

Cross-Party Group on Children and Young People
Assessing the Impact of COVID-19
Wednesday 7 October
10:00–11:30am
Remote Meeting (Platform: Zoom)
Chair: Alex Cole Hamilton MSP
Minutes

Attendees:

Alex Cole Hamilton MSP	Fulton MacGregor MSP	Brian Whittle MSP
Katherine Anderson	Iain MacRitchie	Cath Logan
Helen Forrest	Elizabeth Lumsden	Rosie Moore
Pete Gilpin	Tracey McFall	Naomi Sutton
Claire Houghton	James Ross	Angus MacLean
Tamasin Knight	Kevin Kane	Rona Blackwood
Joan Mowat	Jane Dailly	Sally Cowburn
Kelly Munro	Marielle Bruce	David Ashford
Fiona Nicolson	Bailey – Lee Robb	Elaine Kerridge
Sarah Rogers	John Erskine	David Mackay
Kirsten Shield	Allie Cherry-Byrnes	Amy Woodhouse
Paul Sullivan	Reid Aiton	Alison Keir
Louise Slorance	Helen Anderson	Sarah Paterson
Chris Ross	Eddie Nisbet	Nina Collins
Sarah Anderson	Owen Robert	Lewis MacLeod
Paul Chisolm	Andy Hardie	Meg Thomas
Salena Bagely MBE	Jayne Copeland	Claire Hunter

1. Welcome from Chair, Alex Cole Hamilton MSP

Alex Cole Hamilton MSP welcomed attendees to the first meeting of the Cross Party Group on Children and Young People of the new parliamentary term. Alex told members that we will be covering the impact of COVID-19 and using the evidence gathered to plan out our meetings across the rest of the parliamentary term.

Alex told the group that we would hear from three speakers at the meeting:

- Bailey-Lee Robb, Scottish Youth Parliament
- Rona Blackwood, Children’s Parliament
- Iain MacRitchie, MCR Pathways

Alex then confirmed we would break into a number of small group discussions facilitated by staff from Children in Scotland and YouthLink Scotland.

Alex ran through a range of housekeeping measures and reminded all attendees that the chat function was available for questions and comments.

2. CPG Business

- a. Confirm previous minutes

Alex confirmed that the previous minutes of the CPG's AGM from May 2020 had been shared in advance. The minutes were taken as read.

b. CPG Young Co Convenors

Alex handed over to Chris Ross from Children in Scotland to update the group on the next steps for having a group of young co-convenors who would work with the CPG.

Chris told the group that due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions on face – to – face meetings of the group, the secretariat had decided to take a period of reflection on how working with the young co-convenors had gone in 2019-20. Chris said he would provide further update to the group at the November meeting.

c. New member

Red Harbour Events were confirmed as a new member of the Cross Party Group.

3. Presentations – 10:15 – 10:45

The CPG heard from three speakers about the impact of Coronavirus on children and young people.

a. *Bailey- Lee Robb, MSYP, Trustee for Advocacy and Policy, Scottish Youth Parliament*

Bailey- Lee Robb, MSYP spoke about the recent Lockdown Lowdown survey conducted by the Scottish Youth Parliament, YouthLink Scotland and Young Scot. The survey has shown the impact of COVID-19 and the initial lockdown period.

Bailey-Lee covered a range of issues that were highlighted in the Lockdown Lowdown survey. He said that both the Scottish Youth Parliament and young people generally are worried about the impact of coronavirus. He said that the survey results are helpful evidence for showing what we need to do support them.

Some of the key themes highlighted in the survey include that COVID-19 has impacted on young peoples:

- Education
- Employment opportunities
- Financial Situation
- Relationships
- Health and Wellbeing

Bailey-Lee said that they are working with public bodies to make sure that children and young peoples needs are met. However, he said more needs to be done to include children and young people in decision making.

Bailey-Lee closed by saying that a new Lockdown Lowdown survey is going out soon and asked members of the group to share this with young people that they work with.

You can access the full lockdown lowdown survey here:

<https://www.youthlinkscotland.org/media/4486/lockdown-lowdown-final-report.pdf>

Find out more about SYP's work on COVID-19 here: <https://syp.org.uk/our-work/political-work/covid-19/>

b. Rona Blackwood, Children's Parliament

Rona spoke about Children's Parliament's How are You Doing Survey and the Corona Times which have explored how lockdown and COVID-19 have impacted on younger children.

The How are You Doing Survey has provided qualitative data about how the lockdown has affected younger children. The Corona Times has allowed a deeper look at how coronavirus has affected children over time and has provided qualitative information.

Rona said they have heard similar things to that heard in the Lockdown Lowdown survey. Children said lockdown had affected their learning, health and wellbeing and friendships.

Rona said that lockdown has had a particular impact on younger girls (aged 12-14) compared with younger girls and all boys included in their survey. Rona said they are more likely to have been bored and less likely to have had fun. You can find out more on Rona's slides.

Rona also agreed that it is really important that we make space for children and young people to be involved in decision making about Coronavirus.

You can access Rona's slides here: <https://childreninscotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Childrens-Parliament-CPG-C-YP-7-Oct-2020.pptx>

Find out more about Children's Parliament's work on COVID-19 here: <https://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/our-work/children-and-coronavirus/>

c. Iain MacRitchie, MCR Pathways

MCR Pathways are a national charity that works with young people with experience of care and other disadvantaged young people to ensure they have equal opportunities within the education system.

Iain showed a video summarising the findings from a their Lockdown Survey. The key points included that we need to support young peoples mental health and wellbeing and focus on relationship based practice.

Iain agreed with both Bailey-Lee and Rona and said we need to ensure children and young people are included in decision making going forward.

He closed by saying that situation is suppressing talent and opportunity.

You access the video shared by Iain, here: <https://youtu.be/Z0hE11OJNRE>

More detail on MCR Pathway's survey can be found here:

<https://mcrpathways.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/MCR-Lockdown-Survey-Report-29th-July.pdf>

4. Comments from the floor

Joan Mowat – University of Strathclyde

Joan said she has been working on reviews of the literature for a number of years. She said Children's Parliament's findings about girls aged 12-14 is similar to other research that has been carried out. We know this a vulnerable age.

Joan also said through her Into Headship course at the University of Strathclyde she is running a survey for head teachers to see how they are responding to the situation. Joan also highlighted that on the course she is supporting people to think about supporting the whole school community.

Brian Whittle MSP

Brian said he thought that lockdown would have made it more likely that children would be getting less exercise and be more likely to be sedentary. Rona Blackwood said she thought this would have got worse and screen time would have increased.

Lewis MacLeod, Includem

Lewis highlighted newly published research by Includem on the impact of COVID-19 on poverty and the families that they work with. The research can be accessed here: https://www.includem.org/resources/1602001657_Poverty-and-the-Impact-of-Coronavirus-on-Young-People-and-Families---Includem---Oct-2020.pdf

5. Group Discussions and feedback

Members of the CPG were split in to small groups to discuss the following questions. Each group was facilitated by members of the Secretariat.

- a. What impact has there been from COVID-19 on the children and young people that you work with?
 - i. Do the presentations resonate with what you have seen.
- b. How do you expect this will affect the children and young people you work with in the longer term?

A full note has been taken of these discussions and will be shared separately from the minutes. Key themes included:

- Increased vulnerability

- Health and Wellbeing
- Education
- Digital
- Participation in decision making
- Support/Services being cut
- Relationships
- Caring Responsibilities
- Looking to the future

6. Agree Actions and Close – 11:25 – 11:30

Actions:

- The Secretariat will prepare a note of group discussions and develop a work programme for the CPG for the rest of the Parliamentary term.
- The CPG to follow up with Scottish Government Ministers about plans for action on topics such as free school meals, health and wellbeing and the role of youth work

Date of next meeting TBC

Topic – Covid-19 – The case for Incorporation of the UNCRC