

## MANIFESTO | Children's Health and Wellbeing

Children's Health Scotland is the leading Scottish children's health charity. Our vision is for every child and young person in Scotland to realise their right to best quality healthcare in line with the [UNCRC Articles](#) and the [EACH Charter](#). Our Manifesto focuses on the health and wellbeing of children and young people in Scotland and has been informed by the views of children, young people, families and professionals.

### **Children's Health Scotland:**

- *Is proud to be trusted as experts in our sector, offering expertise and information on the health needs and rights of children and young people in hospital, at home and in the community.*
- *Believes that decision makers should listen to and hear the voices of children and young people with health conditions and that this should be reflected in their policy documents.*
- *Is committed to ensuring that the best possible healthcare is provided for all children and young people to improve their life experiences.*

Our Manifesto calls for improvements to be made to the provision of facilities and services for children and young people with health conditions and their families as follows:

### **1. VOICE**

*We ask MSPs of all parties and those with responsibility for the formulation of healthcare policy to hear the voices of children and young people with health conditions nationally. EACH Charter Articles 8 and 9, UNCRC Articles 28 and 29. We call for:*

- Children with disabilities whether physical or developmental to have the help they need to participate fully in accessing healthcare and decisions that affect them.
- Young people moving into adult health services to be supported in this transition and to receive age-appropriate care by suitably trained staff in an age-appropriate environment.

**"I worry about leaving my healthcare team when I get older. Nobody really talks about it. I worry a lot about the future."**

**Young person, aged 15**

- MSPs to support legislation aimed at helping children and young people with disabilities transition to adult services.

## 2. EXPERTISE AND INFORMATION

*We call on decision makers to ensure that children, young people and families have access to age-appropriate information to enable them all to receive the best quality healthcare.*

*EACH Charter Article 7, UNCRC Articles 23 and 24. We call for:*

- UNCRC information to be made available to children, young people and families in easy to read and accessible formats.

**“I would like information that is easy to find and explained clearly for my age. Examples would help and leaflets that are made for us.”**

**Young person, aged 14**

## 3. FREEDOM FROM HUNGER

*No child should go hungry. UNCRC Article 24. We call for:*

- Healthy eating information to be provided and promoted for children at home and in school.
- Healthy school lunches to be made available for everyone and for children in vulnerable families to be provided with nutritious food appropriate for their age and culture during periods of school closure.

**“My husband is newly self-employed and unable to work because of restrictions. I work part-time. We have a mortgage and two children and we’re now really struggling to make ends meet. It’s soul destroying not knowing how I am going to put food on the table.”**

**Kinship Family accessing the National Kinship Care Advice Service**

- Children in hospital to be provided with nutritious wholesome food, which is appropriate for those with special dietary needs and is attractively presented in an age-appropriate manner.

## 4. IMPROVING LIFE EXPERIENCES

*We all want the best possible healthcare to be provided for children and young people to improve their life experiences. EACH Charter Article 8 and 10, UNCRC Articles 23 and 24.*

*We call for:*

- Each political party to ensure that children and young people with long-term health conditions, particularly those that have been in care and those from BAME communities, are considered as priorities in their Manifesto.
- All children and young people with health conditions to be cared for at home whenever possible and in hospital only when necessary.
- Children to be cared for together with children who have the same developmental needs and for them not to be admitted to adult wards.

**“Mental health and physical health should be equal. It is important. It is not just a tick box.”**

**Young person, aged 13**

- The mental health and wellbeing of children and young people to be given the same priority as their physical health.

- Decision makers to use the opportunities afforded by the devolution of social security benefits to alleviate poverty and deprivation and to mitigate its damaging effects on the health and wellbeing of children and young people.

## 5. TRAINING AND RESOURCES

*We want a range of training and resources to be made available to ensure that children, young people and families, including carers, are empowered to identify the needs of children during times of illness and to access appropriate services. EACH Charter Article 7, UNCRC Articles 28 and 29. We call for:*

- Equity of access to education for all children and young people who are absent from school due to ill health.

**“I miss a lot of school because of my health condition and I miss a lot of work. When I come back I get a lot of questions from the school and they don’t understand.”**

**Young person, aged 13**

- Targeted and tailored support for children and young people with health conditions and their families.

**“[Taking part in the Self-Management Service] was one of the best things I could have done in terms of managing my outlook on my health condition. We learned stress and anxiety management techniques that I have used consistently since, and about young people’s healthcare rights, and I have made friends.”**

**Young person, aged 15**

**“Thanks so much for your support. This programme is providing him with a welcome distraction and some structure! It’s support like this which is invaluable to us just now.”**

**Parent of child, aged 11**

**“It is vital that we have 2-way communication between school and home. I need to know what has gone on in school (running away) and equally I need to be able to tell them what has gone on at home (a bereavement).”**

**Foster Carer in a focus group**

- Training for Foster and Kinship carers, health professionals and local authority staff on children’s rights and the needs of children and young people with health conditions.

**“I wish doctors and nurses could go over your rights with you like they do for consent.”**

**Young person, aged 15**

**“This is the first time we have been listened to and someone believes us.”**

**Kinship carer**

**“Kinship carers need help and training to understand what has gone on with their grandkids and how to help them.”**

**Kinship carer**

## 6. HEALTH-RELATED PLAY

*Play is serious business when it comes to children's health. It is more than just a chance to have fun and can help children physically, mentally, and emotionally. EACH Articles 1, 4, 7, UNCRC Articles 23, 24 and 31. We call for:*

- Policies that are introduced, to enable children, including those with additional support needs, to exercise their right to play in all healthcare settings.

**“The children are already very used to learning through play, so the box perfectly complemented this. They were very excited by the range of resources provided, and every child shared that they felt more confident attending a medical setting as a result of the session.”**

**Mrs MacFie, Primary 2 School Teacher**

- Steps to be taken through health-related play to improve inequalities in child dental health in Scotland.

**“I really liked playing with the eyesight board. We made a pair of glasses and had to wear them.”**

**Annabel**

**“The Dental and Hospital Play session came just at the right time and I was able to support the boy in my care going into hospital. I would not have known what to do otherwise.”**

**Foster Carer**

- Funding to be made available to ensure that play specialists can deliver play services to those children with health conditions who need it.

*NB: Quotes are from feedback received through Children's Health Scotland's services.*