue for us that we are also concerned about their safety, and therefore, their protection and therefore, explaining to them that things we've got to do and that's our role we have but that doesn't take away from what our desire for them to participate, to be open and honest and frank about their experiences and kind of society they want to live in, what kind of system they want to live in so there could be seen a tension their but its recognising there are constraints. All of us as individuals in society and understanding what they are but ensuring that people's human rights, the rights of children are upheld and never undermined so but it is about explaining to them when there will be times when you got to do things that they might not feel are compatible with their values or their ethos, like sharing information – I don't want one agency sharing information about me – you've got to say well that's because we are duty bound to protect them and that is our role within so it is understanding that and about explaining that.

I: There is an argument that a young person doesn't have the ability to make a rational choice, young people aren't granted full citizenship status and the right to vote until they are 18. It would be good to get your take on that and if you agree or disagree with that principle?

P: I was at an event recently and someone was talking about community assets and somebody said that children were our greatest community asset and of course I see them as citizens and we would absolutely support the UNCRC principles, so we would absolutely support them and I would see them as citizens with rights. Young people under 18 can't vote but I don't see them as lesser or having any less rights that the rest of us but it is understanding what their rights and responsibilities are at a particular age as well but it is about full participation as far as I am concerned, and full citizenship, inclusion and kids are vulnerable – we need to make sure that we minimise as much as we can with those vulnerabilities as well so to ensure full citizenship.

I: In what ways do levels of young people's political participation could impact citizenship and democracy?

P: It is important. There are so many children and families in Scotland who have not participated in a political process for a whole range of things and the great irony is that some people who have had some of the worst experiences, are the most disadvantaged, have had the most challenges and they are the people who you want to hear from more. I think we need to work hard to ensure – a lot of the kids we work with they understandably have a lot of frustrations and some got a lot of anger and emotions in them and often when the channel that it comes out and they end up being in groups and gangs,

involved in particular behaviour that is damaging for them or for others and it is important that we can actually support these young people to be involved in a political process to influence, to be heard, to have a say and we believe that all these young people have got values, potential and as much potential if not more than anybody else just because they have been brought up in a family where they were neglected or they weren't looked after properly, whatever it might be or where they come from – that doesn't mean to say they don't have as much, is not more potential and ability than anybody else and it is about how do we release that potential and how do we ensure we influence the political process to ensure that the rights of those individuals are met and adhered to. That's how we would see it and we have kids that go up and speak at conferences in front of 300 people no bother – funny, eloquent, and passionate and can take the whole place with them but before and the great irony is before they get involved in an intervention and a service they weren't get near anything like that, they were not recognised as having the or the didn't feel like they were recognised as having value or worth but clearly they do.

I: What considerations have needed to be made and what changes have had to happen?

P: We for example, Action for Children were one of the GIRFEC pilots and there is a lot of good practice taking place across the piece and in particular we learn through so we had to make sure that we stick to good practice and how you work with a Named Person or if you are lead professional, how you make sure that we start to embed all of that in our organisation and how do we ensure within all that that the voice of the child is heard and the families heard in that too. We support the CYPA, GIRFEC, the Named Professional and those provisions so as an organisation we will need to build on the work we've done previously and start to look to how we replicate that across the country.

I: How do you think the new Act might impact on participation?

P: Hopefully it will increase it, although there might be different views – if we need additional services and supports to actually prove advocacy but as far as I'm concerned, the Act has got potential to increase participation. We've all got a responsibility, organisations like ours, there should be no excuse for organisations like ours not having a strategy in place which seeks to improve participation, consultation, co-production and all of that. You talked about the children's hearing system, you're a panel member – I think there are big bits of system like that that need to improve around participation and listening to children and I think these are the bits we need to support as organisations alongside young people to actually enable positive change within parts of the system, like the CHS. There is a lot to be done still but hopefully through the Act that we will see an increase in participation.

I: What are views of children's rights and levels of participation in Scotland as a whole?

P: I think, totally support children's rights I think that participation in Scotland is patchy. I think there are good examples of it I think there are organisations and individuals good at it I think we need to improve as a whole, across the piece such as the CHS – that is a system, it's an adversarial process, it's a system that's set up to listen, to meet the needs of children and I think we need to do more when listening to children, not about "what do you think about the paint on the walls here?" or "are the seats in here good?" but "was my report good?", "was the experience that I had – was that good?". I think in Scotland we have a long way to go before we have the kind of levels of participation that we require but I have seen incremental progress and the important thing is going back to the bit about offending, you are in a culture where – the secretary for Justice, Kenny McAskill – one of the important things he done when he came into government was he said 99% of kids in Scotland are fine, there not out of control, there now feral youth, there is 1% that needs a bit of support and we are going to give them support and what was important was that he was setting the tone for the country where we have a progressive environment that embraces children and some of them have some challenges but we are going to support them and created a culture where kids are not bad so therefore if you have that kind of culture and set that tone then people will see that it is fine to be sitting with groups of kids like that and be talking to them and hearing their views and listening to them so that's important and I think Kenny McAskill was really helpful at setting the tone around one part of the business. We need more of that and we need more work, this is not a party-political point of view at all but it is saying there is a good example of a Minister coming in from day 1. You read all the things about moral panics in university, that's what it was like pre-KM, feral youth all of control, ASBO this and ASBO everybody and the whole thing was up in the air, media headlines, politicians and KM came in and says "wait a minute" most of these kids are fine, there are some kids that we are going to help so the more of that kind of language sets the tone for more of the environment and culture that's probably at the heart of what you are talking about here.

I: How successful do you think Action for Children has been at involving young people but also setting a standard for other organisations?

P: I think we do and I will give you a good example, we are involved with a range of other agencies in public social partnerships, the government provide organisations with money to work in partnership and to set up exemplar models and then at the end of it, the public sector or LA should pay for them if they prove their worth so there was a big discussion recently about having an event in the Parliament with the organisation's talking and I said "well no, why don't we have an event in the Parliament that is run by young people we work with and you so it is managed by them, they speak at it, they'll send out all the invitations, they will chair it, they will do the presentations and it will be there event that we can all attend", so we had a meeting on Thursday, I chaired a meeting with organisations and young people who are service users from different organisations and there is another meeting being

set up but the services users attend and they were totally up for it and they loved it and it was about just saying that it doesn't need to be about us, the top brass of the organisation were saying I'll chair this and I'll be saying that, but why don't you let the people who have had the experience, why don't you give them the opportunity to do it – they are much more powerful so that's cause we think like that and everyone else was going that is exactly how we should be doing it and a good example. A service user focus, some of them will be 16, 17, 18 and some of them will be older than that but it is about the whole ethos of let's listen to the views of the people who have been there who we provide services for – do they think it is good, do they think it is bad, do they think it is a lot of rubbish? What have we learned from them? Some organisations are always comfortable with that, they let people loose and they can say anything but what's the problem with that? We are going to have this event so I think we have tried to set a benchmark cause on that day I had two members of staff there with young people and the two members of staff were service users themselves, so all the people in the room had been through our services whether they were staff or whether they were young people in development.

Duration: 39:52

Interview 2 – Children's Parliament

Interviewer: What is your role within the organisation?

Participant: I'm the Community Programme Manager and that means within the organisation we have two key strands of work, one is around consultation with young people and that is led by my colleague Chelsea Stinson and the community programmes is led by myself and they are more ongoing pieces of work within communities principally Glasgow and Fife at the moment and we are developing some work in Renfrewshire also.

I: Can you tell me more about the aims and missions of the Children's Parliament, and how is values young people's participation?

P: It might help if I just tell you where the Children's Parliament came from and that then sets the purpose for the organisation. It was about 20/21 years ago that Cathy and Colin, who are still our co-directors were working with a group of children looking at what they needed in their communities to be healthy, happy and safe and that is how we frame children's rights around healthy, happy, and safe just to make it an accessible way in for children. The children in this huge mural, there is so much visual information in it and in the centre of it they painted this building, this place and when asked what it was they said it was a parliament for children, it's a place where children come and are heard by adults and the children felt that that was such an important concept, not to have a fixed parliament building but to have spaces where children are heard and from that was born the idea of the Children's

Parliament in Scotland which means that as an organisation we progress that through very innovative, very creative methodologies to engage with children around their participation in civic life so for us that means we will support children to respond to key policy consultations, we will break it down, we will provide education to help them understand the components of it, we will provide them with space to explore their responses to what they've learnt, a space for them to express what it is they need and we'll do that in the context of children's human rights and a rights-based approach so all the time we are helping children understand what their rights are, how they might differ from their wants and we'll be helping them thinking about the home environment, the school environment, the community environment and how they can be supported with their rights or maybe challenge their rights and we'll be supporting them to think about what changes they want to be seen made. Sometimes that can be against very defined parameters of specific consultation, sometimes it can be much broader than that and the programmes you see running at community level, the community programmes are much broader programmes where children are supported to dream big and think about the big picture. It is very much about participation, children's participation within civic life, influencing policy making and practitioners. Community programmes are there to help demonstrate what rights-based approach looks like in practice and there for children to benefit from transformative powers of a rights-based approach and as an organisation, we are very keen to influence adults and support them to reflect and think about how they can change their practice in order for children's rights are better brought to life through whatever profession they are in.

I: What would be the overall aim of the organisation?

P: The aim of the organisation would be to embed children's rights across practice in Scotland and to demonstrate what that looks like in practice.

I: Can you give me some examples of how children are able to participate?

P: I will give you an example of a piece of work in Renfrewshire where the theme of the project was what do children need when they move from primary school to secondary school so it is a transitions project. What we did there was we had several stages to the programme, the first stage was having identified three primary schools and one secondary school, we surveyed 150 children asking questions relating to how they see themselves, how they see their friends, how they view the learning environment that they're in, what were the strengths of it, what could be better about it, what their feelings were about moving from one school to the next, what were the gains, what were the losses, getting them to think about important adults in their lives, and what were their roles that they might play as well. From that survey data we then designed a workshop that was delivered in the classroom to those children and that workshop explored the theme of change, transition and development and we facilitated it using a set of 56 cards that we developed based on the analysis of data from the

questionnaires and some of the feedback we got from the local authority and some of our understand of working with children and those cards first of all supported children to think about different definitions of change, it helped them to think visually as well as in word-form, it helped them to think about change that they have been through in the past and what they've learnt from and what strengths they had as a consequence, it helped them to think about the changes that they would be about to experience when they moved to high school and some of the key events that would be involved in that change, it helped them to think about the emotions and feelings around that change – the positive and the negatives, and it helped them to think about who is their life that could help, including what they could do for themselves. All the way through that process we facilitated groups of 10 children with one worker so we had 18 groups running in total with the final numbers, some groups were a little smaller and the children were using the cards to record their views so they would be drawing images to reflect what they were talking about, they were using words to capture and those 18 sets of 56 cards then became source material to the next stage of the project, so we had well over 1000 images and words and descriptions from the children themselves we then worked with the local schools to refer 16 children into a creative week and those children were referred on the basis of maybe lacking confidence, having key anxieties around the transition from to high school, problems with engagement in the school environment, similar referral criteria to what you have seen today. Selected children to whom the transformative process of participation would wreak rewards for them and what those children was over the course of 6 days was use all those source material to design and create a 25ft mural, it was 25ft long and 6ft high, 6 enormous panels with hundreds of images all presented in a very coherent way to describe the journey of change from thinking about their past changes and the past challenges and they described that as a jungle, the jungle of past experiences and moving on to a bridge that represented the process of change and transformation and beneath the bridge was a torrent of river that represented challenges and dangers but also in the sky there were messages of hope and possibility, there was a tower in the middle that was a tower of strength, there was a child bearing a flag that said new dawn new day so that was the title they gave the piece of work and they wanted something very positive, very inspiring, and at the far end of mural the bridge came out into the land of their future possibilities, it was a land of abundance, a land of trees and birds and blue skies and children sat reading, learning, relaxed, happy, confident and we used that process to capture the views of 150 children. They were filtered and then articulated by 16 on behalf of all the children and then that mural was presented at a large event at the high school after the children had moved into the high school so we had 56, maybe more, people in attendance there and the children presented the mural and told people what was in it, people were able to talk to children individually and in groups to understand what was there and the mural was then reproduced in a 5 metre banner for each participating school which they now have a learning, education tool where they can use the views of previous pupils to engage with future pupils who are about to go through that change and to support

them. We did some training for the teaching staff as well around that and that is an example of how we work with children creatively: on a big scale, then filter it down, capture it artistically and then use that artistic expression to support children and adults to engage in around what the theme is.

I: Can you think of any challenges that were encountered during the process?

P: Yeah, a big challenge was actually engaging with host school, the high school. The challenge there was that I think to the school by and large most people were seen as folk who came in to paint a picture and bugger off again and it was very hard to get the school to understand that actually they have a key role to play in stepping forward and making themselves available and being open to engaging with the children and the messages they were seeking to convey. That was very hard work.

I: What is the political influence that children can have within the organisation?

P: Their political influence would be, an example of that would be the children and young people bill we were a key agency for engaging with children under the age of 14 in that consultation process, similar kind of process where we working with large groups of children capturing what their broad understanding of what their needs are in relation to the bill, supporting them to understand what their rights are and then working with a more defined group of children to articulate their response to the bill and representing that creatively and artistically in order that then policy makers are then alert to what children are asking for through that consultation process and another much more recent example would be in the Lothian, NHS Lothian has just consulted on a strategy for children's health and wellbeing and how services need to develop to better meet the needs of children and we provided a consultation toolkit so we trained 30 worker across the Lothian's who work with children and they went off and used the toolkit to then capture the views of 350 children and that information was fed back to NHS Lothian and in parallel to that we did a sort of bell whistles version of it so we did some group work using the toolkit with a number of groups with children in Edinburgh and we captured all that information and presented it in an instillation that was then present at NHS Lothian's child health conference that was a couple of weeks ago so the broader NHS staff are then engaged and altered to the views of children but the key strategic managers are in receipt of that report and are actively working with that now to shape their strategy and the actions against it and were in discussing with them, we will be having discussions with them how we can keep that conversation alive, between children and the NHS as well.

I: It sounds like they were responsive to you...

P: Yeah.

I: What about when you were working with children for the Act?

P: That was before my time so I don't have the details of that, I couldn't tell you the answer to that. I do know that the government have on their website our report and some visuals that were created as a consequence of that so publically they are presenting that as an intrinsic part of their consultation process with children but what their response was and how that influence the content of the bill I couldn't give you the answer.

I: What do you think the benefits of participation are to a child or young person, an organisation and a community?

P: To the organisation, it's our bread and butter, it is what we do, it's why we're here so it is very much our raison d'être and every time we work with children we work as an organisation, we learn as a team, we're reflecting, we're refining our approaches so for us its very much a learning cycle and it is not just learning about how we do things its also learning about children's perspectives because they are always change they are always shifting, each year there is a different outlook. For the children themselves, real participation has the power to be transformative, it has the power to lift aspirations, it has the power to build confidence, it has the power to really instil in children a sense of belief that their rights are there for a reason and this is how it feels when their rights are met, it gives them an experience that you can't teach by knowledge exchange alone, you can't just tell children they have rights they need to experience it to believe it and that helps children to build a real sense of value in themselves and from there we get children valuing other people, valuing their peers and other people around them. It is about growing confidence, it is about growing sense of possibility, it is about developing ambition it is about given children tools for life. Within our participation work we bed a lot of nurturing approaches which are designed to help children feel at home, feel safe, feel connected, feel looked after, feel valued by the adults that are providing the experience for them and for many of children that are in our referred programmes that kind of nurture is often lacking in other parts of their life, it might be lacking it other parts of their home life from one or more of the carers, it might be lacking in broad community because the community is very fractured or really run down and not a place where they feel respected or looked after or safe so for us the whole participation process and what is wrapped around it is designed to be transformative so it should be transformative and in policy terms within education policy and the CFE very much speaks about children being active citizens, without those life skills we will never have active citizens, confident individuals that feel that they have what it takes to speak out or to demand what is rightfully theirs when it is not being provided. For the children, it should be transformative and it's got every possibility of being transformative if it is properly resourced. For the community more broadly I think this is one of our challenges, is influencing adults to then meet children half way and it is all well and good raising the confidence of children and raising their abilities and their sense of possibility and entitlement and we have to work with the duty bearers as well, the adults and challenge their resistance, challenge their

barriers, challenge their perceptions, challenge their practice in order that they are then receptive to the demands that are place on them when we adopt a rights-based approach and as an organisation that is the harder work to do because there are different mind-sets as to how to we embed children's rights in Scotland and I think one of our concerns would be that there is more focus on providing children with information about their rights but not so much information about instilling a rights-based approach which is about creating experiences that are transformative, not just about telling children they've got rights and that development is going to be a very long-term investment that we need and we have some polices in place that are starting to impact that, GIRFEC for instance is one of those polices that I think it's starting to influence those who are not yet at the child protection threshold but are heading in that direction. I don't think it has yet come down to impacting universal services and getting it right for *every* child I think it is focusing on children in need as a way of preventing them of going into child protection bracket and that's really valuable stuff, that is really important but the way I conceptualise things I think the children's parliament approach compliments that top-down legislation with some real bottom-up grassroots instilling a sense of possibility in children and a sense of capacity in children that adults now need to respond to and I think the imperative is now on the adults.

I: When I asked you said real participation, what do you mean by 'real participation'?

P: Maybe if I turn that on its head and tell you what I think is not real participation. Sometimes when participation is done very badly, people ask questions that they want answering or they ask questions knowing what the answer will be because the answer that they are aiming for fits their agenda – that's not real participation. That's just gathering information to justify your stance. Real participation is about giving children a much broader platform and not controlling necessary which direction it goes in because children might well take us to places we would never even imagined or we never even thought we should be going and that's for us is a real challenger, when about we consult with children when ideas are pretty fully developed and the likelihood of significant impact of those developed ideas because a lot of people have invested effort in trying to get it right, often things go out for consultation to verify we are on the right track rather than to fundamentally question what we are doing and I think real participation is about engaging children from the very start, it's about given them platform to truly express what is going on for them but it is also a process that helps children to learn as they go and to respond to that learning as well as they go so it's about putting a lot more power in children's hands than often consultation does and I think real participation is, for children, isn't about tick boxes and surveys, it's about dialogue, it's about discussion, it's about getting to know each other and it *has* to be rooted in really good relationships for that to be really valuable. So for me participation, we're as well thinking about it as an approach that is embedded into everything we do on a day to day basis rather than a one-off time limited events for some special occasions or special

policy developments so everybody should be nurturing participation in every child all the way through their professional relationships.

I: What about the barriers to participation, what challenges are there that discourages participation?

P: I think resources is a big barrier, to train people, to help people, to reflect, to adapt their practice, to learn through experiences and to share that with other people requires investment in time. The resource of time is very very challenging for people, if you want to train teachers for two days, you've got back-fill, that's £500/600 of back-fill for a school, not to mention all the opportunities are lost by the teacher being on a training course rather than in the classroom so people's times really limits capacity. I think power is a big issue, schools are hierarchical – they have power within control structures, we run schools like that forever in the day and a participatory approach requires us to relax some of that power structure. It requires us to meet children's needs who are in a slightly different place and to expose more of ourselves as people rather than wearing a mask of a professional and that is a real personal challenge especially if you have been in a profession for 30 or more years, to ask you to unpick that and re-imagine how you might work with children. Although, I have to say that some of the people who I think are, some of the more inspiring people I have seen have been those who have been close to retirement and those fresh in the job so I don't think age need be a barrier or experience to be a barrier, I think it is about confidence, it is about belief. I think also as well there are competing voices around children's rights as to what's the best way to go about this. There are different ideas out there, there are different packages and I think we need a broader, more coherent strategy around children's rights to what I am seeing right now. I'm seeing children's rights embedded in various policy areas but a key articulation of what children's rights means in Scotland, how we're approaching that, what the responsibilities are around that – I don't see that coherence in the way I see it in other fields, it would be helpful for us to have that.

I: Taking it from a children's perspective, what do you think might encourage them and discourage them to actually become engaged?

P: Seeing impact, feeling affirmed for contributing, feeling like they are growing and learning and contributing, contribution being fun, being playful, being interactive. Having the right relationships, having adults that they feel connected to, that they feel appreciated by, that they feel they can trust and knowing that they have the right to contribute and knowing they have rights that sometimes are not met and it's totally justified for them to challenge that and not being met with being discredited or being brushed aside so I think that's a culture, all that I described is a culture in which children right's should be brought to life, that's what would encourage children to know that their valued, to know that they are special to know that they are important and that their views are just as valued as anybody else's view and their views on their own life are probably more valued that anybody else's.

I: How do you think children's participation could be increased?

P: I think it is about culture, I think it is about changing practice, changing people's perceptions and de-escalating people's anxieties. A rights-based approach doesn't mean that they run around a mock and have all the power, sometimes people that everything is going to go to rack and ruin and children will be ruling the world, as adults we owe it to children to keep them safe and that doesn't mean letting them do whatever the hell they want to do. We do need a culture shift and there are great practitioners out there that are fabulous examples of people but it's not consistent across the piece and we need that sense of consistency.

I: Taking Article 12 of the CRC, obviously giving children a right to express their views and being involved in decisions that affect their lives but that also being dependent on their age and maturity, how does the Children's Parliament implement that right and balance the conflict between allowing them to express their views but also being dependent on their development?

P: I think it is about going at the pace the children are at, and not imposing on them an agenda that is age-inappropriate and for us that is about forcing children into an agenda rather than forcing it upon them, and I suppose by that I mean using participatory-based discussion activities so that children populate it with where they're at rather than asking them inappropriate questions. Earlier this year we did a big event for the government where we brought about 25 children from across Scotland to meet 25 senior directors, deputy directors from across government departments to talk to government about what they want in the future and all the children had taken part in some of our previous projects so they came with, for instance, children from Glasgow came with their paper mache models and that was a starting point for their conversation, that learnt children to be in a state that was age appropriate for them because they were defining it, they were defining it by referencing their work and their ideas that sat around that body of work. In the same space we had some children who were in lower primary school and they sat with a treasure chest that was full of coins and all the coins had captured what they had been talking about and so 6/7 year olds were in the same space as 10/11 year olds, both having age appropriate conversations because it was born out of the ideas that children had brought forth and I think this comes back to what I was saying about what's real participation as opposed to tokenistic participation, real participation is transformative participation because participation is based on children's agenda emerging and not being led by the adults and if we allow children to self-define, they naturally are at the age that they are at, that in itself is protective of not asking children to go further than what is appropriate for them.

I: What are your views on lowering the voting age to 16 and giving them citizenship rights?

P: It's a personal view, rather than an organisational view – but I think it is absolutely right, I think the referendum absolutely demonstrated the level of engagement that teenagers can have in processes, their ability to research, their ability to evidence, their ability to draw conclusions, their ability to have their own views independent of their peers, and their ability to really inspire. I thought the debate with teenagers in Glasgow that was broadcasted in the lead up to the referendum was really inspirational and I think if people doubt that teenagers could engage meaningfully in a political process, I think that would have blown any doubts out the water because teenagers there were so on the ball and were taking such responsibility and it was that sense of responsibility that really stood out to me, I think it was a brilliant demonstration of why teenagers should at the age of 16 and 17 be able to vote and why they've got the capacity to engage in that process.

I: Did you work with any children on the run up to the referendum?

P: No.

I: In what ways do you think children's levels of political participation, or participation in general could impact on citizenship and democracy?

P: I'm thinking of the children we've got here this week, if you look at democracy not just as a process of voting and being represented, but democratic systems rely on a sense of social cohesion and a sense of social trust and a sense of regard for different views and sitting with difference even if we might not agree with it, then the kinds of participatory processes you see downstairs today, I see nurturing a sense of confidence in themselves to be who they are and a sense of respect for others and for difference and for diversity and that I think creates, or contributes to creating a respectful dynamics in which democracy sits. Democratic processes don't work if you have diplomats, if you have dominant views that make no room for different opinions, or what other people might call dissent, dissent is good – that's about challenge, that's about questioning and if we are developing children's confidence, if we are developing their ability to articulate, we're developing their ability to engage in democratic processes as adults, as teenagers, as children and democratic process might be on the sort of stage where we are voting, where we're challenging, where we're petitioning in parliament, all that kind of stuff but democratic processes also within establishments, within families there is a sense of democracy there maybe a sense of democracy within the families where children are heard and listened to and where their needs are taken into account and if we look to children's rights to influence things and to have their say, basically what we are saying is that children you have the right to expect a democratic approach to how adults respond to what your needs are so for me democracy works at every level of society, it's about nurturing the ability to engage in an inclusive practice or the ability to engage in an inclusive society and the skills to do that are the skills that are born out of transformative experiences, that might be through education, it might be through sports, it

might be through engaging in the outdoors, it might be through engaging in experiences like we are providing there. It is about building self-worth, it is about building confidence, it is about building key life skills, it is about building appreciate for other people, it is about de-escalating anxieties that arise from seeing diff experiences or being asked to be engage in different experiences, it is about putting on a whole sense of anxiety when people are faced with their own limitations and to help children push beyond what they see as a limitation and to test themselves and to challenge themselves so I think participation in the democratic process building children's engagement in civic society it starts with very small steps in the home, at school, with their peers groups, when they are playing outside, when they are engaging with adults who are delivering a project to them, their they key foundations, their the building blocks that ultimately, if we can build that consistency by having a rights-based approach to our education services, then what we should be able to see emerge from the other end of our education system and in our children's services are young adults that have learnt through experience that they can do this, they can speak up and they will be heard so for me it is all about process and about looking at where are children are at and what's appropriate for them at this stage.

I: Do you and the organisation see children as young citizens?

P: Absolutely, everyone is a citizen, a baby is a citizen, everyone is a citizen. What does that mean? It just means we are all in it together.

I: What considerations has the Children's Parliament needed to make through consulting with the Government and now that the Act has passed? What changes have happened?

P: I think the appetite for children's rights and putting that central to services is increased, people are less resistant by and large to consider right what does this mean for us, I think that is the positives. When we are going out to schools and training teachers and professionals it's easier than it maybe was 4/5 years ago. I think where it is a challenge though is that there is still a lot of decoding to be done between policy and practice, what does this look like in practice? I think it is a big question that people are still wrestling with and I think will do for some time. I'd go back to what I said earlier as well about, I think for some people there is still reliance on exchanging knowledge, teaching children about their rights rather than creating experiences where they can experience there rights being brought to life and that is something that I don't see a body of work that is really aimed at achieving that with real depth and breadth. I think, like I said with CfE, we've got some really good starting points but I think we need a real game-changer to shift that culture and I think that is one of our challenges ourselves as an organisation wishing to support that process is finding the appetite for it and I'm not sure we are seeing the appetite for it at the level we feel would be helpful.

I: Can you think of something that would create that appetite?

P: Leadership, political leadership – it's what it needs. That's absolutely what it needs.

I: How do you think the new Act could increase or impact children's participation – in terms of their rights?

P: What I see happening now, around the implementation of GIRFEC is a more tangible example and what I see when GIRFEC is being implemented well is I see practitioners, named persons, lead professionals who are responding to shared concerns by individual children I'm seeing them actively engaging those children in building solutions, that's when the practice is really good and GIRFEC I think is shifting that practice, positively and in the right direction when it is applied well. I think for me the disappointment there though is when practice is engaging largely with children in need that 20% of children that need some additional support from universal services aren't sufficient, it is meeting their needs but the other 80% I think are probably experiencing life as they had before and probably experiencing services largely that they had before, I don't see GIRFEC really shifting universal service provision. It is a story of two halves, the Children and Young People Bill has helped to embed some of that practice for some of the more vulnerable children and let's never take our eye off the more vulnerable, let's never stop giving them extra support but I think universal services are experiencing a very light touch.

I: It seems like you would say that strong political leadership along with getting it right for absolutely every child would change the culture and improve it?

P: Yeah.

I: What are your views of children's rights and levels of participation in Scotland, as a whole?

P: It is very patchy, when it is done well it is fantastic fun I think it is hugely enlightening for the adults as well as for the children and when you see adults coming into the space where we are working it's just light bulb moments and people really love it, really respond to it and I think if people understood that then people would really want to get involved in it, more and more but it is resource intensive at times. The work we are doing here it can't be done without an investment and it deserves an investment, absolutely, it's underpinning everything we should be doing for children it should be really invested in and the reason that I feel we should be investing in it is if you look at the outcomes attached to embedding really participatory, rights-based approaches then the outcomes for all children start to improve around their engagement, around their appreciation of the learning environment about their attainment, their outcome, their attendance all that kind of stuff so the rewards are there should the investment be made and I think that's what I would want people to consider more and more this isn't just something to do because it is a legislative requirement, it is something we should be doing to make life for better everybody, not just the children but the adults as well.

Duration: 46:06

Interview 3 – Who Cares? Scotland

Interviewer: Can you both explain your roles within the organisation?

Participant 1: My role is the Engagement and Involvement Manager, I'm responsible for the national participation with young people. We've got participation groups all over Scotland, we've got Development Officers in each region that link in with participation groups but they work alongside our young person's workers, our advocates in each Local Authority area and there the people that run the groups and they run the groups alongside our care experienced trainee staff members, we've got about 16 of them currently and I'm responsible for that element of the work. Prior to that I had managed, and still manage the Corporate Parenting National Training Programme and Kevin's now responsible for that and I also was the lead person on the young people influencing the policy agenda and I did that until about 6 months ago.

Participant 2: I am the Senior Corporate Parenting Officer of Who Cares? My role is to design, deliver and evaluate our national corporate parenting training programme as well as implementing it so essentially I coordinate all our training which over the past two years was designed for elected members and health boards and then community planning partners, over the next 6 months the training will be delivered to the 24 Corporate Parents who are named in the Young People Act and I will be responsible for creating that training package. At the moment we are developing three levels of training, level one will be online, level two will be face to face and level 3 will be multi-disciplinary training opportunities for the new Corporate Parents named within the Act so my role involves linking in with Denny's Development Officers, working with young people in Local Authorities and their advocates and making sure they are at the heart of our training, so every training session involves care experienced young people who provide an insight into aspects of their experience relating from education, children's hearings to placement moves or whatever it is that young person experiences.

I: What is the overall aim of the organisation and what is the value of young people's participation?

P1: The aim of the organisation is to create a level playing field for all children, we believe the organisation is going to strive for equality because the outcomes of looked after children are far worse than their peers and I suppose that's the kind of broad brush.

I: Can you give me an example of something that has allowed the young people to participate?

P2: I'll give you an example in terms of Corporate Parenting so if you look at, let's take exclusion – school exclusion, so young people who are looked after are excluded at a much higher rate than those

not looked after young people and if you look at the initiatives over the years, there's been numerous social policy documents, legislative, and guidance documents created, every one of them created to improve young people's lives around 15 specifically for looked after children, there also protected in legislation and in 2009, there was amendments made to the Additional Support for Learning Act which deemed all looked after young people to have additional support needs unless otherwise assessed but exclusions have remained an issue over the years so in our sessions in Corporate Parenting we specifically focus on education, so we look, we provide a broad overview of young people's outcomes and the point we make is that statistics only tell us, they're useful because they help us to identify patterns and themes and they can tell us areas in which we are doing well or not well and however for our looked after young people, they simple tell us there is a problem and they don't tell us why, why are their outcomes so poor, why do young people experience exclusion at a much higher rate and we can look at evidence and research and that's useful but we believe children and young people that have got direct experience of care and exclusion should have a profile in our corporate parenting training sessions so we will actively look for young people who have been excluded from school and we will support them to articulate their experiences. About six weeks ago we took about six young people away on a residential where we done life story work on their before, during and after care experience and then we supported them to tell that story in a way in a way in which they felt safe and comfortable and up in Highland, I've just delivered a session and the young person who we took to the residential came along and deliver his message and within that it talked about being excluded from, the impact that that had and some key messages for policy makers and decision makers, as a result of doing that Local Authorities are changing their systems and structures, so for example, Argyle and Bute have pledged that no young person with care experience should be excluded, they've also created alternative mechanisms which have been built into their existing policies so where in the past the exclusion, the power to exclude has been devolved whereas another system and structure has been put in place so that it goes to the head of service where that is reviewed so the young people are directly involved at every level and we don't deliver any training where we talk about looked after young people and it doesn't involve them.

I: And it helps to answer those questions of why?

P2: Yeah, absolutely and that why is really important because to look at an outcome, to purely look at a statistical outcome doesn't reflect their experience, it doesn't reflect all of the issues in relation to separation, multiple placement moves, bereavement, whatever the issues are and there is message for corporate parents across the board so education, people who are writing policy in the local authority, at every level – elected members who are responsible for allocating budgets are they supporting the right service or are they cutting budgets so it provides a lot of learning and in our evaluations the

aspect which is found most useful across the board in every single session is the involvement of care experience people so it is definitely the biggest part of training.

I: What about when you were consulting with the Government and the Children and Young People Bill, how were young people involved in that process?

P1: It started with a letter, round about September 2012 – a group of young people got together and wrote a letter to the Education and Culture Committee who were having an inquiry at the time which was just looking at the, it was an inquiry into the decision-making processes about whether to take young people into care or not and they were seeking evidence from different organisations and the young people from this organisation said it's all very well taking testimonies from different organisations but they've not lived that experience, we have, maybe you should want to have a conversation with us. I think to our surprise the government got back in touch and said that the clerks of that committee said absolutely, they are really keen, how can we do it and what we didn't want to do was expose young people in parliamentary TV, it was going to go on the public record, the parliamentary record but we didn't want to expose them all in the likes of an open session so what we had devised for a collection of care leavers, it was nine care leavers from all different local authorities and were aged between 17 and 23 at the time, we had agreed for them to come here so politicians came here, I think there was four of them and we set up a series of different pods where young people would talk about their experiences before care, during care and after care. We also interspersed that with fun ice-breakers so it wasn't all just heavy duty stuff and some films that other young people had made as well as additional evidence, the politicians had never heard evidence like this before and they went away and reflected quite strongly on it and it went on the public record and what happened after that, the clerks met around two months after that and said, that was really interesting but we really want to hear from young people currently in care. What was difficult for the young people who had given evidence was that they had never unpicked that before care journey before, the issues of abuse and neglect in the family home, the reasons that they come into care and it was a real rollercoaster because we had a couple a prep days with them and it was really really emotional and the guys had never went to that place before I suppose so what we are really conscious about is that we didn't want young people who are still currently living their care journey to experience the same kind of anxieties so what we proposed, myself and Kevin will prepare the young people again but this time we wouldn't have a strong focus on before care, the main focus would be on coming into care, during care and then about their aspirations about leaving care and their fears and anxieties. We did some prep sessions in here and the decision was made that we would go to parliament so we would make a bit of a fuss of the young people, have a day out but it would be a closed session with no cameras on. Again, the issues were similar to what the care leavers had communicated with politicians, because it was the whole committee this time, they were actually really really blown away by some of the

comments made by the young people. The young people got a lot from it as well, they felt as if the politicians really really listened and I think what happened since then was the report was published and there was obviously comments made in parliament and I think they've got a document somewhere about the political quotes around that time and it had been right from the committee members to Aileen Campbell to Kezia Dugdale to a whole range of politicians who had embraced this issue, that same committee then became the same committee that scrutinized the Children and Young People Act so you had, obviously the most informed group of politicians on looked after children's issues to then scrutinize the biggest piece of legislation for looked after children so it really, I suppose it was good fortune. Our organisation got into a coalition around that time with Barnardo's and Aberlour Childcare Trust so there was a lot of meetings behind closed doors with Scottish Government about the kind of policy, there were various bits of the Children and Young People Act which we could have actively campaigned upon but we decided to focus on after-care and continuing care because we wanted to make something that was going to have a bit of a legacy and that was the only area we focussed on. We were pushing an open door, there was a cross-party political world for this issue, it was the only bit of the Children and Young People Act that actually had cross-party support. When the act was passed in February, I think there was about 30 young people in the audience that we had brought up that night who were obviously cheering but the comments that were made by politicians right through that process from that report was published for the inquiry right through to the bill being passed as an Act in the February, it was really really big for the young people, for a lot of these young people for the first time in their lives they had actually said something and politicians had enacted and for the changes that came in relation to leaving care, the age of leaving care changing from 16 to 21 and for after care provision going from 21 to 26, I mean it is a considerable shift and for us it was the, for the young people it was the ultimate selfless act of giving cause none of the young people that gave evidence, even the younger ones will benefit from that legislation because you need to be born from I think it is April 1999 so they done it for other, it was completely selfless act.

I: They are not going to benefit directly from the Act, what were the benefits of participating in that process?

P2: I would say that from my perspective I supported the second group of young people in the process and there forward but I think what was interesting was and this is on record as well, parliamentary record and I have said this to the committee, is that the young people, there was a complete lack of understanding about their own lives, about why they were looked after, why things had happened, and there was very very little life story work that had been done with the young people. Also, there was a lot of young people who always had harboured views, thoughts or feelings but never had the opportunity to discuss them in a structured, supportive way that was on their terms so when we done

follow-up analysis of it, it was overwhelmingly positive and some of the young people spoke about being able to come to terms with some of the things that had happened and some of the decisions that had been made because we know that a lot of decisions were made for the young people and they didn't feel part of the process but even through that experience they were able to connect with other young people. So a few things happened, first some young people let go of some of their frustrations and anger relating to decision-making in the past and another thing that happened is that young people were connecting with each other and educate each other so because they were talking about specific experiences like at the children's hearing system they were learning so the group of young people who were looked after, one young person would talk about a really negative experience and another young person couldn't understand why that had happened and that young person was then sharing with the young person with care experience well you can speak to the panel on your own, you can ask for, you can invite someone there to support you but then again it showed a lack of young people just didn't understand their rights and they hadn't been supported to exercise them fully so there was many many benefits and I think you could go in to that, there used to be a book shelf there with loads and loads of reports that young people would have shared their views and spoke to people about 5/6 years ago and they've sat in a shelf and I think because there was such a clear avenue for change the young people can track it and it was kind of celebrated and captured when that same group of young people won the Young Scot awards, the overall award and the award of their group and we invited those young people to celebrate that and I think that's the first time they've maybe seen something from beginning, middle to end and it was a really good process to be a part of. I think for the young people, a lot of them had talked about not being listened to, talked about experiences being difficult, had talked about things they had never spoke to anyone about and I think it helped them make sense of their journey but also they took satisfaction in the fact that in should improve systems and structures and experiences for other young people.

P1: The first thing we had said to the young people after we had gave the initial evidence from the care leavers, they went to the pub after it I think they were all a bit stressed and I think we made the comment that guys, this will be a bit like pushing an elephant up a hill but it will get there and I think within 18 months it had been passed in legislation, they'd been to the young scot awards, they had got a lot of recognition nationally in the media. I think to see an end result, for that group of young people and all their peers – it was about 60 young people we took to young scot awards that night and it was just a great party atmosphere and obviously meeting and mixing with the celebs was nice as well but I think for them to be a part of something, I think that was the start of us sort of recognising that the organisation is creating a bit of a movement, a change rather than just a piece of work and we've been trying to develop that ever since in the work that Kevin leads and also in our participation networks

and recently launched our membership strategy as well so we are trying to create a bit of a trade union for young people I suppose in care.

I: What are the barriers to participation, what things discourage young people?

P2: Loads, for some young people it's the simple fact they don't know the opportunities that exist whether it's they've got the right to vote or the fact that there even was an inquiry that they could contribute to, adults are often the gatekeepers to children's lives, rights and opportunities being realised and I think there is a real lack of ownership over looked after young people, they're looked after and they've got the status but is there the same investment in each individual young person as parents would have for their own child, probably not and I think that young people through other systems and structures get disillusioned so the process of getting taken into care if they don't understand it and they feel they are not listened to at that very very early stage even before they are taken into care then that can be a blue print for the rest of their care journey where they feel they've not been listened to, they don't want to form relationships and build up trust with adults so if that's not done properly that can be a barrier for formal processes like children's hearings where it is meant to be about the young person. Research will tell us that young people don't enjoy these processes, they don't feel like it's their meeting, they don't feel listened to and a lot of the time they don't go to their hearing so they become subject to a lot of adult systems, procedure and legal procedures and there's many barriers but I think that's it – the sort of things I can think of because so many young people just don't feel part of the decision making processes like one young person probably articulated it better than me, he said he always feels that he is talked about in the third person even when he is there and although we've got a policy agenda like GIRFEC, everybody being treated as an individual, young people get taken out of school to go to hearings because professionals work mainly nine to five, Monday to Friday, the majority of children's hearings take place during that time so there's a lot of rhetoric about young people being at the centre of processes and in reality they're not.

I: How do you think you can get beyond that rhetoric?

P2: Based on our experience, I think that the model we are using is working so instead of talking about care experienced people we work alongside them so we've got about 16/17 young people who are in traineeships here who have got different types of care experience – foster care, secure accommodation, residential, looked after at home and every one of them sits within a different team so we've got one in our policy team. I line manage two who are in our training team, and we've got other individuals across Scotland who link in with our different networks so we're trying to put young people, I suppose care experience young people at the centre of everything we do and I think with the outcome of the Education and Culture committee I think that when you get behind numbers and stats and outcomes and you connect people with people there is a real change because you connect with

emotions, you connect with the person, and people seem to want to do more – it's better than a DVD and again, the last that session I delivered, an elected member, there were two young people that delivered inputs and the elected member then said to me, we've never had that in a report so people are numbers in report and there outcomes for government but behind that there a person and if you listen and look at the work around giving evidence you will see that that committee refer to the young people, if you look at ministers comments, MSPs they name people by their first name so there is a human connection there and I think the model we are using is cutting out bureaucracy, middle-management so young people are delivering to the very people that are in positions to influence...

P1: I think the fact that our programme, in terms of corporate parenting and political influencing is being delivered to bodies and agencies that can actually effect change, it's decision makers whereas our process before would go up go to a carer or their manager and almost cap in hand and saying we're thinking of doing this piece of work what do you think, oh I'm not sure about that, I'll need to see and it's kind of gone, that will never happen again. I think the difference for the young people is that they feel ownership of their own story, they feel ownership of this process, they are driving it. I'm really keen that our development officers never go anywhere without a young person with care experience because that's your credibility...

P2: There's no point...

P1: ...there's no point, this organisation would never do that again...

P2: ...and things like corporate parenting there is guidance, statutory guidance and there's legislation and then Conner who's our staff member here, care experience he said oh what does it mean to young people and he started his own project looking at how our corporate parents support young people to understand how their supporting them and just a completely different take on what has to happen and why, there's things as well like we talk about Aileen Campbell was really important in that she mentioned the word 'love' as well because in this sector there's a lot of bureaucracy around using words like love or what does that look like to provide care and we have anything that is important to young people, we have tried to support and to articulate it, explain it and alongside it we will use policy research, legislation to highlight that this isn't a bizarre concept, that this is something that is an innate human need and in fact social workers are trained to recognise that as well as most professionals learning social sciences, human development.

P1: I think what the organisation has done and it's through our message everything we do is based on our evidence based on young people, their telling us that what was absent within their life through their care journey and in a lot of cases was a stable, loving relationship and I think that sort of challenges the rhetoric of this sort of risk averse culture, I used to work in a residential school for

example when you couldn't give the weans cuddles and stuff, that was kind of frowned upon whereas it's the most natural thing in the world and I think there was a comment made by a young person that shocked me, they said that the staff are allowed to restrain me when I was in a crisis but they couldn't cuddle when I was upset so that's just an example of suppose a system that's maybe not getting it right about trying to keep people safe and the same time it's stopping that normalization, it's a bit strange but when you are talking to people who aren't in the front line, we're talking to politicians and senior managers, people that have probably never had to deal with that risk averse culture, their frame of reference are their kids, their grankids they get it completely – what's the problem, why we not doing this and I think that's been a big difference.

I: There is a tension between protection and participation, particularly within the UNCRC and Article 12, how do you implement that and if there is a tension between those two concepts?

P2: I think for us in terms of the work we do, there's an element of risk about a young person sharing their story, are they emotionally at the right stage, is the experience too raw, what from should they tell their story, should it be through video, should it be through creative, should it be through a drama so we look at various ways of telling that story to make it safer so the young person doesn't feel expose. I think in relation to the question more broadly, risk versus rights, I think that care historically has been risk averse, if you look at the SCCYP report there's a good report about young people who experience care in risk averse services and there's stories about young people not being allowed to go near the beach unless the worker has got their pool lifeguard, or they've got their cycling proficiency test, various various things but often what happens is there's a disconnect between the policy and practice in many many cases it's just a culture that's developed. If you ask people where the policy is and what it says, very few times it is written down in paper than that's the case but it tends to go through services very very quickly about what you can and can't do and then people will practice it in a particular way.

P1: I think from our perspective, we're a children's rights organisation, I don't sit in a training session with staff and say right here's your responsibilities, we've got a code of conduct, there are rules about being a staff member here but when I worked in residential childcare it was like rights and responsibilities were two words that were joined together, we tend to focus on rights, we're an advocacy based organisation and people come to us with problems, they want their voice heard, we want to make sure their voice is heard within our whole decision-making process, whether that's through advocacy, whether it's participation, whether it's about influencing policy, whether it's about training people and awareness raising. We're a rights-based organisation.

P2: We would probably take the line that many services are risk averse, especially things like hugging children, everyday interactions, not creating environments where young people feel loved,

discussions that need to take place there's a litigation culture so our line generally is risk averse to the point that it inhibits relationship building. When young people experience it they will be able to tell you what they can't do more than what they can do...

P1: There's young people that will come here to get away from their, this is a place where they feel part of something bigger than them, it's about having trusting relationship with different people within the organisation and meeting new friends and having a different connection and from their everyday life.

I: Thinking more broadly at young people's status in society as a citizen, how do you think participation can impact on those concepts?

P1: I think there is still pretty much a culture sometimes that their kids, what do they know and I think sometimes the sector can be quite well meaning and adults speaking on behalf of the child like I'm doing this on his best interest but sometimes if you ask the child it's maybe not exactly what they want. I think in terms of political awareness and a greater sense of citizenship, I suppose if you asked that question this time last year I would of said probably not great but it's quite a politically fuelled year with the referendum and a lot of young people, we've certainly seen it in here with the younger voting age and stuff. I think people are starting to take a real interest in politics, really for the first time and I think it's been quite infectious, we're about to, we've got two seats on the SYP that's been vacant for years, we've never used them but they've kept two spaces open for us and this is the first year we've actually had young people phoning up saying what's happening with these, let's be involved in this but what we're saying now as an organisation we need to look and tread carefully with that to bring in proper democracy with groups all over Scotland, surely we should then look at nominating members and nominating them and have a proper sort of voting and selection through our membership so we are starting to, I suppose politicise young people a wee bit and to take an interest and that'll lead to citizenship and feeling, which will again empower their rights.

P2: I think in some cases at a community level there is some areas if you look at local committee meetings, local residents have gathered together to express their concerns about a children's house being built in their area and sometimes they've been successful but I would say that's a reflection on their lack of knowledge and understanding of that group of young people and the purpose of residential house. I think it's a dual process where we can support and educate our young people about political processes and about community engagement and about how to be represented but at the same time as corporate parents, councillors, local authorities and everyone else mentioned within the act has their role to play in the community and where they are promoting positive images of looked after young people where they're educating their community and where they're creating the

conditions for young people to be welcomed to that community, not sympathetically or patronised but in a way which reflects societies understanding of their needs so I think it's a dual process.

P1: Our staff had a development couple of days last year with a guy called Cormac Russell and he's from an organisation called Nurture Development, kind of worldwide organisation, they do a lot of community capacity building, they worked with certain London boroughs after the riots for example and done stuff in Detroit and Chicago and what he was saying to us is that you should never look at young people from a deficit-based approach, you should always look at them from an asset-based approach, what they can bring to the table, about the gifts they've got and the strengths they've got and if you start looking at them that way you start seeing them as, as what he called it, was at-promise rather than at-risk. We've got a great tool now to hold corporate parents to account through legislation but what we've not got is that whole bit about community parenting and I suppose for us that's our next big challenge. When we launched the corporate parenting training programme in 2010 we done an interview with the Herald, it was myself and a young person got interviewed and he was 16 at the time Fraser and what he said was, it was really interesting, he said if a community has been chosen as the most nurturing area in that local authority to bring up its most disadvantaged children then that community should be proud and it should be a privilege, he turned the whole thing on its head. We've seen evidence of that, a couple of our young people went down and spoke to a minister in East Ayrshire, Rev. Grant Bartley the guy was called and they spoke to his congregation and they were looking, a public consultation was going out and a bit of protest about a children's home that was being built in that community around about that time, that guy then became a champion almost, he then seem them at-promise rather than at-risk, they are going to be an asset to our community rather than a threat and he became a champion and that local authority home built there, its never been a problem its successful children's home...

P2: We can send you that video cause that shows you what he thought, his prejudices...

P1: Can also send you the political quotes of the different politicians through that process cause Duncan sent me that recently.

I: That's a big shift from at-risk to at-promise, but a positive shift.

P1: Yeah, that's the culture of our organisation, basing itself on, at the end of the day we see the promise every day, we've got the privilege to work with these guys every single day and there's a credibility that comes with that because these guys are the face of our organisation, we won six awards this year and every time we've collected an award, it's not been me or Kevin that's picked it up, it's been one of the young people...

P2: We have kind of, we know, it's almost like a taxi taking you to your destination, we're there, all of the disconnect that existed, we're there just connecting young people...

P1: He picked up the award last, the Scottish Politician of the Year award, big Alex picked it up...

P2: ...we're there just connecting them and transporting them and supporting them and helping them to articulate their experiences and stories.

I: Can you say a bit more about the time before the referendum when the voting age was lowered, what was the atmosphere between the young people?

P1: The young people in our organisation had no interest in politics at all, our Influencing Manager tried to, I think quite successfully, he ran a wee campaign called "Care to Vote" and he was asking corporate parents, you've got a responsibility to make your 16 year olds, your younger kids, there is a referendum coming up, they've got a right to vote so how are you going to do that and we managed to get quite a lot of young people registered to vote through that, it wasn't as much as we would have liked but at the same it was, they started to get an interest in politics...

P2: I think the difficult is, you think about the general population – the average age of leaving care in Scotland at the moment is 17, our 15 year olds are applying for house at 15, our 15 year olds are thinking of leaving care, our 15 year olds are actually being encouraged to leave care although there is a big shift in the past 5 years around that but the average age is still 17. Where you may have 16/17 year old who are engage and connected in their academic studies, thinking about going on to university, interested in the political landscape, a lot of our young people are thinking about where they're moving next and what's in store for them – housing applications, how they're going to afford to live on their own and various other issues around that time so I think it's a very, it was a very challenging time to get young people actually linked in with that process and I think again that process linked in for us again because our young people perhaps don't have the parents who have got those values or place that importance on that political process, it was very difficult to identify who was doing that with young people so what we were saying is that corporate parents should be doing that and corporate parents should be engaging young people and educating them and trying to support them to see the value but again when you see their face when filing out housing forms and thinking about moving on it's maybe the most important thing in your life.

I: Just to finish on another brief discussion of the Children and Young People Act, what are the biggest considerations and changes you've needed to make since it has come in or the effect you think it is going to have?

P2: For me it is the two key areas, well actually, obviously for us the parts we have campaigned on – corporate parents, the right to remain in care until 21 and after care to 26. I think in reality that's the biggest, huge changes but I think in reality it doesn't really matter what we've done and what it says in law and what it says in policy because ultimately if a young person wants to leave care, they will leave and the challenge is, how do we make young people want to stay in care, how do you make a young person think this is my family, this is where I want to be, this is the best thing for me – I don't want my own flat, I don't want to go out there, how do we do that? and just because it says it in the law and policy, doesn't mean that it will be a reality and also there were many many provisions within the Children Scotland Act 1995 that we're never realised and because young people are so unaware of their rights, they accepted situations, they accepted poor housing, they accepted the lack of support so I think one of the main considerations for everybody will be how do we really get young people to want to stay in care for longer, to be looked after for longer and how do we inform them that they have got 24 corporate parents that they've got the right to ask for their need to be assessed, that they've got the right to suitable accommodation, how do we actually filter that from paper into every single part of our society bearing in mind that there's 24 corporate parents named. We can do some of that through the training but it needs to be at every single level so that young people if they are going to a job centre, if they're going to a welfare rights officer, they're going to a housing meeting, that at a practice level and they discipline that worker to recognise that they've been looked after, or are looked after and they've got the right for their needs to be assessed and have regard to their wellbeing. There's many many changes but I think actually realising it in practice will be one of the challenges.

P1: I think as well the on-going policy discussions that are still happening around about return to care are crucial, as much as there is a responsibility for corporate parents to make young people aware of their rights, but quite often I don't need to tell you this but young people can be social work to death until their 16th birthday comes and they just want to leave because they want a break from the system, they don't want to go to hearings anymore, they don't want to be involved in that whole system so they will naturally leave. I done a talk years ago with a girl who was in her 20s to her council and she told her story, and at the end the councillors listened and took on board what she was saying and asked questions, what could we have done then and she says nothing because I wouldn't have listened but see when I was 19 and really really needing you, I would have loved to have come back then and I think that's the message for me and I think that's why return to care needs to be realised or we're going to be having this conversation for a long time.

I: What are your views on young people's rights and participation in Scotland, as a whole?

P2: Young people's rights, it's a very, I think for me I think where young people that we work with, cause I used to be an advocate but when young people know their rights they use that knowledge in

the right way so it's not used as a threat and it's used in the proper context. When young people are aware of them they will often end up in better situations, they will access the right supports, they will go to the right people for help, they will access the right information at the right time that is appropriate to them. When they don't know their rights, they don't know their supports or their rights are not being upheld or realised, they don't access the rights services, they don't access the right supports and they can often end up linking in with people who aren't upholding their rights or interests but people who are listening for that period of time and they find themselves in really really difficult situations but some young people, they just do not have an understanding that they are entitled to anything, that they can ask for appropriate accommodation that they can ask for support and sometimes they are told no, but they don't know how to challenge that. I think when young people are aware of their rights and how to utilise them it's a very very good position for them to be in, but also it's quite sad because you don't want young people running around the country regurgitating what articles of the convention adults should be promoting so again it is about adults, it's about corporate parents upholding young people's rights, supporting them to understand what rights to have and how to utilise them but not to the point we make them into mini-policy rights activists because many many young people in Scotland have got rights and their protected and it's never spoke about but our young people, it seems we need to remind them of their rights because they need to be upheld.

P1: I think in terms of participation, we kind of see participation as a thread that goes through all our work and the activities that young people engage in, whether that's group work, whether that's being involved in the staff recruitment and selection processes, whether it's in training. I think it's getting better, 10 years ago I don't know how many young people were involved in training practitioners, I don't know how many young people were involved in recruitment and selection of staff, there's always been activity-based stuff, there's always been issued-based discussion, there's always been consultation with young people, there used to be reports that filled the shelves there that never actually went anywhere, that never made any change so there used to be a cynicism with young people "oh, what is it now", we don't find that now and we're quite hopeful that when our young people are involved in a piece of work that there actually asked the question where is this going to go, why am I giving up my time and that's good. What's also good is, I think organisations are starting to speak to each other as well, I think there is a need for a true participation network in Scotland – something we would be interested in trying to work alongside the sector to try and establish, there's groups of professionals and trainees working with looked after children all over Scotland, there isn't a mechanism to connect all of them so that young people know about the opportunities that are coming up, so they know about events, so they know about activities and also so that the network can learn good practice and innovative ways for that to happen. From our perspective we are getting better at it

being young person led, if you look at our group work, the best attained groups are the ones that are run by our trainee staff, it's delivered by young people for young people and I suppose that's a model that we would like to develop further and we would like the sector to develop that model as well because then I think you can create a real movement of change where young people are coming together in their terms and having their voice and then we can trail-lock it I suppose if you want to look at theory like Hart's ladder of participation, we can actually relate and move away from that tokenism which I think in some cases is still quite relevant. There are other mechanisms where young people are engaging in strategic leadership, for example champion boards in local authorities where the CEO, the leader of council, various director of services are engaging in a meaningful dialogue for looked after children on a regular basis and it is actually influencing local policy. It is a good model, it certainly with some local authorities I think it is something, it is another mechanism for young people to be involved in strategic decision-making. I think the way they have done it in Dundee City is very much on the young people's terms, the adults come into their space, the dress code is very much what the young people want it to be and it creates a comfort and this is being driven by the CEO who is leading by example and saying what do the young people want. It is also teaching young people about governance, purpose of meetings and the fact that councils can move quite slow sometimes in their decision making processes so sometimes the councillors need to get the quick wind up their sleeves cause what we've seen with the end result with the act, the benefits associated with the young people feeling I was part of that, that meant something and we are hopeful about participation and rights, I think rights are more of a challenge but I think with greater participation become stronger rights and that's where our organisation will continue to drive towards with young people at the front.

I: There is a feeling that things are getting better, young people can make a change but there is more that still needs to be done across the board.

P1: Yeah, a lot more needs to be done...

P2: It is getting better

P1: I think the fact that there is a political will, and when there's a political will that tends to filter down, that will filter down into local councils, that will filter down to the CEO, and then if the CEO buys into that ethos, then that will happen because that's the boss and they'll do, the staff will follow but it takes leadership from councils for that to happen. We've got brilliant examples of leadership in some local authorities, in others it needs some work.

Duration: 57:24

Interview 4 – SCCYP

Interviewer: Can you tell me what your role is within the organisation?

Participant: My job title is Head of Participation and Education within the office for SCCYP, in relation to the duties of the Commissioner which are outlined within the Act that brought the Commissioner into being, my role is to lead on ensuring that children and young people take part in the work of the Commissioner but also to promote participation and to promote education around children's human rights as widely as possible with children and young people but also with adults in terms of broadening commitment to and engagement with particularly Article 12 and other articles relating to children and young people's participation in life generally across Scotland.

I: Is that the overall aim of the organisation?

P: Well the overall aim of the organisation is to promote and protect children's rights so there's two different prongs so the promote and protect children's rights through the policy prong for instance happens and takes place through the scrutiny of legislation, or strategic development at highest level and at other levels across Scotland particularly civic society and public bodies and to be an advocate in relation to children and young people within how that is developing or developed to ensure that the perspective, looking through the prism of the UNCRC, the perspective of children and young people or for children and young people that prims is something that through consultation is being considered so that's one side of it. Our policy team are also very involved in advising and promoting and influencing at every level in Scotland, various groups and organisations on pieces of work both nationally and I suppose organisational specific context so for instance this piece of work going on at the moment where the organisation through our policy team is looking at with the Scottish prison service on letters that are going to young people to let them know that if they've been a victim of crime that the perpetrator of that crime something's changed so their sentence might be coming to an end or they might be moving somewhere else so there advising in relation to that at the moment. In relation to a participation point of view, we're also advising on how to involve young people themselves and looking at that issue and supporting that process so that's the way we go so from the participation and education kind of things, our role is to ensure that the commissioner is meeting his duties to make sure that children and young people are involved in his work and also to ensure awareness and understanding of children's human rights is being developed and promoted at every level...

I: What is the value of young people's participation within the organisation?

P: It's important because that's our *raison d'être*, we believe under Article 12 of the UNCRC it's quite clear absolutely that children and young people have absolutely a right to a voice in all matters that

are important to them and as duty bearers, like all other duty bearers we have a responsibility to ensure that the work of the Commissioner is informed and engaged with by children and young people never mind the wider agenda which is about promoting that message loud and clear and encouraging and supporting other duty bearers to ensure that they're complying with that.

I: Can you give me an example of when you have involved young people in the work of the Commissioner?

P: Well going back to the beginning of Tam's tenure because as I say to children and young people when I am describing what a Commissioner is and what the Commissioner does, the Children's Commissioner like many other Commissioners is a bit like Dr. Who, they get to be in the same skin for a certain number of years and then they transmogrify, it's the same role but it's a different Dr. or a different Commissioner, that's how I like to explain it. So within the context of Tam's tenure, so he started five and a bit years ago, he wanted to ensure right from the outset that his priorities were set with children and young people so it was my job, I joined the team at that point so it was my job to lead a national consultation that was called 'A Right Blether' which involved 74,075 school aged children and young people, at that time it was the biggest consultation ever undertaken publicly so that was created on a model that tried to ensure that we weren't excluding children and young people of school age by ensuring there was more than one way you could take part so to begin with we worked with other organisations who were consulting with young people primarily that was the SYP at the time so they were already consulting around their new agenda for the coming year and the new priorities for the year for the SYP from that in terms of young people aged 11+ or 14+ at that time we identified a number of strong themes that were coming through. We also worked with other organisations including the Children's Parliament who you've already mentioned and others to do very specific focus group type work who were doing with specific groups of children and young people and the Children's Parliament did a larger project looking at primary school aged children and the things they thought were important so we then with young people ended up with four keys things which we divided into four areas, one was what's important in terms of what the Commissioner should do in his tenure for children and young people in the home, children and young people in their learning environment, children and young people in the community and generally what is the national importance right across the country. If you imagine what we did with a big mixed group of children and young people came together for two days and did really intensive sort of sieving down of those issues against a clear criteria, one is is this business of the Commissioner or is somebody else already doing it, is this an issue that applies equally to children and young people, there was a whole range of things so those young people and children worked with us on that and eventually came up with 12 key things, three in each of those categories and those three things became ballot cards which then went out to all local authorities and schools and youth clubs and children's organisations, anybody that

wanted to take part so it wasn't a compulsory thing that people had to take part but at the same time as we were doing all this work with young people to identify those key issues we were also working with adults right around the country trying to get them excited about being 'A Right Blether' partner, a champion so lots and lots of people did sign up and it was fantastic. At the same time as that we were also running another strand to 'A Right Blether' which was called 'Right Brilliant Things' where we sent out a broad and wide invitation to any group or individuals child or young person to identify, this was like an assets-focused approach so things that were already right beautiful, right brilliant in their lives, what's going on at the moment in Scotland in children's lives which is really allowing you to live your rights and tell us in any way you want so you could write to us, you could email us, you could draw pictures, you could make models, you could make a film, do a rap, all of that stuff and we got everything, thousands of things came in to the office which identified all the things that were right and so we were able to go through all of that with a bit of analyse to identify what were the strongest themes are so the strongest themes were relationships and access to active and creative pursuits and activities, those were the things that were really really important and people felt that they, children and young people felt that they had a lot – that was lovely too and it also gave us lots of fantastic, wonderfully vibrant materials. Then the Right Blether voting cards went out and there was a ballot and as I said in terms of the vote return what was the votes that were counted that were eligible in terms of being counted, it was all quite strict the count very focused and proper and the votes that came back in were the 74,075 and the outcome of that was Tam's tenure was built on the themes that came out on top at the each of those four areas which in the home was to be safe and secure, so that's been interpreted through the prism of ensuring children and young people are free from abuse and particularly the effect of domestic abuse on their lives so that's become a strategic strand of the work of the office over Tam's tenure. In the community it was about being safe again and respected, so we focused on the respect but kept an eye on the safe so there's two things going on there, one is about campaigning in relation to issues that we can evidence, have a disparity in terms of age discrimination from children and young people the issues that they've told us they have issues with which are different for them than they are from other children and young people, it's a very participative strand so the first thing we did, we had big ideas we were going to do a campaign a year but we actually started on the issue of school toilets and qualities and the difference between standard and quality of adult toilets and workplaces and that has stayed with us, so it's massive. A lot of work has been done there and the government is about to start offering, with an advisory group, new standards, new guidance in terms of standards of school toilets that will go to all local authorities so it's been quite successful so far. We are also looking at things like stop and search, the use of mosquitos in public areas that sort of stuff. The third area that he built his priorities on was on where I learn and the winning, the leading theme from that was everyone should have the same chances in terms of their learning, no matter how much money their parents had so that's become a major part of work on

poverty and education which has been really fascinating lots of research done, lots of events and participative engagement happening with children and young people to look at this particular area, what makes the difference. The last one which is the national one is that everyone should be included no matter how different they all are and that's become an overarching priority on focusing on young people with disabilities in particular because of their lack of equality and equal opportunities so there's been lots of different pieces of work done around that relating to various aspects of that experience so that was fundamentally how he built the key drivers and priorities of the tenure which continues obviously. Not to say he's doing a lot of other things as well but those are the kind of foundations that were informed by children and young people so from that point of view that was how that started and we always ensure that whatever we are working on that the views and voices of children and young people are incorporated into what we are doing and that can be done in many ways. Through projects for instance with children and young people, like the toilet stuff so for instance we developed a model which schools then signed up to take part in which was a model of self-evaluation where children and young people led self-evaluation process and worked with adults in the school community to assess their own standards of toilets to work towards a very democratic, very participatory informed plan of action for that school and their school toilets and that work's been picked up by the World Health Organisation who are very interested in it and asked us to come do a big input on how to engage children and young people and talking about their own school toilets which was really interesting. That's an example of how we are working with children and young people and most children and young people not just doing their projects but bringing the outcomes of their projects to experts or steering group including the government, public health officials so they are coming and feeding back to them about what the reality is and what needs to happen to change so that's informing the new guidance that is about to be written so that's how that strand goes throughout. We have children and young people involved in research, we've got children and young people involved for instance we've developed a tool called the Golden Rules for Participation so right from the outset, children and young people have been informing us about their experiences of both poor and very positive participatory practice and that has come together with research that we undertook through Stirling University and worked with key practitioners who use participatory approaches in their work, and we brought that all together and children and young people then advised on what that tool should look like in order to promote the best participatory experience for children and young people so those are just examples.

I: How does the organisation work with the government, what is the political influence the organisation has along with the young people?

P: I'm sure you are aware, the Commissioner is independent of government and the relationship is one whereby, essentially the Commissioner is here to ensure that the areas where our government need to

improve in which are identified through our reporting process that happens periodically, from the UNCRC Committee so it's the role of the Commissioner to continue to encourage and promote and challenge where necessary government in relation to their commitment to and promotion of children's rights in everything they do. The relationship of the office and government is a very engaged one but it is full of light and shade as you can imagine, depending on the government of course it's one homogeneous beast it's lots and lots of different departments so over the last few years particularly because of the Children and Young People's Bill, there's been lots of dancing and lots of different light and shade in terms of the relationships and how we work but it is an encouraging relationship, it has to be. It's very much a lot has been achieved obviously you can see that through the Children and Young People's Act and the focus on children's rights within that context but it's like, the relationship is you never take your foot off the pedal in terms of scrutiny – scrutiny and engagement so that's kind of the two words I would use, scrutiny and constant engagement.

I: What are the benefits of participation, to a young person, to an organisation and more broadly, to the community?

P: The philosophy from this office is that without a real lived experience of being part of and taking part in your own life and your own world and your own community we can't have the world that is envisaged through the UNCRC which essentially is a massive combined wonderful parcel of all the elements that ensure the best possible childhood and teenage-hood for all children and young people in the now at that point in their childhood. Participation is absolutely fundamental as one of the four guiding principles so the experience of taking part right from pre-birth probably is something that the Commissioner is really passionate about and that obviously looks and feels very different at different stages of a young person's life or within the context of a young child or a young person's capacity. While all young people have rights which are, they come with as they are born that's part of their blessing as they come into our world, different children will at different times be able to take part in different ways in relation to influencing their own lives and the lives of others and it's our mission to ensure that that just becomes part of daily experience for children and young people and that experience is guided through the UNCRC and hold around the child, or around the children that children are not expected to take part in the same way as adults take part, creativity and imagination in relation to children influencing their worlds and the communities in which they live are undertaken as a matter of course, day in day out and they therefore develop their capacity to and their passion for engagement as they go through their childhood and become adults. We're not into becoming, we're into the child being as they are now that children and young people from the outset making meaningful decisions and choices day in day out they will continue to want to make meaningful decisions and choices as they become adults, The benefits therefore to the community are the benefits we can all name when we see there not here at the moment that we have children respected, cared for,

understood, children and young people are empowered, are engaged in their own lives and the lives of their communities, that the skills and aptitudes for both listening and empathising and understand are honed and developed from the word go and in adults who have responsibilities as duty bearers and that that ethos of respect upon which all of that is built continues as our country develops and continues hopefully to maintain the very vibrant democratic engagement that we've seen in Scotland in the last year. One of the things is that from a political engagement point of view, you don't get to just grow up and have an opinion at 18, or even 14 where a lot of the focus in Scotland is at in terms of young people's participation, you will always have an opinion you will always have something to offer right from when you were a baby, it's important that people understand to listen to babies to really understand what they need and what those best choices are so that's nothing but good from respectfulness, listening and communication and responding right the way through a child or young person's life.

I: What are the factors that encourage young people to want to participate?

P: I think respect is a massive thing and I think that's what we're talking about here, you can't have respect for somebody if you won't listen to them and take account of what they're saying or what they're communicating to you and if you are respected, if you feel respected you have a place in the world and if you have a place in the world, you generally want to take part in that world if you can.

I: What do you see as the challenges to participation, the barriers?

P: I think the barriers are at one historic because it wasn't that long ago, you're probably only talking 150 years ago where the worth of a women was calculated through the worth of the ownership of that women by the husband and children were an appendage to that so we are still, that's a tiny window of time in relation to attitudinal change, we still live in a society whereby children can still be seen as the property of parents as opposed to individuals in their own right but that is why working with the UNCRC is a really positive framework. One of the other barriers is that it's still misunderstood and it's manipulated a lot by the media, it's really really clear within the context of the UNCRC what the role of parents and adults but parents specifically are and there's nothing at odds between parents ensuring children are safe and cared for or are offered some advice along with their opinions being considered and taken account of. It's very clear within the UNCRC that this is not about parents abdicating from their responsibilities to do the very best for children and young people and to protect them and to take care for them and to do of those things, it's not about abdicating power, it's about using power wisely so it is about acknowledging the power disparity between adults and children and young people and therefore utilising the power you have wisely with respect so that's the message, not "oh my god children are going to be running wild everywhere". We have misconceptions about that, we have the historic presumptions that children actually are property of the parents first and

therefore the state can have no say in how the experience of that failed a young person. I also think that the third is I would say is a barrier is confidence because one of the reasons we developed the Golden Rules was to demystify participation, I actually hate that word I like to talk about taking part because participation has become quite a scientific word and become quite precious, I think this is just me – lots of people disagree with me but I think that if you can step away from the anxiety about ‘doing participation’ in the right way and actually start focussing on things like hearing, respecting, acknowledging, saying thank you, encouraging, those sorts of words that we all know and understand then more and more being can go oh, I see what you mean – I can do it, I’m actually an auxiliary in a hospital ward, a learning support assistant, or I’m a parent or I’m I don’t know anything at all and I actually have the capacity in me to understand how to ensure children and young people are taking part in everyday decision-making and that their experience is a respectful one because all I need to do is think about these seven things and if I’m thinking about these seven things, so that’s another barrier that there is a lot of, you can get very theoretical about participation and what’s meaningful and what’s not meaningful and what’s dangerous and that’s a big fear or what’s the right way to do it and I just think that scares people and people feel they need to have some sort of massive body of degrees before they can actually work with children and young people in a respectful and participative way and that’s a totally think that that’s not true.

I: What you are mentioning is quite simple things.

P: They’re really simple things, they’re really simple and it’s actually at the end of the day I think that the UNCRC framework actually is all about relationships, it’s about how you treat each other and how we acknowledge our disparities of power and the same principles apply between other groups in the community with disparities of power. First of all, you’ve got to acknowledge that you are in a really privileged position and adults, most adults are in a much more privileged position than children and young people are and then there’s other groups who are much more privileged than other groups in the community so it’s a big huge equalities basket, you’ve got to understand that dynamic but you can understand that quite simple as an adult whether you have got any kind of background in theoretical understanding of participation, you can understand that as an adult you’ve got lots more choices and chances and autonomy than children have, children’s lives are very controlled by adults at every turn so it’s about using that disparity wisely, about recognising that and about ensuring that the child has their place in their own life and just by doing that in a really sensitive, respectful manner and some of the best practice I’ve seen coming from after-school clubs where people are coming and they’re building experiences around that group of children, the children are engaged in a really playful ways about feeding into and feeding back on what’s happening every day and it’s like a total community, it’s fantastic and they’re not fantastic academics who have got this that and another, they’re people who are just focussing on those children and that’s kind of what we need to do.

I: Would you say those are the kind of things that are improving young people's participation?

P: Yeah, absolutely. I'm ensuring that children and young people are always involved in being able to feedback on that experience in a meaningful way and be able to say, and to be innovators themselves within that context.

I: Do you think having all those positive experiences and attitudes towards children and young people could increase political awareness, literacy and engagement?

P: Yes I do, I think one of the things that has to come together is the fact that life is political, it's not like another thing up there I think one of the things that is challenging within the context of our own society and it's obviously to a greater or lesser extent across the world is that somehow politics is other-worldly and it's not got anything to with life for a lot of people, there are a lot of very politically disengaged people and the disengagement is about disparity in power, disengagement is about the distance between experience of those lives and the experience of the powerful. By your day to day actions and by ensuring society where people from their earliest earliest years are involved in making decisions and influencing the quality of experiences in their lives, in their schools and in their communities, that disparity, that distance is minimised through that experience so therefore, what you learn is that there isn't, that life is relevant, that politics is about your life and it is relevant because you can have a voice in it, you can see your relationship with people, in fact you can see yourself making decisions because you are learning how to do that based on foundations and fundamentals like respect for the people you are making decisions about and with. It is a living and breathing, the political process, it's not a separate thing.

I: There is a tension between protection and participation within the Convention in Article 12 around young people expressing their views but also being dependent on their age and maturity, how is that implemented and how that conflict plays out.

P: I don't think there is a conflict, I think what there is is a lack of confidence, I think there is a confusion about how and to what extent and how informing the participation of younger children are. I think from an adult's perspective, it's quite easy, I think the tension is what we tend to do in terms of children's participation is what we try and do as adults is that we try and unfold those participatory processes in an adult construct. While I have a wonderful relationship and utmost respect for SYP for instance, what they are is an adult-constructed participation model because they mirror an adult construct of political engagement but the young people that are involved in that are of the ages and capacities to be able to do that and to take that on board and to make that work. A model like that isn't going to work for six year olds so actually the challenge is, or the tension is building up the capacities and the confidence in adults to be able to take off their adult heads and actually look at that

opportunity for engagement, particularly around really important areas of children's lives like protection for instance, it's to look at that through the eyes of a child and find ways to engage the child and be able to inform their own situation in age-appropriate way as adults we grow up and we tend to disengage, some of us tend to disengage with more playful approaches whereas play is very protected under Article 31 and play for instance as a process, as a methodology for engaging with children and young people to express their views is hugely important. But people forget how to do that and in fact, they're not really sure if that is valuable so instance if you take A Right Blether, we had ballot paper which is an adult construct, we had teachers, government officials and lots of other adults loved that, they're the gatekeepers to children's lives so when offering them a child or young person informed adult-construct of a ballot with all the palava because we had all the ballot boxes with ribbons so adults recognised that and went oh I got that, that's great this is brilliant, this is really engaging, it's fantastic so we got through the locked gates into all the schools and youth clubs and children and young people got it because they see it around them but for those, where that was less appropriate we were able to open to doors to their engagement through Right Brilliant Things which was very much more about expression on their own terms so you are trying to cover base. Then we went on to do A Right Wee Blether which was with early years children and young people so you take that back a little bit further and you say actually what's really important about this conversation is not that we find out what the key priorities and objectives are for the 3-6 year olds at the moment but actually what are the influences, the experiences that 3-6 year olds really value so we built a wee programme, a storybook around that, little ones could populate with their own lives very simple by working with an adult and the themes emerged really clearly about what are the important things. Some people would say is that really valuable because we could second guess they were going to say relationships essentially is what came out of that, relationships all the time it comes back to the quality of relationships but it is because it means we are listening, we had to validate our perceptions and our beliefs. For instance, if you're working, I've had experience for instance working with children and young people who have been abused and have been involved in those systems and it is really dangerous for us to keep assuming things about that child's experience within the context of that system, we have to come back and check with them and actually most children and young people involved in child protection systems are really young so we have to find ways of really listening, really understanding, really testing out our own presumptions against what children and young people are telling us otherwise we can be continually be re-creating massive difficulties and problems for children. So it is a really big challenge I think to move people's confidence and practice from I think this adult-construct participation is all about consultation and consultation looks like this to every day representative engagement with children and young people within the context of the lives are different approaches. It requires us to do things a lot of the time around our children which is a massive challenge.

I: Would you be able to do, in your own words, explain Article 12 and the role of the provision?

P: I would explain it as I would explain it to a child, Article 12 is one of the key driving forces behind that huge packet of gifts, that birth rights that comes to you through the UNCRC and its Articles. Article 12 is about ensuring that the views of the child on all matters that are important to them are heard and taken into account and that's says it all, as far as I'm concerned. The most important part of that obviously being 'taken into account' because I think it's very easy to set up systems whereby people are saying we've listened but taking into account is a complex phrase that actually means unpicking it, looking it at, looking at it from different perspectives, challenging yourself as an adult of power duty-holder about what that might mean going back and checking it and ensuring that the views and the impact of those views informing something is also absolutely re-informed back to the child so that process doesn't stop with a child giving their view about something or a child feeding into something, that its circular. Article 12 gives us this circular energy, emotion and commitment to involve children and young people in the outcomes of their involvement in the first place.

I: When it was the referendum, and there was a decision to allow 16 and 17 year olds the right to vote, can you give me your view on that about giving them that right to vote and the levels of engagement you see?

P: Well my view was that it was clearly well evidenced through the referendum that 16 and 17 year olds when they're informed, when they're excited will become engaged in matters that are important to them, i.e. the life and the future of Scotland and that's what happened. I think it was absolutely right, I think the lobbying was fantastic, they went on to try and ensure that right, I'm not sure politically if the decision was always made on the basis that it was righteous thing to ensure 16 and 17 year olds could vote, I think there was maybe other things at play in terms of that decision but I'm very glad that the lobbying was successful and I'm very glad that politicians took the decision they made and I think it's a blueprint for the rest of the world in terms of understanding that 16 and 17 year olds, if they can join the army, get married, have babies can also have valid, real, informed views and opinions placed in a ballot box. It was fantastic and one of the key things around the referendum that I will always remember was going to my local Asda which is a small one, I was really knackered and I was quite despondent, I was just wandering around and I came to the top of an aisle and there were three young people, between the ages of 16 and 19 and they were stacking shelves, it was quite late, and they were going at it hammering tongs absolutely, they were totally disagreeing with one another but in a really, it wasn't nasty or anything but it was just vibrant and I walked past that and just thinking, well I had to hold myself back from getting involved in the first place but I always remember just thinking this is great, this is so exciting to see young people who are so political generally, it is like politics is a subject, politics isn't a subject, politics is your life and to see people

actually engaging with politics as part of their lives like that was just wonderful so it has been nothing but good. I think in terms of the general election, I think it is going to be really interesting to see what happens next now because I think that 16 and 17 years have clearly evidenced the value and the worth of engagement in the political process, how we can continue to keep a seal at 18 is beyond me.

I: Do you think it will have an impact?

P: I do, yeah and it's fantastic because the anomaly in terms of adulthood in our society is mad, the differences between how you are perceived in one area of life and how you are perceived in another between those ages of 16 and 18. But the UNCRC is very clear, the UNCRC is protection for children and young people, the child is defined as between birth and the 18th birthday, or the 21st birthday if that child or young person has been in care and I think it's massively important because what we know, I mean it's really interesting that that was the definition used through all the developments of the UNCRC through time and from a scientific point of view now we have caught up scientifically to really start understanding the child and the adolescents brain, it's super important that that's protected because we know now that there are lots of people who actually don't come out of adolescence until their 26, childhood and adolescence can be a massively long journey or can happen over those points in different ways and it's really really important to understand the differences between the adult brain and the child/adolescent brain and the protections and the supports and the engagement that needs to happen to allow that child or young person to have the very best childhood or youth.

I: How do you see young people's involvement and engagement impacting on citizenship and democracy more broadly?

P: I think I've covered it really, citizenship and democracy as subjects are not something I'm very fond of because unless you have the lived experience of being a respected citizen, unless you have the lived experience of the process of democracy, making the world a better place, how can you learn about it, you learn about something out there that doesn't belong to you. While I am all for, just as I'm for children and young people learning about their rights it's an incomplete experience if you're not living them as well so you can learn about citizenship and you can learn about democracy but unless you are living it day by day what does it mean.

I: Do you think the full implementation of the UNCRC can see those subjects becoming experiences?

P: Yeah, absolutely. I can give you an example of that, so you take the model of a high school for instance, and rather than a high school working around subjects and crowd management, a high school becomes a place where respect for individual and groups of children and young people to work with adults who are running that facility, inform the curriculum that they want, inform the ethos and the management of movement, the management of behaviours, unless young people and adults are

working together in a team to ensure that that environment is delivering the best education that it possibly can through an adult perspective informed by a young people's perspective and checked on regularly and fed back on. That's a model where that disparity of power and authority is being used wisely in keeping with principles of the UNCRC but we're quite a long way from that in most of our high schools. So you can see when I'm talking about lived experience, to have a lived experience of democratic process and citizenship then that should be the lived experience in the schools that you are going to as a young person but I would have to question whether that is really the case in all schools, I think that there are some schools that are brilliant and always are but that is just a broad example. If we can put our hands on our hearts and say this is why we're such a vibrant and engaged country because folk go out, 14 year olds go out in the morning and they're really excited about being in that environment because they're really engaged in how it runs.

I: Finishing on a discussion of the Children and Young People Act which has obviously have a big impact on the powers that the Commissioner has, what do you think the impact of that Act is going to have on implementation of the UNCRC?

P: I think first of all it raises, it absolutely raises the flag for the UNCRC. I think it recognising and raising the flag again in terms of awareness and understanding of a lot of processes particularly in relation to the protection of the child or young person have not been working and that we need to do other things in order to ensure that children and young people don't fall down the cracks within our systems. I think the expectation that all public bodies now have to report on their implementation of the UNCRC is really good, I'm not entirely convinced that people understand how strong a tool that could be yet and I'm also disappointed within the context of that that it's not absolutely crystal clear that children and young people need to be part of that reporting process and it didn't appear which I am really disappointed about because I think that would make a fundamental, that would be a fundamental message. In terms of the duties of the Commissioner, we are yet to see how really that is going to roll out at the moment but the very fact that it is being recognised that children and young people require a very specific body through which, because again the recognition of disparity of power and authority and the differences between children and young people being able to bring their grievances or problems or issues to a body that is looking through the prism of the child rather than looking through the prism of the system is really important as a principle and I would look forward to seeing how that works.

I: How do you think levels of awareness are around the UNCRC amongst young people?

P: I think they're still sadly very low. I think there are things happening about educating you about your rights are getting better, I think the UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools has made a difference there in terms of children more and more accessing rights-based education. I would question whether

that necessarily all the times transfers into that daily lived experience because I think often it will be seen as a programme to teach children about children's human rights within a broad global context which is all about rights being out there rather than in here, and I don't necessarily think it is successful all the time, it is in some places but not all the time engaging the adults in that very difficult dialogue with themselves about what does that mean for me, what about my practice. I think Education Scotland are doing some good work in relation to CBD around the UNCRC and are recognising that responsibility and the government is supporting that and helping with that but I think there are some fundamental problems. There is no key resource for instance in Scotland, there is nothing that goes to every child or every family as part of that journey before a baby is born, there is lots of lots of gaps that need to be thought about and filled to ensure that awareness and understanding both from an adult perspective and a children and young people's perspective are being really well attended to so we are certainly not anywhere near that, where we should be.

I: How do you see those gaps being filled?

P: Well I think the government has a massive responsibility to ensure that those key resources continue to be created and are well placed. I think that schools need to continue to be supported to take on two things, one is to educate their own staff about the UNCRC and the impact that needs to have on their thinking and their practice and their relationships with children in schools. I think that therefore everybody in the world of education has to really understand that from the top to the bottom, I think children and young people should continue to have, or begin to have opportunities for exploring children's rights through the ethos and experience of interaction with institutions like schools, youth clubs, after school clubs, their GP services – all of those things. My vision is massive obviously, is that when you are engaging with children in any way whatsoever, your practice and your relationship with that child or children will be informed by the UNCRC and that's it. Getting there from where we are at the moment is a massive leap and I see lots and lots of really positive signs that people want to do that and people want to go on that journey but we're just, it just takes time.

I: What are your views of children's rights and levels of participation in Scotland, as a whole?

P: I think as a whole, if we were to go back to look at a model like Hart's ladder of participation which I don't agree with and neither did he, he said for most of his life I got that wrong, that isn't the way it should be at all, people quite like that hierarchical approach to it, however if we were look at that I would say we are not even quite near the tipping point of getting beyond being quite meaningless about how we go about participation with children and young people in Scotland. Although, I think the strengths in Scotland where there are strengths are within the context of the youth sector and youth organisations that are advocates for children's voice. That understanding of their importance from a government point of view is growing and they are well supported, my internal

frustration is that we have no meaningful structure or system of support for young children's voice, we have no strategic encouragement for younger children to being involved more and more on a daily basis. In fact, the understanding of children being involved in a daily basis... I still think we are stuck in consultation events and processes that are not appropriate for children and young people even then to give their views. For instance, I won't say who it was but I was at a meeting last week where there is a massive event being discussed in relation to health and the person in charge is a very senior person saying so we are spending all this money and this is user feedback so we're going to do lots of things which will engage young people and will engage the parents of children and I said, well don't you want to engage children and he went no, well to be fair if you want to talk to children you've got to talk to their parents and this is a really senior person in a really big public sector organisation who is about the spend a massive amount of money on a consultation exercise at the very outset he is wiping out, because he can't see how you do it, so we've got to get past that and that's just one example but we've got to get past that to get, we've got to re-establish our relationships with children in a way that helps us engage better. It's all about listening, it's just like stories. The other thing I think, I'm like super contentious and I start talking like this and everybody hates me for it but the other thing is I think we've got, I think participation has become very research-led and I think there's a million miles of difference between engagement and research and I think we're in a bit of a place where everything has to be evidenced-led so therefore the only way you can get evidence to inform decisions is by doing research. Now that actually isn't a respectful dialogue, it can be a respectful dialogue but research is a study, it's a study of, engagement is the relationship between, that's the bit where I think we are very poor at, at the moment, particularly with children and the bodies do not value what comes out of those engagements, they only value what comes out of that research and that's because we've gone crazy mad about evidence informed everything we can't make a decision without there being a massive study into something. On a day to day basis, finding out what it is that's making a child scared to go to bed, it's as important... We can do a lot through our relationships and discussions with children and young people and understand a lot and we mustn't devalue that.

Duration: 59:44

Interview 5 – Together

Interviewer: What is your role within the organisation?

Participant: My specific role is Policy and Communications Officer so we're a small organisation. In context there's two members of staff so there's the director and there's myself so the role actually covers a diverse range of task but primarily its policy work which involves responding to consultation which can be the Scottish Government or Parliament and out with those areas and writing policy briefings and interacting with our members, speaking to them about what kind of policy is being made

or legislation being developed and how we can ensure that children's rights approach and focus to that policy and legislation so quite a lot of the work is done alongside our members so a big part of my role is liaising with them and so we've kind of got half of the role is the policy side and advocacy and the other half is communication so I write a fortnightly e-newsletter that goes to our members so the people who have signed up which focuses on children's rights in Scotland but also on a national and international level so there will be news articles and events coming up in Scotland and resources for subscribers about how to take part in a children's rights approach and then also the website which has got some children's rights resources that we upload regularly and general communications with members and emailing them on a regular basis about consultation sponsors we've done or events and membership renewal so we have, I have quite a regular communication with the members so that's quite a big part of the role as well.

I: Can you tell me more about the aims and missions of the organisation as a whole?

P: Together is a membership-organisation and we've got roughly about 250 members across Scotland and so we work to protect and promote children's rights in Scotland and promote the full implementation of the UNCRC and also incorporate into Scots Law which is our primary aim and so we do that through the means that I already mentioned through policy work and communication so we are working for children as opposed to with so our work is predominately policy and advocacy based and so our mission is to ensure that children's rights are fulfilled for every child all of the time. We use the UNCRC as a framework and approach so we, the aims of the organisation span across all children's rights so our members range from, they work in different sectors but they range from small playgroups up to UNICEF and individuals with an interest in children's rights, academics so we have a really broad membership base so an aim is to work with our members to find out what is going on in the ground and then that influences our communication and advocacy work to try and further children's rights.

I: You mentioned you work for children rather than with children, can you say a bit more about that?

P: We are of a small so with the capacity we have, we don't directly work with children and young people so the participation work will be carried out by our members which include the Children's Parliament, the Scottish Youth Parliament and we will as an organisation will support them in that work and enable them to increase awareness of children's rights and Article 12 and we then will work with them quite closely so their participation work very heavy influences the work that we do and the advocacy work. Also, through writing briefings and we write an annual report called the State of Children's Rights report and so throughout the year we will look at participation work that's being carried out and the way that's influenced or has an influence or has an impact that that had on the outcomes that its wanted to achieve, in terms of working for rather than with then its that's in terms of

the actual face to face participation that we don't do but work really closely with the members that do work with children and young people and as I said we support them in that so if they, it will ensure a kind of children's rights approach is taken to participation and ensuring that participation isn't just a tick box exercise and areas that we'll probably go into.

I: You must see a very broad range of how organisations do work with young people and participation strategies they use, can you tell me some examples that you have seen from different organisations that have influenced briefings and sources that you've produced?

P: There's Families Outside that do quite a lot of work with children affected by parents imprisonment and they've put together a few videos that highlight the different views of children with a parent or family member in prison and so that then helps us to influence other members and for example, through our e-newsletter or twitter we are able to not only publicize the participation work but then really use to influence our understanding and knowledge of the situation of children in those circumstances and so that would be one area. In all of our consultation responses we work with our members so for example, the young carers consultation, the SYP have had campaign called Care Fair Share which is looking at the rights of young carers in Scotland so the participation work they've done with young carers has then helped to influence our understand and what we put in our consultations based on the reports and what's happened and what they've created as a result of that participation with young carers. In the Children's Parliament as well, they do a breadth of participation work so we used a lot of their videos and their work in any presentations we're giving so if we're delivering presentations on children's rights and participation or wanting to add resources to the e-newsletter of examples of what participation work is being carried out across Scotland, Children's Parliament are really helpful in terms their resources they can provide that highlights what they're doing and what they are up to and we can then give that to our members.

I: Obviously you have been working on the State of Children's Rights report coming out this year, how do you prepare that and make sure the views of children and translated into that?

P: The views of children in that report again are based on, how the report is out together I guess if I go through that then it's helpful. We do some desk based research and that involves looking at our resource base on our website so when we have articles throughout the year on all different sorts of bits of news and events and resources on children's rights, we then take what's happened in the year since the last State of Children's Rights report then we collate that all together and do some further desk research into those topics and that provides us with an overall base of what's been going on in the past year so that will include lots of examples of children's participation we've been publishing for our members so that could be events where children have been part of the event and participated or it could be reports on participation work that has been carried out so for example, the SCCYP or

Children's Parliament or Families Outside as I've mentioned, we'll make sure that's in our e-newsletter so that will then filter through to the website that will then filter to the desk research. After the desk research then we set up a number of focus groups, so there was about eight focus groups that we held at the Together offices and they were split up into specific topical areas of children's rights and one of those was the general principles of the UNCRC and so as part of that group then we discussed Article 12 and participation and how that was going across Scotland and in particular groups of children and young people that perhaps haven't been consulted with and also some really good examples of practice so that information came from our members that included Article 12 and Children's Parliament, we then collated the information we got from our members about their experiences of children's participation and that then was put back into the document of all the desk research so the way that children and young people influence the report is through the work that the members have done and they've then spoken to us about that so there's examples then that fed into the report. Once we then had the focus groups we then we did a bit more desk research into some of the key areas that they had brought up so if there was any really important useful reports we then looked at those further as a result and then just began to draft and re-draft the report before it came a bit more concise. As you can probably imagine then, there is lots of pockets of participation with children that goes on throughout Scotland and across all of our membership so it's kind of looking to highlight some really good examples of participation with children and young people but also making sure that we recognise those gaps where participation perhaps isn't as inclusive as it could be. We don't involve children directly with the drafting but it is indirect through those experiences of our members and their views on how things are going.

I: Do you feel that with every report you write every year that there is a different theme or focus going through them?

P: There broadly the same, we have the same structure so the kind of, the actual topics is based on seven chapters and there the seven areas of the UNCRC so that's structure remains very similar and the themes, there in some ways they are quite similar and in others they change so in ways they change if our members bring issues and topics to us that we've not previously looked in detail at then it's an opportunity to bring something new to the report so for example, in the last couple of years we have focused more on young carers and children of prisoners is something that in the very first reports we hadn't had much information from our members about so certain topics that more work is done on in the year then the more likely we are more likely to gain more information to make them quite prominent in the report. In terms of actual topics, some things tend to be more but they remain broadly the same and in terms of the themes the last few years we have noticed that over and over again our members will comment on the patchy implementation of children's rights and the inconsistency in approaches so that something every year we find is a theme that runs throughout

every chapter. There is some really good practice across Scotland but what we're seeing is that children don't have access to that good practice across so patchy implementation of rights is a reoccurring theme. In this year we also found that access to justice is quite a big theme so actually seeking redress for rights violations and how children are able to seek redress and seek access to justice if their rights have been breached so with that comes the knowledge and understanding of children's rights. A theme that comes out our report every year is that the knowledge and understanding of children's rights across children practitioners, adults, people working specifically within the children's sector or out with the knowledge and understanding of the UNCRC and children's rights is patchy which means that if children don't know their rights then they're not able to access redress so that's a theme that was very predominant this year and has been in the past as well unless we can try and increase awareness and understanding of children's rights then the likelihood of actually seeking redress for violations is very limited.

I: What do you see as the benefits to participation for children and young people?

P: The benefits of participation to children and young people, they have a sense of feeling important and that their views are actually valued in society and in the decisions that are made affecting them so for children themselves I can see that a benefit would be they feel included and part of society and they're respected and the benefit more widely is that there is a culture change towards children's views being fully respected and protected and also not just taking into account their views and then nothing's done about it but actually really using their views to influence and impact on decisions that are across all areas. I think as well, a benefit is that it helps to further the UNCRC in Scotland so including children more and more in decisions, then that is moving towards fulfilling Article 12 in the UNCRC and looking at inclusivity and rights across all areas and so the benefit of participation across all areas is that children are included in all different decisions and not just those that are explicitly affecting them but decisions like environment, transport or planning, housing, lots of different areas and so the benefits of participation across all those sector just means that they're seeing their views and influencing decisions that aren't explicitly related to children but they will have a significant impact, potential impact on them.

I: What about the benefits for a children's organisation involving young people?

P: I would say that we can't advocate for children unless we know what they think and so it's absolutely essential that we can hear from children and what their views and what their experiences are like and their rights and how well they feel their rights are being fulfilled, if they are aware of their rights. Unless participation is there, is working and is actually being carried out then we don't know what is happening on the ground, we can speak to practitioners about their views which is always really helpful but unless we actually speak directly with children about their experiences and their

views then we can't help, we don't know how best to further protect their rights and so it's an essential part of the work, we couldn't do it without that, well effectively without that.

I: You were speaking about awareness and understanding and knowledge, do you think those are the kind of things that would encourage young people to participate more?

P: Yeah so if they know more about their rights then I think they would, they would be perhaps be in a better position to understand that they have an access to their right to participation. More knowledge of Article 12 and the right to express their views in decisions affecting them would come with their expectation that that right should be fulfilled and so I think a greater knowledge of their rights could help to bring that to...

I: How do you think that could be achieved?

P: Furthering the knowledge and standing of children's rights?

I: Taking Article 12 as an example, how do you think greater awareness of that would come about?

P: I guess there is a number of ways and a lot of our members work with children to do so, for example the Children's Parliament is really key in increasing the knowledge of children's rights amongst children and so a lot of our members will be working in projects and programmes across Scotland and quite a lot of that work is in schools so the Rights Respecting Schools programme and the work that our members are doing so that comes quite commonly from work in schools. The barrier to that is that there is some children that are not in formal education so maybe schooling from home, children while they are in hospital so aren't getting school out with school and also gypsy traveller children if they are not attending school but they have some sort of informal schooling and not in mainstream, it means that the benefits of increasing knowledge through schools there's barriers to that because you are not then speaking to all children so that's something that needs to be considered. I think through those programmes and actually going to speak with children and asking about what they know about their rights and taking part in activities might help to increase knowledge so I think that's a way that's working at the moment, it just needs to be increased to all schools and the Rights Respecting Schools, I think our members and a lot of children's organisations have come back to us and said that they've seen that the Rights Respecting Schools is an example that children have become more aware of their rights and there's a new UNICEF children's rights launch pad which came about with some funding from the Commonwealth Games and so that might be a way that children's knowledge and understanding of the UNCRC will be furthered and that's an online resource and children will actually access it themselves and go through different stages I think learning about their rights and so I think that is potentially something moving forward could really help.

I: What do you think are the barriers, that might discourage young people to participate?

P: I think that firstly, the current culture – we're still not seeing children's rights fulfilled and protected and respected across society so I think there's an initial perhaps feeling that ultimately there's a significant barrier that the culture is not respecting children's rights so maybe a reluctance to even engage because of this culture that we are still seeing across Scotland. I think as well that quite a lot of participation work has happened previously where it can be tokenistic so if it is a bit of a tick box exercise to say yeah we've spoken to children great, we've got their views but unless their views are taken into consideration and actually impacted on those decisions and that they are given feedback and their aware of how their views have been taken into account and that kind of it shouldn't be seen as something static, it should be a really continuous approach and programme of children actually participating and then getting feedback and then perhaps being involved in monitoring and evaluation of what they have been involved in. I think that tokenism without the monitoring, evaluation and feedback that I mentioned, I think that can be a significant barrier to encouraging children to participate again and also a barrier to it actually being effective so it's a barrier to children actually wanting to participate but also in being tokenistic then whoever is carrying out the participation, it is a barrier to their effective actually using the information effectively so it makes a real difference in positive impact. I think a barrier as well is there's still not enough child friendly communications to there might be participation but less there's kind of easy to read formats or children that are deaf or blind or have some communication needs or additional support needs then that participation might then not be accessible for all children and young people so the barrier is then only reflecting a select number of children's views and so very much less likely to reflect the situation for all children. Coming with that, there's a lack of inclusivity where we've seen a lot of positive examples from our members of participation work with children but it's not inclusive enough to involve groups who aren't normally or who haven't yet been had their right to have their views listened to so in this year's report we noticed that gypsy traveller children, they're continually denied their right to participate. Children from BME communities as well, children with disabilities that's been a running theme throughout our reports that our members coming back to us and saying still not seeing that participation running throughout all children, that's a barrier to those children who aren't having their rights fulfilled. A barrier to those that are running the participation work that they're not receiving a really inclusive impression of what's going on in the ground and children's views from across all areas. Another example is children with care experiences and that we've got a lot of information about children who are care leavers and their experiences of leaving care but we have from looked after children, their experience of adoption of foster care that's limited and so that's an example of where participation looks good on the outset but actually when you look into detail then not everybody,

significantly vulnerable, there are groups of children that are not recognised and are not listened to. I think they are all the barriers I thought of.

I: Do you think if awareness was raised within society, children were more aware of their rights and these were outweighing the barriers, do you think this would increase young people's politically engaged?

P: I think that if, so if there more aware of their rights I think there's it may be the case that they then are aware of their right to participate and through a greater awareness across society then perhaps all different services might be trying to engage with them more and so health, education and any services they're receiving. If there's a greater recognition of children's rights then I think that might encourage more about those decisions that affect them and where there are issues that are influencing them and thinking oh actually, my views are valued here and I have the right to speak up and say what I think should happen and what's in my best interest. That might help to then filter through to them okay, the decisions that are made at a higher level, those political topics then there being more of a sense of, a greater awareness and expectation of being listened to and asked about those decision-making levels. Through that culture change I guess there would be, if that was filtered through right up to government level and political decision making then I think that would inevitably increase political participation if everybody was aware of their obligations to the UNCRC to consult with children and young people and to ensure that. There would be more child-friendly materials, consultations and there would, if they realised they had to take children's views in to account and that they had to for example publish new legislation in child-friendly formats and the way that they were consulting with children and young people and the articles within the UNCRC, if they really fulfilled and protected all of those principles then I think it would increase political participation.

I: What are your views on the tension between the right to protect and the right to participate?

P: I don't really know that you mean, do you have an example?

I: Take a vulnerable young person at risk, there is an initial need to protect that young person but also exposing them to areas that they are to participate in, does that make sense?

P: So meaning a young person in a vulnerable position and still granting them the chance to participate or do you mean consent and confidentiality?

I: Obviously Article 12 talks about age and maturity so maybe around that area, so a young person's age and maturity levels and trying to protect those aspects but also taking into consideration their right to participate as well.

P: I think there are certain topics where perhaps there's a tension because it might be a sensitive topic so, I guess the right to confidentiality and the right to consent so this topic is quite sensitive, I guess it's quite a complicated example, it's a sensitive issue because when do you breach consent in order to, if a child is in significant risk and how do we keep their information confidential when they are at risk and also be a situation where children's views or their participation is, there is a threat to their right to participate because the actual topic itself is quite difficult and there's a lot of views as to how it's approached and because of the sensitivity of the topic that can then put the right to participate at risk because there's a lack of awareness and knowing how to confront those issues with or not to confront but how to discuss those issues in a meaningful way and an effective way with children and I guess that's the same for complicated, it's quite a complicated topic and so that can be a tension as well as trying to protect children from those issues but then there's things like child abuse or child trafficking, some sensitive topics where very young children there might be a tension to want to protect them from some of those issues and what's happening but at the same time wanting to gain their views on what they think should happen and whether it's policy and legislation which should be the legislation to protect children or actually children who have had some experiences themselves in those areas, the tension between actually wanting to protect them but then wanting to ensure they're fully informed of their rights and that they are able to influence decisions further up those changes that are made in those circumstances so I think. In terms of our members have come across that I think probably in quite a few circumstances then that's become a tension, I don't know if you want any specific examples.

I: What are your views of 16 and 17 year olds having a say in the referendum?

P: My views on it in general are that it's a step forward in recognising children's right to participate in decisions and a recognition of their ability to be informed and to have political views and to not necessarily be heavily influenced, there's research that confirms that they have independent views and they have quite strong political views so I think it has been very positive in showing that and that kind of empowerment of 16 and 17 year olds has been a helpful, a recognition that we need to start considering children's views and that they really can't, quite literally in terms of their views. They have the same right as adults in terms of informing of political decisions and what they would like to see happening and also I think that empowerment has generally been positive across society and in making and raising awareness of that right to participate. It's hopefully through recent developments going to be the case for all elections which is another step in that right direction and I think the numbers of children that participated is a reflection of how important that vote was for them and how politically engaged they were and a reflection of how important it is for that to continue. It was taken up to the extent that it recognises the importance of those young people to be involved and that they really grasped that opportunity to be listened to and in that decision.

I: Do you think that can positively impact an inclusive citizenry and democracy more broadly?

P: Yeah, I think so. A feeling of having the right to vote in terms of actually, the action itself which then emphasises you now have the right to vote in that sense of democracy, it will increase democracy just through that action itself and the opportunity to take part but then also more broadly then young people in having the right to vote will be more inclined to look at what's going on in their community and what decisions are being made and actually they want to be able to influence those decisions and using their vote will help to do that and perhaps they will be more engaged with things that are happening in their community because they are feeling more included in those decisions and they know they will be able to impact them to a greater extent. I think through schools as well, perhaps the recognition that information about politics, about the awareness of political decisions making and what's going on in their communities and how that can be influenced using politics as a gateway, hopefully feeding back through schools are a real importance of everything that comes with that, being really aware of both their right to vote but those decisions and the way they might impact on them and how they would like to contribute to those processes.

I: Hopefully raising awareness of their rights in general as well.

P: Yeah perhaps knowing I've got my right to vote, if that's then coupled with the realisation of Article 12 then greater awareness of that then perhaps filter down to other areas where there's more recognition.

I: What do you think are the biggest considerations and changes within the act that are going to have the most significant impact?

P: It terms in what will have the most significant impact, it depends a bit on how well they are implemented. It's quite dependent on the political will and also the will of public bodies and everybody that's involved within those duties within the Children and Young People Act. In terms of what will have the most significance, just to give some context we were hoping, we were advocating for incorporation of the UNCRC within the bill and that was being scrutinised within the Scottish Parliament and although incorporation didn't happen then we're seeing Part 1 and duties throughout there as a means to further children's rights so hopefully all of the duties will have some significant but I think the duty to consider children's rights in decisions upon Ministers, the very first duty, it is quite wordy – to consider children's rights, where applicable to consider children's rights where appropriate or something like that but don't quote me, and so that's has potentially has quite a large significance as it will run throughout all ministerial departments so that's not just the Minister for Children and Young People, that's Minister for Health, Minister for Education, Minister for Justice you know they are all going to have to look at considering children's rights as of when the bill comes

into effect so that has potential significance so need to assess how well that is implemented but in terms of it being really broad across all departments I think Together is really hopeful that will increase the awareness of children's rights across the Scottish Government. The duty to consider children's views which is also in Part 1, I think there has been a lot of positive steps towards listening to children and young people through Parliament and Government consultations and also more across our membership, there's been certainly been more recognition of the need to involve children and young people in a really effective way. A lot of it is still seen as being a bit of a tick box exercise but things are certainly moving in the right direction and I think that duty will really help to, hopefully to spare that on. The duty to raise awareness and understanding on Ministers as well, it's all got lots of potential but it's how, what the will is behind those duties to actually carry them out effectively and also the guidance as well that is being developed now which will come with the act and how strong that is in the way that things are implemented and how accessible and how well that's all circulate so that everyone is aware of that guidance and that it's really strong. The reporting duties in the act as well so the duty for Ministers to report on how they are furthering children's rights again in relation to all departments has potential to be really, well I think that reporting duty we can then hold, use those reports to hold Ministers to account to say where have you considered children's right and children and young people's views, if there are certain gaps then we can then use those reports so the key thing with that I guess is that they're published and that everybody is aware of those reports so there's a duty to report but there's not a duty to implement, well there is a duty to consider but there report could say very little and that they haven't considered children's rights very much so although it is a good way for us to hold them to account, but at the same time it's not a very strong duty and so there is a concern that they could write a very brief report on what they're doing and that may take longer to actually see that culture change but it is still a step in the right direction. Then there's the reporting duties in Part 3 of the act as well and that's on public authorities to report on how they're, it's in terms of their children's services planning duty but they also have a duty within Part 1 to report on furthering children's rights in their local authority so there's work being done through the guidance for the children's service planning about Part 3 around how they might be integrated but that's still very much in development stage so having children's rights as part of that reporting duty on children's services planning could significantly increase the awareness of children's rights and their understanding across all public services and has potential to give greater effect to Article 12.

I: Those reports will end up being a really helpful resource for you, potentially?

P: Yeah potentially, it's just important that these reports are effective in what they include and that they're thorough. The guidance is still being developed and so we're not sure yet what the reports will look like in terms of indicators, whether they will have to report on every single right or whether it will be certain areas or topics that they use and so the guidance is very much key to influencing the

way in which those reports will be put together and so the stronger we can get the guidance the be, the stronger hopefully the reports will be for us and to use them. If children's rights are very explicit in those reports then there's a greater likelihood there will be that cycle of children's rights at the forefront of those reports so it also hopefully at the forefront of actions and decisions and services so the reports are a really crucial, what's in the reports and how they're developed and who's included in writing them, if there are children's rights indicators importantly children's rights impact assessment on their work they're doing and the negative and positive impact on children's rights. If we can get some really useful reports then they will be, that'll be quite significant in the work that Together does and holding either Scottish Government or public authorities to account but also to look at examples of really good practice and say there's an area in Scotland where they're doing really well they we can promote that to other areas and also if things aren't going so well, we're then able to hopefully support them in better furthering children's rights.

I: What is your view on children's rights and levels of participation in Scotland, as a whole?

P: I think they're a lot of really great examples of participation and Article 12 being protected and fulfilled across Scotland, some of our members are doing some really excellent work and they're able to tell us about participation with children and I think, I get the sense that there is a greater recognition of the need to consider children's right to participation across wider sectors and more and more think. Then at a political level I think government are thinking that it's, they are obliged to consider children's views that it's really important and it's really effective and they, not just their right to be consider but also if they want effective policy they need to listen to those who are actually directly affected by it and that children really have a lot to say in their views and experiences need to be taken into account. I think there are a lot of positive examples and it is moving in the right direction and I think it's still patchy and there are areas and groups, very vulnerable groups of children and young people who still aren't being listened to and so I think that's my general feeling is that it's moving in the right direction and there is more participation, children are getting more access to their participation. But when I say patchy implementation it seems to be similar groups that are continuously have their right to be listened to and that might be as I said children's in school, mainstream schools or children that perhaps are part of an organisation so they are consulted upon regularly but the key point is that there are vulnerable groups of children that are continuously left out of these either consultation processes or any kind of decisions making process that we're seeing that there are certain groups across the board that aren't being listened to. On the whole it's going in the right direction but patchy implementation and the reflection of that it's the very vulnerable groups that we are seeing, aren't being listened to and included in those decision making processes like children from BME communities, LGBT, children with specific care experiences and there are some positive

examples where it is becoming more inclusive but there's still quite a long way to go to ensuring that's consistent across all geographically and also in terms of all children.

P: Just to say something more about our political influence, we have regular meetings with MSPs and we often write letters on particular issues to MSPs, we take part in the Children and Young People cross party group and the cross party group for human trafficking so that's a way that we foster political influence and all of that is then influenced by our members work with children and young people so that runs through.

I: So there is quite a close relationship between the organisation and government?

P: We have quite a good working relationship in terms of, we have something called the Scottish Children's Rights Impact and Monitoring Group and you can get some more information on our website about this group and the kind of meetings we've had and our reports up on the website but we meet around every 4 months, sometimes less sometimes a bit more and about how well children's rights are implemented across Scotland and it's a way for, we meet with the SCCYP as well and so it's a way for Together to hold government to account for their obligations under the UNCRC and we use our State of Children's Rights report as a kind of, as a framework and the recommendations we have within that report we can then use that to determine the agenda we have for those meetings so that's the sort of relationship we have with them in terms of, we work closely with them to ensure that children's rights are being implemented and ways where we can further that and so being on guidance groups for the Children and Young People Act for example which includes the Children's Rights Impact Assessment Group as well and so we can work to support them to try and take a children's rights approach so it's a supportive critical friend role.

Duration: 1:03:38

Interview 6 – SCRA

Interviewer: Can you tell me your specific role in the organisation?

Participant: Sure my name is Jennifer Orren and I'm the participation officer for the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration. There's a number of different elements to my role, I oversee four young people who we employ to work in the organisation and who have experience of children's hearings, the hearing system or having been looked after and accommodated, and we give this group of young people work experience every two years and we pay for them to get an SVQ and essentially I monitor them, manage them and support them through that process because I suppose our organisation recognises that young people, particularly young people with a background in care or of the children's hearing system often don't have the same experiences and access to education that

children and young people who haven't had those experiences have access to so I manage that part of my post. I'm also responsible for developing and promoting participatory materials and access to information about the hearing system for children and young people to help them understand the hearing system and thereby participate in the hearing system if they have more information about it and their understanding – if they are more understanding of the system they are more likely to participate when they attend children's hearings. The other element of my post is training or working with partners to promote their understanding of children's hearing system thereby improvement children's understanding of the children's hearing system because for example, we are working with education, the social work department, if they have a greater understanding of the hearing system they will be able to support the child or young person in attending the hearing thereby increasing their participation. So there is three elements: the Modern Apprentices, the internal participatory work and then there's external partnership work.

I: Taking the organisation as a whole, what is the aim or mission of the organisation, what does the organisation do?

P: Our organisation basically, we administer children's hearings so essentially when we receive a referral about a child or young person that somebody has concerns about, generally the referral process is coming through the social work department, police, health or education but anybody refer to the Reporter. If we receive a referral about a vulnerable child or young person we either decide if that referral is investigated and brought to a children's hearing, we do that side of the administration we arrange a children's hearing and if the case is then referred for proof to the Sherriff court to be evidenced we basically take care of that as well. That is an incredibly basic sort of summary of what Reporters do, the whole organisation there's lots and lots of different parts to it but that's the main thrust of our work and it's probably a good idea to take a look at the website to see what you think, I can always give you more detail but I suppose I don't want to...

I: Your role is very specific and very closely related to what I'm looking at so it was just to get a broad summary.

I: Taking some examples from you've done, what things have been done to involve young people and allow them to participate?

P: I've got quite a few examples for you, this is our second group of Modern Apprentices...

I: How old are the Modern Apprentices?

P: They are generally aged between 16 to 19 so on average they start about 17 years old. Our first group of young people started in 2010 and so they work for two years so they went up to 2012 and

then our second group started in early 2013 I think and will finish early 2015 and both groups of Modern Apprentices have carried out national inspections of our hearing facilities so they inspected our waiting rooms, hearing rooms across the country and written reports on how they think things could be improved and areas of success, they've identified areas that are working well and identified areas that aren't working well at all which require improvement. We've done this twice now and we will be doing it again with the next group of Modern Apprentices to keep measuring whether we're improving things and the young people work the SCRA's research and information team and they design the questionnaire themselves and come up with questions, things that they are looking for, they do that themselves and they are supported by the research team in terms of collating it but it's very much led by the young people and designed by the young people and we then use those research documents to then try and improve our services, our waiting areas, our hearing areas, our reception areas so for example, some of the feedback will be more colourful, the waiting areas could be more colourful with toys so we painted the walls, we've added and put more toys and that's a fairly basic examples but those research documents are available on our website so you can take a peek at them and sort of having a good idea of the depth of work that is involved, I think there is about 20 hearing centres inspected for the first group and about 22 for the second from Stornoway to Glasgow so that's one of our examples. Another examples is that all our participation materials are available online, all of our leaflets and information packs and designed in consultation with children and young people, we don't just design one on the top of our heads we come up with designs and we ask children and young people to come up with ideas they think would be helpful, or the Modern Apprentices. For example, we might show them some sort of graphics and they'll say no that's rubbish try this so we basically involve them in that. We've involved one of the Modern Apprentices in recruitment process and we tend not to use the Modern Apprentices in terms of recruitment internally but they were involved in one recent recruitment process but we involve young people in recruitment of certain posts within the organisation, so I was interviewed by young people as well as a panel of adults so that's just a very brief snapshot of some of the things we do.

I: So it was 2010 the Modern Apprentices started?

P: Yeah so the first group was in 2010 and then the second group started, it was at the end of 2010 so it's really the end of 2010 to the end of 2012 and then next group started at the beginning of 2013 and their current placements will come to an end February 2015.

I: How did that come about then to begin with?

P: Well that's a good question, essentially we recognised in around 2008/2009 that participation needed to be more focus in relation to the work we do and we probably needed to demonstrate this and not just demonstrated but acted upon it to make sure we were including children and young

people in our processes and we were exploring ways in which we could improve, I suppose improve the participation and engagement of children and young people within our processes so we thought that the only realistic way of doing that was through and one of the best ways to do that was to offer young people who have experience of the system to come, to have an opportunity to work here and see how we work and to get experience and a vocational qualification, we can also at the same time work with them to help improve our services because they've got experience of the system. It really came about because I think we were thinking and looking at our cons and we were looking at the work we were doing and thinking there's really not enough going on here to help children and to help young people prepare for and understand children's hearings and how can we legitimately improve that.

I: Do you see an improvement?

P: We do, we see a massive improvement, there's a huge improvement in terms of the communication, the way in which we communicate with children and our partners and both electronically, a paper base way and also in terms of our partnership work and I think that we can legitimately say that we've come a long way, we work closely with major partners both at a strategic level where people are a lot more senior than me in the organisation and work with things at a strategic level more government level, we work with more local partners across the country to try and support these changes taking place so we've got that improvement in participation partnership work including with children's hearing system and working with panel members, we've got better communication online and better communication channels. For young people and children where they can email information as well as download information off our website, we've created new films for children and young people to attend hearings, we have massively improved our hearing centres but there's still a lot of work, that's a big piece of work where it's a big and expensive piece of work to try and basically up do our hearing centres so that's not working as fast as we would like but we know why, it's not delayed it's rather it's a big project but we do see an improvement and we know that when young people are receiving information and when we notify them of children's hearings are feeling more informed about children's hearings.

I: You mentioned that you work at a local level but you also work at a higher strategic level, what is the political relationship and political influence?

P: I don't know Sarah I wouldn't really want to comment on that but what I could do is out you in touch with the people who do work at that level who would be delighted to meet with you. It's not that I don't know, I just wouldn't want to say something that's not correct when I know that there's a lot of very positive work going on at a strategic level and I know that they wouldn't have any problems to meet with you so it would probably be best to refer you on to them.

I: As Participation Officer you see the participation work, what do you see as the benefits to the young people?

P: Well I think the benefits are, in terms of the Modern Apprentices they get an education, a supported education qualification, they get two years of work experience and they get a supported understanding environment to help them through that process but we benefit from their presence as well in terms of improving our services. There are the benefits of working with the Modern Apprentices for the organisation and for the Modern Apprentices but in terms of children and young people helping to improve materials we're helping to and also working in partnership with people who work with children and young people attending hearings, we're helping I suppose to if we're communicating better with children and young people and communicating better with our partners, children and young people are more prepared at those hearings and understand hopefully why they're there and what their rights are during that process, children's rights during children's hearings are very important and we make sure that the information we send out and display in our waiting rooms is clear about their rights and what will happen and who will be there and why they're there and I suppose we feel, and children and young people have told us that being appropriately prepared and understanding who people are and why people are there helps them feel more comfortable, children's hearings are not a very comfortable process for any child or young person and because by that nature, children and young people are there because they're vulnerable for one reason or another but we don't expect to make it a fantastically easy experience but we can provide children and young people with information and also try make the environment a little bit more comfortable, it may be easier for them to feel more comfortable to participate and engage in the process by submit their views.

I: Do you think that providing the information and making the environment comfortable are things that will encourage young people to want to participate?

P: Yes, and we've consulted with children about that externally and internally to make sure we're not just doing that because we think that but because we've been told by young people and children that that's what would help them feel better so we have got external research on our website that we've commissioned just so that we can reflect we're not just operating under our own research but we're operating on, we're sort of improving based on external research as well as internal research and in consultation with children and young people formally and informally about what would help them feel more comfortable about the process?

I: Is that consultation done on a wider scale?

P: Yeah so there's Hearing Scotland Children which is available on our website which is carried out by Who Cares? Scotland and then SCRA were members of the National Participation Forum which is

a fairly small forum, CHS, SCRA and Celsus are a member and there were two other members and I'm not sure if they still are so I won't name them just in case and Who Cares?, and basically Who Cares runs the forum but it's a group membership and we work with young people on the forum to basically improve our services and they come in and do some work with us for example our practice team recently worked with some young people on, they recorded young people talking about their experiences of being on the children's hearings system that they're now going to use on training new Reporters and new Assistant Reporters so it helps to have a more thorough understanding of the direct impact of children's hearings on children and young people.

I: What do you see as the barriers to participation?

P: I think that participation is becoming a little bit of a buzzword at the moment in the last couple of year so there is less barriers now than there were. Some of the barriers in my personal experience in the last few years has been, not just internally but externally trying to promote the Modern Apprentices programme and getting people to understand that it's not a risk, it's a positive outcome for both the organisation and the young people and I think some of the other barriers I've experienced are trying to make sure people do use the communications we've developed, that they do use them whether that's externally or internally to make sure that information is being sent out to children when we write to them but also that partners are aware of our materials and are using them and I think that has been quite tricky. I think we are getting there but it's been quite hard to try and make people understand why it is important to use these materials and that they may not be the be all and end all for every young person but the more we communicate with children and young people, the more they will be aware that they have a choice and it's making sure people know that and making sure they are doing what they are supposed to do getting information out and using information to help them prepare children and young people.

I: When you say people do you mean society in general?

P: No I'm thinking more within the framework of our partners that we tend to work with and I should have said that to start with at the beginning but the main partners we work with children and young people who tend to be referred to the system would be police, education, health and social work so it's tapping into partners and CHS and tapping into partners to make sure they are aware of our materials and using them and then there's the internal work of trying to make sure that our colleagues are regularly sending out the information we are providing for children and young people.

I: You said that things are getting better?

P: Yeah much much better but it's trying to make sure things are consistent across the country and you'll see from the research online that's carried out by our own research team that, for example the

children's and families surveys that some families have received a lot of information and some families feel like they don't receive all of the information but they should and we think that there's probably gaps in things being sent out across the country, it's quite hard to measure nationally. Some of the barriers are promoting the understanding of participation and why it's important, not just vulnerable young people but also the families and why arming people with information and support will actually help a child or young person understand the process and relax and be able to participate and engage in the process.

I: Do you think providing the information, the resources and communication will eventually increase young people's participation?

P: Yeah and I think it probably has already and I think that, we know that we're constantly exploring new ways to communication with children and young people and we are looking at technology obviously our funds are somewhat limited but we are looking at technology and ways in which to help young people to communicate not just in a paper based way and as I said they can email some forms in. I know it has helped and children and young people will say if you consult with them, some of the information they've received has helped them prepare or that some information would have been held and now we're providing that, we know that will be helpful for other children and young people. In some ways it is important for us to remember and I suppose, our partners as well, it's still quite new the programme has only been running for four years which doesn't sound that new but actually to try and change a culture of thinking and also bring in young people, it's not that long to basically redo everything and start from scratch, the way we work with children and young people.

I: How would you describe the culture within the organisation?

P: I think it's very positive and people are very much, I mean people come to work here because they believe in the rights of children and young people and they care about the welfare of children and young people. It's fairly obvious what we do if you look at our website so I think it is very very positive and that people really want to support children and young people through the system. I think some of the difficulties are that we're very very busy and when people are very busy, not everything can always get sent out when it should be, for example, I think sometimes it has been a bit difficult to maybe get leaflets out as frequently as we would like but I think it is improving and as I said, it's a gradual process and I think that it's massively improved and I think that we're feeling, some of the years that have gone by in participatory work and participation are starting to flourish now and see that people are much more interested in finding ways to improve their services for children and young people. I also chair something called the Participation Group in the organisation and that is a group of 15 members of staff across the country who have an interest in improving participation for children and young people, it could be support staff, the reception staff, it could be Reporters, we've got

people, I've got a Policy Manager who is on the group so from a wide variety of backgrounds throughout the organisation who have an active interest in improving our services for children and young people and we tap into that group to use their knowledge and expertise from the areas they are working in to try and improve services so I think between the group and a little bit of time going by I think we're beginning to see that things are really very much improving.

I: Having that Participation team, that might help with the consistency across the country?

P: Yes.

I: Obviously the rights of children come from the UNCRC and I'm thinking about Article 12 in particular, obviously the Modern Apprentices and children in the children's hearing system are deemed as vulnerable and there's maybe a need to protect vulnerable children but they also have a right to participation, also a right to protection. Do you see a tension between those two things?

P: Yes I think there is because, it's not really a tension but we recognise that encouraging a child or young person to say what they think or say what they're feeling may not result in that child or young person getting what they're asking for because quite often for example, a children's hearing, the children's hearing makes a decision that is in the best interest for that child and sometimes that to keep a child safe, the child might need to be removed from where they live and placed in a foster care placement for example, but it's still if we are properly communicating with children and young people and when I say we I mean panel members, and our partners as well as ourselves, if we are appropriately communicating with children and young people, they're more likely to understand why they don't get what they want when they submitted their views than they don't saying anything at all. I think if we encouraged young people to submit their views and participate in the process but we know that that doesn't always mean they'll get what they want from it but if we're all doing our jobs properly they should understand that I think. There will be a tension but I don't know if tension, a conflict...

I: I have been thinking about what is the best word to describe it, conflict, tension...

P: It's hard to put your finger on it and come up with a word, it's come up lots actually it's an interesting question because lots and lots of people both internally and externally have said well we have encouraged children and young people to participate, do they understand that their participation is very important but they might not get what they want, it is up to us to reflect that and to say your views and valued and your thoughts are important and understanding the process is very important and it's not just about participating in the process, it's about understanding why you're there and what we can do to support you during that time so sometimes it can, it's come up a few times but I think

that people agree that once there's been a discussion, if we appropriately support a child through the process they'll understand what's happening anyway, hopefully.

I: Thinking more broadly at the political climate in Scotland at the moment, for the referendum 16 and 17 year olds had the right to vote – just to get your views around that time, the levels of engagement and participation from a younger people's perspective, your views on that broadly?

P: I'm not sure what you mean, my views within the organisation or...

I: Did you see anything from the Modern Apprentices?

P: Not really no, I think, no I didn't and it's not that we would encourage it or not encourage it. My sense of things in general with people was that, I'm not Scottish although I have lived here for a long time and I was able to vote but my sense from people in general that people were quite private about their votes and didn't tend to discuss them very openly whether it's adults or young people and I got that sense from the Modern Apprentices too so I didn't see it as any different to my colleagues. We also received some emails from the Scottish Government in the weeks leading up to the referendum saying that we weren't to actively promote a yes or a no vote in the organisation because it wouldn't be appropriate but that came quite shortly before the referendum. I definitely, I mean other people's views might be different but I didn't have a sense of it, I had a sense that everyone's both internally and also among friends and family it was quite private, people weren't as open about it as I expected them to be and I think that's probably a good thing, a vote is private but I didn't think the young people that I work with had any different attitudes and approaches, I think they were just the same. I'd be interested to hear what other people you are interviewing were saying but no definitely not, I think things just ticked along as normal.

I: Maybe that's because of the uniqueness of the organisation, it's not a political organisation.

P: Yeah, certainly one of the Modern Apprentices asked me about it but more she just wanted to find out a bit more information because she wasn't really sure herself so I directed her to, I said you should go online and look up the pros and cons and that's up to you, I was very neutral...

I: It wasn't a topic of discussion...

P: No, not very much on that.

I: It's good to see different sides and perspectives so that's really interesting.

I: My next question probably you won't be able to answer because there's not been a lot of political engagement, it's really about broader themes of citizenship and democracy with young people

participating, if you feel you can comment on having younger people more politically engaged, participating that's going to have an impact on citizenship and democracy really broadly.

P: Well I suppose it does because a large proportion of Scotland's children are involved in the children's hearing system, children and young people are involved in the children's hearing system and we should be giving children and young people involved in the system information and supporting them in relation to their rights and their rights as a child or young person, rights as a human being and I suppose it ties back to Article 12 and it ties back to human rights in general so I think that yeah it does, part of being a citizen in Scotland is that we have this unique child protection system in place and we do very much on the focus on the rights of the child or young person and try and protect them and keep them out of the court system, the adult court system and the uniqueness of that system is very important and of international interest and I think that learning about the system is important and also considering the rights of the child and promoting human rights based approach which I think we exercise. I think if we're promoting children and young people's views from a very young age and understanding process then that part forms part of the rights of living in Scotland and I think that in terms of education, there's a much more children's rights based approach within the education system now. I think we carry that over into the children's hearing system and I think that educating children and young people about their rights will affect them in the longer term in a positive way.

I: Other issues that has came up is levels of awareness and understanding of children's rights among young people and children, what do you think about these levels?

P: I think that there, my work with young people is quite limited to working with the Modern Apprentices and sometimes on the national participation forum and these are young people who we've worked with or have been worked with other agencies so be aware of their rights so it's not necessarily the best measure. We would promote the rights of our Modern Apprentices and ensure that they are aware of their rights as young people as well as employees so I'm not sure that's a good measure but my sense of things from having worked with partners who are working with children and young people in a more broad, general basis is that children are more aware of their rights and are more aware of human rights, I suppose there's more awareness of human rights in general but I don't have a measure for that, I can't say that I've spoken to 15 children recently and they said, but I have a sense that we are moving towards a more rights based approach in every aspect of our society, primarily in education. Even in the NHS, the patients' rights charters – it's not just for young people but adults as well becoming more right based...

I: Across the board...

P: Yeah, which is a great thing.

I: When the Children and Young People Act was being consulted on, did you have any work to do with that?

P: I didn't personally, I don't know if our more senior staff and executive team and our Policy Manager did, I'm going to put you in touch with Nick Hobbs who is our Policy Manager and he'll be able to tell you a bit more about the strategic work and consultation work because we have been involved in some consultations. I think you said earlier something about maybe not being involved at a government level but certainly we have been involved at that level we are involved in consultation and involved in the 2011 Act so it's probably important to reflect that we have very much worked with the government in consultation, I can't comment because I'm not sure the detail and the level of the work so I can put you in touch with Nick Hobbs. I'm not sure the level of input and influence that Nick and our senior managers had and I know they worked in some, I'm just not sure what it is.

I: How do you feel about the Act?

P: Yeah I suppose it's really positive and it has for example improved young people's, for example, their rights to care for a longer period of time which I think is fantastic. I think that it's important that if the Act is there, we now legitimately carry through with it and make sure that young people who have been in care do get the extended services. I think it's a great thing for young people and for Scotland so it's a positive children and young people centred approach.

I: There's a strong focus on increasing children's rights and duties towards them, do you think that's positive?

P: Absolutely.

I: How do you feel about children's rights and levels of participation in Scotland, as a whole right now?

P: I think they're improving, I think there's a long way to go and certainly not just within our organisation, I think things are improving, I think that most agencies and organisations that work with children and young people are trying to make sure that children and young people are more aware of their rights and are promoting participation and understanding of processes within which they find themselves. I think that sometimes I think my personal opinion can be that things can be a bit tokenistic and not quite really understanding the needs of children and young people and particularly for example the young people I work with, the needs of vulnerable young people but for the most part I get the sense that from my general sense of things and also in terms of my experience things are improving but there's still a long way to go, I could probably say that about many rights based

approaches whether it's for adults or for children and young people with mental health difficulties, things are much much better than they were but still kind of room for improvement.

P: I think what would be helpful for you, which I'm sure you've already done is get a really broad understanding of the work that we do because it is so unique, is to look at our website and see how the system works and then take a look at our consultations and the way in which we're communicating with young people and you're welcome to call me back with some direct questions in relation to that because that might help because I've been very very broad because I'm not sure how much detail you'd like me to go into, you're welcome to come back and go through the materials I've been talking about and different things.

Duration: 37:15