

Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People (SCCYP)

1. What's it all about?

The office of Commissioner was established by the Commissioner for Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2003. The Commissioner is appointed by the Queen, on the nomination of the Scottish Parliament, but is independent of both the Parliament and the Scottish Executive.

Kathleen Marshall took up her post as the first Commissioner in April 2004 and now has a staff of 14. She is based in Edinburgh, near the Parliament, but regularly travels across Scotland.

The Commissioner's general function is to promote and safeguard the rights of children and young people in Scotland. This includes everyone in Scotland up to the age of 18, and those up to age 21 who have, at any time, been 'in care' or 'looked after' by a local authority. The Commissioner must have particular regard to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. However, her responsibilities extend to all other rights under national and international law, including the European Convention on Human Rights.

The Commissioner's role is not about resolving individual complaints, but about taking forward matters that affect children and young people in Scotland. The Commissioner does this by raising awareness and understanding of children and young people's rights; reviewing current and proposed legislation, policy and practice to see whether they respect these rights; and promoting best practice and undertaking research. The Commissioner can set up formal investigations into suspected breaches of rights, where these affect groups of children. At the conclusion of an investigation, the Commissioner must submit a report to the Scottish Parliament, setting out conclusions and recommendations.

The Commissioner is committed to involving children and young people in her work, both through consultation and active engagement. The Commissioner is also keen to collaborate with agencies that work with and for children and young people.

2. Consultation on our Policy Priorities

To assist in setting the policy priorities of her office, the Commissioner has recently carried out two consultations: one with children and young people; and another with the organisations working with and for them. Children and young people were asked to vote for one of seven issues that they wished SCCYP to progress. More than 15,000 young people voted with 'things to do' emerging as the winner. More recently organisations working with and for children and young people in Scotland were asked to choose one of three themes SCCYP should prioritise:

- 1) Promoting Proportionate Protection - balancing protection with fun, adventure and healthy relationships;
- 2) Improving Family Support - making sure that children, young people and families get real and effective support; or
- 3) Promoting Social Inclusion - highlighting the challenges faced by marginalised groups and seeking improvement.

The closing date for responses was 31st January 2006 and so far we have received over 130 submissions. Analysis of the responses has begun. The consultation is not a straightforward vote. Whilst the number of votes for each theme will clearly be significant, other factors such as the range of interests the organisations represent and the results of the national consultation with children and young people will also be taken into account.

Whichever priority is selected will shape our work over the next two years. An analysis of the responses will be published in early March, followed by an informal update to inform agencies of the results.

3. To find out more

If you would like to know more about children's rights in Scotland and the work of the Commissioner and her office visit the SCCYP Website, <http://www.sccyp.org.uk>. In addition if you would like to receive monthly updates on our current and future programme of work, sign up to our e-newsletter, *SCCYP Matters*. To subscribe please send an email with 'subscribe newsletter' in the subject header to Gillian.Munro@sccyp.org.uk.

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